



ENVISION
EVANSTON **2045**

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

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LETTER FROM THE MAYOR

Dear Fellow Evanstonians,

I'm delighted to share this initial draft of our comprehensive plan for Envision Evanston 2045. This document is intended to outline the community's shared values and vision, and therefore give the City a roadmap by which we can make decisions about development, projects, programming, infrastructure, spending, and more.

We are in the midst of an eighteen-month process that has requested a great deal from residents. We've asked for your time, input, ideas, experience, connections to other community members, and trust as we've begun to shape what this twenty-year plan will look like. Envision Evanston 2045 is our opportunity to put down a marker and say that here and now, we commit to these collective aspirations for the next generation.



This draft is just that—a moment in time that captures the input from community members. And as appreciative as we are in all you've contributed thus far, we are asking you for more. Is what we have so far accurate? What is missing and what needs to be tweaked? In the coming months, we will continue to rely on your input as we finalize this plan.

I'm forever grateful for your dedication to making Evanston a wonderful community today, and your commitment to making it even better for the next generation.

Sincerely,

Daniel Biss

A VISION OF EVANSTON IN 2045

The community was asked to imagine Evanston in 2045. You shared your dreams and aspirations, which helped shape Envision Evanston 2045, a Comprehensive Plan and long-range policy guide for future development in Evanston.

In 2045, Evanston is a vibrant, resilient, and welcoming community for all. What does this community look like?

Evanston is a diverse and healthy community. We celebrate our arts, culture, history, and neighborhoods. Convenient access to parks and open spaces and the preservation of our city's heritage promote physical, emotional, and mental well-being.

Evanston is energy and resource efficient, decarbonized, and resilient to the effects of climate change. Our buildings and transportation systems consist of sustainable materials and are powered by renewable energy. Our social and physical infrastructure are designed to withstand extreme weather events and protect residents.

Evanston neighborhoods offer abundant housing choice and people are secure in their homes. The housing supply aligns with the community's needs and residents enjoy a wide range of social and recreational amenities without fear of being displaced from their neighborhood.

Evanston's strong circular economy provides job security and opportunity. Steady growth and innovation cultivate jobs in a wide range of fields close to home. Evanston's small, minority, and women-owned businesses and enterprises are thriving, contributing to a vibrant local business scene.

Evanston's neighborhoods are connected through a robust network of pedestrian, bike, and transit options. People can get where they need to in a safe, convenient, and affordable manner.

Envision Evanston 2045 charts out the path to achieve our vision through proactive planning, community collaboration, and bold action. Our vision is ambitious but certainly attainable, and we invite you to join together to achieve it.

VISION STATEMENT

IN 2045, EVANSTON IS A VIBRANT, RESILIENT, AND WELCOMING COMMUNITY FOR ALL. EVANSTON CELEBRATES ITS DIVERSITY THROUGH OUR ARTS, CULTURE, HISTORY, AND NEIGHBORHOODS. STEADY GROWTH IN OUR LOCAL CIRCULAR ECONOMY CULTIVATES OPPORTUNITIES CLOSE TO HOME WHILE ACHIEVING AMBITIOUS AND NECESSARY CLIMATE ACTION. OUR ABUNDANT ACCESS TO PARKS AND OPEN SPACES PROMOTES WELL-BEING AND EXTENSIVE HOUSING OPTIONS MAKE LIVING IN EVANSTON SAFE AND ATTAINABLE. EVANSTON'S NEIGHBORHOODS ARE CONNECTED THROUGH A ROBUST NETWORK OF TRANSIT, BIKE, AND PEDESTRIAN OPTIONS. WE ACHIEVE THIS VISION THROUGH PROACTIVE PLANNING, COMMUNITY COLLABORATION, AND BOLD ACTION.

A VISION OF EVANSTON IN 2045



FOSTER A HEALTHY COMMUNITY

We strive to build a vibrant, inclusive community for all residents by:

- Enhancing public health through programs that provide support and wrap-around services and proactively prepare for emergency situations.
- Reimagining our city through human-scale design and decarbonization to enhance livability and foster physical, mental, and social wellbeing.
- Ensuring equitable access to safe and attainable housing and daily needs including food and medical services, while also ensuring protection from pollution and environmental hazards.
- Promoting safety by designing accessible neighborhoods with well-lit streets, ample sidewalks, and designated bike lanes to encourage active transportation for all.
- Fostering accessible transportation systems that support individuals of all abilities.
- Enhancing the aesthetics of the built environment through thoughtful urban design, green spaces, expansion of biodiverse natural landscapes, and creating visually pleasing and inspiring places for residents to live, work, and play.

Comprehensive Plan Strategies related to – Land Use, Housing, Environment, Transportation, and Placemaking, Arts and Culture.



STRENGTHEN THE LOCAL ECONOMY

We aspire to build a prosperous, inclusive community where economic vitality and quality of life are interwoven and beneficial for all by:

- Supporting local businesses and promoting workforce development initiatives.
- Encouraging entrepreneurial endeavors and small business development through accessible resources, streamlined development review, and financial incentives.
- Revitalizing and supporting downtown and business districts to create thriving hubs characterized by a mix of public spaces, retail, dining, entertainment, office spaces, and housing.
- Celebrating and retaining Evanston's unique identity and sense of place, encouraging adaptive use and rehabilitation projects, and increasing opportunities for heritage tourism to spur preservation-based economic development.

Comprehensive Plan Strategies related to – Economic Development, Land Use, Placemaking, Arts and Culture, and Preservation.



PRIORITIZE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

We strive to actively preserve our natural environment for the benefit of current and future generations by:

- Fostering adaptive use and rehabilitation, repair, salvage and reuse of high-quality building materials, and deconstruction rather than demolition.
- Conserving lakefront, beaches, and ecologically sensitive areas through sustainable management practices that build resilience to the effects of climate change, maintain water quality, support biodiversity, and provide public access and enjoyment.
- Integrating biodiverse ecosystems in parks and open space to promote health and well-being.
- Expanding green infrastructure to prevent flooding, reduce the heat island effect, and provide nature-based solutions to stormwater management.

Comprehensive Plan Strategies related to – Economic Development, Land Use, Placemaking, Arts and Culture, Environmental Sustainability, Preservation, and Parks and Open Space.



INVEST IN TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

We strive to advocate and invest in equitable, resilient, and environmentally sustainable transportation system where every resident has choices by:

- Eliminating greenhouse gas emissions by increasing active transportation and mass transportation options.
- Creating corridors that improve the reliability and safety of all modes of transportation.
- Working with transit agencies to ensure accessible and reliable transit for all who depend on it and seek to use it.
- Investing in transportation choices that meet the needs of all ages and abilities.



INCREASE HOUSING DIVERSITY

We strive to build resilient and inclusive neighborhoods where people can find suitable, efficient, and attainable housing by:

- Developing a wide range of housing types and sizes to meet the diverse needs of our community.
- Implementing policies and programs that prevent displacement.
- Removing barriers to medium density and affordable housing solutions that bridge the gap between single-unit homes and large apartment complexes.
- Increasing the efficiency and resilience of housing and removing health hazards.

Comprehensive Plan Strategies related to – Housing, Land Use, Economic Development, Transportation and Mobility.



CREATE EQUITABLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ALL

We strive to build an equitable, inclusive, and sustainable community where every community member has the opportunity to thrive and enjoy a high quality of life and well-being by:

- Enhancing transportation options and access for all ages and abilities.
- Promoting local businesses and workforce development to enhance economic vitality.
- Removing barriers to housing choice in all neighborhoods.
- Celebrating arts and culture to bring the community together.
- Prioritizing environmental sustainability to enhance health and well-being.
- Cultivating a culture of active community participation in the decision-making process.

