

February 27, 2019

TO: Members of the Saint Paul City Council

RE: File # 19-012422, 19-012615, and 19-012718  
Appeals of Planning Commission decisions regarding site plan and variance applications of Twin Cities German Immersion School (1031 Como Avenue)

Dear Council Members:

On March 6, the Council will hear testimony regarding three variances and a proposed site plan submitted by the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS).

We live approximately 200 feet from the school property (I can see the entire church structure from the window as I write), but aside from proximity we have no affiliation with the school or defunct parish. We write in support of the variance applications and the proposed site plan. We understand the City cannot approve the applications at this time, due to receipt of a petition for an Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW). But we encourage approval as soon as the petition is dismissed or the environmental review process is complete.

Variances: In our view, the variances are minor. The proposed building will be shorter than the existing structure. It will not block light, cast shadows or in any way impede the views in the neighborhood. The 1% variance in lot coverage is nearly negligible, and will be offset by an increase in green space, reduced impervious surface, and better stormwater retention. Regarding off-street parking, the school is expecting only a handful of new staff and is exploring ways to encourage more ride-sharing, busing, and transit use. The neighborhood surrounding the school is primarily single-family residential and most houses have garages. There is ample on-street parking. At our house, less than a half-block from the school, only our immediate neighbors park in front of our house. The street is substantially empty most of the time.

We encourage the use of existing streets and impervious surface for parking, rather than requiring additional parking lots. We already have plenty of impervious surface in the neighborhood (in the form of streets) - let's make use of it!

Site Plan. The school has developed a site plan that makes good use of the compact site. It will improve traffic circulation, control surface water runoff, provide additional outdoor play space, and accommodate the maximum expected enrollment. The school paid for a detailed traffic study and has committed to adopting the traffic control and safety measures recommended by the City. At District 10's request, the school has agreed to additional fencing to screen play areas from the immediate neighbors. We see no reason not to approve the site plan.

This site was purchased "no strings attached" when the archdiocese unloaded it. The talk of "historic designation" is recent – aimed solely at preventing the school from redeveloping the site. In fact, two Heritage Preservation Commission inventories (in 1983 and 2001) dismissed the building from further consideration for historic designation. The school has made a good

faith effort to use the existing building – but it’s just not working, regardless of whether its enrollment increases.

For those with the patience to read on, we offer a few comments regarding the school as a neighbor, and its treatment by the City.

#### TCGIS is a valued neighbor

The school is a valued neighbor and a benefit to the neighborhood. We have lived here more than 30 years, and in our view, the thriving public school is the best thing that has happened to the neighborhood in that time. We hear children playing outside; we see neighbors’ children walking to school; young families are moving in; houses have been remodeled and upgraded; and the neighborhood is improving. Before the school bought the property, the vacant church site was attracting undesirable activity – specifically, apparent drug-related activity was starting to occur at the site.

#### “Perfect storm” of opposition

The school has been attacked by a “perfect storm” of opposition, a coalition of charter school opponents, intransigent neighbors who want to retain their view, neighbors who don’t want to share the public streets, sentimental former parishioners, people who irrationally believe that language immersion is a racist threat, and preservation activists from elsewhere in the City. We want to assure the Council that these opponents represent only a small number of the neighborhood residents, and they definitely do not represent us. We note that of the 126 signers of the EAW petition, only 14 live in our neighborhood – and those 14 are from just seven households.

A few neighbors have been hostile toward the school from the beginning. A year ago, when the school voluntarily shared its plans and sought feedback, they took aim. Historic designation was the first weapon; picketing the school was next; appealing the minor variances and site plan followed; and now petitioning for an EAW. We expect the opponents to fight every step of the way. Our refusal to join in has resulted in our being shunned by our 30-year neighbors and (former) friends.

#### City failure to act timely

We are dismayed that City has compounded the school’s obstacles. First, it doubled the timeframe for approval under Minn. Stat., sec. 15.99. Then, when the second 60-day period was expiring, the Zoning Committee wheedled even more time from the school (i.e., agree to the extension or your applications will fail today). Next, the Zoning Committee and Planning Commission disregarded the votes of the District 10 Land Use Committee and the District 10 Council, which both supported the variances, and then the Planning Commission procedurally FUBARed the entire process when it violated its own voting bylaws.

In fact, it is difficult to discern the basis on which the Council is hearing the appeal. The appellants missed the deadline for the appealing the Planning Commission’s January 25th approvals (conferred rightly or wrongly), and now the Council appears to be hearing an appeal of the Commission’s February 8 decision not to revisit its earlier votes.

### Committee over-reach

The City's own committees (Zoning and Planning) conflated proposed historic designation of the former church with a straightforward review of three simple variances and a site plan. The site plan and variances are for grading and construction. Whether the former church is designated historic and whether it can be demolished (if designated) are matters for the Heritage Preservation Commission and the City Council, not the Zoning Committee. Nonetheless, the Committee focused solely on the former church and whether demolition could be avoided. This despite the fact that the Planning Commission had already determined that historic designation was not consistent with the City's comprehensive plan.

We also protest the Zoning Committee's treatment of the school principal. One of the members badgered the principal to state whether he believed the existing building is historic. The principal's opinion of the building's historic value was irrelevant to the proceedings.

### A questionable recusal

We note that the Planning Commission member with the greatest knowledge of the situation recused himself from voting, which we assume was on advice of City counsel. To our knowledge, this member is not affiliated with the school nor does he have a financial interest in the proceedings, so why was recusal advised? This precedent would seem to unnecessarily preclude council members from voting on applications in their districts.

### And the pièce de résistance

The City has just received a petition for an EAW on the TCGIS proposal, which prohibits the City from acting on the variances or site plan until either the petition has been dismissed, or any ordered environmental review has been completed. In addition, the 60-day clock in Minn. Stat. sec. 15.99 must logically be paused while the City acts on the petition: to be resumed if the petition is dismissed, but returned to zero if an environmental review is started.

We believe the TCGIS has not been well-served by the City's committees or staff. The City dangled the hope of approval to buy more time and additional concessions, which has resulted in even more delay. This is a publicly-funded, non-profit school; every dollar spent on an overwrought process is a dollar that does not educate children. If nothing else, the school deserves an objective, timely, and efficient review process.

As residents, we thank you for your consideration of these comments, and for your service to the citizens of St. Paul.

Rebecca Wooden  
Gerald Flom  
1121 Argyle Street  
Saint Paul, MN  
55103

City Council of St Paul  
February 25, 2019  
c/o Amy Brendmoen, City Council  
President 15 Kellogg Blvd West, 310  
City Hall  
St Paul, MN 55102

To the City Council of St Paul:

I am writing to oppose the expansion of the Twin Cities German Immersion (TCGIS) Charter School. As part of its expansion the school plans to demolish the former St. Andrew's church, a historically significant building in the Como Warrendale neighborhood in St Paul. This would be devastating to this small pocket neighborhood, where St. Andrew's has been an important community anchor and has stood for nearly a century. History and place matter. It is why many of us live in St Paul.

Together—neighbors and community leaders—can stop the demolition of this important community landmark. Instead we can preserve a beautiful old building that reminds us of the legacy of immigrants who built the Como Warrendale neighborhood. Everyday people, predominantly working class and railroad workers, built a Home Community and Church to anchor their lives in a new homeland. More than a building, St Andrew's reminds us of the evolution of this particular neighborhood and the roots and values of some of the immigrants embedded in its history—Hungarian, Slovakian, Irish, German, Italian.

In recent years, as we have welcomed more new folks to St Paul and Minnesota (immigrants and transplants from other states and countries), we have continued to diversify the fabric of this neighborhood. Several special cultural events like the Hmong Festival in July are increasingly associated with this small neighborhood and Como Park. And we're proud to be affiliated with it.

History, Landmarks and People Stories remind us that our lives are interconnected. Person to Person, Story to Story, Generation to Generation. This legacy is worth saving & preserving.

Our role now is to link Past to Present to Future, honorably and respectfully, as we encourage growth and change that promotes equity, cooperation and collaboration. May we likewise maintain some of the immigrant roots and values of this small Pocket Neighborhood:

- \*Remember those who came before us
- \*Make room for others to join us
- \*Respect the residential and historic character of this neighborhood
- \*Ensure continued evolution of Warrendale that is cooperative and inclusive

As relatively new to Warrendale neighborhood, the German Immersion School needs to work with Warrendale residents and community leaders in ways that respect the values and legacy of their new home neighborhood. Current residents (both new and old) are very invested in the evolution and growth of their immediate neighborhood and are willing to give the School another chance. We want to be at the table with the School, as together we work toward a new and better solution.

I urge Amy Brendmoen, Our Neighborhood City Council Representative and Current City Council President, plus all of our St Paul City Council Representatives to vote against the current expansion plan proposed by the German Immersion Charter School. My hopes are that

they and Mayor Melvin Carter will encourage TCGIS to work with the Community on a better plan.

If the historic St. Andrew's is lost, so is opportunity for collaboration and compromise.

Mary Burnison

Retired Youth Development Professional, Educator and University of MN Youth Studies Faculty

Como Warrendale Resident for 33 years  
1131 Argyle Street, St Paul,  
MN 55103

### **History and Place Matter**

Courage, sacrifice and hope—  
their great gift to us.

Immigrants built church and community  
in Como neighborhood, their new Homeland.

(We remember them.)

Their hands and persistence offered  
free labor one day a month,  
brick by brick, tile by tile,  
neighbors and visionary architect worked side by side.

(We remember them.)

Hungarian, Irish, Italian, German, Slovakian—  
Gubasta, Connolly, Forliti, Warner, Hausler;  
other names lost through the years.

Fruits of their labor and vision remain.

(We remember them.)

St Andrew's stands today  
a symbol of their legacy and more,  
an enduring community anchor,

(We remember them.)

Courage, sacrifice and hope  
These values endure—their gift to us.  
Not forgotten, even as time moves on.

(We remember them.)

A beautiful landmark continues to remind us  
of those who built St Andrew's.

Working together despite differences—  
their legacy hard to live up to  
unless we find a way to bridge  
these confounding invisible walls.  
(We remember them.)

-Mary Burnison

**From:** tumah010 <[tumah010@gmail.com](mailto:tumah010@gmail.com)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 27, 2019 10:57 AM  
**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward4 <[Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** German Immersion School

Dear Councilmember Nelson,

You are my city council member, and I appreciate your service.

As a resident of the Como neighborhood, I have heard the debate about preserving St. Andrew's Church on the German Immersion School campus. I understand this is a very old church building with special architecture, but in this case these factors do not seem to warrant its preservation.

Buildings need communities who are willing to dedicate funding for their upkeep. The former Catholic congregation of St. Andrew's already decided not to devote their resources to maintaining it. The school has learned that the cost to them to retrofit and work around the outdated church building's limitations is prohibitively expensive, and still would not meet their needs well. The community members I see speaking out to save the building are not offering to pay the significant sum to preserve the church building.

I understand the desire to preserve old buildings. I am a member of a church that is nearly 150 years old. Our congregation was part of the Underground Railroad helping slaves escape to freedom. And our church building has been on the National Historic Register since the 1970s. Recently our small congregation had to decide whether to remain in our historic building, or to move to a cheaper location. Our congregation is a neighborhood fixture of activity, outreach and community, and so we stretched ourselves and raised over half a million dollars to maintain our building and further our mission. This is a success story of a thoughtful decision-making process to preserve a historic church. Unfortunately, the church building on the German Immersion School campus shares none of these characteristics. That church has served its purpose, and no longer serves the community. If the neighbors crying out to save it were also offering to foot the bill, that would be a different story. But instead they want the German school to pay for their nostalgia, when school funding is better used to educate children.

Please allow for community planning that enables the German Immersion School to use its campus to best serve its students and our community and does not burden them with an unwarranted historic designation.

Thank you.

Mercedes Tuma-Hansen

**From:** marijo schwiderski [<mailto:marijo1025@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Thursday, February 28, 2019 7:11 AM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:**

Please support the neighborhood, and SHSA, with a moratorium on TCGIS expansion plans to repurpose, not demolish, this historic church building. I was at several meetings with professionals ideas to cost effectively use the existing structure to serve the schools needs. Unfortunately the school administration has tunnel vision.

Respectfully submitted

Marijo Schwiderski  
957 Como Blvd E  
St Paul

2/28

City of St. Paul City Council Members  
Via Email

To St. Paul City Council Members:

I have been following the controversy over allowing a public charter school—Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) -- the ability to remodel the outdated building that it has occupied and conducted school activities since 2013. I find many of the attacks on its renovation plans from a small, dissatisfied neighborhood group in Warrendale – plus comments made by select Planning and Zoning committee members -- highly biased, occasionally ignorant of what city codes and plans do and don't allow, and above all an assault on educating kids. TCGIS is one of the most successful charter schools in the state and only one of three public German Immersion Schools in the U.S.

