

## Riley, Kate

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**From:** Lynne Carvalho Adamian [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 30, 2019 10:27 PM  
**To:** City Manager  
**Cc:** Riley, Kate; David Adamian; Louis Adamian; Nathaniel Adamian  
**Subject:** Tobin School/VLUS -concerns and commentary

Mr. Louis DePasquale  
City Manager

Dear Mr. DePasquale:

Our family has lived across the street from the Tobin School for the last 20 years. We would like to express some concerns regarding the proposed design options. Our **chief concern is the dramatic increase in program requirements and student count**, which appears to be out of proportion to increases elsewhere in the city and out of proportion with the design criteria presented to the community earlier in the process. These increased program requirements are driving the following concerns about the proposed changes to the site.

- Overreaching school and community programming to scale of the site
- Loss of green community space and beloved fields that promote health and recreation
- Traffic, congestion, idling and parking

As concerned citizens and a family with a child with significant special needs, we have specific concerns regarding the adequacy of the proposed designs in terms of staffing and space needs associated with the significant increase in the population of students with higher needs. Where "typical" classrooms might have one to two dedicated teachers and a possible classroom aid, the population of students in the substantially separate classrooms and across some immersion and younger classrooms require very high teacher to student ratios and many more on-site therapists. Not only are these students in need of a higher level staff support they also require more physical space for the one-on-one services separate from classroom teaching and interventions. More space is needed for this population in the design of the new school, in the design of the classrooms and across all of the outdoor play spaces. These students often arrive and depart on smaller buses and require more time for transfers both to and from school: long outside bus lines and many more bus drivers and aides. These students come with and require much more personal gear, including walkers, wheelchairs, gait trainers and higher level and purpose-built larger bathroom design that accounts for one-on-one care. Much more space is required for comfortable and thoughtful instruction, safe mobility and purposeful social interaction and opportunity.

While the city is undertaking the design of a new Universal Playground at a close by site in Danehy Park, the Tobin redesign, including the outdoor spaces needs to also be Universal in design and create seamless interior to outside experience for all learners. Students at VLUS/Tobin are too far from the planned Danehy playground space for school day use.

What is an appropriate scale? The new proposed design plan for all three, is overtaking the current lot, is not thoughtful of neighborhood and is not thoughtful of the students best and most appropriate learning.

As abutters and long-time residents of the neighborhood we are also very concerned about impacts on the neighborhood. The fields and playgrounds have served as a community gathering place and served a strong role in knitting the community together. They have provided, not only a convenient and accessible place for our children to play outdoors, but also an opportunity to meet and get to know many of our neighbors as our

children have played together on those fields. The neighborhood will inevitably become less cohesive if those opportunities are taken away.

Finally, there are the concerns associated with traffic and parking. At its current scale, the Tobin / VLUS creates significant challenges in this arena. The residential streets Standish Street and Vassal Lane are congested with buses and parents picking up and dropping off students. Concord Avenue, meanwhile has its own challenges independent of the school. It is not evident that the design team has adequately thought through the magnitude of traffic impacts associated with the increased faculty, staff and student populations to be housed in the new school.

None of the three proposals adequately addresses parking needs. We support Jan Devereux's idea about broaching a shared use plan with the Armory. The city has been able to somehow have conversations with the government/Armory regarding storage of construction gear during the years long Huron A-B-C graywater and more work. For more than twenty years, the Armory lot has only had a handful of cars on weekdays, very infrequently a few more for voting times or dog training classes. It is mostly untended and unused. What can the city offer the Armory such that this can be a shared-use site and incorporated into the redesign?

The proposed internal roadway that borders the current fields and back alley of trees behind Alpine Street is not thoughtful of the current neighbors, noise and green space. If more cross site roadways are integrated into the design, which makes sense for a "school" (that is now planned to be three to four schools), the roadway, even if only used for drop off and pick up, and any above ground parking should be shrouded by the building and should hug the commercialized side of the site near the parkway.

As we are directly across the street, we have many concerns about the design, construction, outcome and process. We understand that this school is very much in need of thoughtful updating, greening and redesign. We hope that this letter and those of the neighborhood and community at large will be noted at the outset of this design process.

Sincerely,  
Lynne Carvalho Adamian  
David Adamian  
Nathaniel Adamian  
Louis Adamian  
Eleanor Adamian

