

# Citizens for Glen Ellyn Preservation



October 12, 2011

Village of Glen Ellyn Plan Commission  
Glen Ellyn Civic Center  
535 Duane Street  
Glen Ellyn, IL

Dear Commissioners,

Between 2001 & 2002 the Village of Glen Ellyn began implementation of a beautification program on a section of Crescent Boulevard between Park Boulevard and Riford Road that began with burying the power lines and eventually finished with the installation of vintage-style street lighting. Part of the funding for this effort came from a private donor who wanted to enhance the beauty of this important part of the village *for all residents*. One of the major entryways into our town, this scenic street passes between vintage 1920s neighborhoods and wooded Honeysuckle Hill, site of Glenbard West High School, one of the finest historic school buildings in Illinois. In 2009, the Village of Glen Ellyn Historic Preservation Commission identified the campus as a potential landmark. This area is the very essence of the distinctive character of the village and, with idyllic Lake Ellyn Park just to the north and the old-fashioned downtown immediately to the west; it is a favorite route for realtors introducing prospective new residents to the community. The fact that we have such unique neighborhoods that draw new residents benefits the value of homes throughout.

In conflict with the idea of this area as a Glen Ellyn neighborhood is the fact that Glenbard West High School is part of a much larger school district whose current administration places a strong emphasis on extra-curricular sports. While the three other high schools in the district have relatively large campuses partly located on commercial roadways, Glenbard West is uniquely situated on a picturesque site that is also an important element of the historic fabric of the surrounding community. Because of this constricted setting, growth of the after-school sports program at West has caused increased use of off-campus fields and the heightened use of former Memorial Park along Crescent, now an artificial turf practice field for the high school. In turn, this escalated use has brought issues of increased congestion and student safety along the boulevard and into the surrounding neighborhoods. A forest of traffic signs, a gated fence and parking congestion during certain times of day are all evidence of this increase.

Now, recent plans by the school district would bring the historic character of this area to the tipping point. A proposal to add 7 and 6-story stadium light towers that would be placed at the

immediate edge of Crescent Boulevard would be an eyesore during the day and at night would add an ugly glare of blue-white light that would be seen above the tree line from the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. In addition, the contention that light from these towers would be closely contained is only partially true.

In April, 2010, due to a growing problem of excessive decorative lighting in residential neighborhoods, CGEP invited lighting experts from the Illinois Coalition for Responsible Outdoor Lighting\* to speak to our members. We learned that, like many other communities, Glen Ellyn has a dated lighting ordinance. It requires that only *horizontal* light spill be measured, that is light that hits at ground level or 3 feet above. However, light travels neither in a straight beam nor as a cone shape as is sometimes depicted. It goes out in all directions. The light that hits you in the face or lights up the side of a house so that you could read a book by it is known as *vertical spill*. When asked at a district school board meeting why the measurements of glare and vertical spill had not been given for the proposed light towers, the stadium light company representative simply said "We don't have to." While these numbers still have not been released, a visit to the lighted field at York Community High School in Elmhurst gives harsh evidence of the negative effect of this type of light pollution combined with late night congestion on the character of a neighborhood.

Since these six towers, each with six 1,500 watt metal halide lamps, do not meet the village standards for *horizontal* light spill, the school district must seek a variance not only for exceeding the village height ordinance by three stories but also must seek a variance to exceeding light allowances. And, as much as one might hope, glare and light pollution are not the type of lighting that would improve visibility on the street. With the lighting of nighttime athletics in this tight area, the already serious problems of congestion and pedestrian safety would be increased late into the evening. The district plan to lease the field to outside groups makes this a three season problem.

The Board of Citizens for Glen Ellyn Preservation weighs the impact of new development very carefully. It is our mission to protect the character of our village through preservation, planning and sensible growth; however, we realize that modern life has demands of its own. We need to ask if any given new development serves a majority in our community in some important way and, therefore, deserves consideration in spite of negative aesthetic aspects. For instance, a new water tower, while visually intrusive, might serve the health and fire safety of an entire community that might have had limited access to safe drinking water. In the case of the school district's plan to build stadium towers up to seven stories tall along Crescent Boulevard, the facts lead only to the conclusion that this would cause more harm than good to the majority in our community. The student population of Glenbard West, roughly 2200, is served throughout the day as the physical education program makes use of the new artificial turf field. However, night lighting cannot be said to serve the school's curriculum and the majority of students, nor would it serve the extra-curricular needs of very many student athletes. Accommodating 1 to 3 teams any given night does not alleviate the busing needs of the large majority of student athletes who will still need to get to daily practice off-campus.

There are better solutions to the desire to have more student teams practicing on campus than the limited hours that stadium lights might add. Last March, the Our Field Our Town organization made a sincere offer to help School District 87 put into effect the district's own earlier concept plan that would have added an additional practice field at Memorial. Unlike night lighting, this would benefit many student athletes, could be used by the physical education program and would be far less disruptive to the community. Their offer was not considered.

The Board of Citizens for Glen Ellyn Preservation believes that stadium light towers at Glenbard West would have enough of a permanent, negative impact on the character of our village that we believe would outweigh any benefit to such a small percentage of students in extra-curricular sports. *We respectfully urge our Plan Commissioners to recommend against the requests for height and light variances put forward by District 87.*

Sincerely,

The Board of Citizens for Glen Ellyn Preservation

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