Comprehensive Plan Strategies related to – Land Use, Transportation & Mobility, Economic Development, Housing, Arts and Culture, Environmental Sustainability.



CELEBRATE ARTS AND CULTURE

We aim to honor our history, celebrate our diversity, and foster a thriving cultural landscape for all by:

- Preserving, rehabilitating, and adapting our diverse historic resources to maintain Evanston's heritage and connect residents to our shared past.
- Supporting diverse cultural expressions and events that reflect the unique identity of our community.
- Developing vibrant public spaces with impactful public art so people can gather, interact, and engage.

Comprehensive Plan Strategies related to – Placemaking, Arts & Culture, Economic Development, Land Use, Transportation and Mobility, Environmental Sustainability.

CHAPTER 1:
FUTURE LAND U



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USE STRATEGY



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FUTURE LAND USE STRATEGY

FACILITATING FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Evanston must deploy bold action to achieve the goals of Envision Evanston 2045. The land constraints cause tension with important issues like increasing housing diversity and prioritizing climate mitigation and resilience. Resolving this tension might entail choosing one option over the other, but Evanston recognizes that it is not a zero-sum game. It is possible to reconcile these seemingly divergent objectives, and Envision Evanston 2045 provides a framework that can evolve and adapt as new trends emerge.

CENTERS AND CORRIDORS FRAMEWORK

This plan outlines a land use strategy that focuses development in mixed-use centers and corridors. It also uses historic preservation as a land use tool to maintain architectural diversity and celebrate cultural heritage. A city-wide analysis to locate community resources and land with development potential was done to support the identification of centers and corridors.

LAND USE AND TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Coordinated land use and transportation planning is required to implement the Centers and Corridors Framework because each can have a significant impact on the other. For instance, creating higher density centers is not sustainable if a robust transportation network is not in place. Mobility strategies are effective when they connect people to places relevant to their needs and lifestyles, which is largely influenced by land use.

The Future Land Use Map (Figure 01) is an important policy tool that the City will use to guide development decisions over the next 20 years. Future changes to regulations such as zoning and development standards will be informed by this map.

POLICIES

Beyond land use and mobility, there are additional policies that work together to bring the vision of this plan to reality. These policies support the overarching goals of the plan by addressing important quality of life factors, such as community health, economic development, environmental sustainability, housing, preservation, placemaking, arts, and culture.



Source: Adobe Stock

* THIS MAP IS NOT FINAL, AND EXISTING PARKS ARE MISSING. THEY WILL BE ADDED AT A LATER DATE

FUTURE LAND USE

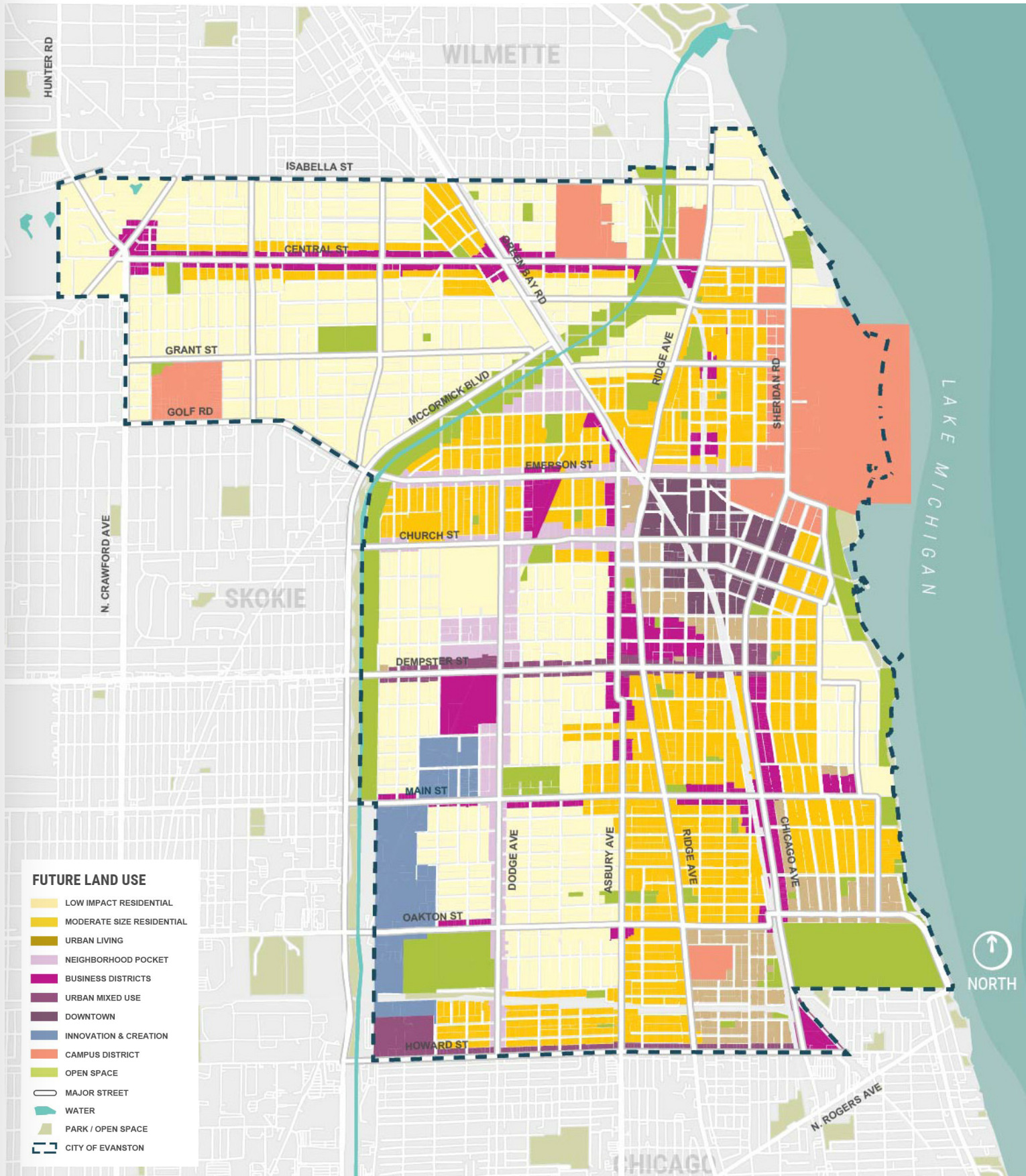


Figure 1 Source: HDR, Inc.

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PLANNING CONTEXT

FOUNDING AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT

The founding of Evanston began when settlers from the East Coast arrived in the mid-19th century. The city's development was significantly influenced by the establishment of Northwestern University in 1851 when a group of Methodist business leaders and educators from Chicago sought to create an institution of higher learning in the Northwest Territory. John Evans, one of the founders of the university, submitted plans for a city to the county judge and their wishes to rename it Evanston in 1857.

