

Thoughts on Design: Design Evanston reviews Central Street townhome project

by [Jack Weiss, Design Evanston](#) December 7th, 2025



Project elevation: 3233-49 Central St. Credit: Kaplan Custom Homes Inc.

On Nov. 3, Design Evanston professional members participated in a project review of the proposed 11-unit [townhome project](#) at 3233-49 Central St. by Krosha Properties.

Following are Design Evanston [project review standards](#) (in bold) with comments on the specific townhome proposal.

The project should address a perceived need in the city and its respective community.

There is a need for more housing in the city and in this neighborhood. This provides for a high-end “missing middle” product. There is also a need for resident-owned housing (which will provide more tax revenue for the city vs. rental). One of the units is reported to be offered as an “affordable” unit.

The project should be an appropriate and beneficial use within the project’s geographical context.

Provides for much needed housing in this ward [the city’s Seventh Ward]. Quality, large townhomes are a good fit in this neighborhood and the area. Massing and density are appropriate in this neighborhood.

The project should be of appropriate and complementary size, scale and proportion for its physical context.

As configured, the arrangement of the units is of an appropriate size, scale, height and configuration for this neighborhood. The variances sought — building lot coverage, rear yard accessory structure/use coverage variation and height variation (three stories vs. 2½ stories) — are relatively minor and do not pose a detriment to the site or the adjacent neighborhood. We generally felt that these variances improved both the project and its compatibility in the neighborhood context.

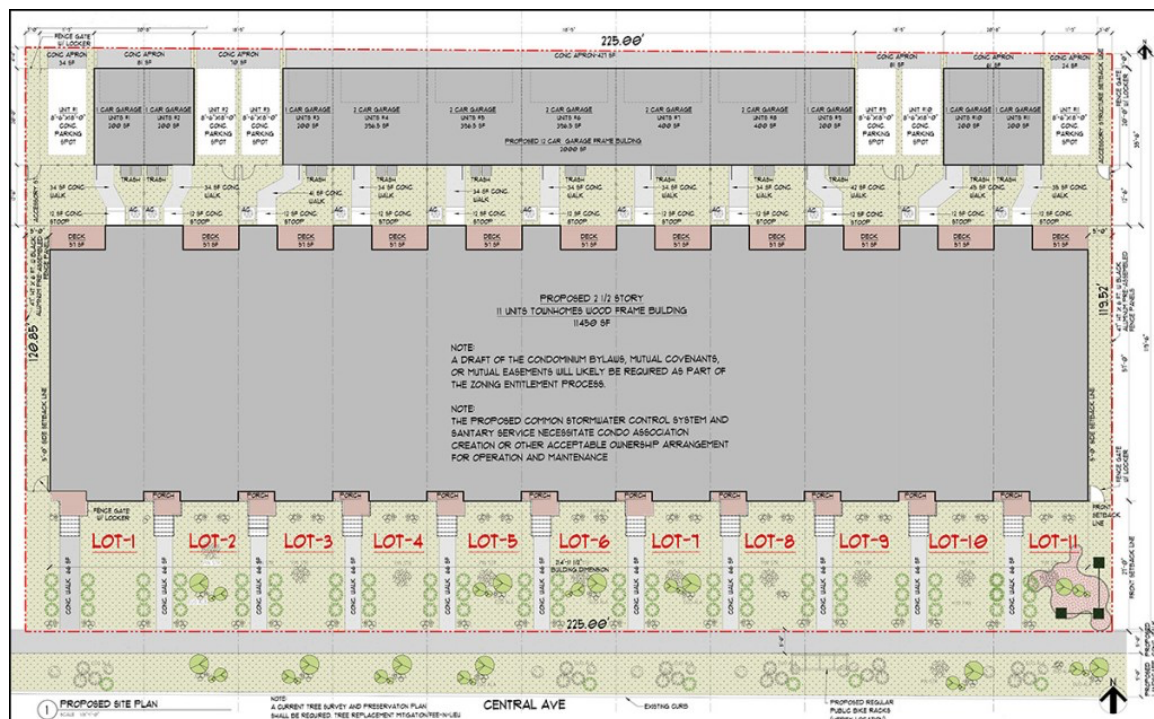
The improved landscaped parkway (widened 2 feet and provided with new mature trees) along with consistent well-designed front yards will improve and complement the streetscape appearance.

The project should reflect current progressive, creative and sustainable design goals and practices.

The design of the townhouse units is of high quality and allows for creative uses of bedroom and common area spaces. The project intends to utilize quality materials, insulation and sound abatement along with sophisticated high-quality energy efficient windows. The project will also utilize Energy Star electric appliances and will likely include a solar panel array across the totality of the townhouse roofline. Low VOC [volatile organic compound] paints and low-flow toilets will be employed. Material procurement (with the exception of high-performing windows from Germany) will be from within a 20-mile radius of the site. Patios at both front and rear will be composed of permeable pavers to better manage groundwater.

The project should provide for current and future economic growth.

The building will increase residency in this area and additional residents should help sustain the commercial retail establishments along the busy Central Street corridor. It could also encourage further retail development at the intersections of Central, Crawford Avenue and Gross Point Road to the west. Furthermore, for-purchase units are currently rare in Evanston and this project could help encourage their creation in other areas of the city. Purchased units provide more taxes to the city and usually are acquired by residents who plan on residing a longer time in the city; homeowners are more interested in civic affairs and the viability of their neighborhood vs. more transient “renters.”



Project site plan: 3233 Central St. Credit: Krosha Properties

The project should provide good city revenue generation with as low as feasible infrastructure burden to the city.

