

April 19, 2023
Evanston Land Use Commission
Public Comments

Timestamp	Name (first and last)	Address of residence	Meeting date	Agenda Item	Position on Agenda	How would you like to	If you are providing a written comment, please leave here:	Are you representing yr
4/13/2023 14:18:39	B. Gruby		4/19/2023	New Fifth Ward School	Opposed	Written comment	LOCATION LOCATION LOCATION District 65 owns land immediately east of 1608 Emerson St. and Emerson St. is wider than Simpson and has a two-way bike lane already. Making new tennis courts by Mason Park, which already has tennis courts, and destroying ones in Foster Field, is a big waste of money, and is just happening to satisfy the state. An alternative is to use the lot next to Gilbert Park with its playground for children, again taking advantage of Emerson St. Both scenarios are across from a grocery store and fast food restaurants away from Double Clutch Bar not good for children as well as more distance from Haven and Kingsley schools (spread out things). The people by Foster Field deserve open space, light, and a playground. We are used to having Fleetwood-Jourdain here as it is now. (It is always cheaper to renovate than to demolish and rebuild.)	
4/14/2023 15:19:30	Fergal Hanks	1500 Chicago Avenue	4/19/2023	Public Hearing: Major Variations 2000 Simpson Street 23ZMJV-0022	In favor	Written comment	The project is only 3 stories barely above the 2.5 story by right zoning and would provide more options for parents in the community	
4/14/2023 16:43:48	Bernadette Burke	1601 Simpson Street Evanston IL 60201	4/19/2023	2000 Simpson Street Project	Undecided	Written comment	As the owner of 1601 and 1607 Simpson Street and the owner of Brella Productions, a local business who has been at the 1601 Simpson location since 2005 (across the street from the proposed development), I have multiple concerns. While the parking study has addressed that there is parking several blocks away that the faculty might use, they did not address the issue of the removal of potentially 50-60 critical parking spaces utilized by the local business community. The parking spaces would be those along Simpson street that would be removed outright and those that could be removed along Ashland Ave where it is proposed that the day long usage be removed or restricted to very short term to accommodate the parent drop off. These two streets are utilized heavily to support the Hill Arts District Business community, both for customer and employee usage. The loss of the critical parking space during business hours will have a negative impact not only on my properties which are zoned mixed use and which support multiple businesses, but on my business neighbors as well. I would ask that the commission address this very critical business impact prior to permitting this usage since I think it is critical ignored in the parking study provided by the school district. In this area not all parking spaces have the same impact and that was not addressed in their study. I am also concerned with the loss of green space and the increase CO2 related to idling car and bus traffic directly across from my business. The field and surrounding mature trees provide extensive area cooling and help to mitigate some of the CO2 generated by the busy Simpson Street traffic. They are also utilized heavily by avian wildlife. I am concerned by the loss of this critical canopy and disturbed that the district is proposing artificial grass and that the new trees planted may not actually be viable given maintenance needs. Lastly, I would like to say that I am very much in favor of a 5th ward school. If the district can reconfigure the parking arrangements and address the environmental impact I am very excited about the project. My concern is that the district has had very little engagement with the business community and has not addressed any of those concerns in a meaningful way.	
4/14/2023 17:05:16	Mark Mallochok	1601 Simpson St.	4/19/2023	2000 Simpson St.	Undecided	In person		Self
4/19/2023 7:48:40	Jenna Morgan	416 Keeney, Evanston	4/19/2023	Major Variations 2000 Simpson Street 23ZMJV-0022	In favor	Written comment	I am writing to express my support for the requested zone variations for District 65's 5th Ward school permit. Since the District 65 School Board voted unanimously in March 2022 to build the 5th ward school, the District has been working diligently to collect feedback from the community and incorporate that feedback into their proposal for the school's construction. The need for the 5th ward school is undeniable and its construction is long overdue. Every student in Evanston should be able to attend a school in their neighborhood. The city now has the opportunity to provide this to the children of the 5th ward and improve learning and living conditions for all Evanston children. I strongly encourage the commission to recommend the City Council approve these variations and the 5th ward school permit without delay.	

