

Dear Members of the Heritage Preservation Committee,

I am writing you regarding the UST request for the demolition of Loras Hall on their south campus.

After careful consideration of all facts both pro and con, I am urging you to vote for demolition of Loras Hall for these reasons.

1. Loris Hall was built as a dorm for seminary students. Although on the Historic Register as contributing, possibly because it is one of Cass Gilbert's buildings, it still looks like a dorm. Other than Cass Gilbert was the builder, it still looks like a large, red dorm.
2. When I heard, either myth or fact, that Mr. Hill wanted Loris Hall and the two other Cass Gilbert buildings nearby to look like boxcars, I agreed. Other than Cass Gilbert was the builder, it does look like a boxcar, a large red boxcar with little preservation value.
3. After 50 years of living on this historic Summit Avenue, the useful purpose of this building as either a dorm or office building, has ended.
4. I think that UST has offered to designate a space to honor the legacy of Cass Gilbert and I strongly support that idea.

Please vote for demolition of Loras Hall so we can move on to a more useful repurposing of this particular property.

Sincerely  
Rachel M. Westermeyer  
1935 Summit Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105  
651/644-3770

# CASS GILBERT SOCIETY

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

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

November 5, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Gause:

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

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

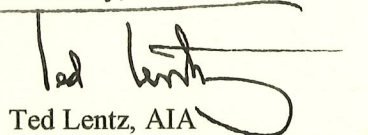
Consequently, the Society is opposed to the proposed demolition of Loras Hall, a contributing building in the Summit Avenue West Heritage Preservation District and the Summit Avenue West National Register Historic District. The University of St. Thomas states its intention to replace Loras Hall with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

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

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

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

Sincerely,



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

Dear George and Members of the Heritage Preservation Commission,


I want to thank members of the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) for considering the application from the University St. Thomas to remove Loras Hall in order to build a Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM) complex.

As founding dean of the Morrison Family College of Health at St. Thomas, I am very familiar with the tremendous opportunity this complex represents for the greater St. Paul community. By growing the new Morrison Family College of Health and establishing a new School of Nursing, St. Thomas is responding to a shortage of health providers and leaders required to promote healthy families and communities. We are building a college where students will learn to provide whole-person care to address the physical, mental, social and spiritual needs of individuals, while also discovering ways to advance systems change to eliminate health disparities. This complex will allow us to provide the best possible educational experience to our students.

As a board member of the Minnesota Historical Society, I understand the need to appreciate and understand our past.

I hope you will appreciate the balance between appreciating the past and serving its educational mission that the University of St. Thomas is striving to bring about the changes needed to serve and meet deep community needs.

Best regards,



**Maykao Y. Hang, D.P.A.**

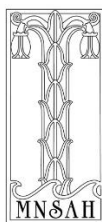
Vice President, Strategic Initiatives and Founding Dean

Morrison Family College of Health [Give Now](#)

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University of St. Thomas | MN [stthomas.edu](http://stthomas.edu)



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

November 27, 2020

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

Dear Mr. Gause:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Rolf T. Anderson  
President