Lee and Penny Anderson Arena: Questions from Neighbors of St. Thomas

The following list of questions have been gathered at various neighborhood conversations about the arena. These include:

- West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Meeting (WSNAC) December 2022
- Mac Groveland Community Council, Housing and Land Use Committee, January 25, 2023
- WSNAC meeting, January 30
- pre-questions submitted for the February 13th meeting with Goodrich Avenue neighbors.

We will continually add to this list and post on stthomas.edu/neighbors. Questions can be submitted to neighbors@stthomas.edu.

1. Why did St. Thomas decide to build this arena on campus?

St. Thomas made its historic Division-I transition after being removed from the Minnesota Intercollegiate Athletics Conference (MIAC). Hockey currently plays at St. Thomas Academy High School, which does not meet D-I hockey expectations. Many sites across St. Paul have been explored for a hockey location, including Highland Bridge. After multiple conversations with the city and others to explore possible sites, it was determined that the best location is on campus where we can involve students and alumni and create efficiencies with our land. This would also allow us to add basketball facilities to an arena to create efficiencies. We are limited with space, due to Conditional Use Permit from 2004 which sets strict boundaries. Student attendees will not need to drive to games – reducing the need for parking and pressure on traffic.

Note: The plans for the arena are consistent with all aspects of the Conditional Use Permit. The proposal for the arena itself as we know it now does not require us to open the CUP.

2. How will we involve the neighborhood and community to gather feedback, identify opportunities, and address concerns about the arena?

We are dedicated to involving neighbors and will work with the district councils, host town halls, develop Q and As, post information on stthomas.edu/neighbors and take suggestions on other helpful ways neighbors want to engage and learn more. Questions can be submitted to neighbors@stthomas.edu.

3. Has the university assigned a team to distribute consistent and accurate information to the community on each step of the project and the impact on the community around the University?

This is a major team effort! The team will be led and coordinated by Amy McDonough, Chief of Staff. Our new Director of Neighborhood and Community Relations will be a direct contact for neighbors. As
the powerpoint indicates, university leaders of Jim Brummer, VP of Facilities, Mark Vangsgard, CFO and Phil Esten, VP and Dir. Of Athletics will be consistently involved in sharing details and responding. You will also see representatives of Ryan, Cos. presenting and helping to answer questions at meeting.

The website at www.stthomas.edu/neighbors will be a good source of information on updates. Our proposal on engagement, as indicated in the powerpoint we shared, includes written emails, regular public meetings with district councils, WSNAC and other groups that are interested in hearing more. The Highland Villager is an excellent partner in communicating as well. We will send mailed information to neighbors we have addresses for, including our faculty, staff and alumni (5,100) who live in the surrounding neighborhood. We will also host community-wide town hall meetings as we have more details to share. Our neighbors@stthomas.edu account is a good way to share comments. We will post additional questions and answer them as they come in. In addition, St. Thomas would like to hear your ideas on ways the community would like to engage.

4. **What public funds will be used to build this arena?**
None. As a private university, funding will come from private donors, corporate sponsorships and university borrowing. No public funds are included in the financing of this arena.

5. **What is the anticipated opening date for the Lee and Penny Anderson Arena?**
St. Thomas plans to open the arena in Fall of 2025 in time for the 2025-2026 athletic seasons after raising the necessary funds and obtaining all necessary city approvals to begin construction in 2024.

6. **What is the planned maximum seating capacity?**
This is still being finalized, but we anticipate the capacity to be between 4,000-6,000. The maximum capacity will vary depending on use. For example, the maximum capacity of a hockey game is anticipated to be around 4,000. For an event like commencement is anticipated to be approximately 6,000. We are conducting a market analysis to determine final seating capacity. (It is important to note that St. Thomas currently manages events of this size that occur on North Campus, including football games, commencement, etc.)