The arrival of the Chicago and North Western Railway spurred Evanston's growth. The amenities in the city made it an attractive location for those looking to escape the hustle and bustle of Chicago. The City was officially incorporated in 1863, and by the late 19th century Evanston developed a reputation as a cultural and educational hub. Following the Civil War, Evanston saw a major economic and population boom. The population quadrupled between 1860 and 1870. Between the Chicago Fire of 1871 and the 1890s, Evanston would see large estates, many covering entire blocks, constructed in today's Lakeshore and Ridge Historic Districts. By the early 1890s, Evanston added telephone service, free mail delivery, and a second newspaper to its list of civic accomplishments. This period also witnessed the formation of many social, philanthropic, and cultural organizations. The Woman's Club, formed in 1899, is still active today. Evanston continued to develop independent of Chicago through the 19th century, annexing the former villages of north and south Evanston, valuable unincorporated land in northwest Evanston, and industrial opportunity in west Evanston – transforming from a town to an independent City.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE AND PROJECTED POPULATION GROWTH

POPULATION GROWTH AND PROJECTIONS

Since the early 2000s, the Chicago Metropolitan Area has experienced slower growth and periods of population decline. While Evanston's population grew steadily in the early 2000s, it declined in the wake of the Great Recession in 2008, consistent with regional trends. Evanston's population continued to decline until the early 2020s when it began to recover (Fig 02). In 2023, about 77,800 residents lived in Evanston, which is nearly 5% more than the population in 2000. This growth is higher than that of Cook County and the State of Illinois in the same time period. Based on CMAP's data, Cook County has experienced an average annual growth rate of 0.05% from 2010 to 2023, with a projected population of approximately 5,285,730 by 2045. Evanston, however, has seen a slightly higher growth rate of 0.35% annually, with a projected population of about 84,175 by 2045.

As an established employment center with potential for infill development, Evanston is well positioned for future growth. Evanston's transit stations provide a unique opportunity to accommodate denser residential development, helping to meet the community's housing needs while increasing efficiencies in the regional transportation system. Property values and housing costs in Evanston are higher than the surrounding region, substantiating robust demand for the area. The schools, lakefront access, green space, diversity, walkability, architecture, and public transportation continue to make it a desirable location for residents.

Accommodating this projected population growth will require proactive efforts by the City to create a conducive development environment and maintain a high quality of life for its residents. In particular, the City must focus on increasing housing options, providing amenities, and creating employment opportunities to attract young families, entrepreneurs, and recent graduates. Several factors could influence this trajectory, including policy changes, economic development efforts such as new job centers or transportation hubs, and broader regional trends like migration due to climate change. By addressing these dynamics, Evanston can shape its future rather than react to whatever the future brings.

AGE

Evanston has a large youth and young adult population and residents aged 15-64 comprise 67% of the city's population. Evanston's median age increased from 34.4 in 2012 to 37.6 in 2022, which is attributed to the growing proportion of residents aged 65 and above (increasing from about 12% in 2010 to 17% in 2022). Evanston's median age is slightly higher than Chicago (35.3) and Cook County (37.5) but lower than both Skokie (43.0) and Wilmette (45.7). Northwestern University students lower Evanston's median age, which otherwise is trending older. This poses a risk to Evanston's economic growth if older people retire and there are insufficient young people to replenish the workforce.

Population data indicates that relatively few families with young children call Evanston home. The local school district projects that total school enrollment will decrease more than seven percent from 2023 to 2029. The largest decline will occur in younger grades due to fewer families with young children calling Evanston home. This trend could be attributed to rising housing costs in Evanston. The City should remove barriers to housing production and affordability to address displacement, enhance public spaces, and attract families and younger populations.

RACE AND ETHNICITY

Evanston's racial composition changed significantly during the Great Migration, a period in the early 20th century when millions of Black people moved from the rural South to the urban North in search of better economic opportunities and to escape Jim Crow laws. Evanston was a destination for many Black families seeking a new life.

Before the Great Migration, Evanston was already home to a well-established Black community. As the number of Black residents grew, they were forced to live in less desirable areas by discriminatory housing policies and lending practices such as redlining. As a result of systemic racist policies at all levels

of government, Evanston's Black residents were segregated from the overall community. Despite facing racial segregation and discrimination, the Black community established their own institutions including churches, schools, and social organizations, contributing to Evanston's rich cultural mosaic.

Today, more than half of Evanston's population is White and the percentage of Black, Asian, and Mixed-Race community members is higher than state and national averages but lower than Cook County. Evanston neighborhoods exhibit greater differences in racial composition than the city as a whole. In northwest Evanston, more than 80% of residents are White, while in west Evanston, that number drops to just 11%.

Black-White segregation is most prominent, whereas Asian and Latino populations tend to be more integrated. A larger percent of Latino community members reside in southwest Evanston than other portions of the City. Black residents are much more likely to call southwest or west Evanston home. The City will need to reevaluate and prioritize equitable investment in services, public spaces, and infrastructure in areas that have lacked public and private investment.

HOUSEHOLD SIZE

The number of households in Evanston grew from around 28,500 in 2012 to just under 31,000 in 2022. While household counts have increased, Evanston's average household size decreased from 2.36 people in 2012 to 2.27 in 2022, less than the average size in Cook County (2.49) and the City of Chicago (2.36). Households over the age of 65 make up 30% of the total households, higher than Chicago (24.7%) and Cook County (28.5%) and indicating a larger proportion of retired empty nesters.

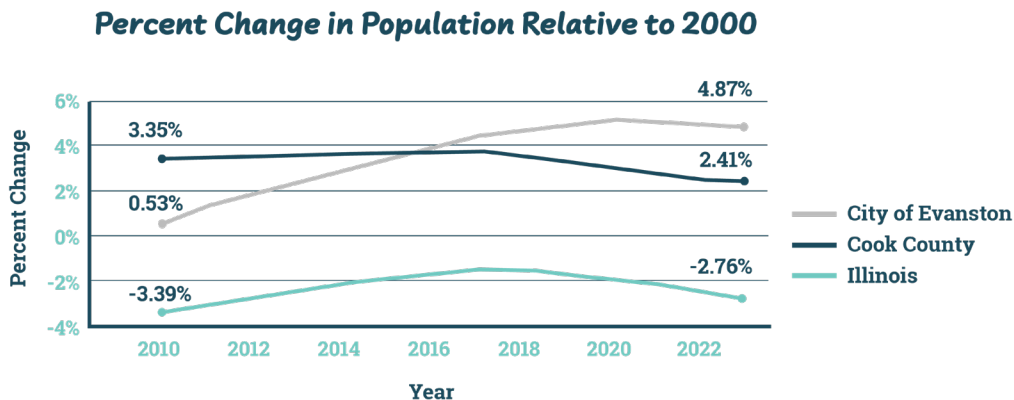


Figure 2 Source: HDR, Inc

HOUSEHOLD INCOMES

Evanston's median household income is \$97,144, higher than that of Chicago (\$70,386) and Cook County (\$76,632) and indicates that Evanston is, on the whole, a relatively wealthy community. However, the distribution of wealth in Evanston is not equal. Neighborhoods with predominantly White residents have higher median incomes than neighborhoods where Black and Latino residents generally live.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Evanston residents have an average life expectancy of 82 years, more than three years longer than the US average. Life expectancy varies greatly, up to 13 years, between and across neighborhoods. The disparity in life expectancy illustrates a common pattern of inequity as observed by income across Evanston.

CLIMATE

Evanston has demonstrated national leadership on climate action and resilience for nearly two decades. The first city in Illinois to set a goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2050, Evanston frequently leads the region on innovative climate legislation and programming. Because of extensive community-led climate action planning, Evanston has developed hundreds of strategies to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to the effects of climate change over the next 25 years.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Illinois's average temperatures have already risen 1.5 degrees Fahrenheit over the last century, and are expected to rise between 7 and 12 degrees more by the end of the century. Temperatures in the 2000s have been higher than in any other historical period, with the exception of the early 1930s Dust Bowl era. Annual precipitation has been above average since 1990. Very heavy precipitation events have already risen 37% in our area and are expected to increase in frequency. Increases in precipitation will most likely occur during the winter and spring. Illinois has experienced a dramatic increase in the number of 2-inch extreme precipitation events, which can cause severe flooding. The intensity of future droughts is projected to increase even as precipitation increases. Water levels in the Great Lakes have fluctuated by 3 to 6 feet since the late 19th century .