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4/19/2023 8:46:39	SYLVIA F CARLSON	1748 Dodge Ave	4/19/2023	5th ward school	Undecided	Written comment	Please do not allow artificial turf at the new 5th ward school. I would prefer my children get dirty than filled with more chemicals.
4/19/2023 10:24:30	Joseph Hailpern	3834 4 Winds Way Skokie, IL	4/19/2023	Public Hearing: Major Variations 2000 Simpson Street 23ZMJV-0022	In favor	Written comment	<p>I am writing as a member of the Board of Education for Evanston Skokie School District 65 and a resident of District 65 for the past 38 years. Strong communities have been and always will be identified and anchored by strong community schools. For decades Evanston has grappled with the reality that every neighborhood, but for one, has the opportunity for a quality school nearby. We, at District 65, need your support to help take the next step in creating a world-class educational opportunity here in Evanston.</p> <p>This school is about the neighborhood of the 5th ward. It is also about CARP goals. It is about early childhood programming. It is about class size reduction. It is about special education services in home schools.</p> <p>This is much more than a singular building. It impacts a long-term approach to strong fiscal sustainability and program development that our children and their children deserve.</p> <p>I appreciate your consideration of the plans put forth today. Joey Hailpern</p>
4/19/2023 11:26:36	Sergio Hernandez	1400 Kirk Street	4/19/2023	Public Hearing: Major Variations 2000 Simpson Street 23ZMJV-0022	In favor	Written comment	<p>Hello LUC Commission members,</p> <p>My name is Sergio Hernandez and I am the Board President of the Evanston/Skokie School District 65 School District. I want to thank you for the service you provide to our community.</p> <p>I writing to express my hope that the the Land Use Commission approve the major variations proposed by our District and Cordogan Clark, the architectural firm making the proposal on our behalf. We are committed to working in partnership with the City of Evanston, and other community organizations and institutions to ensure the 5th Ward school provide families and their students an optimal educational experience in a community that has been long overdue.</p> <p>I hope that your vote will allow us to continue this history making journey to embed and operationalize educational equity across Evanston. Again, I thank you for your service to our community.</p> <p>Sincerely and in partnership, Sergio Hernandez, Jr.</p>
4/19/2023 11:37:28	Alana Hanson	1701 South Blvd	4/19/2023	5th Ward School	In favor	Written comment	Using synthetic turf for the athletic field is a step backward and goes against the stated ecological goals of this project. Please use real grass instead.

