



ST. Olaf College Parking Proposal

Northfield Planning
Commission

June 16, 2025

History

- 2020: St. Olaf planned for a new residence hall and townhomes along St. Olaf Ave, replacing existing houses, and seeking addition of parking to serve the campus.
- 2022: The College opened the new housing and parking that was approved to proceed (some of what asked).
- 2022-2025: The college has grown in students and faculty/ staff

Campus Community Size	2019/2020	2024/2025
Student Enrollment	Fall 2019: 3,072	Fall 2024: 3,202
Faculty/Staff Counts	484 Staff	549 Staff
	316 Faculty	351 Faculty
	800 Total	900 Total

Transportation Goals for College

- To support students to be able to get where they need to be (college, home, internships, healthcare, entertainment, etc.)
- To support faculty/staff ability to get to campus and space to park.
- To have sufficient parking accessibility for visitors (prospective students, music and athletic fans, etc.)
- To be a good neighbor within the City by adding citizens, shoppers, diners, visitors, events, etc. while managing (as much as possible) the implications of the added volume of the campus community (ex. keeping parking on campus).
- To make transit a convenient and accessible option for students

Existing Parking: Demand exceeds Space

Parking Capacity by Designation

- General student parking permit - 833
- Commuter student parking permit - 186*
- Spots for students with approved accommodations: - 122*
- Faculty/staff - 672*
- Visitors - 119*
- Total - 2,015 (including all ADA spaces, service vehicle parking, hourly parking, etc.)

**Please note that some spaces on campus are dual-designated (e.g. faculty/staff and visitor)*

Special Events: Demand for special events (graduation, ChristmasFest) brings added demand of up to 2,000 added vehicles.

Excess Demand:

- The campus hold a waiting list and additional temporary permits nearing excess demand of 300 additional spaces.
- The Campus receives ongoing concerns about students parking in neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Concerns: example

After March 15 this year and until St. Olaf's graduation May 25, neighborhood streets, east of Lincoln Avenue between St. Olaf Avenue and 2nd Street West, were adversely affected by the daily, ongoing usage of residential streets as the student solution to St. Olaf College not providing enough spaces on campus for their vehicles. I commonly take a 5:30 a.m. walk on weekdays and could count 80 plus cars filling our streets. (this number does not include 30 to 36 cars illegally parked in "No Parking from 2:00 a.m. to 6:00 a.m." on 1st Street West, west of Lincoln Avenue at 5:30) During fall semester 50 to 65 cars lined residential streets. From November 15 to March 15, when winter parking rules were in effect, very few students used street parking in the neighborhood. I wondered where they were parking their cars.

Unfortunately, limited street parking was available for residents and their guests this spring, garbage pick up was hindered, construction and delivery crews were inconvenienced, traffic and visibility was disrupted. Some residents took the action of keeping their garbage receptacles in the street to deter student parking.

Currently posted on the college website was the figure that St. Olaf has approximately 800 student parking spaces on campus for its 3,000 students. I noted in college policy that freshmen were not eligible for a college permit unless they lived more than 250 miles from Northfield. When our daughter attended Olaf for four years, this policy was in effect for all students enrolled. I understand why the institution is now having an issue with student parking: both the number of spaces and location of lots on campus do not appear to be adequate.

I have had conversations with local police officers, contacted my city council rep. and studied how several other private MN colleges have handled parking issues.

"The St. Olaf parking office strongly suggests that students **do not** bring a vehicle to campus unless they have obtained a parking permit". Many paragraphs of campus parking policy follow this statement and then City of Northfield Parking Regulations are listed with no guidance for students. If the college is committed to fostering positive relationships with its neighbors; moves need to be made to change the current pattern of student parking.

Transit Programs

- The college invests in and promotes several transit programs:
 - City Circulators through Hiawathaland Transit
 - Red/Green: daily route service
 - Express: evening/weekend routes to common locations
 - Point to Point shuttle and Metro busses – Northfield Lines
 - Campus Go: point to point shuttles for teaching, volunteering, internships and medical needs
 - Metro Express: daily/weekend buses to airport, MOA and Minneapolis
 - Break Bus: charter buses to airport at breaks
- Changes:
 - St. Olaf, Carleton and Northfield lines contracted to merge their campus shuttle program to increase access, lower trip costs for Express bus, and adding a tracking app. for reserving and tracking rides.
- Transportation website with transit options available for students:
<https://wp.stolaf.edu/transportation/>

Transit Ridership Ridership: St. Olaf

2024/25 Academic Yr	Sept through March	Monthly Average
City Circulator	2,558	365
City Express	17,112	2,445
Campus Go	1,337	445
Metro Express	1,520 (Oct to March)	153
Break Bus to Airport	1,696	N/A