According to the United States Department of Agriculture, due to an overall 4 degree increase in temperatures since 2012, Evanston's Hardiness Zone, which assesses plant hardiness based on average annual extreme minimum winter temperatures, has changed from 5b to 6a, affecting which plants will thrive during certain seasons. Due to the effects of

climate change, it is expected that winter temperatures will continue to rise, affecting cultivated plant hardiness, native species health, and invasive species proliferation.

As other regions experience the effects of climate change that exacerbate events such as wildfires, Evanston may experience diminished air quality. In the summer of 2023, Evanston closed its beaches and modified summer camp activities for several days due to wildfire smoke that caused an unhealthy air quality index.

ARTS, CULTURE, AND ARCHITECTURE

Evanston is known for its diverse architecture and arts and culture scene. Historic resources and landmarks serve as a testament to the City's rich history. From the grand Victorian homes of the 19th century to innovative modernist designs of the 20th century, the architectural landscape enables the past and present to coexist. In 1917, when Daniel Burnham Jr. and his colleagues developed the first Plan of Evanston, they wrote, "For a full half century Evanston has had a character. People have thought of it as a place distinct, somehow, from the other suburbs of Chicago."

This mindset continues to define the community. As Evanston evolved, it maintained a distinct identity that sets it apart from other communities in the Chicago metro area. Evanston continues to be a dominant education and employment hub that welcomes researchers and students from across the globe and a daily inflow of workers. Its cultural fabric, natural beauty, and recreational amenities make it a desirable place to live.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Engaging the community is a vital part of this planning process. The activities and events described in a separate Public Engagement Report (Appendix B) were designed to involve and engage all segments of the public to achieve sustainable outcomes through an equitable decision-making process. We brought together stakeholders (current and future residents, developers, large and small property owners, business owners, employers, government agencies and non-profit organizations, regular and occasional visitors) to facilitate interaction and exchange and to discover common ground.

To ensure that as many voices as possible were heard, the project team engaged with the community at multiple touch points both in-person and online throughout the planning process. More than 3,000 community members have helped to shape Envision Evanston 2045.

Nearly 2,500 community members participated in the survey, which was offered in both English and Spanish in online and paper formats. The survey, which was open from February through May, collected input on a range of topics including housing, transportation, downtown vibrancy, and parks and recreation. The survey also included an open response field that allowed respondents to share input that wasn't specifically solicited in the survey.

The team also held seven "Perspectives" community-wide meetings in various physical locations and online formats during the same time frame.

To encourage greater participation from the community, the team prepared materials for meetings-in-a-box that volunteers could use to seek feedback from the community at any time with or without the assistance of a facilitator from the project team. Volunteers engaged over 180 community members across approximately 40 meetings-in-a-box.

The project team also attended meetings in Wards 1, 3, and 9, in addition to combined meetings for Wards 6 and 7 and Wards 2, 5, and 8. These meetings enabled residents in the respective wards to share issues and suggestions that were specific to their neighborhoods.

About 31 people from various organizations, professions, age, and interest groups in the community were engaged through a community visioning workshop to help identify future trends that could impact Evanston and develop various scenarios showing how they could be addressed.

The team conducted intercept surveys at train stations, grocery stores, busy street corners like Main & Dempster, outside neighborhood ice cream shops and pizza places, and attended community events such as Evanston Made Makers Market and Downtown Summer Sounds to hear from an additional 330 people.

The team led focus groups to explore the topics of Arts & Culture, Development Community, Design Professionals, Equity and Prosperity, Housing and Community Development, Jobs and the Economy, Land Use and the Built Environment, Social Gathering Places, and Transportation and Mobility, where 128 people participated in-person and over 300 responded to the corresponding online survey. Finally, a development scenario workshop was held where about 43 participants worked with the team to explore the type of development that might be appropriate in several locations in the community.

MAIN THEMES

Data from the community engagement activities provided important insights into the people's perception of Evanston's strengths and weaknesses and, more important, the community's vision and aspirations for their home in the future. The predominant themes that emerged are:

- 1. High Cost of Housing:** Housing is expensive, and there is a lack of housing options that fit the lifestyles of younger or multi-generational families as well as other diverse demographics.
- 2. Need for Transportation Improvements:** The City needs more protected bike lanes and sidewalk enhancements. Parking is a challenge and causes some residents to shop elsewhere.
- 3. Preserve Evanston's Sense of Place:** New buildings should complement existing design patterns and vocabularies. Evanston's tree canopy, lakefront, historic neighborhoods, and resources are important assets.
- 4. Climate Change:** Emerging climate trends are here and our policies and rules are not aligned to address them.
- 5. Protect Vulnerable and Marginalized Community Members:** The City should prioritize racial equity, support people with disabilities, repair past harms, restore environmental justice, and support the unhoused.
- 6. Enhance Public Spaces and Activities:** The City needs to update and add more parks and outdoor spaces and should hold and encourage more street activities.
- 7. Address Public Safety:** Crime and traffic issues contribute to a lower perception of safety.
- 8. Support Local Businesses and Downtown Vibrancy:** The City should provide more resources to local businesses. Downtown should have more shops, restaurants, and entertainment options.

This plan combines these key takeaways with other data insights to develop the policies and actions that are described in the subsequent chapters.

CHAPTER 2 :
LAND USE










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LAND USE

INTRODUCTION

This land use chapter sets policy directives for how Evanston will use its land resources. This section integrates environmental justice, equitable development, and smart growth approaches to maintain healthy and inclusive neighborhoods. The land use strategy prioritizes a centers and corridors framework which focuses on developing densely populated centers connected by corridors with efficient public transportation and active transportation infrastructure. Centers are designated areas that serve as hubs for economic, social, and cultural activities. They typically feature mixed-use development where opportunities to live, work, and play coexist. Corridors are the transportation routes that link these centers, promoting connectivity and accessibility. Overall, a centers and corridors framework represents a holistic approach that can align development to achieve the vision and goals for Evanston in 2045. The table below includes the policy statements that should be used when making land use decisions and links them to the goals of the comprehensive plan.

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
1	Direct development to centers and corridors to ensure the efficient use of land and access to transportation choices and amenities.	
2	Ensure development, infrastructure improvements, and zoning decisions implement the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map.	
3	Evaluate development and redevelopment proposals to measure their impact.	
4	Prioritize capital improvement projects in centers and corridors.	
5	Encourage the transition of industrial areas and buildings to support innovation districts with a thriving entrepreneurial and research scene that foster collaboration, innovation, and economic development through close proximity and shared resources..	
6	Collaborate with local institutions to implement Envision Evanston 2045 and address emerging trends.	
7	Ensure public facilities are carbon neutral, support workforce and customer needs, and improve service delivery.	
8	Prioritize efficient utility planning to sustain system adequacy, manage costs, and keep the City’s utility rates competitive while addressing sustainability and climate resiliency.	

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
9	Ensure equitable and proper stormwater management by improving infrastructure, programs, and regulations to improve the health of urban watersheds.	
10	Ensure universal broadband access across all neighborhoods in Evanston by prioritizing underserved areas to close the digital divide to achieve 100% broadband availability by 2045.	 
11	Collaborate with the energy utilities to continue to modernize, decarbonize, and increase efficiency.	 