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4/19/2023 12:29:25	Soo La Kim	932 Hinman Ave, Evanston 60202	4/19/2023	D65 school in the 5th ward	In favor	Written comment	<p>Dear Land Use Commission --</p> <p>My name is Soo La Kim, 15-year Evanston resident, D65 parent, and current vice president of the Evanston/Skokie D65 School Board. Thank you for your service and for reviewing plans for the new fifth ward school. I want to urge you to approve the major variations proposed by District 65 and Cordogan Clark. It has taken years of committed work by many stakeholders to bring this plan of returning a neighborhood school to the fifth ward school to fruition, and I hope you will help us take the next steps in making it a physical reality.</p> <p>A school building is much more than a physical space -- it's a learning environment, an educational home, a center of community, ideally, a place of hope and imagination, where students can begin to realize their full potential. But for these things to exist, we must take the necessary steps to create that physical space. Let us not delay any longer. Thank you for your consideration.</p> <p>Sincerely, Soo La Kim</p>
4/19/2023 13:56:43	Elsa Wenzel	1323 Lake Street	4/19/2022	Artificial turf:: 2000 Simpson Street District 65 School Major Variations 23ZMJV-0022	Opposed	Written comment	<p>I am opposed to using synthetic turf at the new District 65 school. It contains "forever chemicals" linked to cancer. It is unhealthy for children. Plastics, which contain chemicals linked to cancer, reproductive harm and learning disabilities, and which emit those chemicals in high temperatures, have no place in a place where children play. Children track the chemicals home on their shoes, clothes and skin. Artificial turf also contributes to the toxic plastic pollution crisis, reduces biodiversity and likely has a higher carbon footprint over its lifecycle than using natural alternatives.</p>
4/19/2023 14:40:14	Jennifer Karlovitz	729 Emerson St 2W	4/19/2023	II. A. 2000 Simpson St	In favor	Written comment	<p>Let's finally stop busing Black students out of the 5th ward</p>
4/19/2023 14:56:36	Katie Weiss	1741 Leland Ave	4/19/2023	artificial turf around 5th ward school	Opposed	Written comment	<p>My name is Katie Weiss and I am a 5th ward resident and have a child who will attend the 5th ward school. I am also a physical therapist and concerned about the artificial turf being put around the school. Ankle and foot injuries are increased with artificial turf and kids are going to run around and play on these school grounds. Grass would be a better option for their sensory experience and help avoid injury as they grow. I hope you take this into consideration. Thank you.</p>
4/19/2023 15:48:40	Amanda Ziehm	1632 Wesley Avenue	4/19/2023	2000 Simpson Street	Opposed	Written comment	<p>I am writing as a parent of three school-aged children living in Evanston. I reviewed the plans for the proposed 5th Ward School, and I am concerned that the plans include 35,800 sq ft of synthetic turf for the kids' play field. Artificial turf increases the risk of cancer, injury and also becomes much hotter than grass. These types of fields are increasingly becoming banned in cities and professional sports venues across the country. (A simple google search will yield many articles on the topic.)</p> <p>The chemicals used in synthetic turf are toxic and the exposure gets worse over time as the field degrades. Grass is much safer for our kids to play on!</p> <p>I ask that the proposed 5th Ward School plan be revised to include natural grass in place of artificial turf for the health and safety of our future 5th Ward School students, who will be historically under-resourced black and brown children.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> <p>Regards, Amanda Ziehm</p>

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4/19/2023 17:01:35	Donna Su	1236 Chicago Ave #401, Evanston, IL 60202	4/19/2023	2000SimpsonStreet 23ZMJV-0022	In favor	Written comment	Dear Land Use Commission -- My name is Donna Wang Su, 17-year Evanston resident, D65 parent, and board member of the Evanston/Skokie District 65 School Board. Thank you for your service and for reviewing plans for the new fifth ward school. I urge you to approve the major variations proposed by District 65 and Cordogan Clark for 2000 Simpson Street. This has been decades of committed work by many stakeholders to bring this plan of returning a neighborhood school to the fifth ward to fruition. Your support will help us as a community take the next steps in making it a physical reality. This building is more than just brick and mortar as it is a space for growth, community, and creating a safe space for our children - the next generation - to learn, create, and discover the world around them. Thank you for your consideration,	
4/19/2023 17:04:13	Amanda Ziehm	1632 Wesley Avenue	4/19/2023	2000 Simpson	Opposed	In person	Donna	Self
4/19/2023 20:01:27	Robin Brown	1205 Elmwood	4/19/2023	2000 Simpson	In favor	Written comment	I am here to express my family's support for the commission's approval of the permit to build a 3-story building along Ashland and Simpson, in Evanston's 5th Ward. We live in the 4th ward and our elementary and middle school children walk to school everyday. Having the choice to be able to walk to a school in one's neighborhood should be a minimum for all families in Evanston. But, as we know that is not currently the case and families in the 5th ward do not have a neighborhood school. When District 65 "desegregated" the schools in the early 1960's they got it wrong. The time to make it right is long overdue. In the run-up to the recent school board election, one of the most inspiring themes we heard was Board President Sergio Hernandez's hopes for productive collaboration between District 65 and the City of Evanston. District 65's courageous and innovative board and administration have done tremendous work to bring a school back to Evanston's 5th ward, including a unanimous vote in March of 2022. Now, it is your turn. You have an opportunity to be a part of the necessary, yet long overdue, plan to return a school to the 5th ward. Over the past several years, District 65 has provided many opportunities for community input. Now is the time to move forward to the building phase. We strongly encourage you to vote without delay to approve the variations as requested by Cordogan Clark Architects, allowing construction of the school as planned. Thank you.	

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Land Use Commission,

I am in support of the construction of a school in the 5th Ward and am proud to have served on the Student Assignment Planning Committee in 2021-22 which included in its purpose that all students should have the right to a high-quality local area school. I live a block and a half from the proposed school site and have a child in District 65 who will be entering 4th grade when the school is scheduled to open in the Fall of 2025.

However, I have concerns about the proposed plan for two schools on one **undersized 3.2 acre site**: both a new “walkable” K-8 5th Ward School and the relocation of the “busable” K-8 Bessie Rhodes magnet school. The inclusion of the latter with a built-in busing requirement diminishes the walkability of the neighborhood school and the neighborhood itself.

While there have been many community members that have called for the return of a neighborhood school in the 5th Ward for decades there has not been a groundswell to add this combination of **two** schools. Further, the proposal for two schools is not the least deviation among feasible options. Additionally, the reduced size of this parcel was self-created by the school district selling the site of the former Foster School, now Family Focus, and transferring the parcel where Fleetwood-Jourdain is located to the City of Evanston. The size of all three of these parcels today is 6.8 acres, a more adequate size for the second largest District 65 school.

A better solution would be to relocate Bessie Rhodes to an existing school with capacity, such as the 7.9 acre King Arts campus where there is already capacity for an additional 200 students, infrastructure that supports busing, and bell schedules that align. Reducing the capacity of the proposed building would reduce the footprint and cost of the new building and allow more of the campus to be devoted to open space while reducing the demands on those spaces. Busing to a centralized location would likely also result in greater cost savings and efficiencies for the District.

I also note that the Major Variation Application submitted by the applicant is deficient because the applicant only answered 5 of the 7 standards for approval.

I have included a comparison of the characteristics of existing District 65 schools in Evanston for the Commission’s use. The information in the comparison was derived from a combination of reports produced by Cordogan Clark and presented to the school district in [February 2022](#) and using the measuring tool from the City of Evanston GIS Property Browser. The following may be of interest:

- The average lot size for the nine D65 elementary schools located in Evanston is **4.9 acres** and **6.7 acres** for the three middle schools.

- These larger lot sizes result in an average Floor Area Ratio (F.A.R.) of 0.35 for elementary schools and .40 for middle schools if the total building square footage is used for the calculation or **0.28** and **0.32** under an assumption that 20% of the square footage would be excluded under the zoning definition of Gross Floor Area (approximately 25% was excluded from the proposed school plans).
- The applicant is asking to construct a building that is more than **4 times larger** than is allowed in the OS District and approximately **double** the average F.A.R. for Evanston D65 schools.
- The 120,000 total square foot building would be the **second largest** behind only Haven Middle School and would also have the second largest student capacity.
- An average of 26 onsite parking spaces are provided at elementary schools and there are schools that function without any onsite parking.
- The proposed 535 feet of lay-by lanes for a walkable school would be the **largest** in the District and more than double that of the largest elementary school.

If the Land Use Commission determines that the proposal for two schools totaling 89,000 square feet of GFA meets the standards for approval, including the minimum relief necessary and that the hardship was not self-created, please consider the following alterations to the site plan:

- Reduce or eliminate the lay-by lanes on Simpson and Ashland to preserve mature trees that contribute to the streetscape. The introduction of lay-by lanes reduces on-street parking and widens the roadway, which can contribute to increased vehicle speeds and decreased safety for pedestrians and cyclists (Simpson is a designated bike route). The provision of large lay-by lanes induce motorized travel methods.
- Consider Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to ensure that a sight line from public right of ways exists for all exterior areas.
- Increase the areas dedicated to bike parking. The current areas are inadequate for the proposed number of students and staff. As a comparison, Nichols Middle School, with a capacity of almost 200 fewer students has an approximately 30' x 45' enclosed bike parking area. Creating sufficient bike parking can reduce the need for vehicular parking and increase the number of non-motorized trips.
- Provide parking off-site or below grade to allow for an increase in the limited play area on the site. There are at least 10 surface parking lots on properties within 1,000 feet of the property that are underutilized during school days, including 3 churches. If parking is located onsite, only the minimum code required parking (23 spaces) should be provided.

Thank you for your consideration,
Scott Mangum

Evanston District 65 School Characteristics

Elementary (K-5)		Land Area		Floor Arrea Ratio		Capacity	Enrollment (2021-22)	Parking (estimated)	Lay-by Lanes (ft)
School	Address	SF	Acres	F.A.R.	20% Discounted				
Dawes	440 Dodge Ave	299,876	6.9	0.19	0.15	501	313	40	0
Dewey	1551 Wesley Ave	143,944	3.3	0.44	0.35	537	370	0	90
Kingsley	2300 Green Bay Rd	170,401	3.9	0.37	0.30	435	334	46	237
Lincoln	910 Forest Ave	134,984	3.1	0.50	0.40	642	409	26	90
Lincolnwood	2600 Colfax St	385,117	8.8	0.16	0.13	508	321	36	0
Oakton	436 Ridge Ave	253,944	5.8	0.38	0.30	467	367	37	0
Orrington	2636 Orrington Ave	86,045	2.0	0.53	0.43	464	282	10	0
Washington	914 Ashland Ave	235,473	5.4	0.33	0.26	626	482	40	85
Willard	2700 Hurd Ave	213,071	4.9	0.27	0.21	533	404	0	90
	Average	213,650	4.9	0.35	0.28	524	365	26.1	65.8
5th Ward School	Foster Field	140,302	3.2	0.86	0.62	900		83	535
Middle (6-8)									
Haven	2417 Prairie Ave	309,460	7.1	0.46	0.37	937	770	80	120
Nichols	800 Greenleaf Ave	177,658	4.1	0.55	0.44	705	681	68	0
Chute	1400 Oakton St	387,178	8.9	0.29	0.23	792	569	133	0
	Average	291,432	6.7	0.40	0.32	811.3	673.3	93.7	40
Magnet (K-8)									
King Arts	2424 Lake St	341,993	7.9	0.29	0.28	653	443	86	390

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April 17, 2023

Via email – mmjones@cityofevanston.org

City of Evanston Land Use Commission
c/o Megan Jones, Community Development Department

Re: 2000 Simpson Street – 23ZM JV-0022

Dear Members of the Land Use Commission:

I represent Julie Banaei, owner of 2025 Ashland Ave., which is directly across from the proposed District 65 school. Ms. Banaei has owned this property since 2004 and has invested a considerable amount to improve and upgrade it. Her house includes two affordably priced rental units, which provide much needed naturally occurring affordable housing in Evanston.

Ms. Banaei has already sent a letter to the Commission with her thoughts and concerns regarding the proposed school. In this letter, I will expand upon some of the points she previously made and address other issues regarding District 65's proposal. I note that Ms. Banaei is an "eligible property owner" as defined in Section 6-3-8-11 of the City's Zoning Code and reserves her right to request a continuance of the April 19 Commission hearing per Section 6-3-8-11(D).

Ms. Banaei understands District 65's desire for a new 5th Ward school and its reasons for wanting to build on property that it already owns. However the specific configuration and design proposed by the District severely impacts Ms. Banaei's property, as well as the other properties on the west side of Ashland Ave.

This negative impact can be gleaned from the scope of the proposed Variations as well as the District's architectural plans and "rendering".

