

Eye on Evanston: Design Evanston reviews 900 Clark St. project

by David Galloway, Design Evanston and Jack Weiss, Design Evanston March 23rd, 2025



Rendering of 900 Clark St., looking south on Maple. Credit: Antunovich Associates

Professional members of Design Evanston met with the development team: Evan Meador and Will Hunter with Continuum Capital; Aaron Galvin with Luxury Living Chicago; and Joseph Antunovich and Patrick Cusak with Antunovich Associates, Architects on Jan. 28 to review their proposed project at 900 Clark Street.

The proposed development is a 27-story, 358-unit residential high-rise that will be located at the southeast corner of Maple Avenue and Clark Street. The site is occupied by a portion of the AMC 12 Evanston Theater and ground floor retail and restaurant tenants. The building will include apartments ranging in size from studios to multi-bedroom penthouse units. Seventy-two of the units will be inclusionary affordable housing units. The building is located in a prime transit-oriented location. It will use existing available parking spaces at the adjacent Maple Street city garage.

The ground floor will be activated by a retail space and widened sidewalks and a dedicated drop-off/delivery area. The building facade will incorporate the latest sophisticated metal and glass curtain wall system and be bird friendly. The building is intended to be highly sustainable and energy efficient, with all electric apartment units. Three Green Globes Certification and Stretch Energy Code compliance is intended.

Following is a summary of comments as they relate to the Design Evanston Project Review Standards:

Specific criteria comments

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

There is a need for more housing in the city, particularly downtown. This project will provide 358 residential units, 20% of which will be affordable units, per Evanston’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

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

The location of the proposed multifamily mixed-use building at the intersection of Clark Street and Maple Avenue is an appropriate site for high-density development, as supported by the city’s prior and current comprehensive plans and other land use guidelines. This is a prime site for transit-oriented development and will be a welcome addition to the entertainment and commercial venues in this area.

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

The development site is located within an existing mixed-use planned development that was originally crafted and approved in the 1990s as the Research Park. This designation anticipated significantly higher density than what has been realized in the area today. Given the current zoning classification, the City of Evanston’s Planning and Zoning Division acknowledged that the proposed density is appropriate.

The building’s size, configuration and height are suitable for this location. Its narrow footprint minimizes obstruction to existing views for occupants of Optima Views. From a skyline perspective, it harmonizes with nearby buildings and emphasizes this area as a downtown destination. Shadow studies indicate minimal impact on neighboring parcels.



Rendering of 900 Clark St. looking north on Maple Avenue. Credit: Antunovich Associates

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

The design exceeds the minimum standards and requirements of current applicable design and sustainability guidelines, utilizing the latest technologies and materials. As currently rendered, the project meets the Three Green Globes Certification (equivalent to LEED Gold) and aims to exceed the Illinois Stretch Energy Code. The project will be a fully electric residential building.

Some sustainable design elements proposed:

- High-performance building envelope
- White “cool roof,” green roof and permeable site surfaces to decrease urban heat island effect
- High-efficiency HVAC systems
- 100% LED lighting
- Water saving plumbing fixtures
- Energy Star kitchen appliances
- Participation in ComEd’s energy efficiency program
- The site is a transit-oriented location adjacent to multimodal transportation options
- High walkability due to its downtown location near major entertainment venues
- The project intends to lease unused parking spaces within the existing Maple Avenue city garage rather than construct a new structure
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5. The project should provide for current and future economic growth

The building will increase downtown residency, offering long-term economic benefits for retail, entertainment and commercial businesses in the area.

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

The project is expected to generate significant tax revenue with a relatively low infrastructure burden, as few residents are anticipated to own automobiles or have school-aged children. Data from similar completed projects in the city supports this assumption. However, it may be prudent to confirm the availability of additional parking spaces within the existing city garage as tenant needs evolve.

The development will utilize the existing water detention vault under the Maple Street garage, and new sanitary sewer connections and stormwater volume control measures will meet Metropolitan Reclamation Water District standards.

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

The project will improve the narrow streetscape along Clark Street with a widened, newly paved sidewalk, enhanced landscaping and new lighting in the public right-of-way. The corner retail space (2,930 square feet) is intended for a local coffee shop or similar business that will serve the community. A staffed front desk in the residential lobby will contribute to a more active and safer pedestrian environment.



Rendering of 900 Clark St., looking east on Clark Street. Credit: Antunovich Associates

8. The project should complement the practices and goals of “Complete Streets” and encourage multi-modal transportation use

Located near both CTA and Metra rail services, the project’s location is ideal for encouraging transit use. The building will also feature a large bicycle storage area and nearby bike pathways. Walkable destinations further support multimodal transportation. Anticipated vehicle usage will be minimal, likely less than when the theaters previously operated at full capacity.

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

The development aims to meet and exceed the Illinois Stretch Energy Code with all-electric residential units. It incorporates nearly every commercially available component for energy self-sufficiency and includes infrastructure for potential conversion to a fully electric building in the future.

10. The project should provide a tangible complement of public benefits

The development will enhance downtown by attracting residents who support local businesses, driving long-term economic, social and cultural growth. It will generate significant tax revenue, permitting fees and use underused municipal parking. Additionally, 20% of the units will be affordable, per Evanston’s Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.

Specific design comments

1. The project’s location is highly appropriate for a high-rise residential building. The narrow profile and east-west orientation reduce view obstructions for Optima Views residents and cast minimal shadows on adjacent properties.

2. The building's window-wall system is visually appealing, with elegant, reflective glazing and metal framing that effectively minimizes the perception of mass.
3. The streetscape along Clark Street will be significantly improved, creating a more pedestrian-friendly scale than the current design.
4. The fully staffed concierge in the lobby is a strong asset for the building and the neighborhood.

Summary



Aerial photo mockup of 900 Clark St. looking northeast.

The proposed design enhances Evanston's skyline with its modern, clean lines and well-considered massing, making it a welcome addition to the downtown fabric. Its slender profile and glass and metal facade contribute to a visually appealing composition that integrates seamlessly with its surroundings.

At the street level, the project fosters a strong sense of community along Clark Street by improving the pedestrian experience with widened sidewalks, new landscaping and active retail frontage.

The combination of architectural refinement and thoughtful urban engagement positions this development as a valuable and contextually appropriate contribution to Evanston's evolving cityscape.

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