EXISTING CONDITIONS

DEVELOPMENT PATTERN

The City of Evanston’s origin story is seen in its built environment to this day. The major economic and population boom between 1860 and 1870 allowed the City to grow and develop independent of Chicago through the 19th century. With the combination of the University, access to amenities like Lake Michigan, the mansion boom that occurred following the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, and easy access to city life in Chicago, Evanston developed a reputation as a cultural and educational hub. It became home to numerous art galleries, theaters, and music venues, making it a cultural destination for residents and visitors.

Originally built as three separate communities with three distinct commercial hubs including South Evanston/Ridgeville that centered around Main Street, North Evanston that thrived around Central Street, and central Evanston including the original downtown area. These areas remain as mixed-use hubs that serve the greater surrounding neighborhoods. North Evanston was annexed in 1874, and South Evanston was annexed in 1892 to form the municipality of Evanston that is known today.

As Evanston developed, the city became known for its unique architecture and vibrant culture, from the grand Victorian homes of the 19th century to innovative modernist designs of the 20th century. Evanston is filled with historic homes and landmarks that serve as a testament to the City’s rich history and cultural diversity. Over the years, the City has become home to distinct neighborhoods and business districts that showcase a development pattern that celebrates its rich social, political, cultural, and architectural heritage. This built environment supports tangible connections to the past and a collective memory of place.

EXISTING ZONING AND LAND USE

Zoning includes a set of laws that outline what can be built and done on a piece of land. If these rules are not followed, it is a legal violation. Zoning helps make sure that development fits the city’s goals by regulating things like building type, business location, and building height. Before construction can occur, it must be checked to ensure it meets the zoning rules for an area.

Evanston’s zoning code was last redrafted in 1993 and has about 800 rules, making it hard to understand. Although there have been some changes, the outdated system struggles to keep up with new businesses, housing types, and climate needs. The current code limits much of Evanston’s land to single-unit homes, which restricts expanding the mix of housing that can be built to meet the needs of the community. The existing rules also support exclusionary practices, and the complicated mix of zoning districts and additional regulations makes it difficult for local businesses and homeowners to navigate.

EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURE

Infrastructure systems are the essential foundation of a community, providing the necessary services for daily functioning. Infrastructure availability and capacity are also an integral part of a city's future land development or redevelopment. Evanston's infrastructure includes transportation, telecommunications, energy utilities, water, wastewater, and drainage. While transportation is covered in a separate chapter, this section focuses specifically on the city's water, wastewater, and drainage systems and the regional energy and broadband utilities. These vital infrastructure systems are critical to the City's continued growth and development, and their proper functioning has major environmental implications. Water, wastewater, and stormwater systems are embedded in the region's hydrology, and the quality of our lakes, rivers, and other surface waters is heavily influenced by the operation of these systems. The progress towards decarbonizing regional energy utilities will determine our collective climate future.

WATER SUPPLY AND SYSTEM

The municipal water system is evaluated based on its volume, pressure, and quality. It must provide enough water for daily use, especially during peak summer months, while also maintaining reserves for emergencies such as fires. Consistent water pressure ensures effective delivery to residents, reduces strain on the system, and minimizes the risk of bacterial contamination. The Evanston Water Treatment Plant, located on the shores of Lake Michigan, supplies up to 108 million gallons per day (MGD) of clean drinking water to approximately 400,000 residents in Evanston, Skokie, and several surrounding communities. This facility is a critical asset, providing reliable and safe water to the region.



Source: Adobe Stock

SEWER SYSTEM

The City of Evanston's sewers are a complex system of interconnected components of private and public infrastructure. While the City is responsible for a majority of the drainage system, private landowners control or own the sewers that discharge into the system, and the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) operates and can partially control the interceptor sewers, deep tunnel, and North Shore Channel, which is downstream of the sewers operated by the City. There are parts of the system that are over a century old, while new components are continuously added through redevelopment and public infrastructure improvements.

The original combined sewer system consists of a series of street sewers and trunk sewers that are sub-divided into 15 drainage basins. Each combined sewer basin includes a separate trunk sewer and an independent connection to MWRD facilities, which directly discharge to the MWRD Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP) deep tunnel system or are indirectly connected to TARP through the MWRD North Shore intercepting sewer.

As part of the City's Long Range Sewer Program, the City supplemented the combined sewer system capacity with a series of relief sewers and storm sewers installed between 1991-2008. Restrictors are utilized in combined sewer drainage inlets and catch basins to reduce the risk of surcharging and basement back-ups during heavy rains. The relief sewer system is divided into seven drainage basins that have direct connections to TARP through drop shafts. The storm sewer system is divided into 10 drainage basins that discharge to the North Shore Channel or Lake Michigan.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Since the early 1990s, the City of Evanston has made a number of large investments to improve the publicly owned drainage infrastructure. These projects have resulted in a drainage system that has managed intense storm events without widespread catastrophic flood damage. There have been very few reports of flood damages caused by surface floodwaters. Basement backups caused by sewer surcharging have been reported, but the locations have tended to vary from storm to storm.

While the sewer system has recently performed as expected, climate change poses new challenges. The intensity and frequency of severe storm events are expected to continue to increase in the Midwest. In 2023, the City completed a Stormwater Master Plan that included the development of a detailed hydrologic and hydraulic model of the City's complex sewer system. In the face of climate change, the model will allow for detailed analysis and evaluation of the system as

drainage projects are contemplated and areas of concern are further investigated. Comprehensive stormwater management will help reduce flooding, protect infrastructure and natural resources, and improve water quality.

BROADBAND

Evanston aims to remain an attractive location for professionals and businesses by addressing gaps in digital infrastructure, such as high-speed broadband access. As of 2023, 95.2% of households in Evanston have internet access. The City recognizes the importance of digital access to support daily life and in areas such as work, education, healthcare, and commerce. Ensuring access to clean and reliable energy to support digital infrastructure is also key to future planning. As technology continues to evolve, promoting digital equity will become increasingly important.

ENERGY UTILITIES

ComEd provides the delivery of electricity in Evanston. ComEd is a subsidiary of Exelon and a part of PJM, a regional transmission organization spanning 13 states in the Midwest and Mid-Atlantic. As of 2024, ComEd’s sources of electricity include natural gas-fired power (44%), nuclear power (34%), coal-fired power (15%), wind power (4%), solar power (1%), hydropower (1%), and other resources (1%). ComEd has committed to net zero emissions by 2050. The State of Illinois has committed to 100% clean energy by 2050, which aligns with the City’s goals of achieving community wide carbon neutrality by 2050 and 100% renewable electricity supply for all Evanston accounts by 2030. The City makes progress on its goals through the community choice aggregation program which allows the City to aggregate residential and small commercial retail electric accounts and seek proposals for alternative suppliers to seek cleaner electricity.

Nicor Gas provides natural gas to Evanston properties. Southern Company, Nicor’s parent company, has set a goal to make its enterprise-wide operations net-zero by 2050.



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Development needs to mitigate its climate impact. The built environment accounts for over 70% of greenhouse emissions, split between natural gas and electricity. These emissions result in indoor and outdoor air pollution, which is harmful to the health and wellbeing of community members. The City must decarbonize existing buildings and ensure all future construction is carbon neutral to ensure a more resilient building stock and community.

The majority of land in Evanston is developed, and community members and businesses are being displaced.

