

## St. Olaf Community Forum regarding Parking Request – Notes July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025. 4:30-6 pm. Viking Theater.

Total Attendance: 8 residents (1 from the planning commissioner and 1 city council); 3 St. Olaf staff. List of attendees attached. St. Olaf sent invitations to 53 community addresses within a radius of 200-300 feet of the proposed project. Introduction and opening made by Mike Berthelsen, St. Olaf's CFO and VP for Business and Finance.

Notes from the meeting:

College Introduction:

- Mike Berthelsen explained need for parking spots on campus.
  - Waiting list of 300 students on top of the existing 800+ student permits
  - Concern regarding student parking utilized on nearby city streets.
  - The College proposal includes building on areas that are connected to existing parking, have no impact to college program space and would be the most cost effective. This includes 90 parking spots behind the athletic complex and 26 additional spots of the lot adjacent off Lincoln Lot.
  - The Lincoln Lot would:
    - Not require any new stormwater or street entrance/exit needed
    - Use the existing interior green space within the current parking lot footprint
    - Not add any additional lighting; currently using downward light
- Mike also discussed College efforts regarding transit and other non-auto transportation:
  - Working with Carleton College and contracting with Hiawatha and Northfield Lines to create public transit opportunities both within the city (Express bus within Northfield, Campus Go point to point van service) and outside of Northfield (with Metro Express).
  - Working with student leaders on a bike share program to encourage non-car options
  - Mike went over data points and other mitigating efforts

Conversation/Questions (names of community members not identified):

- Brad Ness - commented that the City Council needs to approve based on its close proximity to city property, which starts in the middle of Lincoln Street.
- Questions and Comments
  - **Q:** Will there be more lights? **A:** We will not be adding more lights to the Lincoln Parking Lot
  - **Q:** Is this why 90 spots do not require city council approval? (In response to Brad's comment). **A:** Yes
  - **Q:** Has there been a conversation of adding parking on Campus Drive (the existing gravel service road going north from campus through the natural lands up to North Avenue)? Could this add another entrance and address pedestrian safety concerns? **A:** There has not been a serious conversation due to nature and use of the Natural Lands. To change the road from gravel to a two-lane asphalt would be very expensive.
    - **Comment:** We shouldn't encourage students to go up Cedar. They are three-times more likely to get into an accident.
    - **Comment:** 7 years ago, the upgrade Campus Drive would be \$7.5 million.
  - **Q:** We moved to town in 2018. In 2020, we started having cars parked in front of our house 24/7 starting in the beginning of August to the end of May. *[Comment on police marking tires.]* We didn't understand why there was a green spot in the middle of the parking lot. We just learned that it is the city. I think the city is living in a fantasy if kids will not want to bring cars. They want to go shopping, intern, jobs, or don't feel safe taking public transport or Uber. Lincoln and Second Street are lined with cars during the school year. Why can't the college have their parking spaces?

- **Q:** Can Northfield have neighborhood parking permits for Lincoln Lane? Feels like a Walmart getting dropped next to the neighbors.
  - **Comment:** students will still want to park closer to the New Townhomes.
  - **Comment:** I live on Lincoln Lane and street parking doesn't bother me.
  - **Comment:** I have concerns with noise, smells, cars coming and going at all hours, and drinking.
  - **Comment:** Northfield is overbuilt with street parking
  - **Comment:** Old folks need a blue curb in front of their houses
  - **Comment:** I have no issue with the College adding 26 spaces
- **Comment:** City denied the initial request and gave the college the minimum number of spots
- **Comment by Planning Commissioner:** Commission wants to know what the problem the college and the city is trying to solve. If the issue is people are parking in front of my house the city should provide a parking district. The college is asking to accommodate people traveling to and from campus—the college can build as much parking as they want. How will the college and city develop a plan for Lincoln Lot that impacts the rest of the city? The commission said two weeks ago said the St. Olaf proposal is worse for the city.
  - Conversation about why the city is restricting and why does denying 26 spots contribute to solving the problem
  - Study cited about environmental impact
  - Comment about the colleges make Northfield unique
  - Other comment about power struggle
- **Q:** Can the college have better permits of their parking lots?
  - **Comment:** The policy the city has adopted is that the 28 spots are based in a place/way that people will drive more. The college can build as many spots behind Skoglund as they want.
- **Q:** How many students have permits? **A:** We provide about 1,000 permits/spaces to students. The college impacts the campus community, college neighbor, storm water, programmatic, etc. We are building in the elevated space that is not sports fields or Natural Lands.
- **Q:** Are there enough parking for the town homes and the residence halls? **A:** not sure based on current permit system.
- **Q:** Bike lane painted along St. Olaf Ave. Why would the city do that? **A:** [commissioner] the city is not doing a great job on getting students to downtown Northfield.
- **Comment:** I am happy that the city is taking the quality of life of the residents — oil spills, gas emissions, noisy, etc. College keeps infringing on the neighborhood.
- **Q:** If someone has access to a parking spot. What do you think they are going to do? No one can point to a solution and say, 'this is exactly what will happen?' Why can't the college limit where students park to discourage from driving? I think the city and college would rather, in my opinion, would walk downtown rather than drive. The conversation should be where are students allowed to park. Carleton's position is don't bring your car to campus.
  - More conversation about that the city isn't acknowledging the cars are not already here
  - Can homeowners request a no parking sign in front of their house?
  - City more likely to approve seniors or students that have internships
  - **A:** St. Olaf currently has commuter permits and general parking permits. It is an administrative management issue with limited staff.
- **Comment:** I am fine with adding these 26 spots. My concern would be to not have more parking extend to take over more green space along Lincoln Avenue.