

For LUC 10/11/2023 – *Comments and Questions* essay by Yvi Russell

<https://evanstonroundtable.com/2023/10/02/guest-essay-ryan-field-comments-and-questions-zoning-change/>

Here are just a few comments for, and questions to, Northwestern University, the city, and people who endorse the commercial rezoning of the entire U2 District.

How do you limit exceeding the amount of people converging on the proposed plazas both for “community” events and the special events hosted by non-city and non-university events? Is there going to be some sort of revolving gate counter on the proposed plazas? I don’t think that’s feasible.

Michael Godoy, the NU expert, during the Sept. 6 Land Use Commission meeting, referred to “a wine and food festival that might have a concert as part of the Saturday night activity of that two-day festival or something to that effect.” In that case, how would NU ensure that the Evanston community will even have access to the plazas on concert days? The plazas could be overrun by people who are going to attend the concert, and residents may not even be able to participate in the “community” festival. And isn’t a wine festival just another type of tailgating, in terms of outdoor drinking and merrymaking?

On days before or after concerts, could the plazas be rented out for commercial chaotic market-type events to peddle band paraphernalia and souvenirs, such as happened at Taylor Swift events?

What oversight will be used for the unlimited commercial events (non-university and non-city sponsored) that would be allowed in any of the U2 District venues, including the stadium? Is the special events procedure touted by NU going to require just staff approval? How is the community going to have any input in that process? Are political rallies permissible events?

The comparison to Out of Space concerts is disingenuous. Since music events would be allowed in the plazas, we have to compare the effect of concerts there with the current concert situation on the Canal Shores Golf Course. The golf course’s green space is much larger and thus more removed from a large number of nearby residences. The golf course concerts attendance is much smaller, and is truly attended by many who can just walk there. The frequency is one weekend only.

Moreover, Out of Space has an indoor venue, an Evanston presence that is, and thus has a vested interest in keeping a civil relationship with the community and the city. Out of Space therefore

recognizes the need to and is induced to follow curfews and loudspeaker sound levels. That is by no means guaranteed for the organizers of musical events that would be allowed in the plazas.

Even so, I have to state that, depending on the wind, we residents can hear Out of Space outdoor music all the way to McCulloch Park, for example. I also believe that the residents closer to the golf course would protest to the city if those golf course concerts were larger and more frequent, as they protested when the VFW post started to hold music events. But unlike those events, we are talking here about NU's proposed music events. NU is a mega corporation and, as a council member recently told residents, town and gown issues are to be considered by City Council during discussions regarding zoning text amendment. Add to this the precedent created by zoning change, and Evanston residents around the stadium and elsewhere would have absolutely no recourse to resolve any future issues of sound, traffic and pollution created by NU's proposals.

And finally, the enormous overall size of the proposed stadium, which is not to be confused with reduced seat capacity, is in order to have increased space for banquet halls and other rooms to host commercial meetings and events. Besides the real possibility that in good weather such events could spill over on the plazas or on the football field, why is the city allowing the increased size (height and square footage) which is obviously not necessary for hosting football? NU could easily renovate or even build a brand-new state-of-the-art smaller seat capacity or even current seat capacity stadium for less money and less imposing dimensions.

Proponents of the new stadium often mention their love of football for NU's need to build a new stadium. That's a reasonable request, but they should be well aware that between 2012 and 2022, that is, 10 seasons of football games, the average attendance was 35,874, and that average was achieved only because of the single 2018 high-attendance season. The average attendance during the 10 preceding seasons, between 2011 and 2021, was only 29,298!

That's why NU offers to build a smaller seat capacity stadium, and that is why NU's football team does NOT need a stadium of the proposed size! And that is why, if NU built a stadium for their football team's needs, they could build it AND maintain it for far less money, and would not need to claim they cannot do it unless they host commercial events there, which by the way, even for the proposed enormous size they do not need to do. NU has enough revenue from the Big Ten and other sources to maintain any type of stadium.

All community events shown as examples at city meetings by NU are permissible under current zoning. Such events already occur across Evanston. For example, we do have an Easter egg hunt and other kid events, movie night and exercise groups such as Tai-chi in McCulloch Park. A Halloween event, art shows and other community events already happen on Central Street. We already have a thriving community area here. Community events of every type, moreover, occur all over Evanston parks and venues, including the farmers' market and garage sale events downtown. This is a city where fun already is alive and well. We already have foot traffic to businesses and restaurants here. COVID and current parking regulations are what impedes expanded use of those venues, not the lack of events.

What is going to happen to the economic impact of current customers or current event shoppers during the times of NU's proposed commercial and even community events? Substitution and replacement effect on current shoppers – that's what NU's rosy economic forecast is not accounting for. In fact, published peer-reviewed economic studies account for substitution and replacement effects.