The rising cost of rent and housing, transportation, and daily needs is putting pressure on and displacing community members and businesses. Evanston needs to reimagine its policies related to development and streamline the permit review process to improve access to housing options, transportation choices, and a mix of businesses that support current and future community members anticipated over the next 20 years. The City should prioritize investment and remove barriers to development within identified centers and corridors, as outlined below.

DOWNTOWN CENTER

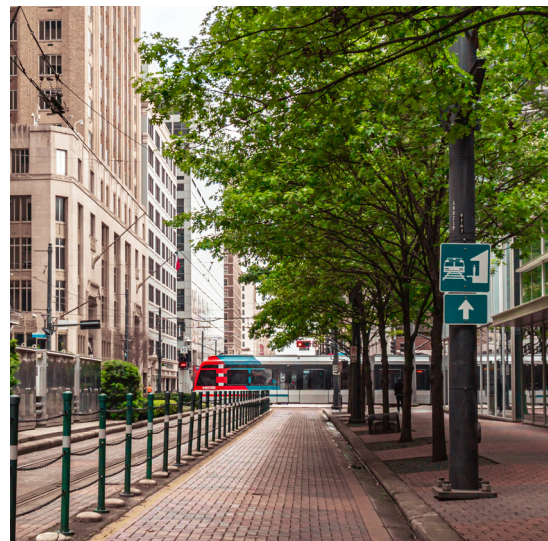
The Downtown Center is where the highest level of development and investment in transportation choices should be directed over the next 20 years. Community members and visitors will enjoy a mix of local retail, services, and restaurants with amenities including outdoor and rooftop dining. The downtown center features world-class arts and entertainment. Efforts to revitalize the downtown should build upon existing resources that contribute to its sense of place, history, and overall vitality. Investment in transportation choices, shared public space, and natural landscaping should occur as more people live, work, and visit this center.

MIXED USE CENTERS

Mixed Use Centers are located near transit stations and major transportation hubs and bring together housing, jobs, schools, retail, community amenities, and services. Mixed use centers are compact and walkable to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and provide access to daily needs of the neighborhood. These centers provide a mix of housing options and access to transportation choices to reduce expenses and support access for all ages and abilities.



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock

NEIGHBORHOOD CENTERS

Neighborhood centers provide significant opportunities for new residential and commercial development and redevelopment and are located throughout the City, often at major roadway intersections. In addition, large campus-type developments are targeted for infill development and improvements to urban design and connectivity to create more integrated, walkable centers.

MIXED USE CORRIDORS

These corridors combine homes, businesses, and sometimes light industrial spaces along major roads or natural features. Areas adjacent to natural features should be developed with walking and biking paths, community gardens, and parks, and the surrounding land can be redeveloped to include mixed-use buildings of various sizes that support the nearby neighborhoods. Other corridors with underused commercial land should encourage redevelopment by adding housing above or adjacent and by building new mixed-use structures. This will help create walkable communities with a good mix of housing and businesses, supported by public transit and other transportation options.

Develop a land use map to guide development decisions. A land use map includes categories that describe the vision for the scale and type of development that is desired in an area. The map supports City staff and decision-makers review of development proposals and zoning changes to determine if they are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Future Land Use Map is designed to achieve the goals of Envision Evanston 2045 and support the implementation of the centers and corridors framework by encouraging development locates near existing infrastructure to build more fiscally sustainable neighborhoods. The following sections summarize the intent of each land use category identified on the map.



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock

RESIDENTIAL CATEGORIES

Low Impact Residential: This category is composed of single unit dwellings with some lots accommodating up to four homes. The lots are a decent size and include different types of homes, both standalone and connected, that look similar and have space between them and neighboring properties.

Moderate Size Residential: This category includes existing multi-unit buildings with a moderate number of units, along with some single-family homes on smaller lots. The smaller lots can have more than one home, while the larger lots can support new multi-unit buildings through expansions, adding multiple homes, or redeveloping the land.

Urban Living: This category includes large multi-unit buildings, often designed around a central courtyard, located near commercial areas and around downtown. These large properties can support significant buildings that might have small businesses on the ground floor, like coffee shops and convenience stores, to serve the local community.

MIXED USE CATEGORIES

Neighborhood Pocket: This category includes small business areas surrounded by residential neighborhoods. These areas improve the quality of life for nearby residents and allow moderate mixed-use development that encourages local businesses to thrive while keeping a walkable feel. This way, people can live, work, shop, and access services in their own neighborhood.

Business Districts: This category includes established business districts that have a mix of uses but could support additional development to help local businesses thrive. Their proximity to public transportation also supports these neighborhoods as walkable and desirable for living.

Urban Mixed Use: This category includes areas with a good mix of residential and commercial development that have some public transportation options but still see a lot of car traffic. Some places here allow businesses but don't permit homes because of past industrial use that is no longer relevant. There's a lot of potential for new development in these areas, where higher buildings and density make sense. Recently, some main roads have been successfully redeveloped, and this trend should continue, helping to improve underdeveloped properties. Over time, we expect less reliance on cars as more transit options become available and these areas become more walkable.



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock

DOWNTOWN CATEGORIES

Downtown: Evanston’s downtown is a mix of buildings, from low-rise historic ones to high-rise offices and apartment towers. The downtown core is an urban area that takes advantage of its great public transport and walkability. This area can support more people living and working to help local businesses thrive. It also provides amenities that attract people from the regional draw and bring resources into the community. There should be a lot of tall buildings in the central downtown area, while the edges should transition to shorter buildings as they approach nearby residential neighborhoods.

EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES

Innovation and Creation: These areas consist of former industrial areas that host a mix of retail and service businesses, along with some lighter industrial uses. This land use category attracts new types of businesses, like research, technology, and labs to effectively adapt old industrial spaces and create local jobs. As these areas transition they will reduce the impact on nearby homes and lead to fewer environmental issues.

Campuses: These areas contain various institutional campuses, like universities, high schools, hospitals, sports facilities, and senior care centers. Land within this category typically contains multiple buildings that provide an array of programming and services. Campuses will evolve over time as institutions change their goals and this land use category provides flexibility to accommodate emerging trends related to institutions. Since these campuses mostly operate within their own boundaries, rules should allow flexibility to accommodate the need for institutions to invest in aging buildings and develop to address their emerging programming trends.

RESOURCE CATEGORIES

Open Space: This category includes open space that the community values and uses frequently. This land is usually owned by the City and is used for different recreational activities, including parks and community centers. Since these areas are meant for everyone, rules should keep these green spaces intact and protect natural habitats while making them available for public use.

Infrastructure policies and investments must consider climate change and displacement implications. Infrastructure planning needs to ensure that residents have reliable access to utilities, support future development, and protect the community from environmental risks and displacement pressures. Policies related to waste, recycling, and compost facilities must address past environmental injustices to avoid increasing exposure to hazards. As climate change affects

EVALUATING ZONING PROPOSALS FOR CONSISTENCY WITH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

The Future Land Use Map is based on the policies and data contained in the Comprehensive Plan. It shows the general land use recommended and corresponds to a range of land uses and intensities within each category. The designation of an area does not mean that the most intense zoning district described in the land use categories is automatically recommended. A range of densities and uses are encouraged within each category, and zoning districts reinforce this range and balance infrastructure capacity. The future land use categories should not be interpreted to support or preclude development. Zoning proposals should support implementation of this plan's vision, themes, and policies and mitigate impacts on streets, schools, parks, and other community facilities. Determining conformance of a proposed use or zone with the Comprehensive Plan should include consideration of the following questions:

- Is the proposal consistent with the vision, themes, and policies contained within the Comprehensive Plan?
- Does the proposal significantly alter the recommended land use of the area?
- Will transportation infrastructure and community facilities be available at City standards to serve the proposal?

water resources, the City must adopt innovative technologies and collaborate regionally to manage impacts without raising costs significantly for users. Regularly evaluating water usage and pricing is essential to reflect the true cost of service. Upgrades to both gray (traditional) and green (natural) infrastructure will need to occur to handle flooding from heavy rain and storms.