7. **What other locations were considered?**
We studied several on campus solutions for the arena. The south campus location is the only location on campus that will meet the requirements of the existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP), has enough space to fit all of the program and doesn’t displace other existing programs that would require additional construction.

   a. The west block of Summit/Grand is too small and does not fit with the CUP
   b. There is not room on the North Campus
   c. There is not enough room on the Minneapolis Campus

Off-campus locations were also considered, including:

   d. Highland Bridge – cost prohibitive
   e. Town & Country – not able to secure the land
   f. We have looked at eleven sites in the metro area at various levels of details, including sites along university avenue.

8. **How will the proposed location impact the Goodrich Avenue neighbors?**
The arena will be centralized to south campus and faces north, or inward to south campus, adjacent to the Facilities Design Center and the Anderson Parking Facility. Brady Educational Center and the Binz
buildings will remain on the southern-most parcel of campus, along with our athletic fields supporting soccer and softball.

9. What other changes to campus will occur with this project?
The finished arena will create a campus quad and green space between the arena and the Schoenecker Center, our new STEAM complex. The project will remove Cretin Hall, the Service Center and McCarthy Gym. Utilities, steam, electrical, sewers and water will be relocated during construction. Stormwater improvements will be made to better capture and purify water before discharge.

10. What facilities does D-I obligate us to build?
We do not have a contractual obligation with our conferences to build facilities.

COMMUNITY BENEFITS

11. How does this arena benefit others?
The Lee and Penny Anderson arena will be an economic asset to the neighborhood, the City of St. Paul and the region.

It was important to St. Thomas that this investment be made in the City of St. Paul. We are an anchor institution in the city and want to contribute to the vibrancy of the city. More than 5,100 faculty, staff and alumni live in our surrounding neighborhoods.

- The increased economic activity spurred by the arena will be a benefit to local businesses.
- The second sheet of ice will help supplement a demand for the youth hockey community.
- St. Thomas will work to develop partnerships with local public and private K-12 schools, our corporate partners and nonprofits on use of the facility.

TRAFFIC

12. What will St. Thomas do about concerns with increased traffic caused by events hosted at the arena?
St. Thomas recognizes that the possibility of increased traffic during peak events is a concern for neighbors. A traffic demand management plan is required by the city as part of the EAW (Environmental Assessment Worksheet) process.

We anticipate that a percentage of attendees to the events will be students, who will be pedestrians, walking from north campus and from the neighborhood.

St. Thomas already manages large events like commencement and athletic events of this size on campus. We contract with St. Paul Police when needed to manage traffic and logistics for events of this size. Currently, our football games average 5,000 people per game. We work with SPPD to manage parking and traffic.

Events that could eventually reach peak attendance would include:
- 17 regular season home men’s hockey games per year
- 16 regular season home men’s basketball games per year
- Approximately same number of women’s events, although attendance is considerably smaller (25-50 percent)
- Commencement, once per year.
- Any outside use of the facility that is anticipated to reach peak attendance would follow traffic and parking management

**TRANSIT**

13. **How will St. Thomas factor transit into these plans?**
Increasing opportunities for transit is a priority at St. Thomas. St. Thomas will continue to increase opportunities for transit for students, faculty and staff as part of our sustainability plan.

**PARKING**

14. **Could there be additional parking built onto the Anderson Parking Facility?**
The Anderson Parking Facility was built with the infrastructure that would allow two additional levels of parking to be added. However, St. Thomas believes that adding two levels to the parking facility would violate the CUP height restrictions and is currently exploring all options for parking on campus.

15. **How will St. Thomas help manage parking?**
A plan for parking and transit options will be developed as the project continues. This is a high priority as we further develop plans. We understand the importance of helping prevent attendees from illegally parking in the neighborhood. And, we want our fans to have a positive experience getting to and from events.

**ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS**

16. **How will the arena plan take into account environmental concerns?**
As part of its larger sustainability plan, St. Thomas is committed to building LEED-certified buildings, and this arena will be no exception. There are exciting synergies for this arena to be powered with renewable energy through our Center for Microgrid Research that will promote sustainable development in unique ways, including the ability to power this facility with renewable energy. St. Thomas will also work closely with the City of St. Paul and will participate in the Environmental Assessment Worksheet (EAW) process with the city.