I am a teacher at the school. I believe all kids have a right to a proper education in a modern space that does not infringe on their ability to learn and engage in physical education and private, one-on-one mentoring when needed. I ask that you keep this front and foremost in your thoughts as you make your decision.

The public policy implications – and legal ramifications -- are important to consider, including:

1. Those opposed to TCGIS' renovation of its property forget that the District 10 Como Community Council's Land Use committee – on a majority neighborhood vote – approved both the variances and the plan. This point seemed lost or willfully ignored by Zoning committee members who voted against both recently.

Moreover, these members also ignored Staff recommendations to approve, and used the arguments (and obvious personal biases) about historic preservation – rather than following the zoning parameters in place to justify their decision-making. **I would point out that the Planning Commission soundly rejected HPC's designation by a 12-1 vote!**

2. Declaring a public school building a heritage preservation site – without providing the financial or logistical means to preserve it – places an unjustifiable financial burden on public tax dollars for this particular public school which may be illegal, given that the building structure is now considered a historic church by the Heritage Preservation Commission (and not a school inside of the shell of the old church structure). That distinction seems critical.

3. While several planning commissioners appeared to show prejudice against charter schools, Commissioner Baker made it clear that the St Paul Zoning Code sees no distinction between types of schools.

4. The school tried “adaptive reuse” and it has not worked given the space limitations and configuration of the building it’s in. It also spent two years looking at alternative locations which were found to be unfeasible, unreasonable or otherwise unworkable given their needs.

5. Finally, you add up these factors and look at all the benefits that TCGIS brings to this neighborhood and our broader community (See list below) and there is really only one question that needs to be asked: **Do we want to educate St. Paul kids in modern environments that are conducive to learning or not? I think at the end of the day, it really is quite that simple. \***

Thank You for Your Service.

Esther Neu

655 Grandview Ave W

Roseville, MN 55113

**From:** Charlotte Melin [<mailto:melin005@umn.edu>]

**Sent:** Friday, March 1, 2019 1:31 PM

**To:** \*CI-StPaul\_Mayor <[Mayor@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Mayor@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Cc:** [board@tcgis.org](mailto:board@tcgis.org)

**Subject:** Twin Cities German Immersion School--letter of support

Dear Mayor Carter and City Council President Brendmoen,

German plays a vital role in primary through postsecondary education in the Upper Midwest. At the University of Minnesota, we understand that role in terms of both the history of the State of Minnesota and the community we hope to build for the future. For students at every level, opportunities to learn German create the conditions for long-term career success. The Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) plays a particularly important role in the educational ecology of our state and region in this regard. For these reasons, the current discussions about what to do with the current TCGIS building are of great concern to us.

TCGIS is the only German immersion school in Minnesota at a moment when immersion education is expanding in many languages. In Wisconsin, by contrast, there are two German immersion schools in Milwaukee alone. Unlike other languages, German language learners gain access to multiple forms of financial support. Through on-going federal initiatives, Germany sponsors programs to promote the study of German for STEM fields in particular. This in part accounts for the fact that although there are fewer numbers of students than in Spanish, for example, it remains one of the most popular languages for academic study.

For U.S. students, such educational opportunities are vital. There are programs that specifically address the needs of students who are growing into their future roles as global citizens: the DAAD (German



Academic Exchange) Research Internships in Science and Engineering ([RISE](#)) and internships with the German parliament ([Bundestag Internship](#)) offer two powerful examples of how investment in learning German translates into career-related experiences. Early opportunities for learning German, such as those at TCGIS, are especially important for the career futures of students who years later will want to apply for RISE. Beyond these initiatives, the support for German enhances funding for programs, educators, and students at all levels, thanks to the efforts of the American Association of Teachers of German, community partners, and the work of accomplished teachers like those at the Twin Cities German Immersion School.

In 2017 my department and the Center for German and European Studies on the University of Minnesota received a legacy gift of \$5 million to be used to enhance our educational programs in German studies. This gift makes it possible for us to support students on the University of Minnesota campus in tangible ways and we hope that students from TCGIS will be part of that cohort. We offer scholarships to incoming students and continuing students who are German majors and minors, including many awards for study abroad. We connect our students with internships and engagement opportunities. These awards make it feasible for students to realize their dreams and to prepare for future careers. In fact, a large proportion of our students pursue double majors and minors that further enhance their credentials and impact their future careers. Lifelong learning is a key objective in our support and it is connected to the economic wellbeing of Minnesota as a whole—to that end, we would like to see TCGIS thrive.

Pointing to the significance of TCGIS in a [2015 article](#) in the Star Tribune, former German Honorary Council Christ Tiefenbacher-Hudson applauded the opening by the state of the Minnesota Trade Office in Düsseldorf. She further stressed that direct investment by German companies had created over 9,000 jobs in Minnesota. Those ties make Germany the largest European export market for Minnesota products.

Indeed, German has growing importance for Minnesotan's careers in business, tourism, communication, and non-profit organizations. As a global leader in renewable energies, health care, urban planning, and sustainable design, Germany has become a model for developments in [Minnesota](#). Germany's leadership position in the European Union places it at the center of events today. In Minnesota, there is a chapter of the [German American Chambers of Commerce](#) that has created a broad and active membership that spans many business sectors.

While we realize that there are many complexities to be resolved regarding questions of relations between TCGIS and the surrounding neighborhood and its future status, we hope that a constructive approach will be found to resolving the current impasse. We support the educational mission of TCGIS. That support comes with an awareness of its importance for the community as a whole.

Sincerely,

Charlotte Melin

**From:** Alexander Lengauer [<mailto:al.lengauer@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 03, 2019 7:53 AM  
**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward6 <[Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** Twin Cities German Immersion School

Dear Mr. Busuri,

I have been following the controversy over allowing a public charter school—Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) -- the ability to remodel the outdated building that it has occupied and conducted school activities since 2013. I find many of the attacks on its renovation plans from a small, dissatisfied neighborhood group in Warrendale – plus comments made by select Planning and Zoning committee members -- highly biased, occasionally ignorant of what city codes and plans do and don't allow, and above all an assault on educating kids. TCGIS is one of the most successful charter schools in the state and only one of three public German Immersion Schools in the U.S.

I do not have any kids at the school. But I had the privilege to work there as a science teacher for grades 6 and 8. Although I have been teaching in my home country of Austria for a while now, I can say that TCGIS is the best school I have taught at so far. It is a place where students' needs are always ranked first and where highly idealistic teachers meet every day to do something great. If it weren't for family reasons, I still would be teaching there. TCGIS was the main reason why to this day Minnesota feels like my second home. I believe all kids have a right to a proper education in a modern space that does not infringe on their ability to learn and engage in physical education and private, one-on-one mentoring when needed. I ask that you keep this front and foremost in your thoughts as you make your decision.

The public policy implications – and legal ramifications -- are important to consider, including:

Those opposed to TCGIS' renovation of its property forget that the District 10 Como Community Council's Land Use committee – on a majority neighborhood vote – approved both the variances and the plan. This point seemed lost or willfully ignored by Zoning committee members who voted against both recently. Moreover, these members also ignored Staff recommendations to approve, and used the arguments (and obvious personal biases) about historic preservation – rather than following the zoning parameters in place to justify their decision-making. **I would point out that the Planning Commission soundly rejected HPC's designation by a 12-1 vote!**

2. Declaring a public school building a heritage preservation site – without providing the financial or logistical means to preserve it – places an unjustifiable financial burden on public tax dollars for this particular public school which may be illegal, given that the building structure is now considered a historic church by the Heritage Preservation Commission (and not a school inside of the shell of the old church structure). That distinction seems critical.

3. While several planning commissioners appeared to show prejudice against charter schools, Commissioner Baker made it clear that the St Paul Zoning Code sees no distinction between types of schools.

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5. Finally, you add up these factors and look at all the benefits that TCGIS brings to this neighborhood and our broader community and there is really only one question that needs to be asked: **Do we want to educate St. Paul kids in modern environments that are conducive to learning or not? I think at the end of the day, it really is quite that simple.**

Thank You for Your Service.  
Alexander Lengauer

**From:** Joseph Huebsch <[Huebsch@bipl.net](mailto:Huebsch@bipl.net)>  
**Sent:** Monday, March 4, 2019 10:14 AM  
**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward4 <[Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** Designating the St. Andrew's Catholic Church Building a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site

Dear Councilmember Jalali Nelson,

I respectfully request you please consider the attached letter in advance of your spring 2019 Saint Paul city council meeting regarding designating the St. Andrew's Catholic Church Building a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site. Please feel free to contact me if you have questions regarding the attached letter. Thank you.

Best regards,

Joe

Joseph C. Huebsch

1/10

March 4, 2019

Ms. Mitra Jalali Nelson  
Councilmember, Ward 4

St. Paul City Council

15 Kellogg Blvd. West, 310-D City Hall

Saint Paul, Minnesota, 55102

Dear City Council Member Jalali Nelson,

My name is Joseph C. Huebsch. My daughter attends the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS). In the spring of 2019, the Saint Paul City Council will take up the issue of whether to designate the St. Andrew's Catholic Church building (SACCB) a Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Site (SPHPS). I respectfully ask that you deny this request to make the SACCB a SPHPS for at least the following reasons.

Designating the SACCB a SPHPS will prevent the TCGIS from removing the SACCB from public property. This will force the TCGIS, a public school, to (1) publicly display permanent Catholic religious iconography and (2) encumber the TCGIS with spending public money for the maintenance of a Catholic church building. Both actions are a violation of the Establishment Clause of the Constitution of the United States of America.

The Establishment Clause of the Constitution of the United States of America prohibits a government entity from taking any action that communicates an endorsement of religion so as to maintain governmental neutrality between religious and nonreligious. With the understanding that the TCGIS is a public school, the consideration to designate SACCB a SPHPS should include whether this action has (a) a secular purpose; (b) whether its principal or primary effect

is one that neither advances nor inhibits religion; and finally, (c) must not foster an excessive government entanglement with religion (*Lemon v Kurtzman* (403 US 602), *Lemon*). Designating SACCB as a SPHPS would violate each of these prongs of *Lemon*.

Designating the SACCB as a SPHPS would not have a secular purpose. The SACCB is a Catholic church building, festooned with a multitude of permanent Catholic religious iconography (please see appendix for list). Examples of such permanent Catholic religious iconography on the building include Latin crosses and Greek crosses that are visible and clearly recognizable on the exterior surfaces of the SACCB (Figs. 1-5 in Appendix). The most prominent is the large Latin cross in the middle of the window over the main Como Ave. entrance to the SACCB (Fig. 1). Equally as obvious to the casual observer is the shape of the SACCB itself, configured as a Greek Cross (as noted by City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report and discussed in the Appendix). It is well established that both Latin and Greek crosses are the main symbols of Christianity.

In addition to the permanent Catholic religious iconography, I note that local government officials and agencies have consistently referred to the SACCB as a "Catholic church" (e.g., "The 2/10

Church of St. Andrew of St. Paul", "St. Andrew's Church" and "St. Andrew's Catholic Church" in any number of documents prepared by government agencies including the City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report and the December 12, 2018 letter from Josh Williams, Senior City Planner, to the Comprehensive Neighborhood Planning Committee). Additional examples of the permanent Catholic religious iconography and references thereto by government agencies include those provided in the Appendix to this letter.

While it may be tempting to think or suggest that the secular purpose of designating the SACCB a SPHPS is due to alleged "secular" architecture features, the general public would see the architecture of the SACCB as directed to one specific religion, Christianity. No other symbols are as significantly or prominently present or represented. As such, this Catholic church building, now used and owned by a public entity, is not inclusive of other religions (e.g., Judaism, Islam, Animism, Hinduism, Buddhism or any number of other religions practiced by the residents of Saint Paul).

In addition, any suggestion of a secular purpose to promote architecture in Saint Paul is far outweighed by the untenable position of a public school being forced to expend public resources (i.e., public money) to prominently display permanent Catholic religious iconography. The TCGIS is a public school that must be welcoming to people of any religion or no religion. To force the TCGIS to keep and maintain this Catholic church building with its permanent Catholic religious iconography will run contrary to the mission of the TCGIS and run afoul of any secular purpose there may be in preserving this Catholic church building.

Clearly, the principal or primary effect of designating the SACCB a SPHPS advances religion. If the SACCB is designated a SPHPS, the TCGIS will be (1) forced to both publicly display permanent Latin and Greek crosses on the SACCB (including the shape of the very building), and (2) burdened with spending public money to maintain and publicly display such permanent Catholic religious iconography. As noted above, these symbols unmistakably signify Christianity, and in particular the Catholic religion. Forcing the TCGIS to maintain and display these Catholic religious symbols under the guise of some form of architectural significance by designating the SACCB a SPHPS would cause the public to both fund and promote religion. As a result, the principal and primary effect of designating the SACCB a SPHPS would be one that advances religion.

