



**Central Street Evanston**  
**SPECIAL MEETING TO DISCUSS RYAN FIELD PROJECT**

**Board Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, February 8, 2023, 9:00am**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**Attendees**

Peter O'Malley  
Kelly Mack  
Aim Larrabee  
Dylan Johnson  
Mari Barnes  
Adam Seger  
Stacia DeSalvo  
Paul Zalmezak  
Paula Danoff

**Staff:**

Angela Shaffer

**Guest Presenters:**

Dave Davis - Northwestern University  
Peter Braithwaite - Northwestern University  
Jim Konrad - Northwestern University  
Gina Speckman - Chicago North Shore Convention & Visitors Bureau

**MINUTES**

**1. GOVERNANCE:** Peter O'Malley

- a. Meeting called to order at 9:02am. Peter O'Malley welcomed everyone to the meeting and mentioned that the purpose of the meeting is to gather as many facts as possible about the Ryan Field Stadium project so the Central Street Board can be fully informed.

**2. INTRODUCTIONS:**

The meeting kicked off with a brief round of introductions from all meeting participants:

- **Dave Davis:** Senior Executive Director, Neighborhood and Community Relations and liaison for the Ryan Stadium project

- **Peter Braithwaite:** Director of Procurement/Diversity, working to leverage resources and lower barriers
- **Jim Konrad:** Director of Payment Logistics—in charge of buying and paying for things
- **Gina Speckman:** Director of Chicago North Shore Convention & Visitors Bureau. Works with Northwestern University, merchants, and other SSAs. Works with a lot of venues and was asked to join the meeting to answer any questions that might come up regarding the benefits of the stadium.
- **Peter O'Malley:** Current Central Street Board President, former Treasurer, and owner of Beer on Central
- **Stacia DeSalvo:** Owner of DeSalvo's Pizza with her husband Alex
- **Mari Barnes** - Former Central Street Board President and owner of Notice clothing and accessories with her daughters
- **Dylan Johnson** - Owns Sona Fitness with his wife Kenna and lives on Central Street
- **Kelly Mack** - Owns Mack's Bike & Goods with her husband Sam and lives just off Central Street.
- **Adam Seger** - Operating partner of LUSH Food & Drink. Involved, informed, and educated about the Stadium project.
- **Aim Larrabee** - Owns Aim & Ailie Hair Boutique with her wife Ailie
- **Paula Danoff** - Executive Director of the Evanston Art Center
- **Angela Shaffer** - Central Street Community Director - oversees the Central Street business district and all the events, programming, and beautification efforts.
- **Paul Zalmezak** - Economic and Development Director with the City of Evanston

**3. Presentation:** Northwestern presented a video providing an overview of the stadium project. The video can be [viewed here](#). Most talking points and questions can be addressed by visiting the [FAQ section](#) of the Ryan Field project page.

#### **4. THE WHY AND POSITIVES BEHIND THE STADIUM REBUILD:**

The higher level overview presented by Peter Braithwaite:

- Outdated stadium that needs a lot of updating
- 12,000 fewer seats = less traffic
- Improve accessibility to be the most ADA accessible stadium in the world
- Business opportunities
- 2900 Jobs
- \$3.5M in new tax revenue
- Opportunities to include local businesses
- Opportunity for minority contractors: 35% of spending to support local minority/women-owned businesses.
- Bring foot traffic to the area
- Improve the fan experience and become the nicest stadium in the nation
- Public transportation to help mitigate the traffic
- Enhanced security, appropriate for large gatherings
- Create plazas adjacent to the stadium for all to enjoy
- Canopy to control the stadium noise
- Create a LEED gold certified stadium that will last for the next 100 years.

**\*View the full presentation and project site [here](#).**

## 5. POSSIBLE OTHER STADIUM USES

Aside from University functions, NU is proposing 10 concerts a year, and added green plaza space outside the stadium for the community to enjoy. Proposed plaza events include:

- Pumpkin Patch
- Holiday festivities
- Theaters and park
- Movie night and picnic every year
- Sleepover in Ryan Field

## 6. MAJOR CHALLENGES/COMMUNITY CONCERNS:

NU wants to partner with the local community on this project. NU has hosted and attended numerous focus group and outreach meetings. NU hired Tripp Umbach to complete a thorough economic impact study. Based on their findings and learnings, they are facing the following challenges, including mixed buy-in from surrounding community members and businesses:

- 1) Even though there is no public financing or taxpayer funding, in order to build a new self-supporting stadium, the stadium must be used more than 7 days a year. Options to be considered are to add in 10 concerts a year. The concerts could happen between the stadium and the Welsh-Ryan arena. Some community members that live in the area are concerned with the added population and congestion to the area.
- 2) In order to make the concerts possible, zoning ordinances would need to be amended.
- 3) The liquor code needs to change so NU can serve alcohol inside the stadium.
- 4) There are concerns with traffic congestion and lack of parking.
- 5) Endowments can't be accessed for stadium use, because endowments have use restrictions.