17. **What is St. Thomas’ commitment to environmental sustainability?**
St. Thomas has reduced our annual carbon emissions by 53% since 2008, and there has been a 38% reduction from 2019 until 2022. We did this by partnering with Xcel Energy to complete energy audits for existing buildings. We also pursue energy conservation measures and implement submetering of gas, electricity, water and steam for our buildings.

18. **Will the city consider environmental impacts?**
Environmental Impacts of this project will be studied during the City of St. Paul’s EAW process. For example, the university is required to assess stormwater treatment. Improvements will be made to ensure that we collect and purify stormwater. This will be an improvement in stormwater collection.

19. **Will the project include removal of trees and natural habitat to wildlife? Will the remaining ground be returned to native plants and trees? If not, what is the plan to these areas?**
The project is located centrally on our south campus where the tree canopy is sparse. There will be some trees removed, but these are primarily at the perimeter of existing buildings or in parking lot
landscape. We will be gaining green space in front of the arena, completing and beautifying the south quad. As in all of our projects, when trees are impacted, we plant additional trees, more than were disturbed by construction. A landscaping plan will be developed further along in the project and option to use native plantings will be discussed.

20. **Will the project consult with the Water Shed District on the impact of the underground stream which is contiguous to the project and directly discharges in the river?** What processes will be used to ensure that no pollutants from the construction are discharged in the river and in the ground waters?

Since the project will be over one (1) acre of disturbed land, the project will require a couple of stormwater permits.

i. A construction stormwater permit must be obtained from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to meet the requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)/State Disposal System (SDS). A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) will be developed to assist in keeping the construction site in compliance. Site inspections of the SWPPP will be performed by the Design-Builder and the Capital Regional Watershed District (CRWD).

ii. The project will also be required to obtain a watershed permit from the CRWD. CRWD issues permits to ensure stormwater runoff from development projects does not negatively impact the rivers, lakes and wetlands.

Environmental Assessment (EAW) will also be required for the construction of a new sports facility expected to accommodate a peak attendance of 5,000 or more persons. An EAW is a study that identifies ways to protect the environment, informs the public about the project, and informs the project team and jurisdictional agencies what permits are required and if additional environmental review is warranted. The EAW is meant to act as a source of information to guide the specific project approvals rather than approve or deny a project itself. There are 22 factors reviewed within an EAW such as existing site conditions, water resources, waste, ecological resources, historic properties, visual/air/noise impacts, and transportation. The City of St. Paul is the party responsible for preparing the document. A draft of the EAW is published through the Environmental Quality Board (EQB) Monitor where there is a 30-day public comment period.

**CURRENT BUILDINGS IMPACTED**

21. **How will St. Thomas replace student housing lost with loss of Cretin Hall?**

Our two-year residency requirement and the construction of the 740 beds in Tommie North and Frey Hall in 2020 has made a tremendous difference in our campus culture and has benefitted the surrounding neighborhoods by bringing more sophomore renters on to campus. We are dedicated to ensuring that freshman and sophomores live on campus, with limited exceptions. Cretin Hall currently houses about 60 students and that number can be accommodated through existing housing managed by residence life. They have the ability to change singles into doubles, etc. to ensure that our overall number of students living on campus remains steady.
22. What about the historic significance of Cretin Hall and the Service Center?
Cretin Hall was built in 1894 as a seminary dormitory. The Service Center was also built in 1894 as Gymnasium and heating plant for the seminary. Neither building is located in the Summit Avenue historic district.

Our top priority is to serve our students and take seriously how tuition dollars are spent. These buildings are very costly to maintain for the university. The buildings are very energy-inefficient and not ADA accessible. Cretin Hall is our least-requested residence hall and the Service Center has no additional useful purpose for students. Neither building has additional useful purposes for students because of their age, structure and construction.