To begin, a comparison of the Open Space ("OS") District Building Height and Floor Area Ratio ("FAR") requirements with District 65's proposed Variations demonstrates how far the proposed school deviates from the standard OS zoning district requirements. The primary goal of the OS zoning district is to "support the continued existence of major open space and recreational areas in the City including, but not limited to, . . . large parks . . . as identified on the Zoning Map. The district is intended to apply to major public and private open space." Zoning Code, Section 6-15-9-1.

Foster Field undoubtedly qualifies as a large park and is extensively used for recreation by Evanston residents, as well as the City of Evanston itself.

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The Zoning Code allows public schools as permitted uses in the OS zoning district but, consistent with the overriding goals of the OS zoning district, **building height is limited to “35 feet or two and one-half (2.5) stories, whichever is less” and FAR is limited to 0.15.** These standards demonstrate that construction of a permitted use in the OS district is intended to be minimal, so as not to interfere with the primary goal of maintaining major open space and recreational areas for the public.

District 65’s requested height variation would allow a **55 foot building, an increase of more than 50%** over the standard limit. The request for a variation of the FAR standard is even more shocking: it **quadruples the 0.15 FAR limit to a shockingly large 0.62 FAR.**

Numbers alone tell only part of the story, District 65’s plans and rendering demonstrate how the proposed building will dwarf the two-story homes on the west side of Ashland Ave. Instead of facing an open park as they currently do, these neighbors will be greeted with an imposing 50 foot wall, with no set back from the property’s lot line. Further to accommodate the pick-up/drop-off zone on the east side of Ashland Ave., at least eight mature heritage trees will be chainsawed and replaced with small young seedlings.

District 65’s own rendering, which depicts the Ashland-facing façade of the proposed building, shows its imposing presence. As for Ms. Banaei and the other residents on Ashland Ave., the District’s rendering conveniently erases all the homes on the west side of Ashland Ave., as if these homes and their residents simply do not exist and do not matter.

Throughout its planning process, District 65 has continually ignored the rights and needs of these Ashland Ave. home owners. Indeed, District 65 refuses to acknowledge that these home owners will be negatively impacted by the building and it offers no mitigation or relief for the hardship the building will impose on its closest neighbors. Ms. Banaei challenges the City to identify another recent development where the City, through grant of a zoning change or Variation(s), allowed such a large and imposing building to be constructed directly across a narrow street from a row of two-story homes.

Focusing on the standards the Commission must consider when presented with a request for a Major Variation, see Section 6-3-8-12E, the proposed project **fails to meet:**

Standard 1 - which requires that: “The requested variation will not have a substantial adverse impact on the use, enjoyment or property values of adjoining properties.”

The above discussion clearly articulates the negative impact on Ms. Banaei and her fellow owners on the west side of Ashland. Indeed, one of Ms. Banaei’s tenants has already told her that will not renew his lease if the proposed school is constructed.

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Standard 2 – which requires that: **“The requested variation is in keeping with the intent of the zoning ordinance.”**

With respect to the Open Space District, the intent of the zoning ordinance is to allow a limited class of uses, but to ensure that those uses do not functionally eliminate the protected open space.

The proposed project functionally eliminates most of Foster Field. If the proposed school is built, the site can no longer be characterized as Open Space.

Standard 7 – which requires that: **“The requested variation requires the least deviation from the applicable regulations among the feasible options identified before the Land Use Commission issues its decision or recommendation to the City Council regarding said variation.”**

District 65 has not shown that its chosen proposal requires the **least deviation** from the applicable standards. The District has not demonstrated that a school of this particular size is necessary given current and projected enrollment. It has not demonstrated that a smaller building, both in terms of height and FAR, would not satisfactorily serve the needs of families within the District. And it has not demonstrated that this particular configuration, which unfairly impacts a small group of residential neighbors, is the only possible configuration for the building.

Ms. Banaei is an architect by trade and is willing to share her ideas for changes in the site plan that will reduce the negative impacts on her property and other properties on her block.

In conclusion, for all of these reasons, Ms. Banaei asks that the Commission recommend that the City Council deny District 65's proposed Variations.

Sincerely,

Adam Kingsley

Adam Kingsley