Moreover, the Saint Paul City Council designating the SACCB a SPHPS would foster an excessive government entanglement with religion. In particular, encumbering the TCGIS with the burden of using public money for the maintenance of a Catholic church building. This encumbrance at the public expense also clearly conveys a message of government endorsement of the Catholic religion on public property. As such, the city of Saint Paul would be excessively entangling itself with religion as it would be the primary reason and the enforcing entity to ensure the SACCB (i.e., a Catholic church building) is preserved on public display by a public school at public expense.

4/10

Appendix

Fig. 1 – Large Latin Cross in central window.

5/10

Fig. 2 - Latin cross in brickwork on west elevation

6/10

Fig. 3 - Latin Cross seen in brickwork east elevation

7/10

Fig. 4 – Two examples of Latin crosses in the brick/tile work of the SACCB – (1) Latin cross located at top of center column; (2) second Latin cross defined by the tiles, where the "diamondshaped"

tiles define the end points of the Latin cross.

8/10

Fig. 5 - Greek Cross layout of SACCB

9/10

### **Publicly Visible Signs of a Catholic Church**

- "The church is a large, imposing building" (Josh Williams, Senior City Planner, to the Comprehensive Neighborhood Planning Committee) having heavy brickwork, which confirms and identifies one of the hallmarks of a Catholic Church (*firmitas, venustas and utilitas*) – the stability/endurance of a Catholic Church. The idea of "stability" in the construction of Catholic churches is seen in the choice of materials and fanciful brickwork and roof tiles. As such, the very architecture of the SACCB broadcasts it as a Catholic Church.

### **Government Agencies Recognize SACCB as a Church**

- The City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report identifies the building type of the SACCB as "Church" (page 3 of Historical Abstract).

### **Government Agencies Recognize the Permanent Catholic Religious Iconography of the SACCB**

An easily recognized feature of the Romanesque style of a Catholic church is the Greek cross floor plan.

- "The church also retains . . . its Greek-cross layout." (Section D, item 6 of City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report (page 2, Section C). "The interior of the church is in the form of a Greek cross covered by a groin vault." (City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report (page 5 of St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Individual Property Designation Form). "[T]he interior retains its original layout, proportions, and spatial arrangement." (page 6 of St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Individual Property Designation Form). "Design elements in St. Andrew's that reflect this style include the interior spatial arrangement in the form of a Greek cross and the interior groin vaults." (page 13 of St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Individual Property Designation Form).

- "Three towered church," City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report (page 2, Section C). "The next bay on the south elevation includes the tall, bell tower." (City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report (page 5 of St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Individual Property Designation Form). A bell tower is an important feature of a Romanesque Church, a feature that again is recognized as a symbol of the Christian Church.

- "A cross is centered in the window and is encircled with twenty, round window openings." (City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report, page 4 of St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Individual Property Designation Form). The cross is a Latin cross, recognized by the courts as the main symbol of Christianity.

- "There is a cross just below the gable, which is formed by openings in the brickwork." (City of Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Staff Report (page 5 of St. Paul Heritage 10/10

Preservation Commission Individual Property Designation Form). The cross is a Latin cross, recognized by the courts as the main symbol of Christianity.

**The SACCB has NOT Stopped being a Church Building just because it is owned by a Public School**

- "The strong visual presence of the church and its three primary elevations are not affected by the addition (of the new TCGIS school buildings)." (page 6 of St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Individual Property Designation Form). "The church . . . maintains a strong architectural presence, it is also among St. Paul's most distinctive period revival style churches." (page 7 of St. Paul Heritage Preservation Commission Individual Property Designation Form).

3/1/19

St Paul City Council

I have been following with great interest the discussion concerning the future of the former St Andrews Church building and the Twin Cities German Immersion School. During my formative years I had the great fortune to have been parishioner of the church and a student of St Andrews School. I am 75 years old and a proud member of the Class of 1957. I am "old school". My class was the last to graduate from the original school built in 1919. In those days daily Mass was part of the school curriculum. Sunday Mass was never missed, so I was in the church building about 235 days a year from 1949 to 1957.

I treasure my St Andrews experience. With each passing year my appreciation grows. I have vivid memories of attending church with my family, serving as an altar boy, singing in the choir, my sister's wedding, and my parents' funerals. I have maintained some contact with beloved Father John Fitzpatrick, and the School Sisters of Notre Dame. I started the committee which led to a successful 50<sup>th</sup> Grade School Reunion in 2007.

With this personal history you might guess that I strongly support the historic preservation of the former church building. You would be wrong.

The Twin Cities German Immersion School is doing a wonderful job for its students and in my mind, this is a greater benefit to St Paul than retaining the church building. After the Catholic Church twice

declared that the building was NOT historic, and after its sacred objects were removed, it is unfair to raise the issue of historic preservation especially by those who would bear NONE of the costs. I think that this initiative is counter to the moral instruction that I received at St Andrews.

Over the years, the old St Andrews community has essentially dissolved. It is fortunate for St Paul that a new community is flourishing in its place. I urge the St Paul City Council to support the Twin Cities German Immersion School in its efforts to prepare St Paul children for the future and to add vitality to the this part of the city.

Sincerely,

Ronald Bierbaum

Attention:St. Paul City Council Members,

I endorse the citizens input that Ron Bierbaum gave you regarding the former St. Andrews Catholic Church. I grew up at 1116 N. Oxford street- 5 houses from the church. The points that Ron raised are spot on! By jeopardizing the German immersions school with a "Historic" designation would be a tragic outcome for the students, the city of St Paul and it's citizens, and the greater metropolitan community. This building is no longer a church and there are other similar architectural churches in St Paul. Those citizens who are asking for this designation will be long gone when the structure and also it's roof are a hazard to those near by. I respectfully ask that you take the " high road " by not granting an " historical designation " to this former church building.

St. Paul and it' citizens will be able to value the school and it's graduates for years to come.

Ed Le Clair, '57

1320 Riverside Lane #102

Mendota Heights, MN 55118

**From:** Tanja Schmitt [<mailto:schmitttan@hotmail.de>]

**Sent:** Saturday, March 2, 2019 2:55 AM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward2 <[Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward3 <[Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward4 <[Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward6 <[Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward7 <[Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** TCGIS, St Paul

Dear council member,  
please read my attached letter!

Greetings from Germany!

Tanja Schmitt (former teacher and Middle School Coordinator at TCGIS)

March 02 2019]

City of St. Paul City Council  
Members Via Email

To St. Paul City Council Members:

As a former teacher (2013-2016) and Middle School Coordinator (2014-2016) of TCGIS, I still feel strongly connected to this school and thus keep following what is going on. In my 3-year program in the US, St Paul has become a second home of mine and I have fallen in love with the city, the Como area and the idea of an Immersion school. I have seen so many kids growing into an informed world citizen with an open mind and heart and ready to celebrate diversity. It is no surprise that this amazing program attracts lots of families and thus the buildings as they are not sufficient anymore. The kids need a good space to learn. As a gym teacher I must add that the former church building does not offer a safe space for gym classes and always posed a great challenge of me to find a way to let the kids exercise and stay safe. My dream for the school is to be able to expand, be modernized and have appropriate facilities for exercise, move and play.

I have been following the controversy over allowing a public charter school—Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) -- the ability to remodel the outdated building that it has occupied and conducted school activities since 2013. I find many of the attacks on its renovation plans from a small, dissatisfied neighborhood group in Warrendale – plus comments made by select Planning and Zoning committee members -- highly biased, occasionally ignorant of what city codes and plans do and don't allow, and above all an assault on educating kids. TCGIS is one of the most successful charter schools in the state and only one of three public German Immersion Schools in the U.S.

I do not have any kids at the school. But I believe all kids have a right to a proper education in a modern space that does not infringe on their ability to learn and engage in physical education and private, one-on-one mentoring when needed. I ask that you keep this front and foremost in your thoughts as you make your decision.

The public policy implications – and legal ramifications -- are important to consider, including:

- 1) Those opposed to TCGIS' renovation of its property forget that the District 10 Como Community Council's Land Use committee – on a majority neighborhood vote – approved both the variances and the plan. This point seemed lost or willfully ignored by Zoning committee members who voted against both recently.

Moreover, these members also ignored Staff recommendations to approve, and used the arguments (and obvious personal biases) about historic preservation – rather than



following the zoning parameters in place to justify their decision-making. **I would point out that the Planning Commission soundly rejected HPC's designation by a 12-1 vote!**

- 2) Declaring a public school building a heritage preservation site – without providing the financial or logistical means to preserve it – places an unjustifiable financial burden on public tax dollars for this particular public school which may be illegal, given that the building structure is now considered a historic church by the Heritage Preservation Commission (and not a school inside of the shell of the old church structure). That distinction seems critical.
- 3) While several planning commissioners appeared to show prejudice against charter schools, Commissioner Baker made it clear that the St Paul Zoning Code sees no distinction between types of schools.
- 4) The school tried “adaptive reuse” and it has not worked given the space limitations and configuration of the building it’s in. It also spent two years looking at alternative locations which were found to be unfeasible, unreasonable or otherwise unworkable given their needs.
- 5) Finally, you add up these factors and look at all the benefits that TCGIS brings to this neighborhood and our broader community (See list below) and there is really only one question that needs to be asked: **Do we want to educate St. Paul kids in modern environments that are conducive to learning or not? I think at the end of the day, it really is quite that simple. \***

Thank You for Your Service.

NAME            TANJA SCHMITT  
Address        SALVATORSTR. 17  
Email           schmitttan@hotmail.de  
Phone          01149 15730610244

**\*CITY OF ST. PAUL AND NEIGHBORHOOD BENEFITS OF THE TWIN CITIES GERMAN IMMERSION SCHOOL**

- TCGIS has created an attractive reuse of property compared to proposed alternatives like possible commercial ventures.

- As a result of families deliberately moving to the area for the school, and the stability of school, property values have increased.
- Some TCGIS families who moved to the neighborhood bought up vacant, run down or foreclosed properties.
- Teachers deliberately moved to Warrendale as home buyers or long-term renters. Currently, 6 teachers walk to school!
- Today 54 TCGIS kids live in St. Paul's District 10.
- Neighborhood kids and families are welcome to regularly use the playground.
- Because 20% of TCGIS staff does not drive or require street parking, this reduces on- street parking and congestion.
- TCGIS has become a Community meeting place: The neighborhood has used TCGIS for national night out and other gatherings.
- The school has made the pre-existing school site greener by landscaping and adding play areas, turf fields, and rain gardens that have improved the character of the surrounding area.
- It has added other environmental benefits of greater stormwater filtration and served as pollinator habitat for monarch butterflies.
- The school has made international connections with visitors who have come to the Como neighborhood: This year, over 40 visiting German exchange students took classes at TCGIS, toured the Como Zoo, St. Paul's Minnesota History Center, and St. Paul's Capitol building. The German Consulate has also visited!
- Community events like the Oktoberfest Fun Run and the Halloween Parade add greater vitality to the area.
- Students pick up trash as a volunteer activity in the neighborhood.
- TCGIS also feeds into St Paul Central High School, bringing bilingual students into St Paul Public Schools district, thus helping to improve success rates.

- Graduates of TCGIS can enroll at St Paul Central and have an accelerated German instruction track geared towards TCGIS graduates, which likewise improves public education in this area.
- The school calendar and daily hours of operation means the neighborhood benefits from quiet nights, quiet weekends, and those times when school is out of session such as winter and spring breaks and summers.
- The school has flourished at this site, and has a substantial wait list.
- The Como location is its “Forever Home.” All of us should strive to make that a reality.

**From:** Jill van Koolwijk [<mailto:koolwijk@visi.com>]

**Sent:** Monday, March 4, 2019 5:23 PM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward3 <[Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward4 <[Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward6 <[Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward7 <[Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** St. Andrew's Church - historic designation

City of St. Paul City Council Members  
15 Kellogg Blvd. West  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear City Council Members:

As a St. Paul resident, I am writing to support the historic designation of the former St. Andrew’s Church on 1031 Como Avenue.

I have been following the controversy over the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) wanting to remodel the 91-year-old building of the former St. Andrew’s Church that it has occupied as a charter school since 2013.

The church is a gorgeous building that deserves upkeep and its place as a landmark in the Como neighborhood. Tearing it down would be a great loss to the community.

To my knowledge, TCGIS has tried to adapt the sanctuary of the former St. Andrew’s church as a gym for its students and the church basement as a school cafeteria. It is clear to me that this has not worked out well for the school, as they need to modernize the interior and require more classroom and office space. I hope that the city would be interested in a remodeling project that would not hurt the beautiful exterior of the church, but at the same time try to meet the needs of TCGIS.