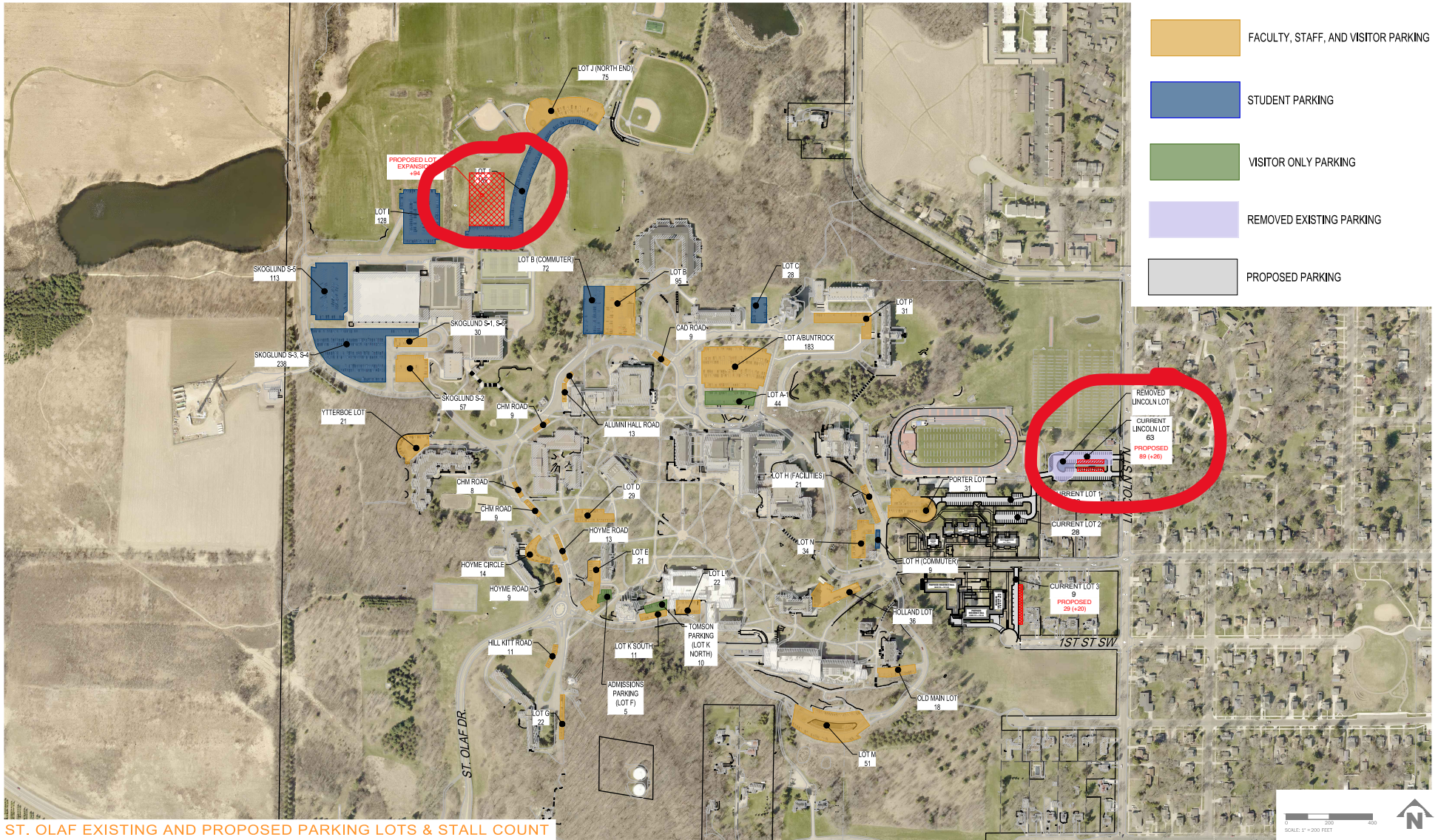
Other mitigation efforts

- As part of the new residence hall, the college built an indoor bike locker for 55 bikes, in addition to existing outdoor spots.
- The college is planning to increase its parking rates each year for students by \$20 for next 5 years (currently \$130/semester).
- First year students may only have a vehicle permit if living over 250 miles from campus or needing an accomodation.
- Student leaders are working to develop a bike share program.
- The College supports several EV charging stations
- The College partnered with City, CAC and Carleton for a grant to research an EV car-sharing program.

College Additional Parking Proposal - Revised

The college is seeking to balance parking through 3 steps:

- **Step 1 (PID 2235100001):** Adding 93 spaces in a lot between Skoglund and the softball field. The college currently needs to park cars on green space in the winter during its Christmas Festival to accommodate visitors in addition to the campus community. This would help alleviate those issues as well as day-to-day parking pressures.
- **Step 2 (PID 2236325017):** Adding 26 spaces to the existing parking lot east of the football field and west of Lincoln Street North, which was previously designed to provide additional parking, and which would require a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) due to its location within the Perimeter Transition Area (PTA).
- **Step 3 (PIDs 2236351067, 2236351030, and 2236352005):** ~~Adding 20 spaces to the utility street east of the New Residence building by creating one row of parking spaces at the east side of this road into college owned property. It is anticipated that this would also require a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) due to its location within the Perimeter Transition Area (PTA).~~



Materials Submitted

- CUP Narrative
- CUP Application
- Site Plan Application
- Overall Parking Map
- Step 1 – Skoglund Site Plan
- Step 2 – Lincoln Site Plan
- ~~Step 3 – Utility Street Site Plan~~
- Campus Parking and Transit Memo
- Parking Study Report - 2020

Next Steps

- April 17th: Seek feedback from Planning Commission
- June 19th meeting: Seek approval from Planning Commission
- Tbd: Seek City Council approval

Questions and Feedback: