

Thoughts on Design: Design Evanston reviews indoor youth sports facility proposal

by [David Galloway, Design Evanston](#) July 21st, 2026



Exterior Elevation, 2722 Green Bay Rd. Credit: Gensler rendering

On July 1, Design Evanston professional members participated in a Project Review of the indoor youth sports facility proposed for 2722 Green Bay Road by the developer Ishbia Family Foundation and presented by the Gensler architecture firm.

Overall, the consensus of the reviewing group was that this was a good project with only a few areas of concern and some areas that might be improved upon.

Appropriate use

The project is perceived as a very appropriate and beneficial use for this area of Evanston. It will provide valuable services to the youth and their families in its market area. It will replace a vacant retail facility and reuse its parking/circulation area. It is the first of likely other new developments along this corridor.

Appropriate form

The project's massing and scale were generally acceptable to most reviewers. A few thought it too tall and massive. Given that the successful execution of the building's program requires a facility of such size and height to work effectively on the site, and that the height exceptions requested are relatively minor, the majority had no problem with the current proposed mass and height. Furthermore, it is likely that there will be further development along Green Bay Road in the future, and such development will likely be significantly taller than the existing single-story structures in the neighborhood.

The building is a shell to house the youth athletic functions inside. The exterior mass, with its functional size, can set a precedent in the urban design character and culture of this part of Green Bay Road. In addition, this is likely the first of this kind of facility in this region. It deserves to have a strong, unique and recognizable form. Subsequent conversations among some of the attendees addressed the option of utilizing a "barrel vaulted" roof in lieu of the

proposed gable roof. These attendees thought that this form would soften the height of the building, make it appear less tall and visually disruptive in this neighborhood context. This would also result in a form that is more synonymous with recreational facilities. We encourage the architect to investigate such an option. The first floor of the building along Green Bay could also be slightly set back and treated with contrasting material, resulting in this floor appearing as a base for the curve-topped rectangular element above it. More comments are provided in the “architectural design” section of this review.

Site design

Access to the property from local streets appears quite adequate. The existing parking lot of the former Office Depot is, as-is, a relatively efficient and accommodating design. Since this building use type is relatively new, there are no similar projects that we know of that can be referenced to evaluate the current provisions for parking, dropping off users, bicycle use, etc. A traffic study is forthcoming and should provide valuable information.

Our group had several observations and recommendations related to the site design and access to the facility:

1. The traffic study should reference past use of the property as a food store and office supply store to better understand and evaluate the current anticipated use.
2. Users of the facility will likely arrive by the following means: a vehicle that they park; a vehicle that drops them off; a bicycle or scooter, etc. that they park; or by foot.
3. Vehicle parking provided by the current configuration appears to be quite accommodating, providing apparently a total of 50 vehicle spaces. Nevertheless, the entrance off Green Bay Road does not allow an immediate right turn to access the parking drive aisles. Adding one could be a real advantage, even if it sacrifices a parking space or two.
4. Drop-off and pickup users should be accommodated in the manner that is most efficient and least conflicts with other site activities. The recessed drop-off area at the west side of the north elevation is appropriate. These vehicles would not have to obstruct traffic flow in the adjacent drive lane. We recommend that a permanent architectural cover be provided at this area to protect users during inclement weather and provide more of a visual identity for this function. This could be an extension from the entry vestibule area. Additional drop-offs and pickups could be done at the sidewalk adjacent to the entry area and the drive aisle.

We recommend that the entire east-west drive area adjacent to the pickup/drop-off area and the north side of the building be treated with a contrasting and different paving material. This would better accentuate its special use and, if of a different texture, influence vehicle speed. A pleasing and contrasting texture and color to the asphalt paving could be provided by permeable brick or concrete pavers that would also aid in site water management.

Vehicle circulation, related to dropping off or picking up users, is best done by access off Jenks Street or off the public alley off Jenks. This would reduce congestion in the parking area and ensure that the right side of the vehicles would be adjacent to the drop-off area. Use of the alley for this purpose should be closely coordinated with the city and residential neighbors that use it for access to their garages. Making improvements to the alley, with new paving and other possible elements, is something that should be discussed.

Exiting cars would likely use the curb cut at Jenks or Green Bay. Will traffic use allow both left and right turns at Green Bay?

5. Bicycle users need additional accommodations. There is a mention of bicycle racks being placed near the building entrance, but none are indicated on the drawings. A rack at the west end of the pickup/drop-off area (two-tiered, if necessary) makes sense. The recommended roof cover over this area would also protect the bicycles from the elements. Other locations for bicycle parking may be desired in the future. These might include some parking lot islands or borders, or a vehicle parking space adapted for this purpose. Access for bicycles and scooters could be a significant need and should be planned for.
6. Pedestrian, walking access is possible from neighboring communities and nearby bus or train stops. The current walkway along Green Bay is of adequate width and has a brick paver border at the curb line serving as a cautionary visual device, as there is an adjacent drive lane at the other side of the curb that allows 35 mph vehicle speeds. To further assist with safety and to create a better visual experience, we recommend adding small planters and/or bush plantings sequentially installed near the curb area. If the first floor at this location were slightly set back from the structure above with clear window glazing it could serve as a place for viewing (and advertising) the activities inside. It would further activate and humanize the walkway.
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It was also suggested that additional trees be provided along the east side of the parking area, creating a consistent rhythm along this portion of the site. Existing trees at parking islands should be retained and new ones installed as needed at these locations. Additional trees along the east façade of the building would not likely be a good idea as they would ultimately reduce daylight through the translucent panels, as well as obscure the attractive façade. Low plantings in well-spaced planters would be more appropriate.

Architectural design

The building design was generally well received. Insulated metal wall panels, if carefully selected, colored and detailed, would be appropriate. The use of translucent insulated wall panels to bring daylight into the interior was especially appreciated. Clear glazing at the first floor along the east elevation facing Green Bay and the sidewalk was also viewed positively, as it provides needed daylight and allows views into the building's activities. As the façade design is still in development, we encourage continued refinement of the fenestration along the east, Green Bay façade. Some attendees felt a butt-glazed first floor wall would provide an attractive, contrasting, reflective base for the upper floor. This would further emphasize the metal wall panel and translucent panel elements. The shape of the mechanical louver on the north elevation warrants further study. The south elevation of the building remains relatively underdeveloped.

The roof clad with metal panels was thought to be appropriate. Several reviewers found the image of the gable ends unappealing. Consequently, a few attendees recommended employing a barrel-vaulted roof as described above in the "appropriate form" section. It would likely appear lower than the ridged gable roof and better convey the recreational function of the building. Standing seam finish metal panels would be appropriate. The paint finish should be a low luster.

The single-story entry area just east of the drop-off/pickup area is unimpressive for an exceptional facility that is so unique and offers such great recreational opportunities. We suggest a more articulated design, possibly taller in portions, that contributes to a more interesting, engaging and festive expression. How is identification signage to be addressed? Could there be a projecting element somewhere on the north façade that would provide a west face for signage and branding for the facility?



Building entry, 2722 Green Bay Road. Credit: Gensler rendering

Interior spaces seemed generally very adequate and impressive. We do suggest that the restrooms be increased in size to provide users with the option to change and lockers to secure clothing, personal items or equipment. We did not think showers were necessary. Interior lighting will be critical in providing an effectively and evenly lit environment free of direct-source distractions as best as possible.



Interior view of second level, 2722 Green Bay Road. Credit: Gensler rendering

Energy conservation

Well-insulated exterior materials and construction are anticipated. The proposed HVAC system and space provided at the north end of the building appear adequate, though design of this facility is only in the schematic stage. The applicant has stated that it intends to adhere to the COE Energy Ordinance and 2023 Illinois Stretch Energy Code. Further investigation of various energy efficiency standards (LEED, Green Globes or IGCC-Standard 189.1) is anticipated as the design progresses. The applicant refers to only utilizing materials that meet product sustainability criteria for carbon reduction. It intends to employ a detailed energy model in developing the HVAC systems. We suggested that either the gable roof or the suggested “barrel vaulted” roof would be a good candidate for solar panels. If not initially, sometime thereafter.

We suggest the use of low volatile organic compound materials and recycled-content materials for flooring and other building elements. There should also be a building energy management system, and a means by which energy savings can be attained during off hours.

Closing

In closing, this is a very important, significant and unique addition to the urban built environment. It warrants having a special and unforgettable appearance. This facility is oriented for use by the next generation. Consulting with young people might be a prudent and mutually beneficial endeavor. Their values and opinions may be quite interesting and motivating.

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Source: Evanston RoundTable 7.22.26