The city of St. Paul should declare this charter school building a heritage preservation site and support the school by providing it with the financial or logistical means to preserve it, given that the building

structure is already considered a historic church by the Heritage Preservation Commission. With financial and logistical help from the city of St. Paul and perhaps the Como neighborhood association, both the school and its neighbors could be satisfied and remodeling could happen without the destruction of the church exterior.

I would like to see this beautiful church building preserved in St. Paul. In our modern day, we will never build such a structure again and once it is destroyed it cannot be reproduced. Just take a look at the ugly church that was built across the street from St. Andrew's. The Mission Orthodox Presbyterian Church on 1040 Como Ave is an eye sore in comparison with St. Andrew's and represents what we usually find in our neighborhoods. Como is proud of this treasure in the community and it deserves to receive its historic designation.

Sincerely,  
Jill van Koolwijk

**From:** Fabian Liesner [<mailto:fliesner@germanschoolchicago.com>]

**Sent:** Thursday, March 7, 2019 8:14 PM

**Subject:** A message from Chicago!

To St. Paul City Council Members:

Guten Tag, Hello.

**My name is Fabian Liesner and am writing to you today because I have been following the controversy over allowing the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) the ability to remodel the outdated building for a long time now. I am a German native, got my education in Germany, and chose to move to Minnesota for work. I could have gone to New York or Chicago to teach at similar schools, but in the end TCGIS was one of the main reasons me and my wife chose Minnesota.**

**The school has great potential, which is one of the reasons I ran to become a board member and help the school advance its unique mission.**

**On the board, I have worked with some of the brightest, most considerate and thorough people I have ever met in my personal, academic, and professional life.**

**With this in mind, I am saddened to see that all of the hard work on this project might have been totally in vain. Rather, it seems clear that some of the opponents of the project have succeeded in making it look as if TCGIS has deliberately kept them out of the loop and/or is a bad neighbor and must be stopped as if they are some corporate giant trying to eat up the neighborhood. TCGIS with its educated proposals and careful planning meets blind, uninformed activism and bold and unfounded statements.**

Thoughts on that:

- 1) Is Haussler actually the proven architect of the church? or even if that was the case:
- 2) Apparently, there were people that wanted a historic designation when the church closed and even then it was denied.

The church's items (pews, confessionals, etc.) have since been removed, why would it get a historical designation now?

I currently live in Chicago because it was time to put my wife's career first this time, but we are considering moving back in a few years.

This decision also depends a lot on whether or not the school gets this new building, as it's not possible to teach there with its current growth rates.

You are endangering the neighborhood because TCGIS might move away if this building is not torn down.

I am a P.E. teacher and taught P.E. there and will not go back to teach in a building that is dangerous and hard to navigate.

Apart from the emotional message I hope you have taken the time to read, I would like to end with what many people have probably sent you already.

I fully support all of the statements below:

The public policy implications – and legal ramifications -- are important to consider, including:

1. Those opposed to TCGIS' renovation of its property forget that the District 10 Como Community Council's Land Use committee – on a majority neighborhood vote – approved both the variances and the plan. This point seemed lost or willfully ignored by Zoning committee members who voted against both recently.

Moreover, these members also ignored Staff recommendations to approve, and used the arguments (and obvious personal biases) about historic preservation – rather than following the zoning parameters in place to justify their decision-making. **I would point out that the Planning Commission soundly rejected HPC's designation by a 12-1 vote!**

2. Declaring a public school building a heritage preservation site – without providing the financial or logistical means to preserve it – places an unjustifiable financial burden on public tax dollars for this particular public school which may be illegal, given that the building structure is now considered a historic church by the Heritage Preservation Commission (and not a school inside of the shell of the old church structure). That distinction seems critical.
3. While several planning commissioners appeared to show prejudice against charter schools, Commissioner Baker made it clear that the St Paul Zoning Code sees no distinction between types of schools.
4. The school tried “adaptive reuse” and it has not worked given the space limitations and configuration of the building it's in. It also spent two years looking at alternative locations which were found to be unfeasible, unreasonable or otherwise unworkable given their needs.
5. Finally, you add up these factors and look at all the benefits that TCGIS brings to this neighborhood and our broader community (See list below) and there is really only one question that needs to be asked: **Do we want to educate St. Paul kids in modern environments that are conducive to learning or not? I think at the end of the day, it really is quite that simple.**

\*

Thank you very much for your consideration. Please don't give in to a group of uninformed voices. just because they are the loudest.  
Our political discourse in this country has enough of this already.

Best regards,

Fabian Liesner

**From:** Maiken Givot <[mgivot@mmm.com](mailto:mgivot@mmm.com)>

**Sent:** Sunday, March 10, 2019 8:16 PM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward1 <[Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** Letter requesting support in favor of building variances and site plan for Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS)

Dear City Council Member Thao:

My name is Maiken Givot, and I am parent to an 8<sup>th</sup> grader at TCGIS (Twin Cities German Immersion School). I am writing to request support for the site plan and variance applications for the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) that will allow my child and their fellow students, teachers and staff to be educated in a newly remodeled building that meets their needs and the needs of students joining our ranks in the next year. As one of the most successful public charter schools in the state, TCGIS will top out with 630. But it needs an appropriate place to educate these kids!

I urge you to support the variances, which include a 3.1-foot variance on height, a 1 percent variance on lot coverage, and a 37-space parking variance, all of which city staff recommended for approval. Additionally, the site plan was recommended for approval by city planners with some conditions that the school will collaborate with the city to meet. Notably, the District 10 Como Community Council Land Use committee, with about 200 people in attendance, overwhelmingly supported the TCGIS variances in December.

The current school property includes a former 91-year-old church, which was purchased by TCGIS in 2013. The School has tried adaptive reuse of the space without success. Because we've been so successful at providing a best-in-class German Immersion experience, we need more room for basic things like new classrooms and a real cafeteria, bona fide gym space and offices for private mentoring with students who need extra help. Currently, all these functions practically take place on top of one another in the antiquated building the kids and teachers are in.

**Please support our public school's right to remodel its property in the face of the overwhelming space needs at TCGIS. As City Planner Tia Anderson reiterated to the Zoning Committee recently, the school is in an R4 zone, where schools are an "allowed use" in such zones. Moreover, a St Paul City statute underscores that there is no proper differentiation between traditional public, public charter or private schools – a school is a school is a school.**

Our child has been a TCGIS student from kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and as parents we are VERY impressed by the dedication, determination, skills, and vision of the entire staff at TCGIS. TCGIS is a top performing public charter school, yet with only 60% of funding compared to traditional public schools.

It is admirable how much dedication, creativity, and loyalty the teachers and staff at TCGIS demonstrate towards the school and children – despite the comparatively low funding.

Working as a researcher at 3M Company, I accepted an 18-month work assignment in Austria a few years ago. Thanks to the excellent bi-lingual education and preparation our child received at TCGIS, it was possible to take our child along to Austria, and transfer smoothly into the Austrian Public School system and then back to TCGIS.

Having lived in 4 different countries and being able to compare the educational systems, I can appreciate the academic excellence the school brings to our children, preparing them for global citizenship.

It is therefore most disturbing to learn that all the good plans towards expanding the school to accommodate more children on the current property, put together by a very dedicated and diligent team, are attacked by a small group of neighbors, who wish to see the decommissioned St. Andrew's church (being part of the school property) being put under heritage protection, preventing the school from re-modelling the school, creating more class rooms for accommodating future growth.

**As parents we are urging you to please approve the request**, as it will have a tremendous and positive impact on the neighborhood, and the city of St. Paul.

Success for our school goes hand in hand with success for the city.

Below are just a few benefits to Warrendale Neighborhood as result of TCGIS purchasing the property:  
Vacant former church property had new life breathed into it by vibrant, successful charter school  
Attractive reuse of property compared to proposed alternatives  
Increased property values as a result of families moving in and stability of school  
Neighborhood kids and families are welcome to use the playground  
Families are moving to the neighborhood. Some buying up vacant or foreclosed properties in close proximity to the school.

Community meeting place. The neighborhood has used TCGIS for national night out and other gatherings.  
School calendar and daily hours of operation means the neighborhood benefits from quiet nights, quiet weekends, and those times when school is out of session such as winter and spring breaks and summers = OVER 50% OF THE YEAR TCGIS IS NOT IN SESSION

Teachers deliberately move to the neighborhood as home buyers or long-term renters.

Rain gardens at TCGIS add beauty and the environmental benefits of storm water filtration and pollinator habitat.

Students pick up trash as a volunteer activity in the neighborhood.

Community events like the Oktoberfest Fun Run and the Halloween Parade.

The school has made international connections with visitors who have come to the Como neighborhood: This year, over 40 visiting German exchange students took classes at TCGIS, toured the Como Zoo, St. Paul's Minnesota History Center, and St. Paul's Capitol building. The German Consulate has also visited!

TCGIS feeds into St Paul Central High School, bringing students back to St Paul Public Schools district. Graduates of TCGIS can enroll at St Paul Central and have an accelerated German instruction track geared towards TCGIS graduates.

Councilmember Thao, as a member of the St. Paul Hmong community, you are keenly aware of the plight of people struggling with a place to call home. TCGIS shares common ground with you here. This is our school's third location and we find ourselves the new kids on the block once again, longing for a permanent home and acceptance by community. Forced historic designation of our school would have a catastrophic impact on our ability to maintain our high caliber immersion program. Please vote against this forced historic designation, and in support of the building variances and site plan.

Thank You for Your Consideration and Time.

Respectfully,

Maiken Givot (resident of Ward 1)

438 Laurel Ave #3, ST. Paul, MN 55102

3/12/2019

City of St. Paul City Council Members

Via Email

Dear City Council Members:

I am writing to request support for the site plan and variance applications for the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) that will allow my kids and their fellow students, teachers and staff to be educated in a newly remodeled building that meets their needs and the needs of students joining our ranks in the next year. As one of the most successful public charter schools in the state, TCGIS will top out with 630. But it needs an appropriate place to educate these kids!

I urge you to support the variances, which include a 3.1-foot variance on height, a 1 percent variance on lot coverage, and a 37-space parking variance, all of which city staff recommended for approval. Additionally, the site plan was recommended for approval by city planners with some conditions that

the school will collaborate with the city to meet. Notably, the District 10 Como Community Council Land Use committee, with about 200 people in attendance, overwhelmingly supported the TCGIS variances in December.

The current school property includes a former 91-year-old church, which was purchased by TCGIS in 2013. The School has tried adaptive reuse of the space without success. Because we've been so successful at providing a best-in-class German Immersion experience, we need more room for basic things like new classrooms and a real cafeteria, bona fide gym space and offices for private mentoring with students who need extra help. Currently, all these functions practically take place on top of one another in the antiquated building the kids and teachers are in.

**Please support our public school's right to remodel its property in the face of the overwhelming space needs at TCGIS. As City Planner Tia Anderson reiterated to the Zoning Committee recently, the school is in an R4 zone, where schools are an "allowed use" in such zones. Moreover, a St Paul City statute underscores that there is no proper differentiation between traditional public, public charter or private schools – a school is a school is a school.**

Thank You for Your Consideration and Time.  
Danielle Behling  
835 Watson Ave.; Saint Paul, MN 55102 (Ward 2)

**From:** Will Hommeyer [<mailto:will@bluemoonpro.com>]

**Sent:** Tuesday, March 5, 2019 10:52 PM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward1 <[Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward2 <[Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward3 <[Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward4 <[Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward6 <[Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward7 <[Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** former St. Andrew's Church on 1031 Como Avenue

City of St. Paul City Council Members  
15 Kellogg Blvd. West  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear City Council Members:

I am a St. Paul business owner and resident, I urge you all to support the historic designation of the former St. Andrew's Church on 1031 Como Avenue.

The church is a gorgeous building that deserves preservation status. It is an important asset and landmark in the Como neighborhood. Tearing it down would be a great loss to the community and to St. Paul's collective history.

To my knowledge, TCGIS has tried to adapt the sanctuary of the former St. Andrew's church as a gym for its students and the church basement as a school cafeteria. It is clear to me that this has not worked out well for the school, as they need to modernize the interior and require more classroom and office space.



I hope that the city would be interested in a remodeling project that would not hurt the beautiful exterior of the church, but at the same time try to meet the needs of TCGIS.

The city of St. Paul should declare this charter school building a heritage preservation site and support the school by providing it with the financial or logistical means to preserve it, given that the building structure is already considered a historic church by the Heritage Preservation Commission. With financial and logistical help from the city of St. Paul and perhaps the Como neighborhood association, both the school and its neighbors could be satisfied and remodeling could happen without the destruction of the church exterior.