Utility systems need to find efficiencies and explore renewable energy sources, aiming for electrification that cuts greenhouse gas emissions and saves money for consumers. Transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable electricity requires innovative approaches and careful planning in a changing regulatory landscape. We must ensure there’s enough utility capacity to support future growth by improving and expanding older systems. Maintenance and expansion of infrastructure should align with the community’s growth and climate strategies to keep costs down and maintain financial health. Educating and involving the public as informed customers is crucial.

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

The list below summarizes policies and actions that prioritize and implement a centers and corridors framework to ensure the use of land and infrastructure improvements support the shared goals of this plan.

1. Direct development to centers and corridors to ensure the efficient use of land and access to transportation choices and amenities.

- LU 1.1 Update zoning regulations to increase the housing supply and allow more people to live, work, and operate businesses in centers and corridors.
- LU 1.2 Require all development to be carbon neutral with zero onsite greenhouse gas emissions while exploring onsite renewable electricity generation to achieve zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.
- LU 1.3 Remove barriers to mixed-use development with housing, commercial, and public spaces.
- LU 1.4 Develop policies to attract, support, and retain local businesses as development and redevelopment occurs.
- LU 1.5 Provide technical assistance to promote quality design and site planning early in the development processes.
- LU 1.6 Regularly review and update zoning regulations to ensure they achieve the goals of this plan.

2. Ensure development, infrastructure improvements, and zoning decisions implement the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map.

- LU 2.1 Update zoning regulations to align with the Comprehensive Plan.
- LU 2.2 Develop an implementation plan to prioritize the policies and actions of this plan.
- LU 2.3 Create a public dashboard to track implementation of the Comprehensive Plan.
- LU 2.4 Routinely review and update this plan to make sure it achieves the goals and proactively addresses emerging trends.

3. Evaluate development and redevelopment proposals to measure their impact.

- LU 3.1 Develop criteria to analyze the economic impact, emissions mitigation and climate resiliency measures, infrastructure and utility capacity, housing diversity, and environmental justice implications.
- LU 3.2 Update development applications to require the data needed for the evaluation.
- LU 3.3 Include evaluation results in reports to inform decision-making and public awareness.

4. Prioritize capital improvement projects in centers and corridors.

- LU 4.1 Establish criteria to prioritize capital improvement projects based on equity and community impact.
- LU 4.2 Develop a system to track maintenance needs and proactively invest in City facilities.
- LU 4.3 Align capital improvement projects with private investment to leverage mutually beneficial outcomes.

5. Encourage the transition of industrial areas and buildings to support innovation districts with a thriving entrepreneurial and research scene that foster collaboration, innovation, and economic development through close proximity and shared resources.

- LU 5.1 Streamline policies, regulations, or processes that stifle creativity and emerging sectors.
- LU 5.2 Strengthen partnerships with local businesses, institutions, and community groups to achieve entrepreneurship goals that lead to creation of innovation hubs in Evanston by:
 - Establishing regular communication and setting goals with local partners.
 - Encouraging and participating in networking events.
 - Attracting and retaining startups and emerging markets that align with institutional programming.
 - Ensuring land and spaces that support the creation of research and innovation hubs.
- LU 5.3 Explore the use of city-owned properties to support the creation of innovation hubs.

6. Collaborate with local institutions to implement Envision Evanston 2045 and address emerging trends.

- LU 6.1 Expand and encourage partnerships with local institutions through proactive planning and communication.
- LU 6.2 Support innovations in healthcare programming and remove barriers to ensure equitable distribution of providers and services throughout the City.
- LU 6.3 Update zoning regulations to support emerging trends in programming and the modernization of aging facilities on institutional campuses.

7. Ensure public facilities are carbon neutral, support workforce and customer needs, and improve service delivery.

- LU 7.1 Decarbonize city facilities by 2035 through continued partnerships like power purchase agreements, performance contracting, and utility and federal incentives.
- LU 7.2 Assess public facilities to ensure they meet the needs of the workforce and community and provide a high-level of service.
- LU 7.3 Include proactive and low-cost design methods to ensure connectivity to support technology of the future.
- LU 7.4 Consider public-private partnerships to provide an opportunity for the community to develop new facilities and infrastructure, which can be a catalyst for community development and redevelopment.

8. Prioritize efficient utility planning to sustain system adequacy, manage costs, and keep the City's utility rates competitive while addressing sustainability and climate resiliency.

- LU 8.1 Factor water supply issues into planning for the City's growth, including assessing the impacts from the rezoning process, as well as incorporating demand management considerations into the City's development standards.
- LU 8.2 Rehabilitate and maintain in good condition existing water and wastewater facilities to accommodate infill development and development in identified Centers and Corridors and to allow for the most efficient use of existing infrastructure.
- LU 8.3 Prioritize growth in areas adequately served by existing or planned water and wastewater infrastructure by analyzing the need based on proposed development pattern and the existing system capacity of infrastructure systems.
- LU 8.4 Institute full-cost pricing with a subsidy for low-income users to equitably recognize the real long-term cost of service, which includes maintaining infrastructure in a state of good repair, and to promote environmentally sound decisions by customers.
- LU 8.5 Review and update water and wastewater master plans and related CIP project list annually for growth-related changes to the water and wastewater systems.
- LU 8.6 Increase the use of reclaimed water and other non-potable sources such as rainwater to relieve pressures on the potable water treatment system and prioritize the implementation of reclaimed water infrastructure to serve the largest potential users and concentrations of users.
- LU 8.7 Adopt watershed-based approaches to water supply planning to promote decisions based on a holistic view of the entire water system. See text box: A Holistic approach to Watersheds.
- LU 8.8 Plan for the replacement and maintenance of aging sanitary sewer collection systems with the goal to eliminate overflow and backups.
- LU 8.9 Create or expand the re-use programs for wastewater treatment plant effluent and expand the use of reclaimed water for non-potable water uses.
- LU 8.10 Continue lead pipe replacement with the goal of making Evanston's water infrastructure lead-free by 2045.

9. Ensure equitable and proper stormwater management by improving infrastructure, programs, and regulations to improve the health of urban watersheds.

- LU 9.1 Continue to educate and involve the public in stormwater management.
- LU 9.2 Conduct drainage basin studies to determine the locations of future and additional stormwater facilities.
- LU 9.3 Promote the use of green infrastructure to encourage stormwater to absorb naturally.
- LU 9.4 Assess need to strengthen stormwater regulatory requirements.
- LU 9.5 Continue separating the stormwater and sewer systems when possible.

10. Ensure universal broadband access across all neighborhoods in Evanston by prioritizing underserved areas to close the digital divide to achieve 100% broadband availability by 2045.

- LU 10.1 Conduct a digital needs assessment identifying the specific neighborhoods and demographic groups that lack internet access or experience barriers to digital services, and tailor solutions to address these gaps.
- LU 10.2 Collaborate with local institutions to promote digital literacy programs that increase awareness and skills related to technology use, ensuring all residents can fully participate in a digital world.

11. Collaborate with the energy utilities to continue to modernize, decarbonize, and increase efficiency.

LU 11.1 Integrate smart meters throughout the city.