For-purchase townhomes will generate substantial taxes on property that was previously underdeveloped. The burden on city infrastructure does not appear to be significant. No increases in existing city infrastructure appear to be required. The provision of permeable front and rear patios and walkway surfaces as well as each site's stormwater retention devices located under their garages should manage stormwater very well. The units are close to commercial retail and service facilities to the west and farther to the east, accessible by walking, bicycling or local bus transit. The provision of two parking spaces at each townhouse unit will reduce demand for on-street spaces.

The project should provide for a positive, engaging experience at street and pedestrian level.

The design is sensitive to the scale and height of existing structures along Central Street. The project expands the width of the front parkway and sidewalk and provides for additional parkway trees. The front yards of the residences activate the streetscape. We understand that homeowner association covenants will better ensure that front yard elements and amenities are well designed, consistent in scale and location and well maintained.

The project should complement the practices and goals of “Complete Streets” [the city policy is [here](#)] and encourage multimodal transportation use.

Residents in this project can walk, cycle or take CTA bus service to nearby amenities; automobile usage is optional. The east- and westbound CTA bus route 201 is accessible in front of the property.

The project should be a contributor to the City of Evanston's goals to be energy self-sufficient.

The building will likely be all electric. The project will be well insulated and provided with sophisticated German-produced energy efficient windows. Attendees encouraged the developers to provide for the initial or future installation of rooftop solar panels. This could be a real marketing advantage for progressive and frugal buyers and make for a unique development worthy of more publicity and attention.

The project should provide a tangible complement of public benefits.

The project provides high-quality, high-end residences on a formerly underutilized site and increases the number of area residents that can support local businesses. The project is currently planning on including one “affordable” unit in its configuration. The streetside parkway is to be widened and improved. The encouragement of residents to utilize their well-designed front yards and patios will further activate the street. An attractive for-purchase townhome project can only encourage further similar quality projects in the city.

Additional design-related comments



Unit elevation: 3233 Central St. Credit: Krosha Properties

Facade improvements: Attendees encouraged the developer to investigate utilizing brick masonry on all or portions of the front elevations. The use of cement panels or siding on the front was discouraged. It is not an appropriate quality nor a suitable product for such a sophisticated project in a well-established neighborhood of more vintage buildings. Possibly substituting EIFS [exterior insulation and finish systems, also known as “synthetic stucco”] on a portion of the front facade with the brick was another suggestion. EIFS could also be employed on the north and south facades of the configuration. Cement siding of a compatible color to the masonry or EIFS could be employed on the garages.

To improve the project’s streetfront presence it was suggested that some adjacent units’ facades be aligned, creating a more massive appearance, somewhat like a double-house, of which there are many in this ward. These pairs would be separated visually by a single set-back adjacent unit. The resulting arrangement (starting, say, at the west end) of two aligned, one set back, two aligned, one set back, two aligned, etc. is worth investigating. It would be a symmetric composition, with the central set-back single unit at the center of the configuration.

Energy saving and sustainability: We encourage the developer to make the units all electric. We also suggest that provisions be made to install photovoltaic panels atop the third-floor townhome roof, either as an initial provision/option, or at some future date. The high-end market that the units appeal to would likely favor such an amenity. The installation of these units on this roof could be done in a very rarely achieved, visually complimentary manner. The panels’ installation would also likely double the useful life of the underlying roof.

Life safety: We understand that the townhomes are to have sprinklers, and also, possibly, the garages. Questions were raised regarding the safe evacuation of the typical townhomes via the rear basement stairway (possible lack of height clearance?).

Also, typical unit rear yard design employs fencing from the house to the garage. Garages are typically two-car units adjoined across the site, sharing walls. The failure of providing direct evacuation from the rear yard, unimpeded by having to go through the unit's garage, was thought to be a possible issue with the Building Department, and more likely with the Fire Department. Doors at the garage's rear yard elevation could inadvertently be locked, impeding exit from the property. The presence of operable gates at all rear yard fences could improve the situation, allowing for evacuation into the neighboring yard, but still off the overall property and into the alley. Suggestions also were made to reduce the garages to large single units with adjacent surface parking for a second car. This space could also be covered by a trellis or continuation of the garage roof. Attendees recommended that the developer consult with appropriate local building life safety and fire department officials.

In addition, the first-floor powder room entry needs to be investigated in relation to the adjacent stairway. The current configuration of the room being accessed off the adjacent stair landing is not appropriate (probably a drafting error).

The landscaped front and rear yards: Should be well designed and executed to provide appropriate complementary amenities to the architecture and the public way. They also should be consistent from one unit to the other. All front lawn areas should be composed of the same menu of elements to maintain a sense of unity across the front of the project. Alternative plantings may be offered, but their scale, size and general locations should be relatively consistent and not deter the perception of the individual units as belonging to the same project. These yard elements should be designed, installed and maintained by a selected landscape company.

An in-ground watering system was also recommended for these areas.

The maintenance of the front yards should be handled as part of a homeowner association agreement to assure their continued proper design coherence and overall good appearance. The agreement could also include snow removal services.

Miscellaneous: Has the future installation of an elevator been considered? This feature would assure longer ownership by those who are elderly or becoming elderly. There will likely be many new derivations of such single-family units in the future, less costly than conventional units. Or the optional addition of a stair railing seat conveyance unit?

An optional skylight at the third floor, centered over the second-floor stairway, could provide daylight to a space without windows.

Front entry doors should be of high visual and construction quality.

The use of the smaller second-floor bedrooms as dens or offices should be considered, and the basement and third-floor spaces could also be utilized as individual studioliike living units, live-work units or home offices as well. Is the use of the basement unit as a separate rental unit a possibility?

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Source: Evanston RoundTable 12.8.25