Sincerely,

William Hommeyer

**From:** MARILYN GAUSMAN [<mailto:gmgausman@comcast.net>]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, March 5, 2019 10:28 AM  
**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** save historic Dt. Andrews LLC

Please save St. Andrews!

Marilyn Gausman and family

**From:** Pia Sektnan [<mailto:4ugipsy@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 13, 2019 10:13 AM  
**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Subject:** against designating St. Andrews as a historic site

Pia Sektnan

Nebraska Ave W

St. Paul, MN 55117

City Council of Saint Paul

15 Kellogg Blvd. West

Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Council Member Amy Brendmoen:

As a resident of the City of Saint Paul and a parent of a student at the Twin Cities German Immersion School, I oppose the historic designation of the former church that is currently part of TCGIS.

Our family chose to move into this neighborhood because of TCGIS. We believe in short commutes and we bike to school year around. Many families have chosen to move closer to the school over the years,

and the longer the school remains at its current location, the more families will move to be near the school. These deliberate moves increase the stability of the neighborhood and increase property values in the immediate community. In fact, several families bought up properties around the school that were in need of repair. More and more staff choose to live in Saint Paul and specifically within walking distance or biking distance of the school. 57 students live in District 10, and nearly half live in other parts of Saint Paul.

TCGIS has also been a positive force in the community as a whole. Students have a clean up day around Lake Como and Como Park, and the school has gone above and beyond in developing a green facility with stormwater filtration and landscaping as examples. To hear that the process got delayed yet again because an environmental impact study was requested, is simply painful. It makes very little sense when one looks at the facts of how well the school treats the environment. Furthermore their outdoor facilities are available to the families around the neighborhood when school isn't in session. More than 50% of the year is quiet for neighbors, including nights, weekends, holidays and longer school breaks. The school's indoor facilities have been used as a gathering space for various groups and events. TCGIS adds to the vitality of the community with a 5K fun run and Halloween parade.

I implore you to vote against historic designation so that TCGIS can continue to attract families and highly qualified staff from around the world. Please, allow TCGIS to continue to thrive at his current and forever home. Financing the upkeep of an aging building is simply too much to ask of a charter school. Especially since the people who are fighting for keeping this building around have not offered any financial means to achieve such a feat. They seem to be very much "against", but have not offered a constructive plan B of how this can be dealt with. TCGIS spent a lot of time and resources into looking at a variety of possible alternatives, in the end building new was the only viable solution for the school. It is very painful to witness how the school is being forced to invest so much time and resources to deal with the attacks and requests from SHSA, instead of being allowed to focus on education of the students. It is heartbreaking to see a one page letter printed in the neighborhood paper, in which the writer who is unhappy that his school is not thriving, attacks the school, makes claims that are inflammatory and unfounded, e.g. eluding that TCGIS educates kids to be racists - which could not be further from the truth. This writer never visited our school or engaged in conversation with our school community. Articles like that are simply meant to divide the neighborhood further and I am very dismayed that such an article was allowed that much space in the paper. An alarming sign how much this process has degraded. I am worried that the longer it goes on, the more damage of that sort will be done. Please end this very unfortunate chapter and vote against the History designation of this building. It was voted down before, when it was still intact as a church - why would it qualify now?

Thank you for all you do to navigate this issue gracefully, I can only imagine how difficult that must be and how much it adds to your workload.

Sincerely, Pia Sektnan

**From:** Ralph Krantz [<mailto:ralph.a.krantz@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Wednesday, February 27, 2019 3:01 PM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; Ralph Anthony Nicholas Krantz <[ralph.a.krantz@gmail.com](mailto:ralph.a.krantz@gmail.com)>

**Subject:** I oppose the historic designation of the former church that is currently part of TCGIS.

Ralph Krantz  
1362 Snelling Avenue North  
Saint Paul, MN 55108

February 26, 2019

City Council of Saint Paul  
15 Kellogg Blvd. West  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Dear Council Member Amy Brendmoen, Council President:

As a resident of the City of Saint Paul and a parent of two students at the Twin Cities German Immersion School, I oppose the historic designation of the former church that is currently part of TCGIS.

As a resident of Saint Paul, I am proud to have TCGIS here because of the reputation this school has in the community of the Twin Cities and beyond. Many families have chosen to move closer to the school over the years, and the longer the school remains at its current location, the more families will move to be near the school. These deliberate moves increase the stability of the neighborhood and increase property values in the immediate community. In fact, several families bought up properties around the school that were in need of repair. More and more staff choose to live in Saint Paul and specifically within walking distance or biking distance of the school. 57 students live in District 10, and nearly half live in other parts of Saint Paul.

The church was de-sanctified by the Catholic Church in 2010 and merged the parish with another local parish. The building has not been used as a sanctuary since then. When the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) purchased the property over six years ago, the school adaptively reused the former church building as a makeshift gym and cafeteria. With the maintenance costs and need for pedagogically usable facilities, TCGIS needs to reconstruct part of its building.

The desire to historically designate a portion of the TCGIS building goes against the will of the school and has not received any form of consent. If historic designation is approved, the owner will not only have to deal with the added costs of maintenance of a decaying building but also with the strict regulations that are required of historic designations.

The Heritage Preservation chapter 4.5 states that the City should "acquire key threatened historic properties until a suitable owner can be found." St. Paul Senior City Planners have opined that this provision suggests that the will of a property owner should receive consideration. George Gause, Heritage Preservation Supervisor, has publicly stated that it is almost unheard of for a St. Paul property to receive historical designation status without the consent of the property owner.

I also want to remind the City Council of Saint Paul that the former Catholic Church no longer has its historical features worthy of historical preservation (inside or outside the building). The building no longer has crosses and sculptors that adored the outside. The building no longer has stained glass windows. The building no longer has a bell. The current owners, Twin Cities German Immersion School, cannot add back those elements. The Catholic Church took them with the desanctification. Now that it has been desanctified, sold, reconfigured and repurposed, its eligibility is even less warranted.

I believe there is a letter from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) letter from December 2018 strikingly omitted any mention of eligibility for state designation or national registration.

I ask you to vote against historic designation of the former St. Andrew's church that is now a part of the TCGIS building.

Councilmember Brendmoen, we both know the vibrancy and vitality TCGIS brings to the neighborhood. We recognize that this is a difficult situation for all parties who have vested interests in the Warrendale neighborhood. When it come down to it, TCGIS simply cannot afford the requirements described by the HPC preservation plan if historic designation were approved. Our successful public language immersion school would lose its vitality as a result. We don't think that is in the best interest of the thriving Warrendale neighborhood. Please prioritize the future over the past, recognizing that it is hard, but absolutely necessary. Please vote against historic designation.

Sincerely,

Ralph A. Krantz

**From:** Jeana Anderson <[janderson@gai-mn.org](mailto:janderson@gai-mn.org)>

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 13, 2019 12:48 PM

**To:** Zimny, Joanna (CI-StPaul) <[joanna.zimny@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:joanna.zimny@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; Xiong, Mai Chong (CI-StPaul) <[mai.chong.xiong@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:mai.chong.xiong@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** Letter to Dai Thao from Germanic-American Institute

Dear Council Member Thao,

Please find the attached letter from the Germanic-American Board of Directors in support of the Twin Cities German Immersion School and their need to build a new school building on their property.

Thank you.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

***Jeana Anderson***

**GAI Executive Director**

Germanic-American Institute  
301 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55102



March 13, 2019

Dear Councilmember Thao:

301 Summit Avenue, St. Paul MN 55102

Phone: 651.222.7027 Fax: 651.222.6295

Language Services: 651.222.2979

[www.gai-mn.org](http://www.gai-mn.org)

I write to you on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Germanic-American Institute (“GAI”) regarding the Twin Cities German Immersion School’s (“TCGIS”) construction plans. The GAI firmly supports TCGIS’ plans, including the granting of the requested variances and the denial of the historic preservation designation for the Aula (formerly the Saint Andrews’ sanctuary). GAI’s support of TCGIS, a public charter school, is rooted in our mission, our history in Saint Paul and appreciation of the same, and the school’s primary responsibility for the education of its students. It is the GAI’s hope that the City Council and subsequently you, the Mayor, will see the benefit in helping TCGIS’ students receive a quality education because of its facilities, and not in spite of them.

#### **Background on the Germanic-American Institute**

GAI is a 62 year-old, 501(c)3 non-profit, membership organization proudly based at 301 Summit Avenue in Saint Paul. We are supported by more than 1,500 members, including 250 members in Saint Paul. Our mission is *to foster appreciation and understanding of the culture, language, arts, and ongoing history of the German speaking peoples through public educational and cultural programs*. We deliver on that mission using several methods including: cultural events; Kinderstube (an immersive pre-K day program); adult language classes; and organizing two annual cultural festivals (Deutsche Tag and St. Paul’s Oktoberfest). Over 30,000 Minnesotans participate annually in our cultural programs and we educate over 800 children and adults in our language programs.

A significant number of those activities occur at our *Haus*, a 1906 historic mansion on Summit Avenue. The GAI purchased the *Haus* in 1965 and it has served as our home since. We are a cultural and educational organization while also maintaining a historic property. We know well of all of the challenges created by balancing those responsibilities. But we also know that an organization is more than the building in which it exists and that a building should serve the interests of the organization operating within it and not the other way around.

#### **Relationship between GAI and TCGIS**

The relationship between the GAI and TCGIS goes back to the founding of the school. TCGIS started when several GAI members realized that there was a gap within Saint Paul’s public school system in grade K-8 for the study of the German language. While

German is spoken as a native language by more than 1,000,000 Americans, the German language is increasingly not being taught in schools; in fact from 1997 to 2008 there was a dramatic drop in the number of schools that teach the language: from 24% to only 14%. Saint Paul reflected this change as there was no German language program offered in the district.

Several parents interested in teaching their children German decided to create a public German immersion charter school and asked the GAI to serve as the school's required authorizer. GAI served as TCGIS' authorizer until 2016 when the University of Saint Thomas took over. The GAI does not maintain any financial or fiduciary responsibilities for TCGIS.

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Fostering appreciation and understanding of the culture, language, arts and ongoing history of the German speaking peoples through public educational and cultural programs.

Still, TCGIS' continued vitality remains of concern for the GAI. GAI's Value Statement commits the organization to "supporting the Twin Cities German Immersion School." This letter regarding TCGIS' plan is testament to that support.

We are also proud that 30-40 TCGIS graduates have enrolled in the German language program created by Saint Paul's Central High School. It is a wonderful development to see these students continue in the Saint Paul Public Schools and commit themselves to staying in Saint Paul for their secondary education. When we think back to the modest goals at the start of the school's existence, we could have never forecast the broad success it now enjoys.

#### **GAI's Maintenance of a Historic Property**

GAI recognizes the emotional nature of the question regarding the Aula. We take great pride in maintaining a historic mansion that is part of Saint Paul's legacy. But the GAI also believes that the interests of the students should be prioritized above the needs of the structure they learn in. The GAI's historic property was acquired in 1965 and serves us well as a gathering space for our members, a commercial kitchen for our catering, a small ballroom for special events, and, most important, a Rathskeller for enjoying a fine German beer. Even with all that it provides, the continued viability of the *Haus* depends on constant upkeep from a host of volunteers. In addition, its original design as a residential home imposes serious limitations on the size and types of events we are able to host.

On the other hand, TCGIS was created with one purpose and one responsibility: to give its students the best possible education. After due consideration, TCGIS decided that the Aula no longer met the needs of its students. To ask TCGIS to maintain the Aula pursuant to a historic designation is to

ask a school to put a building ahead of its fiduciary duty to the students. Even though we are passionate about our Haus and historic preservation, the GAI believes that request amounts to putting the students' needs second – and we strongly oppose that outcome.

**TCGIS is a Community Asset**

We are also supporting the school because it is an unrivaled community asset. It is producing globally-engaged, critical thinkers right here in Saint Paul. TCGIS' students are actively engaged in important issues such as sustainability, equity, climate change, and tolerance. We've organized German-speaking visitors to this amazing public school, including the German Consul General in Chicago and the Mayor of Neuss, Saint Paul's sister city, to meet its remarkable students and faculty. The school is evidence of Saint Paul's aspiration to become a global leading city. With the site plan and the school's continued development, it will continue to be an asset we can all be proud is located in our city.

**Request to Support TCGIS' Plans and Avoid Historic Designation**

In conclusion, GAI again requests that TCGIS' plans be approved and the requested variances from the Saint Paul code be granted. GAI also requests that TCGIS not be burdened with having the Aula designated as a historic property.

We welcome any opportunity to host you again at the GAI's *Haus* and are happy to discuss these matters in greater detail at your request.



Sincerely,

Nancy Zinter  
Board Chair, Germanic-American Institute

**From:** Juliane Schicker [<mailto:jschicker@carleton.edu>]  
**Sent:** Sunday, March 24, 2019 12:59 PM  
**To:** \*CI-StPaul\_Mayor <[Mayor@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Mayor@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>  
**Cc:** [board@tcgis.org](mailto:board@tcgis.org)  
**Subject:** Subject: Twin Cities German Immersion School—Letter of Support

Dear Mayor Carter and City Council President Brendmoen,  
I am writing to express my strong support for the building project of the Twin Cities German Immersion School and I truly hope that you will support it as well. Let me explain why this project is crucial not only for the school but for the greater community of St. Paul, Minnesota, and even the country.

As Assistant Professor of German at Carleton College, I have experienced first-hand the joy and excitement our students of German experience when they can use their language and cultural skills for the first time in an authentic setting. This could happen, for example, during a study abroad trip after the first year, or an internship in a German-speaking environment. Already after the first few weeks of German instruction, however, our students understand that learning German means so much more than just reaching a level of linguistic and cultural competence so they can communicate with German-speakers locally and globally. Learning German—and frankly learning any language beyond one’s mother tongue—allows students to experience the richness and potential of another world, which helps them reflect on the one they grew up in. German speakers share a multi-cultural history that is not only crucial to the identity of Europe today, but in international relations and questions of the human condition including issues of diversity, identity, gender, religion, ethnicity, race, physical abilities, political affiliations, economic background, age, and immigration statuses.

TCGIS—the only German immersion school in Minnesota and the largest German-speaking school in North America—is providing the environment for students in the Twin Cities to engage in dialog about the above-mentioned issues that are at the forefront of current socio-political debates in the United States and beyond: How can we meaningfully engage with people of opposing political views so we can improve our living conditions? How can we create an environment that welcomes people of all physical abilities, skin colors, economic strengths, genders, and religious affiliations? How can a community be diverse and support strong identities at the same time? One answer TCGIS offered, for example, has been their commitment to reducing discrimination because of economic status: the school gathers donations so they can send all of their students abroad, no matter their personal financial backgrounds.

TCGIS wants to renovate its campus particularly to accommodate those many families that seek answers to the questions above. Their desire to immerse their children in a German-speaking environment is a desire to broaden horizons, to learn from others, and to place their own culture next to those of other German-speakers. TCGIS offers their families thirty student teachers from Europe, numerous teachers from German-speaking countries, and connections beyond their St. Paul location. The term “global citizen” is not only a buzzword at the school, but it characterizes those people who are able to join discussions with an open mind, the wish to improve lives, and a belief in equity, diversity, and justice.

Because Minnesota is at the forefront of such debates, we must support initiatives such as TCGIS that allow students to learn in a multi-cultural environment, which prepares them to join those debates. While TCGIS brings the world to St. Paul and the Twin Cities by inviting German diplomats, educators, and parents, it also brings Minnesota and the United States to the world, by sending students abroad who act as young cultural ambassadors. As one of the best public charter schools in Minnesota, TCGIS also enriches the educational landscape of the Twin Cities by strengthening language education: because of TCGIS, the German program at St. Paul Central is strong and thriving.

If TCGIS is prevented from renovating their existing campus to provide additional classrooms, dedicated special educational spaces, a regulation-sized middle school gymnasium and a larger, above-ground light-filled cafeteria, the school will not be able to serve their enrolled students adequately. The school would be forced to compromise their vision—not to mention their commitment to providing jobs and a new community that stimulates the neighborhood of Como



Park. The former church in question for the project was dormant for a long time before the school brought new life to it. While the religious community gave it up, TCGIS has tried its best to integrate it into their day-to-day operations by adaptively reusing the former church nave as a gym space, and the basement as cafeteria for as long as it could. That the school now needs to expand beyond the former church's capacities speaks to the school's reputation and abilities.

TCGIS is a unique place for students, parents, and neighbors that reaches beyond its local ties to engage with global issues. While I realize that TCGIS's renovation is a complex project involving the surrounding neighborhood, parents, teachers, and local politicians, I hope that the well-being of the students is the first priority in this discussion.

Sincerely,  
Juliane Schicker

RECEIVED  
MAR 26 2019  
CITY CLERK

St. Paul City Council  
310 City Hall  
15 Kellogg Blvd. West  
St. Paul, MN 55102

March 24, 2019

Members of the City Council:

Subject: Demolition Of the old St. Andrews Church

I may be late in getting into the controversy, but I figure better late than never. I grew up in the Como area and spent my entire childhood at St. Andrews Parish. I went to school there for 8 years, received all the catholic sacraments there, including getting married, and I buried both my parents and one brother from St. Andrews.

Although St. Andrews meant much to me, I now feel it is time to move on and permit the German Immersion School to do with the building, a building they own, whatever they please. This school is thriving and certainly is an asset to the area.

Also, to preserve the building as historic should been done many years ago, before the Archdiocese sold it to the German Immersion School. It is way too late to preserve it as historic as the inside in completely gutted. There is absolutely no sign inside of it being a church. The only thing people are trying to preserve is the outer brick and mortar, also if it is preserved who would have the monies to maintain it? The Archdiocese certainly knew that the cost to keep this parish and its buildings up to date was far too expensive, thus closed the parish and moved it parishioners to another church.

I hope you take my thoughts in consideration when making the final decision of this building, as it would be a great disservice to the German Immersion School to force them to move because they cannot do what they desire with a building they own on property they own. Thank you!



Rita Eckert

976 Cherokee Avenue  
West St. Paul, MN 55118  
preckert976@gmail.com

I have lived next to the St. Andrews campus since 1986. I have teachers for the current German Immersion School park in front on my house on nearly daily basis. I believe the school has been a good neighbor to the local community.

I believe in historic preservation but the recent dispute seems to be perversion of that concept. The church itself did not view the facility as sufficiently historic to seek a designation before it parted with the property. Now in an effort to restrict or chase away the current school, some neighbors raise this issue.

These are neighbors who for the most part find it inconvenient to live near a school and expect the world to change to meet their needs. The thought that taxpayer money will be wasted to work around the inefficiencies associated with retaining the current structure, acquiring additional property for construction or moving the school galls me.

This school is a perfect use for this property and thought of it being becoming vacant as a result of this dispute is appalling. St Paul is an old Catholic town and beautiful churches like this exist in nearly every neighborhood. I'm sure many of them are also architecture gems. With that in mind, Where does this end?

Please understand the neighborhood is not by any means of one mind as to changes to this site and the highly orchestrated effort to use historical preservation to block site upgrades speaks only for a narrow few.

Dave Edin

To His Honor, Melvin Carter, Mayor of Saint Paul  
To Council members: Dai Thao, Jane Prince, Chris Tolbert, Amy Brendmoen, Kassim Busari, Mitra Jalali Nelson, Rebecca Noecker

Dear Servants of our Saint Paul Community,

Please accept my gratitude for the time, energy, and care with which you serve the citizens of St. Paul. Particularly, be assured of my appreciation for your efforts toward the just and fair resolutions of the challenges you face.

My purpose in writing this letter is to share my thoughts about the process, or lack of it, that the Twin City German Immersion School (TCGIS) used in their decision to raze their Aula, the former St. Andrews church. This iconic architectural gem has served as the anchor of this community for nearly a century. It matters that it remains as such.

**Process matters.** It was not until one year ago, April, 2018, that TCGIS shocked our neighborhood with its sudden announcement of their decision to destroy the Aula.

**Collaboration matters.** Had the leadership of TCGIS involved the neighborhood community three or four years earlier, the present conflict could have been avoided. Whether by design or oversight, the TCGIS board chose to ignore or failed to attend to their civic responsibility to respect the resident community.

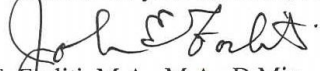
**Place matters.** This structure proclaims the deepest instincts and values of the human heart, among them, the courage, sacrifice, and commitment to community that provided the inspiration and means to construct it a century ago. This building continues to be the major identifier of our local community.

**Beauty matters.** Dostoevsky wrote a powerful insight: *the world will be saved by beauty*. More than ever before, today's children need education in the arts and humanities. TCGIS could mine, if they chose, the historical, artistic, and sociological meaning of the Aula, bringing a unique depth of richness to their curriculum.

**Past matters.** This building served thousands of citizens, including immigrant families --mine among them—who worked menial jobs so their children and generations to come might achieve the American dream. Foundation, when treasured, assures future.

**Future matters.** The future benefits that only an appreciation of the past can give await the children of TCGIS ....??

Grateful for your attention, I remain, sincerely yours,



John E. Forliti, M.A., M.A., D.Min.  
1130 N. Oxford St, St. Paul, MN. 55103 [jeforliti@comcast.net](mailto:jeforliti@comcast.net)  
Forliti family, residing "next door" to St. Andrews/Aula for 98 years.

**From:** Christopher Tabisz [<mailto:ctabisz@tcgis.org>]

**Sent:** Sunday, May 5, 2019 8:59 AM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** Request for Support of the Twin Cities German Immersion School Improvement Project

Dear Council President Brendmoen:

Attached is my letter requesting your support for the TCGIS building project and in opposition to historic designation of Saint Andrew's. Please, let me know if you have any questions. Thank you for your time and consideration.

With sincerest regards,

Dr. Christopher Tabisz

Dr. Christopher Tabisz  
1127 Chatsworth Street N, Apt. 6  
Saint Paul, MN 55103

Council President Amy Brendmoen 320-  
A City Hall 15 Kellogg Blvd. West Saint  
Paul, MN 55102

Dear Council President Brendmoen:

My name is Dr. Christopher Tabisz, a Warrendale neighbor, board member and middle school social studies teacher at the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS), and I am writing in support of the TCGIS building project. I specifically moved to Saint Paul for this school, and as long as the school is in Warrendale, I intend to stay.

Originally from the Washington DC area, TCGIS brought me to Minnesota. After graduate school, I chose to teach at TCGIS because of its reputation in the network of German educational institutions (see [AATG K-12 Centers of Excellence](#)). I had not even considered living in Saint Paul and had assumed that I would live in Minneapolis around the beautiful Lake Harriet or Bde Maka Ska. Upon visiting TCGIS and the Como Neighborhood in which TCGIS resides, I decided to move to the Saint Paul. Since then, I have been a long-term renter in the Warrendale Neighborhood and have no desire to move, as long as TCGIS stays where it is.

I am not the only teacher to have moved to Saint Paul for the school. Of the ten TCGIS staff members I know residing in District 10, not a single one is originally from Saint Paul or anywhere in the Twin Cities; three are from Germany, one from Austria, one from Canada, two from Wisconsin, one from Georgia, one from northern Minnesota and one from Maryland. TCGIS attracts staff from across the country and internationally to live in Saint Paul, building an intellectual capital and reliable tax revenue for the City of Saint Paul.

Preventing TCGIS from improving its facilities in this building project would force the school to move, likely to a location outside of Saint Paul, assuming TCGIS could actually accomplish the nearly impossible tasks of paying off the extra costs for leaving prematurely and finding a buyer for the property. I cannot speak for the other TCGIS staff members living in District 10 or

throughout Saint Paul, but I for one will move whithersoever the school goes. I predict other current staff members and certainly future staff members will prefer to live near the school. Therefore, I sincerely request that you support the TCGIS building project and continue to attract intellectual capital and a reliable tax revenue source to its neighborhoods.

With sincerest regards,

Dr. Christopher Tabisz, Ph.D.

**From:** William Kemnitz <[william.kemnitz@gmail.com](mailto:william.kemnitz@gmail.com)>

**Sent:** Tuesday, May 14, 2019 11:29 AM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward1 <[Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** St. Andrews Historical Designation

Dear Mr. Thao,

We email you to express our opposition to the historic designation of St. Andrews Church (the Church) and our support of the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) site plan and variances.

While we appreciate the historic value of buildings, and the importance of historically significant ones, forcing the designation of the Church goes against public policy and property rights.

TCGIS has the right as property owner to tear down a church that had no historical designation attached to it at the time of purchase. TCGIC has evaluated other options – they are neither prudent nor feasible. We respectfully remind you of the following essential facts:

- In 1983, then again in 2001, the building failed to earn a historical designation in surveys done by the Historical Preservation Association (HPC).
- The Catholic Church decommissioned and abandoned the site in 2011. Neither the diocese nor the Vatican's canonical real estate agents ever declared the building worthy of preservation.
- In 2013, TCGIS bought the site relying on the lack of discussion of historical preservation.
- Chapter 73 of the City's Code of Ordinances prohibits forced preservation: *It is impossible to argue that forced preservation of a historic building is in the interest and welfare of "the people" when that very preservation will have a deep and negative impact on the prosperity, safety and welfare of the people who learn, study and work within that building.*
- Several members of the Planning Commission's Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Committee indicated that historical designation should not be used as "a weapon" by people *who will not have to carry any responsibility, including any financial obligation*, for the burden imposed when there is a designation over the property owner's objection.
- The school has increased the vitality and property value of the Warrendale neighborhood in many ways, in particular bringing TCGIS families to move to the neighborhood to be close to the school, in some cases even buying "troubled" neighborhood properties.
- The school brings landscaping, play areas, turf fields and a rain garden that all improve the character of the surrounding area with stormwater filtration and habitat for monarch butterflies.

