

1501 Central Street (Ryan Field)
Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment Application

Section 8 – Proposed Amendment

Please describe the reason for the proposed zoning ordinance text amendment.

Response: The proposed zoning ordinance text amendment is necessary to allow for additional activation of the new Ryan Field as a broader community asset, in a manner aligned with the magnitude of investment and consistent with stadium projects across the country. As a once-in-a-century, transformational project, the new Ryan Field provides an opportunity for unprecedented job creation and economic impact in Evanston. However, it is not consistent with modern stadium design, operational practice, or financial sustainability to limit use of the new facility to only seven football games per year. Such limited use would leave this state-of-the-art facility sitting dormant the remaining 350+ days per year.

Currently, Section 6-15-7-2 (U2 District Permitted Uses) is overly restrictive in permitted uses and unclear regarding what types of events are allowed. Additionally, the current ordinance should be updated to reflect proposed updates to operational requirements and restrictions, including permitted hours for events and traffic management planning for events.

The Applicant requests the amendment to clarify the types of community events permitted and to allow for up to 10 public-facing, full-capacity concerts. These changes are necessary for the new Ryan Field project to move forward, as the University needs to make material financial commitments in the coming months in order for the stadium to be built in alignment with its September 2026 target opening.

It should be noted that, although Northwestern is exempt from paying property taxes, it pays a variety of state, local, and federal taxes annually. The additional uses of Ryan Field will be subject to local amusement, sales, liquor, and parking taxes – all which will generate new tax revenue for the City. In addition, it is contemplated that non-profit organizations may perform some activities that are ancillary to, but in support of, their core mission. The Internal Revenue Service addresses this with its provisions on Unrelated Business Income Tax. It's also important to clarify – the University isn't pursuing this additional activity to generate profits – the University is a non-profit organization and doesn't have shareholders.

Additionally, the Applicant has committed to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Evanston prior to the first concert to address operational issues that are outside of the purview of zoning. The items to be included in the MOU include: the terms for the Applicant's reimbursement of the City for event-day services; specific security, traffic, and sustainability plans; the requirements for periodic updates to the Traffic Management Plan, which shall include specific traffic control measures, street closures and potential blockades during events; the parameters for a newly created Community Advisory Council that shall meet periodically, as needed, to serve as a conduit for community input; and any additional items raised during the ongoing community process. Finally, the Applicant has committed to cooperate with the City and support its efforts on the currently-pending referral to implement event-day permit parking for area residential streets.

Section 6 – Zoning Code Text Amendment

Proposed Amendments to Section 6-15-7-2 of the Zoning Ordinance

Current Language	Proposed Language	Explanation
The following uses shall be considered permitted uses when conducted in association with the above permitted uses:	<i>Eliminate language</i>	Remove ambiguity about what uses are “conducted in association with an above permitted use” and allow for use of facilities in the U2 district by the community.
Intramural and intercollegiate sports and athletic events and practice therefor.	Intramural, intercollegiate or amateur sports and athletic events and practice therefor.	Clarify that other amateur sports events are allowed in addition to high school or college athletics, such as Olympic trials or competitions, 7 on 7 football games, college pro days/combines and Special Olympics events.
Band playing and practice in connection with the above events.	Band playing and practice in connection with another permitted use.	Clarify that band playing and practice is allowed in connection with any other permitted use, not simply the ones listed above.
University-sponsored lecture, speakers, musical performances and other cultural events held within an enclosed building provided that attendance is limited to ten thousand (10,000) or less.	Indoor and outdoor lectures, speakers and other community or cultural events and musical performances intended for the University community, provided that attendance is limited to ten thousand (10,000) persons or less.	Clarify that University-related events do not have to be <i>sponsored</i> by the University and allow events to also be held outdoors
<i>New Section</i>	Indoor and outdoor lectures, speakers, non-musical festivals, social events and other community or cultural events, and musical performances in conjunction or associated with the foregoing, hosted by the University or City and designed for the local community, provided that attendance is limited to seven thousand five hundred (7,500) persons or less and no more than 60 days of such programming shall be offered outdoors in a given year. Such events shall not include any outdoor plaza rentals to organizations not	Add a new section allowing for smaller community events in the U2 District that are sponsored by the University or City, intended primarily to allow for the use of the new Ryan Field plazas by the community. Third party events will require approval by Special Events Committee.

	affiliated with the University or City, all of which shall require approval by the City's Special Events Committee.	
Luncheons and dinners and dining room facilities in a stadium provided that attendance is limited to the seating capacity of the facilities.	Banquet halls, including breakfasts, luncheons, dinners, meeting and dining room facilities, provided that attendance is limited to the capacity of the specific facilities.	Allow for other dining/private event uses, including philanthropic events, weddings, birthdays, etc.
Off-street parking for hospital employees and for university students and employees.	Off-street parking for hospital employees and for university students, employees, guests and invitees.	Add "guests and invitees" as allowed in the off-street parking.
<p>Temporary event (provided they are of a community or cultural nature and further provided they meet the conditions listed below):</p> <p>Community and cultural events of a nonprofit nature intended primarily for residents of the City and amateur athletic events shall be permitted provided that the following conditions are met:</p> <p>Sponsors of the temporary event shall obtain a certificate of zoning compliance pursuant to Section 6-4-8-2 of this Title.</p>	Public-facing concerts (provided they meet the conditions listed below):	Clarify and simplify the type of capacity events that are allowed and eliminate the requirement of a certificate of zoning compliance, as required operationally in order to book acts in advance. Note: The requirement of coordinating meetings with City staff will be included in an MOU between Evanston and Northwestern.
Attendance at such events is limited to ten thousand (10,000) persons or less.	Attendance at such events is limited to the capacity of the facility.	Allow for events up to the capacity of the respective facility.
Adequate university parking is available and is provided to all persons attending the event.	A coordinated Transportation Management Plan shall be submitted to the City Manager or its designee.	Provides for required parking to be governed by the approved Planned Development and a Traffic Management Plan that will cover utilization of off-site parking, alternate modes of transportation, the provision for closure of streets and other topics.
Private security is provided for those parking areas utilized.	Private security is provided for University-owned parking areas utilized.	Clarify that private security is only required for University-owned parking areas (or as

		established by the Traffic Management Plan).
Adequate provision of traffic-control devices at no City expense including personnel, shall be provided to ensure the free flow of traffic and the security and safety of said traffic flow	Reasonable provision of multi-modal traffic-control devices at no City expense including personnel, shall be provided to ensure the free flow of pedestrian, bike and vehicular traffic and the security and safety of said traffic flow.	Enhance requirement to include “multi-modal” traffic control, including pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
No more than seven (7) such events shall be held in any calendar year in any one facility, and each such event shall not exceed five (5) consecutive days in duration.	There shall be no more than ten (10) total days of such events in any calendar year within the U2 district, excluding setup and takedown. Such events shall not occur on the same date as other full-capacity events at the stadium or fieldhouse.	Establish the number of permitted events as 10 total across the entire district. Prohibit two full-capacity events occurring simultaneously at Ryan Field and Welsh-Ryan Arena.
Tractor trailers may not remain running while parked on the public street or in off-street parking areas.	Vehicles may only idle in approved designated areas on private property.	Expand “tractor trailers” to all vehicles and allow for idling on private property but only in designated areas. Note: Idling on public streets is restricted by Evanston idling code.
<i>New Section</i>	Concert music may be amplified during the hours of 10:00 a.m. through 10:00 p.m. on Sundays through Thursdays (subject to the following), and during the hours of 10:00 a.m. through 10:15 p.m. on Fridays, Saturdays and days preceding national holidays and legal school holidays enumerated in 105 ILCS 5/24-2, as permitted for special events pursuant to Section 9-5-20 and any associated required permits shall be issued.	Add event hours more restrictive than proposed noise ordinances and common practice to be restricted after 10:00 pm on school nights and 10:15 pm other nights.

Section 9 – Standards

Explain how the petitioned amendment relates to or satisfies each of the following standards.

(A) How is the proposed amendment consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Comprehensive General Plan, as adopted and amended from time to time by the City Council?

Response: The Comprehensive Plan was last amended in 2000 – over 20 years ago. The Comprehensive Plan recognizes that institutions are a vital engine of the local economy and outlines policies to monitor institutional development and evolution, including by using land use regulations to limit negative effects on the surrounding community. It also encourages Evanston to support the growth and evolution of institutions so long as the growth does not have an adverse impact on adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The proposed new Ryan Field is a once-in-a-century opportunity for the City of Evanston and will allow for a sustainable, year-round community asset for the neighborhood and City, while aspiring to be one of the most accessible collegiate stadiums by applying Universal Design standards for accessibility and inclusivity. The Applicant has worked closely with the neighborhood and working groups to develop protocols for minimizing the impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood. This includes a limit of 10 public-facing, full-capacity concerts per year (i.e., less than 3% of the year), requiring a traffic management plan and multi-modal traffic-control devices, limiting the hours for concerts, and providing for security at no City expense.

(B) In what ways is the proposed amendment compatible with the overall character of existing development in the immediate vicinity of the subject property?

Response: The proposed new stadium will address deficiencies of the existing stadium while reducing the capacity by 12,000 seats. The proposed amendment will only increase the number of full-capacity concerts at the stadium by less than 3% of the year annually. At the same time, it will make the new stadium financially viable and a better community asset rather than sitting dormant outside of game days and the current limited number of events.