Finally, if you add traffic congestion, parking congestion and all ensuing pollution in noise and vehicular emissions in an increasingly hostile climate situation you will have a total overall negative impact on the City of Evanston. The city will not be able to maintain its environmental goals, its status as a Green City, or for that matter its vision to be the most livable city in America. To live well is not to be subjected to pollution of any kind.

The city should focus on injustices such as the waste transfer station and not spend time and city resources, such as the studies it had to pay for, to investigate NU's proposals, or Michael Schill's and Pat Ryan's vanity project proposals.

See [this article](#) on Schill's seven years of tenure as president of University of Oregon during which the following occurred: student protests, racial issues, Title IX violations, attempts at reducing faculty salaries and eliminating health insurance for staff and finally the pursuit of a "white elephant," that is, a bankrolled large vanity project that highlights existing asymmetries on campus.

I am sorry, dear readers, that I haven't covered all that is wrong with the proposed text amendment ordinance change. Please find out more at spotlightevanston.org; consult the accurate, evidence-based history sections, both [Brief History of Conflict](#) and [Full Chronology](#), regarding what happened in the U2 District, how the City of Evanston, the Village of Wilmette and the Illinois Courts responded to NU's actions over the years, and especially how the issue of PRECEDENT was used by NU as a tool in trying to manipulate city zoning regulations.

Yvi Russell has lived in the Seventh Ward since 1981. She is the creator of spotlightevanston.org.

LUC 10/11/23 Transcripts available - Yvi Russell

To the Land Use Commissioners and any other interested party:

I have transcribed several meetings when the NU proposals were discussed. I testify that the documents below are accurate transcriptions of the City Video-recordings.

It is always easier to have typed-out documents to consult, rather than just relying on memory or a video that just zips by.

I would ask you respectfully to take a look at these transcripts. You can do word search, scroll up and down easily, in short, I believe that like past City's court-reports, these transcripts have an important function to keep interested parties informed.

I have not yet finished my transcript on the 9/26/23 LUC meeting, but it will be posted on the same site where you can and you will find all completed transcripts re. 2023 NU proposals.

<https://sites.google.com/view/spotlight-on-evanston/home/2023-transcripts>

For now, what is available in terms of transcripts:

1. For the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-x-nKNqb_zQ

Below: Three transcripts (too long for one single document) of the LUC 9.6.23 meeting

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UJgDgt1Ezv67frDRmkSIy5kNdOpTDxkM/view>

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ga1HrS7PQVkrJyo5z5QTFyXbb3zkxsmM/view>

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YGxfPMIzhr_gCGAgrnQ3oZS5N2_L2Wty/view

2. For the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpigVWhOZqU>

Below: Transcript of the 8/31/23 NU-City Committee meeting

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bc6NsonKXOQWCT2nRav2WWfe6ai7ueFC/view>

3. For the video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BT9OxM2QgAw>

Below: Transcript of the 6/27/23 Revelle-NU community meeting

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1GGdWMBct8Gq4qoxEXS6lhuijgtKICMet/view>

LUC 10/11/23 – History informs the present – Yvi Russell

Here are the two sites that show you the history of the U2District

<https://sites.google.com/view/spotlight-on-evanston/history-index/chronology/brief-history-of-conflict>

<https://sites.google.com/view/spotlight-on-evanston/history-index/chronology/full-chronology>

Below see some historical excerpts BEFORE the 1970's

Early 1900 -- *"The area of Dyche Stadium has not been agreeable with the residents of the City of Evanston since some time in the early 1900's when it was originally conceived and there were wooden stands and the records of the City, which I can produce, show public hearings and citizens like us objecting".* [Archive; ZAC 15-10/3/74; William Strasser testimony, Evanston interdepartmental memo 4/3/1978]

1921 January 19 -- Zoning Ordinance: stadium area placed in Use District "A" Residence, and "C" Commercial; Area District: "A" and "C"; Height District 35 feet. [Archive; addendum Zoning Ordinances] *"Provided however, that stadia, when owned, controlled and operated, for educational and athletic purposes, by universities or colleges devoted to the study of liberal arts and education, may be erected to a height of not to exceed eighty (80) feet when constructed fireproof etc."* [Archive; addendum Zoning Ordinances]

1925 November 2 -- During the ZBA application proceeding to rebuild the stadium Mr. Dyche confirms, *"this proposed stadium is for intercollegiate football"*. He explains that the reason to build a stadium is for NU to be in the Big Ten, and to be competitive in intercollegiate sports. [Archive; ZBA 1925 excerpts]

1925 December 10 -- During deliberations of the proposed amendment of Section 567 of the 1921 Evanston code re. stadia height *"not to exceed 80 feet*, Horace Kent Penney on behalf of NU writes: *"In my judgement...A stadium owned and controlled by a university and used by it for athletic contests is a structure which is entirely different from inhabited buildings, that it seems to me it could be well made a subject of an exception to the [1921 Height] ordinance."* [Archive; 1925 letter]