We trust that when reconsidering these facts at the City Council meeting tomorrow you will oppose this inappropriate and irregular historic designation. Alternatively, the City Council should stand ready to provide

the public funds necessary to cover the cost of preserving, maintaining, and ensuring the safety of the parts of the Church it intends to preserve.

Sincerely,  
William & Catherine Kemnitz  
St. Paul Residents, Ward 1

Dear Councilmember Nelson,

I write in support of the building project at the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS). Please reject the appeals filed by Save Historic St Andrew's and the District 10 Como Community Council (APC 19-1, APC 19-2, and APC-19-3).

I have lived in Ward 4 since 2005, and my daughter started at TCGIS in 2013, its first year at the Como Avenue location, only one mile from our home. Forty-six percent of my daughter's schoolmates live in St. Paul; the city should be proud to have this academically rigorous, internationally-recognized school right here in Como Park and aid its future success. Investment in the building is ultimately an investment in the education of current and future students.

The plan developed by TCGIS has been reviewed at multiple stages by city staff and the Planning Commission; school representatives have worked diligently with the city to respond to questions and modify plans as needed; and professional staff in the Office of Planning and Economic Development have recommended approval of the site plan and variances. Approval of the appeals noted above will do nothing but delay the project further with no positive impact whatsoever. Delay for the sake of delay is not how city business should be conducted and sends the wrong signal to all who want to invest in the future of St Paul.

My daughter will be attending St Paul Central High School when she finishes at TCGIS in 2022. The foundation for her future success at Central and beyond is being built today at TCGIS. I urge the City Council to reject appeals by Save Historic St Andrew's and the District 10 Como Community Council that would derail the site plan and needed variances.

Please allow TCGIS to move forward with its building project to invest in its students and the Como Park neighborhood.

As always, many thanks for your service to Ward 4 and St Paul.

Lisa Linnell  
1472 Holton Street  
Saint Paul, MN 55108

Good Morning Josh,

I am the neighbor immediately adjacent to TCGIS, owning the home at 1042 Van Slyke Ave. For discussions concerning the school's variance requests, I'd like to make the Council aware that earlier this year I did notify TCGIS's board that my wife and I we were willing to sell our property to them.

This was a day or two after a preliminary vote to NOT allow the variances. Not a vote by the City Council, but by some other commission. I wrote an email to two members of the TCGIS board, in which I informed them that my wife and I intend to sell our house in about 3 years (2.5 years from now). I suggested that if it could help them with their parking and land coverage issues, we'd be willing to sell sooner than we had planned, if they were willing to pay a modest premium to market value.

I did not mention any specific price. For us to move our timetable up this far and sell immediately, I estimate we'd need about 25-30% above current market value.

I did receive a brief response from their board (Nik Ludwig), thanking me for reaching out and indicating that the board would discuss it. I did not give him any kind of a "decision deadline". In fact, I said we were in no rush and that we'd welcome their bid in three years when we list the property for sale if they did not have immediate interest.

As you may be aware, we had previously signed a purchase agreement with TCGIS to sell our property, about a year and a half ago. This deal fell through. In hindsight, I'm quite happy it did. It gave us a chance to have a good look at the local housing market, which led to our decision to wait 3 years before trying it again.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thanks, Lars

My name is Arturo Sanchez Galindo and I own the property at 1010 Van Slyke Ave. This property is right next door to the Twin Cities German Immersion School. I understand that the school has stated that they need variances because there is no property that they could purchase. This is not true. I would be willing to consider selling my property to them for a price that would allow me to relocate to a similar neighborhood. They could buy this land and build a parking lot instead of needing a parking variance.

best regards

Arturo Sanchez Galindo.

May 28, 2019

Saint Paul City Council  
15 Kellogg Boulevard West  
310 City Hall  
Saint Paul, MN 55102

RE: Site Plan and Variances requested by Twin Cities German Immersion School File #s 19-012422, 19-012615, and 19-012718; APC #s 19-01, 19-02, and 19-03

Honorable Councilmembers:

Thank you for Notice of the June 5, 2019 public hearing regarding the site plan and variance applications of the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS). We are unable to attend the hearing but request that you accept these comments into the record.



As neighbors living three houses away from the school, we want the Council to know that we anticipate no adverse effects to our family, our quality of life, our property value, our safety or our neighborhood resulting from the proposed site plan and variances – and we believe they should be approved without further delay.

The school has been an excellent neighbor, helping to revitalize our south Como neighborhood. We believe the school is a positive draw, attracting young families and staff associated with the school. As aging “empty nesters”, we acknowledge that a successful future depends on young people, new families, and openness to change – and that retaining a thriving school in the neighborhood is key.

We encourage the Council to deny Mr. Anderson’s two appeals regarding the variances and site plan and District 10’s appeal regarding the site plan. We do not believe the Planning Commission was compelled to take action, nor to reconsider its earlier votes.

We hope the Council is aware that the full District 10 Land Use Committee (i.e., District 10 residents) voted overwhelmingly in favor of the variances. Unfortunately, the District did not put the site plan to a full Committee vote – so there was no opportunity for residents to endorse it as well. The District 10 president and staff acted independently to appeal the Planning Commission decisions, receiving retroactive approval from the Board, but without broader neighborhood approval.

We offer the following comments regarding the site plan and variances:

**Site plan:** We believe the site plan proposes thoughtful and efficient use of the site, meeting the needs of the students while better capturing stormwater, providing additional green space, and improving traffic flow and safety.

We encourage the Council to approve the site plan, whether by default or affirmative action. We would support minor modifications to the site plan, to the extent TCGIS agrees, to address safety and nuisance issues.

**Variances:** The proposed variances may be “major” by definition, but they are minor in effect. In fact, we believe the variances improve the project and enhance the use of the site. The variance requests for building height, lot coverage, and off-street parking are in harmony with the purposes and intent of the zoning code; are consistent with the City’s comprehensive plan; will not permit land uses that conflict with the current R-4 zoning, and will not alter the essential character of our neighborhood – but instead will contribute to the strength and vitality of the community.

**Building height:**

The proposed minor height variance will have no impact on surrounding structures or the neighborhood. First, the proposed building will be substantially shorter than the existing structure (reaching only to the height of the present eaves) and second, the proposed building is far enough from neighboring structures that it will not block light, cast shadows, or in any way impede anyone's view. From our home (three houses away), we will not be able to see the new building, in contrast to the existing structure which is visible from all our north and west-facing windows.

**Lot coverage:**

The proposed variance of 1% is negligible in our view, and any potential impacts (though we cannot think of any) are offset by a proposed increase in green space. TCGIS has already reduced impervious surface at the site from 65% to 60%, and the new site plan will result in further reduction to 55%. The new site plan creates more space for outdoor study and play. In addition, TCGIS has incorporated native and edible plantings, a pollinator-friendly improvement from the monoculture lawn maintained by the previous owner.

**Parking:**

In our view, the City's off-street parking requirement for schools dedicates entirely too much land to single-purpose impervious surface. It makes no sense to require eighty-odd off-street parking spots when there is so much parking available on neighboring streets. We believe the City should reconsider the amount of land area devoted to parking in general, and should promote transit, shared parking, and using existing infrastructure (our streets) more efficiently. We also recommend that the City place a higher priority on prompt snowplowing in the vicinity of schools to ease some of the congestion in winters with heavy snowfall.

As close neighbors to TCGIS, we can attest that there is ample parking on our street (Argyle). As we write this letter on a school day, there are nine cars parked on our block. Only one of the cars (parked closest to the intersection with Como) appears school-related. The rest of the cars belong to neighbors who routinely park on the street. Except during the July 4<sup>th</sup> Hmong Freedom Fest (which we welcome), our street is never parked to capacity.

Variance opponents typically overlook the fact that the looming church building would require multiple variances if it were constructed today. In addition, it is disingenuous for the opponents to suggest that they would drop their opposition if the new building were three feet shorter, consumed 1% less surface area, and included a large parking facility to satisfy the off-street parking requirement. The variances and site plan are simply one more avenue for opposing demolition of the former church.

In our view, the school should have proposed demolition immediately after purchase – without consulting the neighborhood. Instead the TCGIS naively invited the neighborhood to weigh in on a new building design. The school has been punished ever since.

We have heard arguments that the site is “too densely populated”. This is just ridiculous. The proposed campus is efficient – not excessively dense. The proposal satisfies per student space recommendations, provides access to public open space for outdoor activities and environmental education (instead of developing new dedicated facilities), and leverages existing infrastructure for parking. This is all good.

In closing, please know that we are dismayed by how the City’s committees, commissions, and council have enmeshed the TCGIS in an overwrought process. The school has done everything the City has requested, including agreeing to numerous delays and additional studies and expense. The proposal makes efficient use of the site, provides environmental benefits, and addresses traffic and safety issues. The three variances — while “major” by definition — are minor in practice. They should have been approved months ago.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments and for your work on behalf of the City.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Wooden  
Gerald Flom  
1121 Argyle Street  
St. Paul, MN  
55103

**From:** Paul Nelson [<mailto:ashland1661@gmail.com>]

**Sent:** Monday, June 3, 2019 10:31 AM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward1 <[Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward2 <[Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward3 <[Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward4 <[Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward6 <[Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** St. Andrews

Dear Council members:

Property rights in NOT the issue. The school leaders bought the place subject to all city ordinances, including Chapter 73. Also, they knew exactly what they were doing.

The issue for you is what is best for the city. Please consider:

The neighborhood is forever.  
The German immersion school is temporary.  
Destruction is forever.

Also, isn't it clear that the school is a bad neighbor? The leaders are perfectly willing to disfigure the neighborhood and enrage the neighbors, for their own convenience.

Cheers, Paul Nelson, 1661 Ashland (Ward Four), St. Paul

**From:** Dave Koenen [<mailto:koenend@hotmail.com>]

**Sent:** Monday, June 3, 2019 10:05 AM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward1 <[Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward2 <[Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward3 <[Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward4 <[Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward6 <[Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward7 <[Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** Re: The Cost of throwing away - Save the historic landmark hall (formerly known as St Andrews Church)

It is painfully evident by now that the price we pay at the landfill does not really reflect the *true cost* of 'throwing away'.

It's been almost 50 years since the commercial about littering and pollution came out; you remember it; the Indian, a car drives by as the passenger throws trash from the window and it lands at the foot of the Indian; a tear rolls down his cheek as he looks at the camera. The commercial was successful in rallying a nation to hold on to their trash until they reached a waste bin. But years later we still have the phrase "*throw away*".

Let's finally rid our lexicon of this antiquated phrase "*...to Throw Away*". The term has no place in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; we have come to realize that we live in a finite world today and we are motivated by sustainable solutions.

*Waste* is a bad word. *Waste* is the unforgivable total failure to use, or reuse something.

The cost of throwing away in terms of simply dollars, has never reflected the true cost of the disposing of waste. Landfills take up valuable real estate (they're not making any more of that); they require sorting of toxics from recyclables, (least they should, but rarely don't), landfills deplete natural resources, they pollute storm water runoff and leach into the soil and pollute aquifers beneath. It is very very costly, especially to future generations. Kick the can down the road; someone else further on will pick it up the cost; someone from the future (our children).

We understand the ramifications of higher dollar costs for trash pick-up and landfill dumping; that if people were required to pay their trash hauler the *true cost* to dispose of their garbage, people would discontinue the service and dump their garbage in other people's dumpsters in the middle of the night. It happens today even with the reduced and highly subsidized trash hauling services. Similarly, if landfills charged the *true cost* of taking the loads, trucks would dump on the side of the road in the middle of the night. Quite simply, this would not be pretty, and so the out of pocket cost at the landfill is nothing; and *that* is the problem.

## The Solution:

**Be the Creative Council Member who spearheads this endeavor:**

### **The Truth in Demolition Assessment.**

The city can charge people and (would-be demolitionists) the *true cost* for their demolition permit. An inspector would show up on site to determine value, (the same guy they send out who might otherwise post a condemned sign.) A sliding scale of current value would be factored into the true cost of demolition, and the demolition permit would reflect this cost; and it would be a significant price tag.

If builders could realize *the true cost* in their planning process we would never have the dilemma we have now; where the current occupant of this particular property has determined that it makes fiscal sense to demolish the historic landmark hall, so that it can erect a basketball shed. The current system in place is not just failing the Como community; it is failing all of humanity.

