From: Daniel Kennedy
To: *CI-StPaul_Contact-Council
Subject: Council Agenda 8/19/25, No. 24 - Objection
Date: Monday, August 18, 2025 12:00:03 PM
Attachments: ARD Sound Objection to UST, Agenda No. 24.pdf

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Hello,

Attached please find an objection to the three variance applications filed by the University of St. Thomas. These are agenda item no. 24 on the agenda for the council's meeting.

Sincerely,

Daniel L. M. Kennedy
Advocates for Responsible Development

OBJECTION TO LIQUOR LICENSE APPLICATION
OF UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS

TO: City of St. Paul City Council
FROM: Advocates for Responsible Development, [1]
info@advocates4rd.org
RE: The University of St. Thomas's request for sound level variances
Date: August 18, 2025

The University of St. Thomas (UST) seeks large sound level variances for three events in August 2025. Advocates for Responsible Development objects to all three variances, as they are inappropriate given the immediate proximity of UST's stadium to the residential community.

August 27, 2025: Rally at O'Shaughnessy Stadium
UST seeks a variance from 65 to 92 dBA, measured at 50 feet.

• No game. The application claims the reason for this variance is "Announcements and music during the game." There is no game on August 27, 2025. The real reason is to play music very loudly on campus.
• No students. Classes at UST do not begin until September 3, 2025, which is after Labor Day. The number of students on campus will be minimal. This is a lot of noise for very little audience.
• No need. UST announcers are perfectly audible blocks from the stadium, thanks to the sound reflecting off UST buildings and into the neighborhood. Residents of Minneapolis can hear the announcers on game day. It is vastly excessive.
• Better venue available. UST has the option to host a rally in Schoenecker Arena, which seats 1,800 in the stands and more on the floor. This option keeps UST's noise entirely on campus and does not require a sound level variance.
• Too high. In 2013, UST was approved for a variance to 85 dBA in its stadium. That was too high. Now it seeks 92 dBA. Especially for this small audience, no variance is required.
• No balance. UST has been requesting, and receiving, sound variances for stadium events for far too long. This stadium is about 125 feet from the residential neighborhood to the west and has no sound barrier to the houses across the street to the north. UST's variance application does not consider *at all* the well-being of its residential neighbors. UST should keep its volume within the normal 65 dBA limit; even at that level, the sound will carry throughout the neighborhood.

August 28, 2025: Football Game at O'Shaughnessy Stadium
UST seeks a variance from 65 to 92 dBA, measured at 50 feet.

• No need. Macalester College, playing football in a stadium similar to UST's, does not obtain variances for its football games. Neither does Hamline University. Both of those stadiums are

[1] Advocates for Responsible Development is a registered 501(c)(3) organization with over 300 members, most of whom live within blocks of the University of St. Thomas. ARD successfully challenged the Environmental Assessment Worksheet prepared for UST's Anderson Arena.

adjacent to residential communities, and both school respect the need for balance in the neighborhood.

• Excessive Noise. The fact that Minneapolis residents can hear the noise from football games should concern city council members. Is there such a thing as noise pollution? Is there a need to broadcast sound at such high levels? Recall, of course, that UST is not on Harriet Island; residents live directly across the street from UST's stadium.

• It Is Not Just Noise. It should be noted that the sound rising from the stadium is not the only way in which UST's football games take over the neighborhood on game days. UST does not have sufficient parking even on weekdays, and football game days force fans to turn the residential streets into UST's parking lot. Cretin Avenue, a main north-south street, is clogged as it narrows with parked cars and fans walk across at uncontrolled intersections. After the game, fans return to their cars in neighborhood, where they litter, urinate, trample plantings, and create more noise. For local residents, Saturdays in Autumn are a different experience than for fans. It is more than enough for the neighbors to host the cars of spectators; making them listen to the entire game is far too much.

• It's About the Music. The reason UST wants a variance has little to do with football. UST wants to provide a professional-level arena experience, with music pumped to keep the crowd excited. Have you ever heard an 8-second loop of Seven Nation Army twenty times in 90 minutes as you try to work outside, blocks from the stadium? ARD members have. Every break in the action, and there are many of them because football plays only last a few seconds, is filled with music that carries over the neighborhood. That may be entertaining for the fans, but the thousands of people outside the stadium do not enjoy it as those inside the stadium might.

• Wrong Location. UST could host a football game where it can turn up the volume if it were to rent Huntington Bank Stadium or US Bank Stadium. Neither is near residences and US Bank Stadium is enclosed. But if UST wants to hold its football games on campus, the city should require that choice to be accompanied with balance of the neighborhood's needs. UST can fully meet its legitimate announcing needs without a variance from the permitted 65 dBA level.

August 29, 2025: Welcome Days Tommie Get Together
UST seeks a variance from 65 to 92 dBA, measured at 50 feet.

• What Is This Event? UST's variance application does not describe what the Tommie Get Together is other than that the reason for the variance is "Announcements and music during the game." There is no scheduled game on August 29th. UST should at least be required in its application to describe the event (number of attendees, events, and the actual need for a variance above the permitted 65 dBA). If it described the event, then those that receive notice of the event would have an opportunity to know whether they wish to submit an objection. It is a failure of due process to act on a variance application that does not accurately describe its rationale.

• Three Days In A Row. To the listener a few blocks away, a football game sounds much like a pep rally and a "get together" — a combination of talking a recorded music played at a level that permeates the neighborhood. By the second consecutive day, neighbors will have their fill of the noise. When it starts on the third day, the community will have had quite enough of UST's rally music. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mw7Gryt-rcc. The city should not permit UST to subject the immediately adjacent residents to its noise for hours on three consecutive days, and given that the events will take place with or without a variance, the city should not permit any of the events to exceed 65 dBA to minimize the cumulative impact on the residents.

Staff Recommendation Insufficient

The staff recommendation (stated in an email to David Eide that is part of the city council record) is to approve the variances to 90 dBA for August 27 and 29 and to 92 dBA for August 28. A drop from 92 to 90 is not a meaningful reduction. The variance applications should be denied altogether.

UST should conduct its events like the other institutions of higher education with stadiums set in residential neighborhoods. It is time to restore some balance to UST's impact on its community.

Sincerely,

Daniel L. M. Kennedy
President, Advocates for Responsible Development