## 7. PLANS TO MITIGATE TRAFFIC

- The new Ryan Field will be designed for a maximum capacity of 35,000 — a more intimate setting with a capacity approximately 12,000 less than the current Ryan Field. That means fewer people coming to and leaving games.
- Plans call for a bike valet system, keeping more cars off the road. Northwestern University aspires to have the stadium be among the most bike-friendly college venues in America.
- There is a plan in the works for strategic and streamlined ride sharing with designated drop-off points to prevent unnecessary traffic in and around the neighborhood.
- The University is hiring a traffic consultant to engage with CTA and Metra in hopes of optimizing public transit to/from the new Ryan Field Campus.

## QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

**Peter O'Malley asked the following questions:**

**Question:** Are the concerts linked to doing the stadium or not?

**Answer:** The stadium design needs concerts to move forward with the project in general

**Question:** What's the timing of projects and votes that need approval?

**Answer:** 1) Stadium design needs concerts to move forward with the project in general

2) Working with Councilmember Revelle to change the text amendment zoning to allow hosting of concerts and not just football. Currently only students can host concerts.

3) The liquor code needs to change so they can serve alcohol inside the stadium.

4) Building of the stadium and all the variance approvals that go with it.

**Stacia DeSalvo asked the following questions:**

**Question:** We see a good amount of business on game days. Are there any plans to include local businesses as vendors? Any ideas for advertising and promoting eating and drinking on Central Street? Any opportunities within the stadium to be a caterer?

**Answer:** Yes, if we come up with a strong plan now, years in advance, this will help with our costs.

- Expansion of the Wildcard Advantage Program
- Used to have local restaurants at the stadium at the SE corner. NU will consider local restaurant pop-ups, as there will be a much nicer space for this.
- Compass is the school's food provider. NU will see if there are ways to connect the independent restaurants with Compass.
- NU's goal is to have year-round opportunities and not just for game days.

**Mari Barnes asked the following question:**

**Question:** I have a shop on Central Street next to the former Starbucks with a main parking lot across the street. Visitors from out of town park by my store all the time. How many onsite spots will there be for visitors with the new construction?

**Answer:** There will be the same number of parking spaces - 1500 spots. The project is being built on the same footprint. There are conversations taking place in the 7th ward about restricted parking. NU is also exploring ideas. Some of the neighbors are in support and other neighbors are not. NU explored having a multi-level parking structure, but the community support is not there.

**Aim Larrabee shared an idea and asked a question:**

**Question/Idea:** What if we got shuttles for all Central Street events? Used the same shuttle from Downtown Evanston to the games?

**Answer:** Dave said that would be a smart solution and suggested putting together a shuttle working group. NU wants residents to be able to stay parked in their spots.

**Paul Danoff shared a comment**

**Comment:** Paula encouraged Northwestern to be mindful of Central Street events so they don't trip over the Central Street event calendar.

**Kelly Mack shared her thoughts:**

**Comments:** Kelly is excited to hear the goal is to be among the most bike-friendly college venues in America. The challenge with Central Street is that it is not bike friendly. It's narrow and congested and not safe. Lincoln Avenue is the local bike route used to get to Central Street. Kelly is open to collaborating with Dave and sharing feedback. Dave asked Angela to connect him with Kelly. Angela said she would make the connection.

**Gina Speckman shared her thoughts:**

The advantage of the stadium is that it provides year-round opportunities for activations that bring people to the District. For example, ice skating and 10 concerts a year will bring people to the area. They might walk by a store and plan to come back the next time they are in town for a visit. Football is not going away. The goal would be to get people to eat before the game at the local restaurants in the immediate area and focus on year-round opportunities and not just on game days.

## **8. WRAPUP**

Dave asked the Central Street Board to think about what happens during the time there are no football games or football visitors coming to the District. The timeline: Construction: 2024-2025. First game in 2026. First concert in 2027. How can NU help address that? NU is open to ideas.

Dave mentioned several times that Northwestern has funds available to support Central Street during and after construction. He also made it very clear that the Central Street Board needed to get recommendations to him ASAP. He also asked the Board to think about how Central Street can tap into the University spending partners to get students to Central Street.

Angela suggested NU help fund east end signage to attract businesses to Central Street.

Peter suggested the Central Street Board should meet to discuss wish list ideas.

Meeting adjourned at 10:04am.