TAXES

23. How does St. Thomas pay for the roads and services it uses? The project will take resources from the city – how will the University pay its fair share?
The Minnesota Constitution provides for the exemption from property taxes of nonprofit properties owned and used for public purpose such as, education, religious or charitable. Along with the other 13 colleges and universities in the City of St. Paul, state government facilities, hospitals, K-12 institutions and other nonprofits, St. Thomas does not pay property taxes. However, there are a variety of other payments St. Thomas makes to the city.

St. Thomas pays:
- $250,000 - $300,000 per year in sales taxes from the sale of parking, books, apparel, accessories, tickets, etc. This includes $30,000 from athletics tickets which would increase with the increased ticket sales of the new arena.
- $150,000 per year for non-exempt properties + the “storm sewer” tax that St. Paul has outside of property tax.
- $100,000 per year to Metro Transit to support students, staff, faculty with public transportation.
- $10,000 per year in rental tax to the City of St. Paul
- Thousands of dollars per year to the St. Paul Police department for extra security on campus for events.
- Tens of thousands per year to repair city amenities adjacent to the campus – sidewalks on city property that are heaving, curb and gutter, etc.

St. Thomas also pays:
- $10,000 per year to each of our District Councils (Mac Groveland and Union Park)
- $10,000 per year to WSNAC (West Summit Neighborhood Advisory Committee)
- In addition to what St. Thomas pays directly, it’s important to note that 5,100 tax-paying staff, faculty and alumni live in the immediate vicinity of our campus – in zip codes 55105, 55104 and 55116.

CONSTRUCTION

24. How will the arena construction activities be planned to limit disruptions to the community?
A Construction Management Plan will be developed for the project. This plan will identify the project timeline and typical construction working hours in addition to defining strategies to limit disruptions.
The plan will specifically address topics like construction parking, construction vehicle traffic, dust and dirt mitigation, street closings, and construction noise. This plan will be shared with the community and published on www.stthomas.edu/neighbors for future reference.

25. Will we ensure construction vehicles use roads that were not just improved? 
Suggested trucking routes will be reviewed with the appropriate city department(s) for approval. The final approved trucking routes will be shared with all subcontractors working on project and traveling to the site.

26. Will we consider a shuttle bus for construction workers to help with parking? 
Yes, we will be considering the use of off-campus parking and a shuttle service to transport workers to the construction site.

27. Will the university provide updates on completed steps and next step of the project? How far in advance will the university share information on the next steps and what will be the impact on the community?

Yes. Regular communication as mentioned above will help provide these updates. We are committed to sharing information in a timely manner. We can develop specifics on timelines as the proposal continues. Today, we do not have specific timelines.

We want the community to engage in the project, both to celebrate the potential benefits to St. Paul and to the vibrancy of our neighborhood – and to clearly state concerns and work with us on solutions. We are prioritizing community engagement because we realize there will be impacts on the neighborhood and look forward to working with all neighbors. We should both expect honest, direct communication from each other as we continue.

28. Will the project include a structural impact on housing outside of the campus boundaries? The driving of pilons down to bed rock can create instability of the surrounding grounds where private housing is now sitting and shifting of the foundations of impacted structures. Will the university finance the assessment of private structures around impact before and after the operation? Who will finance mitigation to private structures impacted by the construction activities if damages are determined to be due to the shifting of the ground?

While the structural details are not available and design work in early in the process, we believe the foundation will be constructed of poured in place concrete spread footing and concrete foundation walls. This structural system is typically used for new building on campus, including the Schoenecker Center currently under construction. We do not anticipate a structural piers or pylons system will be used in the foundation.

The site may require limited temporary earth retention system on the east side to the site during the excavation phase, but this is still under review. Vibrations from the project are not anticipated to impact the surrounding neighborhood, but we will hire a third-party testing firm to install vibration monitors on adjacent buildings to ensure vibrations levels are below a threshold that would cause structural damage.
29. Will the project require variances from the city?
The plans for the arena are consistent with the Conditional Use Permit (CUP). The proposal for the arena itself as we know it now, does not require us to open the CUP. We do not anticipate that other variances will be required and we are actively engaging with the City of St. Paul as we navigate the entitlement phase of this project.