



Preservation Alliance of Minnesota

“... to preserve, protect and promote Minnesota’s historic resources”

July 31, 2006

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25 years
of historic preservation
in Minnesota

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Mr. Phillip Koski, Chair
Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission
210 City Hall
350 S. 5th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55415

Dear Mr. Koski and Members of the HPC:

On behalf of the Preservation Alliance of Minnesota, I am writing to express our deep concern about the proposed DeLaSalle High School Athletic Field and the Certificate of Appropriateness application under the consideration of the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission.

The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota is the statewide, nonprofit historic preservation advocacy and education organization. Formed in 1981 with the mission to preserve, protect, and promote Minnesota’s historic resources, the Alliance has grown to represent hundreds of citizens and groups, including almost 250 members in Minneapolis, who desire to preserve cultural resources and a sense of place in their community.

The proposed athletic facility is located within the St. Anthony Falls Historic District, recognized in the National Register of Historic Places and as a locally designated historic district. Approving the Certificate of Appropriateness will negatively impact the historic district and its resources as the project disrupts the historic circulation pattern for an athletic complex that is not compatible in scale with its surroundings, thus materially impairing the setting and feeling that defines the district’s historic integrity.

The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota has listed this area twice on our annual 10 Most Endangered Historic Places List. The St. Anthony Falls Historic District was listed in 2005 and Grove Street itself in 2006. Although Grove Street’s pavers are new, the circulation pattern it represents is not. Interrupting the historic east-west circulation pattern with the construction of the athletic facility would inhibit the comprehension of the island’s connectivity to the Mississippi River and its place in the larger city grid. Streets and contiguous circulation patterns are as significant as buildings and other resources in defining the character of historic districts. As cited in the EAW, the NRHP Bulletin #15 states, “... a district derives its importance from being a *unified entity* (emphasis added), even though it is often composed of a wide variety of resources.” (p. 25)

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DeLaSalle High School correctly identifies in its application that the historic, above ground structures have previously been removed from the eastern portion of Grove Street. However, there are other historic resources that will be negatively affected. The Two Pines Resource Group's October, 2005, "Literature Search for Archaeological Potential," included in the project EAW, concluded that "there is a high potential for the area to contain intact precontact and historical archaeological resources that may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places" (Page 1). The field may disrupt or destroy these resources.

Furthermore, additional contributing structures exist on Nicollet Island that would be impacted by the project, including the residential area surrounding the proposed site. Grove Street as it exists is in keeping with the historic district's period of significance. The proposed use and corresponding infill design are incompatible with the district's period of significance, which was primarily comprised of residential and industrial use. The size of the field, its bleachers, concession areas, and light standards will materially alter the existing integrity and character of Nicollet Island's setting and feeling.

The Preservation Alliance of Minnesota strongly encourages the Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Commission to deny this Certificate of Appropriateness on its face or table the application until alternatives have been further explored and exhausted. The Alliance recognizes DeLaSalle High School's long history on Nicollet Island and we support their effort to provide adequate space for their student's athletic education. However, we believe that responsible stewardship of this national and local historic district demands further consideration of alternative sites and designs that would serve both the school's needs and the need to protect the integrity of our invaluable historic resources.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bonnie McDonald
Executive Director