

Supplemental document to include in submission by Debbie Thiersch

These additional statements provide more details related to my Continuance Presentation to the Land Use Commission on September 27th, 2023.

Infrastructure

The traffic gridlock you saw in the Isabella Street video was predictable. NU knew they had a sold-out event before it occurred, and yet they could not do anything to prevent the gridlock that night, despite the presence of their traffic officers, because the infrastructure cannot handle that amount of traffic. Quite simply, the stadium is surrounded by a residential neighborhood with small streets that cannot be changed. No mitigation steps can solve this problem.

Traffic Plan

If NU states that they will have a traffic plan and that traffic will not be a problem for these events, I can attest to the fact that traffic congestion caused by NU events and their lack of adequate parking has already been a problem for years, and despite best efforts to mitigate this issue it is not fixable due to the extremely limited parking and the few access streets to the U2 parking lots. You can see the dangerous driving that takes place in the Isabella Street video. NU cannot prevent the traffic gridlock for a 7,000 person event, yet the events NU wants to have will be bigger and more frequent. This would change the character of this quiet neighborhood in a very negative way.

Number of current traffic problems caused by NU per year

This number varies depending on the number of sold-out basketball games. If the sold-out game results in large numbers of people driving here and exceeding the available parking spots in the adjacent lots, we will experience traffic congestion and gridlock. As a point of reference, sell-out games at Welsh-Ryan Arena have attendees that need twice the amount of parking available at the adjacent two lots.

How traffic could drastically change

Regardless of the number of days per year traffic congestion and gridlock currently happens, NU is proposing an unlimited number of events that could attract crowds of 10,000 or more, and, according to the current text amendment, **an unlimited number of non-collegiate (amateur/semi-pro) sporting events up to the maximum capacity of the stadium**. This is a **huge** increase in the number of days we would experience traffic congestion and would drastically change the character of this residential neighborhood.

Unlimited events and unlimited attendees

The unlimited events that NU is requesting are more than this residential neighborhood can handle without drastically changing its character. The current wording in the text amendment still includes the unlimited number of events of 10,000 persons, but just as importantly, as I pointed out in my presentation, NU has also added the word **“amateur”** where it used to have just intramural and intercollegiate. **The addition of this one word would profoundly change things for my neighborhood**. The text amendment has no limit on attendees or number of days per year for these sporting events. Popular amateur events open the door to a **huge** number of attendees and resulting traffic congestion and gridlock on our neighborhood streets. Amateur and semi-professional sporting events will draw people from farther away who will be driving. Depending on

the type of sport, many events will fill to maximum capacity either the arena or the stadium, **and this could happen all year**. The residential neighborhood surrounding the stadium could become completely congested or gridlocked on many more days per year than we currently experience from the handful of football and basketball games. It could become extremely difficult to drive to the store, drive our children to their appointments, get to other places of business in town, get to a doctor appointment or to the hospital.

Any length of time in traffic gridlock is too long if stuck in an ambulance.

I have observed traffic congestion from sold-out basketball games disperse in anywhere from 20 to 45 minutes. But if you are in an ambulance trying to get to Evanston Hospital, any length of delay in getting to the emergency can pose a huge medical risk. One of the commenters at the September 27th LUC hearing read aloud the statement of a woman who had been stuck in stadium-related traffic gridlock in an ambulance on Central Street with her husband who had just had a heart attack. Any one of us could be in that person's shoes needing desperately to get to the hospital.

Parking restrictions

I've heard that NU may propose that Evanston restrict attendee parking on the streets surrounding the U2 district to make more room for cars to alleviate traffic congestion. The reality is that there would still be parked cars on the streets that belong to residents, so attendees would still have difficulty navigating the very narrow neighborhood streets. There will still be the same number of cars going to the same destination, so there will still be congestion and gridlock.

One-way on Central Street

I have heard that NU might propose that Evanston make Central Street one-way on event days. This will be confusing and possibly dangerous when people or cars are trying to cross Central and expect traffic in the closest lane to be coming from a different direction. This may also cause people to avoid the Central Street shopping district on those days. This could happen many days of the year if there are unlimited full-capacity amateur and semi-professional sporting events at the stadium. Changing city traffic patterns on an important street like Central to suit NU would be unfair to the residents and businesses that rely on reliable, predictable two-way traffic on that street.

Shuttles

NU may propose shuttle busses for all of these smaller events as well as stadium capacity events. However, most people view shuttles as a hassle. Many spectators will avoid parking a mile or two away to catch a shuttle and will instead drive around locally to find the end of the restricted parking zone or will take a chance on getting a parking ticket.

Precedent

I'm concerned that any changes in the current zoning that would allow concerts or other commercial and unlimited events would set a dangerous precedent that would give NU an opportunity to ask for more in the future. This is a quiet residential neighborhood. NU might want people to think it isn't, but just drive around on the residential streets and you will see how quiet it is. We don't want to set a precedent where NU gets to have even a few of these commercial events, because once a precedent is set, NU can keep coming back and asking for more. That is what happened at Wrigley Field, which started with 18 night games per year and now has 47 night events including concerts.

Conclusion

The neighborhood infrastructure is such that mitigation efforts cannot alleviate the parking and traffic problems caused by events of 7,500 or more that exceed the capacity of adjacent parking. Increasing the number of events with 7,500 attendees or more will profoundly impact the surrounding residential neighborhood, increasing the frequency and intensity of parking and traffic problems, and thus changing the character of the residential neighborhoods that surround the stadium property. No matter what mitigation NU proposes, this problem is not solvable because of the limitations imposed by the existing small streets and extremely limited adjacent parking. It is not fair for the neighborhood to absorb the impact of this traffic and parking problem.