Early 50's -- *"Issue of whether professional sports & games of various sports could be played in Dyche Stadium...goes back into the early 50's, when the old Chicago Cardinals wanted to play in Dyche's Stadium"*. [Archive; ZBA 9/21/1976, p.23 O'Meara testimony] NFL commissioner Bert Bell stops Violet (widow of Charles Bidwill, owner of the Chicago Cardinals) from transferring the team to Dyche Stadium. [16]

1954 December 20 -- IL Supreme Court, Bullock v. City of Evanston: Chief Justice Bristows opinion about the disputed property zoning issue near the stadium: *"the use of the property for residential purposes was adversely affected by its location, being subjected to the unfavorable influence of Dyche stadium and the athletic field on the west.....these facilities [stadium & McGaw Hall] do tend to have some detrimental effect in that, on those occasions on which major events are held there is much congestion, noise and confusion"*. [17]

1960 -- New Evanston Comprehensive Zoning Ordinance places Dyche Stadium area in U1 & U2 University, and B2 Districts. [Archive; addendum Zoning Ordinances]

1960 October -- NU Lakefill project is announced. NU's property tax exemption plays a role since for NU it's cheaper & politically easier to reshape nature itself than to buy land in Evanston" [29] See Addendum below

1961 November 10 -- Salvage operation for "laked" goal post. Jim Sheffield, NU's Director of Operations describes the behavior of the football crowd: *"The vandals were intoxicated, pushing 60-year old ushers and fighting with cops. Half the people had nothing to do with Northwestern. It makes me wonder what kind of crowd we're attracting."* Ken Kraft, associate director of public affairs, *"thought the goal post incident was 'rather exciting.'...it was just natural enthusiasm bubbling over'."* [26] [Archive; Daily Northwestern]

1964 -- Nash J. Dowdle, TX businessman & Chicago associates discuss with Evanston the feasibility of establishing the Brave Bulls pro football team. At the same time, this American Football Association approaches NU to use the Stadium. The Evanston Council of Churches, the Board of Commissioners of the North East Park District and NU president reject the attempts. NU president: *"While such an arrangement would mean a substantial financial advantage to the university, we feel it would be offensive to our neighbors"*. [Archive; ZAC 15:10-3-74 Johnson testimony; p. 3; Evanston Review 6/4/1964]

1964 June 29 -- NU president Dr. J Roscoe Miller, defends NU tax free status by recounting the outside efforts to make Dyche Stadium available to professional football games, and the substantial contributions to the NU athletic budget being held out as lure. NU, *"in keeping with its fundamental objective to maintain Evanston's unique character, rejected these inducements....has endeavored to be a good neighbor and a willing partner in what essentially has been a common undertaking to preserve the integrity of Evanston as a choice residential community..."*. [Archive; Miller's statement]

1967 -- IL Circuit Court, NU v Dee-El Garage, Inc., holds the tax exemption void. NU appeals. Illinois Supreme Court reverses the Circuit Court judgement, and refers to *"the university as an *136 incubus on the community"*. [1]

1996 - 2000 Gems

1996 February 27 -- On being questioned whether there is a management goal of NU to expand uses of the Welsh-Ryan Arena...to include professional venues & events, Jack Friedman, NU director of athletic facilities & operations states: "*No. We don't –NU is not in the business of generating revenue with their buildings.*" [Archive; ZBA 2/27/96, p. 56]

(In 2011 we have the first season in NU history with **two night-games** on Central Street. As of 2023 only five night-games (1935-present) were before the Ryan Field renovation)

1996 August -- NU Director of Athletics, Rick Taylor announces the structural renovation of Dyche stadium to the stadium neighbors. He provides a "Dyche Stadium Renovation" list of questions and answers that includes the following: "*Is this project being done so that professional sports can be played in Dyche Stadium? Absolutely not. The renovation is intended to improve a facility for intercollegiate athletic events and to make Dyche Stadium more comfortable for those who enjoy watching our student athletes. The use of the athletic complexes will remain consistent with zoning ordinances*". And: "*Will there be night games at Dyche Stadium? No, we do not intend to play night games*". [Archive]

1996 August 10 -- Without an Evanston certificate of compliance, NU rents the west parking lot to Mercedes Benz to showcase their latest luxury cars. Non-professional drivers test acceleration times and handlings all along the border of the lot. After repeated neighbors' complaints, the Zoning Administrator, Mr. Wolinski issues a warning letter to NU about the **Zoning Ordinance violation** and states that "Failure to remedy this situation will result in the Zoning Administrator issuing a citation". [Archive; NEW]

2000 -- 80% of Evanston vote yes on non-binding resolution to make NU pay its "fair share." [4] The Independent Senior Citizens of Evanston float a plan to de-annex NU from Evanston proper. Alderman Ann Rainey [Chicago Tribune], "*We couldn't divorce Northwestern. It's an intricate part of this community*". Rainey [Chicago Sun-Times], "*What I'd like to do is carve Sheridan Rd and have [NU] float away into Lake Michigan and maybe attach itself to Waukegan.*" [29]