The proposed new stadium is designed by the internationally recognized team of Perkins & Will and HNTB Architects and responds to the existing vicinity by creating a distinguished architectural design that reflects both the community and the Northwestern Athletic Campus. The gentle sloping limestone west façade echoes the original 1926 stadium design. The exterior limestone incorporates a material seen throughout Evanston and provides a high-quality expression absent from most stadiums but keeping with Northwestern’s commitment to design excellence. The new plazas, parking and landscape design will enhance the public areas surrounding both the stadium and Welsh Ryan Arena by providing improved pedestrian circulation and crowd control. The East Parking Lot is designed to mirror the quality and details employed in the recently renovated West Parking Lot and helping to unify the existing campus while providing landscape buffers to the adjacent residential areas.

Importantly, the new Ryan Field aspires to be the most accessible stadium in college football with an accessible seating capacity that will exceed ADA standards and a universal design approach for the entire site and stadium. The universal design approach strives to make the environment more inclusive and allow for equitable, flexible, simple, and intuitive use. Beginning with the site design and continuing into the stadium interior spaces and seating bowl, the universal design approach will improve the fan experience with multiple design features, including accessible parking near entrances, multiple accessible entrances, elevators, intuitive wayfinding, assistive communications technology, and accommodations for visually and hearing-impaired guests.

Finally, the Applicant has engaged an acoustical engineer to collect data on existing gameday noise and compare it to a computer model designed to predict future noise produced by concerts. The engineer's analysis is enclosed.

(C) Will the proposed amendment have an adverse effect on the values of adjacent properties and why?

Response: No, the proposed amendment will not have an adverse effect on the values of adjacent properties. To the contrary, reports have indicated that proximity to music venues and stadiums may lead to enhanced home values. As noted above, the proposal is limited to total 10 public-facing, full capacity concerts per year, consisting of less than 3% of the year.

The University asked its economic impact consultant, Tripp Umbach, to research the impact of stadium projects on residential housing values. In addition to a wide range of social and community benefits, Tripp Umbach provided the following:

“According to research published in the Journal of Sports Economics, there is evidence that the construction of a new facility or renovation of an existing facility increases property values by 1.75% for each 10% decrease in distance from the house to the facility.¹ In other words, the closer a house is to the stadium, the more property values are positively impacted. This is also evident in a property value map of Evanston, broken out by city council districts. Ward 7, where Ryan Field is located, maintains the city's highest average residential property value. The opening of a facility is also associated with a 20% increase in mortgage applications to purchase homes in the area.”²

While each jurisdiction is different and subject to a number of moving factors at any given time, much press has been given to recent mega-stadium builds in [Los Angeles](#) and [Atlanta](#). In Evanston's current situation, Ryan Field already exists, and the physical improvements to the stadium and surrounding area, financed privately, would only have a positive impact on local property values.

In 2016, Realtor.com [analyzed prices](#) for homes located near to an outdoor music venue and found at least a 9% associated premium. Additional studies reveal the net positive impact on housing prices and new stadium developments. In November 2022, West End [home of the TQL stadium for FC Cincinnati] home prices were up 2.5% compared to last year.” ([Redfin, 2022](#)). Homes in neighborhoods close to new stadium builds — or proposed stadium builds — on average, have premiums ranging between 3 percent and 15 percent.” ([reonomy.com, 2020](#))

(D) What change to existing public facilities and services, if any, will be required to serve the effects of the proposed amendment?

¹ Assessing the Economic Impact of Sports Facilities on Residential Property Values: A Spatial Hedonic Approach. (Xia Feng 2018).

² Do New Sports Facilities Revitalize Urban Neighborhoods? Evidence from Residential Mortgage Applications. (Huang, Humphreys, 2012)”

Response: The Applicant has worked with City staff and the neighborhood to address and accommodate any increased need for public facilities and services that is generated by the proposed amendment. For more than one year, the Applicant has actively listened to Evanston residents to better understand the shortcomings of the current stadium and to address future issues. Since the start of their fiscal year (September 2022) alone, the Applicant has engaged with Evanston by hosting 38 community forums and participated in 146 community events and conversations with residents and leaders.

This has included working with Kimley Horn to develop a Transportation and Parking Management Plan for the proposed concerts to minimize impact on public facilities and services. As part of this plan, Kimley Horn recommends utilizing on-site and off-site parking and providing shuttle service for off-site parking. The Applicant will also explore coordinating with Metra and CTA to arrange for rides to/from concerts without purchasing a separate ticket, similar to the arrangement with Ravinia. Finally, similar to football games, the Applicant will coordinate with Evanston Police to manage key intersections in the vicinity of the stadium, which will be done at the Applicant's cost.