Thank you

Dave Koenen



To Councilmember Nelson and the St. Paul City Council,  
I am writing to ask you to please help save historic St. Andrews Church. I am a lifelong resident of St. Paul and have lived in Como park over 15 years. The church holds no personal historical significance for me, but I have appreciated the facade since the first time I saw it. Varied historic character such as this is why I choose to live in Como. My own house was built just two years after St. Andrew's. While not everyone might want to live in a little house of this era, we can all be glad that representative buildings are still here. Too much of our past gets torn down in the name of progress.

Certainly progress is important, but there are lots of opportunities for progress and improvement in our neighborhoods and city for those who seek it. Tearing down a beautiful building of such significance to the neighborhood is the opposite of progress. Once gone, it can never be replaced. While this decision is now in the hands of certain decision makers today, it will affect the community for generations to come. Please vote to save St. Andrew's Church for our neighborhood.

Thanks for your service and consideration,  
Molly Rosenberg

**From:** Dave Koenen [<mailto:koenend@hotmail.com>]

**Sent:** Monday, June 3, 2019 8:40 AM

**To:** #CI-StPaul\_Ward1 <[Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward1@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward2 <[Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward2@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward3 <[Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward3@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward4 <[Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward4@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <[Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward6 <[Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward6@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>; #CI-StPaul\_Ward7 <[Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us](mailto:Ward7@ci.stpaul.mn.us)>

**Subject:** Re: Land Swap Possibility - Save the historic landmark hall (formerly known as St Andrews Church)

Dear Council member,

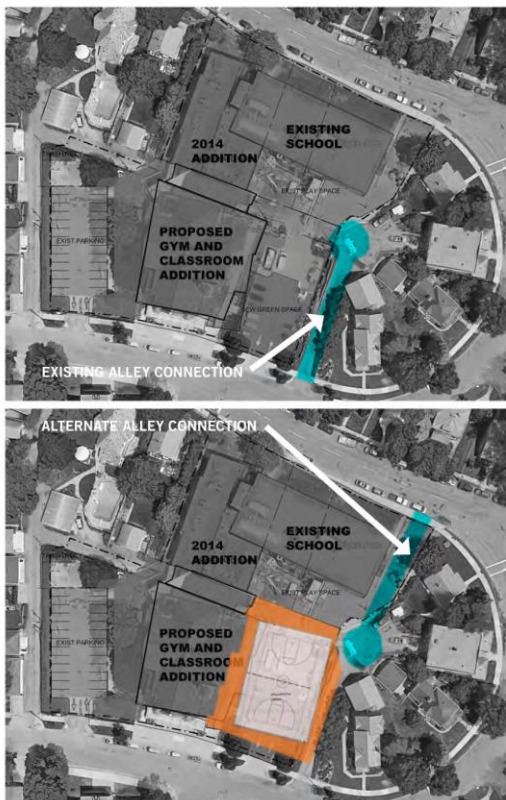
See the Attached image offered up for your consideration.

A solution for providing the current specific needs of the TCGIS, while saving the landmark historic hall for reuse, might be accomplished with something as simple as a land swap. Could the City Council facilitate this land swap? The trade essentially would move the alley access to the north and gives the school the extra footage on the south side of the site to accommodate a gymnasium.

Thank you

Dave Koenen

### LAND SWAP POSSIBILITY



From: Rosemary Kassekert [mailto:rosie960@hotmail.com]  
Sent: Tuesday, June 4, 2019 12:37 PM  
To: \*CI-StPaul\_Contact-Council <Contact-Council@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
Cc: #CI-StPaul\_Ward5 <Ward5@ci.stpaul.mn.us>  
Subject: St. Andrews Church

On reading a recent article in the Pioneer Press entitled "Omaha tries to recapture what it tore down three decades ago," I was struck by the following: "There are many tales in the U.S. of grand old historic buildings demolished in the name of progress only to have everyone decide afterward that losing them had been a huge step backward."

Incidentally, the buildings razed in the article were replaced by a food giant headquarters which years later relocated. I can envision the school wanting to expand years from now (like the School of Excellence which is adding another location in addition to its large new school) leaving St. Paul with another non-descript building. I think of all the wonderful historic buildings which have been demolished in our city and how the Landmark Center was almost destroyed.

In years to come, people may see pictures of St. Andrew's and wonder what happened. Oh, the city council headed by Amy Brendmoen decided to have it destroyed.

Honorable Council Members,

I am contacting you to urge you to vote to approve the three variances the Twin Cities German Immersion School requests for their building plan. It is clear this building replacement is needed to continue to provide appropriate and productive educational opportunities to the nearly 600 students at TCGIS, which includes my two children. As a society, we either start to actually care about children and their education, and move to create and implement the policies that further this, or we stop talking about it and admit we actually have other priorities. Our kids deserve actions, not words.

I thank you for your attention and service to our community.

Respectfully,

Cynthia Miller  
Roseville MN

Mayor Melvin Carter and  
Saint Paul City Council  
15 W. Kellogg Blvd.  
St. Paul, MN 55102

Re: Request Denial of Variance Requests by Twin City German Immersion School (TCGIS) (Zoning File No.#18-126865) relating to MN Statute 462.357

Dear Mayor Carter and City Council,

I am writing with respect to the Twin Cities German Immersion School (TCGIS) variance application, submitted December 3, 2018, which requests building variances for parking, building area, and building height (St. Paul Zoning File No.#18-126865). I request that variances be denied based on State Statute

462.357 Subd. 6. (2). Municipal variances are regulated under Minnesota Statute 462.357 Subd. 6. (2). Variances can only be granted if:

“...The plight of the landowner is due to circumstances unique to the property not created by the landowner; the variance, if granted, will not alter the essential character of the locality. Economic considerations alone do not constitute practical difficulties.”

The plight of the landowner (TCGIS) has been created by the owner, not the property. Also, the variance will allow the demolition of St. Andrews, which is part of the essential character of the locality. A municipality does not have the legal authority to grant a variance, if these conditions are not met. It is my belief that TCGIS has not met these requirements.

### **Part 1 – TCGIS plight is created by TCGIS and not the uniqueness of the property**

TCGIS created their own plight by their planning errors and not due to the uniqueness of the property, therefore variances must be denied.

The **Property uniqueness** did not create the plight where 3 sections per grade are needed. TCGIS made the decision to buy the St. Andrews School which had 2 sections per grade, and then expand the school to 3 sections per grade, with limited land. There are hundreds of successful schools with 2 sections per grade. **\*\*The solution is to hire someone who can fiscally manage a 2 section per grade school\*\***

The **Property uniqueness** did not make the decision, to buy a small property with limited expansion potential. TCGIS planners failed to purchase property of sufficient size, to allow for expansion from 2 to 3 sections per grade.

The **Property uniqueness** did not create the student departure rate planning error. Ted Anderson said, ‘more space is needed because the student departure rate was lower than planned’. The student departure rate planning error is that of TCGIS’s. Also, Board members stated after a departure, that space needed to be filled, by state statute.

The **Property uniqueness** did not create the TCGIS stipulation of a maximum of 24 students per class. St. Andrews had 37 students per class maximum in 1962. This is important in that the additional cost for the purchase of Central Lutheran School could have been offset by the addition of 2 to 3 students per class.

The **Property uniqueness** did not create the need for a variance request for 37 cars. It’s TCGIS expansion from 2 to 3 sections per grade and number of teachers that is creating TCGIS’s own plight.

The **Property uniqueness** did not stipulate that 60 more students be added for enrollment, rather it is TCGIS’s planning that is stipulating the addition of 60 more students.

The **Property uniqueness** did not make an \$2.8 million dollar estimate to repair Central Lutheran School (CLS) and the decision not to buy the property. Journey School has bought CLS for about \$2.4 million and are upgrading the 2/3 school for \$400,000 for a total of \$2.8 million. This is about ½ the cost of the new TCGIS building, without land. At the CLS, TCGIS would have had about 13% more building space, and a playground for a small soccer field / baseball / track, for ½ ± the price of the proposed project. TCGIS has caused their plight.



TCGIS made the decision not repair broken roof tiles on an annual basis like St. Andrews, which cost about \$1,500 per year. Broken roof tiles are the decision of TCGIS and are not unique to the property.

TCGIS made the decision to defer normal maintenance repair projects (hot water heater, boiler, windows, masonry repair, repair broken roof tiles etc.). Effectively, TCGIS has not maintained St Andrews per City Code 34.36. They have created their own building plight.

TCGIS made the decision to hire about 48 teachers for 580 students, with a total of 80 staff. St. Andrews at the peak student population of 592 students in 1962 had teaching staff of 11 Sisters of Notre Dame and 4 lay teachers. TCGIS has about 3 times more teachers, than what St. Andrews had back in 1962, which was basically one teacher per grade. Granted, the educational situation was different back in 1962, but to my understanding TCGIS has a high number of staff, compared to other contemporary schools.

The proposed demolition of historically eligible St. Andrews does “alter the essential character of the locality”. The State Statute does not require that a building be on list of Historical Buildings. The variances can’t be issued, as the character of the locality will be altered.

TCGIS has effectively created their own building expansion plight, by the actions listed above; therefore, the variances can’t be granted according to State Statute. The Zoning Committee voted 5 to 1, recommending that the TCGIS variance requests be denied.

## **Part 2 - Grounds for Misrepresentation of Variance Request Justifications by TCGIS**

On February 28, 2019, I wrote Mayor Carter a letter entitled,

“Grounds for Misrepresentation within Variance Request Justifications by Twin Cities German Immersion School (Zoning File No.#18-126865) relating to MN Statute 462.357”

In the letter, I reviewed and commented on twenty-four (24) written statement by TCGIS in regards to their variance request justifications. This letter to Mayor Carter was written only weeks before the Central Lutheran School (CLS) was sold to the Journey Charter School. I believe that TCGIS has presented deceitful answers for variance approvals, in order to self-justify their proposed building expansion. For example,

*TCGIS: The owner did not create the limited expansion opportunities needed to address the parking shortage or needed open green space.*

**Rebuttal:** TCGIS knowingly purchased the St. Andrew’s school and church building, which at the time of purchase had limited parking and green space, and therefore, limited expansion opportunities. The owner made a planning error by not purchasing a large enough property to allow for future expansion..... The plight of the landowner is fully due to TCGIS wanting to expand beyond what the property was designed for, which is two sections per grade; thus, the owner’s plight is not due to the property, but rather TCGIS’s expansion plans.....

TCGIS wants to blame the property for limited expansion opportunities, but rather it is TCGIS's lack of planning by not purchasing enough property to allow for an expansion from 2 to 3 grades.

Another critical example, TCGIS wrote in this variance justifications to the City:

*"2. TCGIS: Limited parking in a dense urban environment is not unique to this school. It is difficult for schools in an urban area to acquire property sufficient to build a free-standing gymnasium or parking lot...."*

**Rebuttal:** ...TCGIS had the opportunity to buy the Central Lutheran School (CLS) and a complete block of property at Lexington and Minnehaha in 2018. They could have built a new gym and parking lot on the property. TCGIS elected not to buy the property....

Also, I have to question the \$2.8 million for CLS remodeling estimate by the TCGIS architects (Exhibit 4), for a school that was serving the Hamline-Midway area. In my opinion, the \$2.8 million remodeling project is very suspect (i.e. gold-plated) in order to make a project appear economically unfeasible. The only requirements were listed in the RJM estimate to meet city code which are: fire extinguishers, two head emergency lights, GFI outlets and lighting control. The RJM rehab estimate is essentially a complete demolition of the interior doors, restrooms, plumbing, windows, floors, HVAC equipment etc. The public was not included in the discussions concerning evaluation of CLS remodeling costs and alternatives, as to what "is needed" versus what "is required."

The fact is that Journey Charter School bought the CLS property for about \$2.4 million. They are remodeling about 2/3 of the school, to get it ready for fall use at a cost of about \$400,000. Remodeling the addition 1/3 of the school will be about \$100,000. Therefore, it is factual that the \$2.5 to \$2.8 million of for TCGIS remodeling estimates are about 5 times higher than what the Journey School is paying for remodeling. The TCGIS cost estimate had about \$413,00 to remodel the restrooms, which is a clear example of 'gold-plating'. TCGIS's high remodeling estimates made the purchase of CLS appear economically unfeasible. This example of TCGIS not purchasing the CLS site is a factual example as to why TCGIS has created their own plight and also, raises the issue of consultant conflict of interest.

Another reason that the variances should not be granted is that maintaining the church is economically reasonable and protects property, which is paid for by state taxpayers. This is documented in my letter, "St. Andrew's Historical Designation - Why Maintaining St. Andrews is Fiscally and Environmentally Responsible!!!!", to George Gause, dated May 9, 2019.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Stephen Greenwood