LU 11.2 Continue to expand community solar, prioritize local solar installation, and explore opportunities to use community choice aggregation to achieve renewable electricity goals.

LU 11.3 Underground electrical infrastructure, and improve system sensors for storm resilience.

LU 11.4 Continue to support innovative carbon neutral technologies like microgrids and hydrogen fuel cells.

LU 11.5 Partner with the electric utility to ensure continued grid reliability and added capacity in the wake of increasing ferocity of storms and continued electrification.

LU 11.6 Partner with the electric utility to support incentives for building and vehicle electrification.

LU 11.7 Explore shared and collaborative installation and colocation including the proactive incorporation of fiber.

LU 11.8 Support the transition to a high pressure efficient gas system to improve reliability, reduce leaks, and improve system monitoring as an interim step towards phasing out natural gas use.

LU 11.9 Leverage the expertise of the natural gas utility and workforce on expanding thermal energy networks and non-fossil fuel reliant infrastructure.

LU 11.10 Support infrastructure for future geothermal utilities.

LU 11.11 Continue to convert streetlights and traffic lights to LED and consider innovative, smart, emerging technology.

LU 11.12 Continue to implement the 2018 Streetlight Master Plan.

LU 11.13 Prioritize growth in areas with adequate electrical capacity to accommodate building electrification and vehicle electrification.

LU 11.14 Collaborate with utility providers to underground alley utilities in future alley improvement and pavement projects.

CHAPTER 3 :
TRANSPORTA

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MOBILITY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter analyzes Evanston's existing transportation infrastructure and mobility landscape. Historically, Evanston's development has been closely tied to transportation planning and investments. This section of the plan focuses on creating a holistic, multimodal transportation system by expanding access to diverse transportation options. These efforts align with goals in regional and statewide transportation plans, including Connecting Cook County - 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan and the Illinois Department of Transportation's Long Range Transportation Plan. Additionally, this section supports local initiatives such as the Climate Action and Resilience Plan (CARP), the Multi-Modal Transportation Plan, the ADA Transition Plan, and the Complete and Green Streets policy.

As climate change intensifies, reducing emissions from transportation activities is essential. In 2022, greenhouse gas emissions from vehicle miles traveled accounted for 22% of total emissions in Evanston. Investments in public and active transportation options can reduce reliance on cars, lower vehicle miles traveled, and decrease greenhouse gas emissions from motor vehicles.

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
1	Collaborate with and support regional transit partners to improve and expand Evanston's transit network coverage, service levels, and vehicle decarbonization.	
2	Invest in Evanston's transit infrastructure and programs to ensure that transit is a safe, accessible, affordable, desirable, and convenient option.	
3	Enhance the safety, accessibility, convenience, and usability of the existing active transportation network for all ages and abilities.	
4	Invest in infrastructure and programs that encourage walking for both transportation and recreation.	 
5	Develop infrastructure that encourages use of the bike lane network.	 
6	Support and create programs that reduce financial and skill barriers, promote safe road practices, and increase participation in active transportation.	 
7	Expand the shared active transportation fleet, integrating it into existing networks for maximum effectiveness.	
8	Develop an educational and regulatory framework to support safe, positive active transportation experiences.	
9	Support an increase in the share of electric vehicles (EVs) within Evanston.	
10	Implement policies and infrastructure improvements that support EV use by the City of Evanston and other fleets operating in the city.	 

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
11	Encourage reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by Evanston residents.	
12	Promote safe driving practices through infrastructure and traffic operations improvements.	
13	Encourage infill development on surface parking lots.	
14	Support data-driven parking management solutions.	
15	Revise the parking fee structure to balance affordability with transient parking goals.	
16	Apply best practices in street design and construction to promote all forms of transportation.	
17	Manage truck and delivery vehicle use to support local businesses while minimizing adverse impacts.	
18	Ensure seamless transitions between travel modes and service providers to enhance the user experience.	

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The following sections provide an overview of current transportation modes used for moving people and goods in Evanston, highlighting existing challenges. From this analysis, six key themes have emerged: efficiency, equity, accessibility, safety, placemaking, and carbon neutrality. These themes were emphasized by public engagement throughout the planning process. Suggested policies and actions are presented at the end of each section.

Efficiency: Does the transportation system enable timely and reliable movement of people?

Equity: Are burdens and barriers for marginalized communities reduced or mitigated? Are options affordable and diverse?

Accessibility: Does the system remove barriers to mobility and create affordable, desirable transportation options for all?

Safety: Are people able to travel safely and comfortably?

Placemaking: Does transportation infrastructure foster community bonds and serve as a place for connection?

Carbon neutrality: Is the transportation system fossil fuel-free and resource-efficient? What is its impact on air quality?

TRANSIT

Evanston’s transit network consists of both bus and rail services, offering residents access to local and regional destinations. The Chicago Transit Authority (CTA) and Pace operate nine bus lines that connect Evanston to the broader metropolitan area. In 2023, Pace launched the Pulse Dempster Line, an Arterial Rapid Transit (ART) bus route, which provides direct service between Downtown Evanston and O’Hare International Airport.

Commuter rail service in Evanston is provided by Metra’s Union Pacific North (UP-N) line, with passenger stations located at Central Street, Davis Street, and Main Street. The CTA’s regional rail network, commonly known as the ‘L’, operates the Purple Line through Evanston, with seven stops throughout the city, offering convenient access to Chicago. The CTA Yellow Line also runs along the city’s southern edge between Chicago and Skokie, though it does not have a stop within Evanston itself.

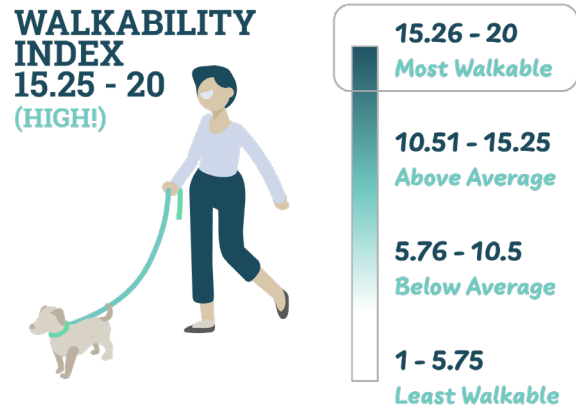
In terms of transit usage, 15.3% of Evanston’s workers aged 16 or older commute by transit—a figure 1% higher than the average for Cook County and over twice that of Illinois overall (7%).

Although ridership on all transit systems has not yet returned to pre-COVID-19 levels, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) reported in June 2024 that ridership is steadily recovering. May 2024 saw the highest ridership levels for CTA, Metra, and Pace since 2019, totaling over 32 million rides (64% of pre-COVID-19 ridership levels).

WALKING

Evanston’s street network largely follows a grid pattern, making it conducive for pedestrian travel. However, certain infrastructure features in parts of the city bisect neighborhoods and can create barriers to walking. Overall, the sidewalk network is extensive and well-maintained. Most neighborhoods feature approximately 5.3-foot detached sidewalks, separated from roadways by landscaped buffers, enhancing pedestrian comfort. Additionally, back alleys used for trash collection and garage access minimize curb cuts along street fronts, creating a more seamless walking experience.

The U.S. EPA’s National Walkability Index rates Evanston neighborhoods as either “Most Walkable” or “Above Average,” reflecting the city’s strong walkability. Evanstonians often cite the ease of walking to the lake, grocery stores, parks, and other amenities as a key benefit of living in Evanston.



Source: City of Evanston



Source: City of Evanston

TRANSIT ROUTES AND STOPS

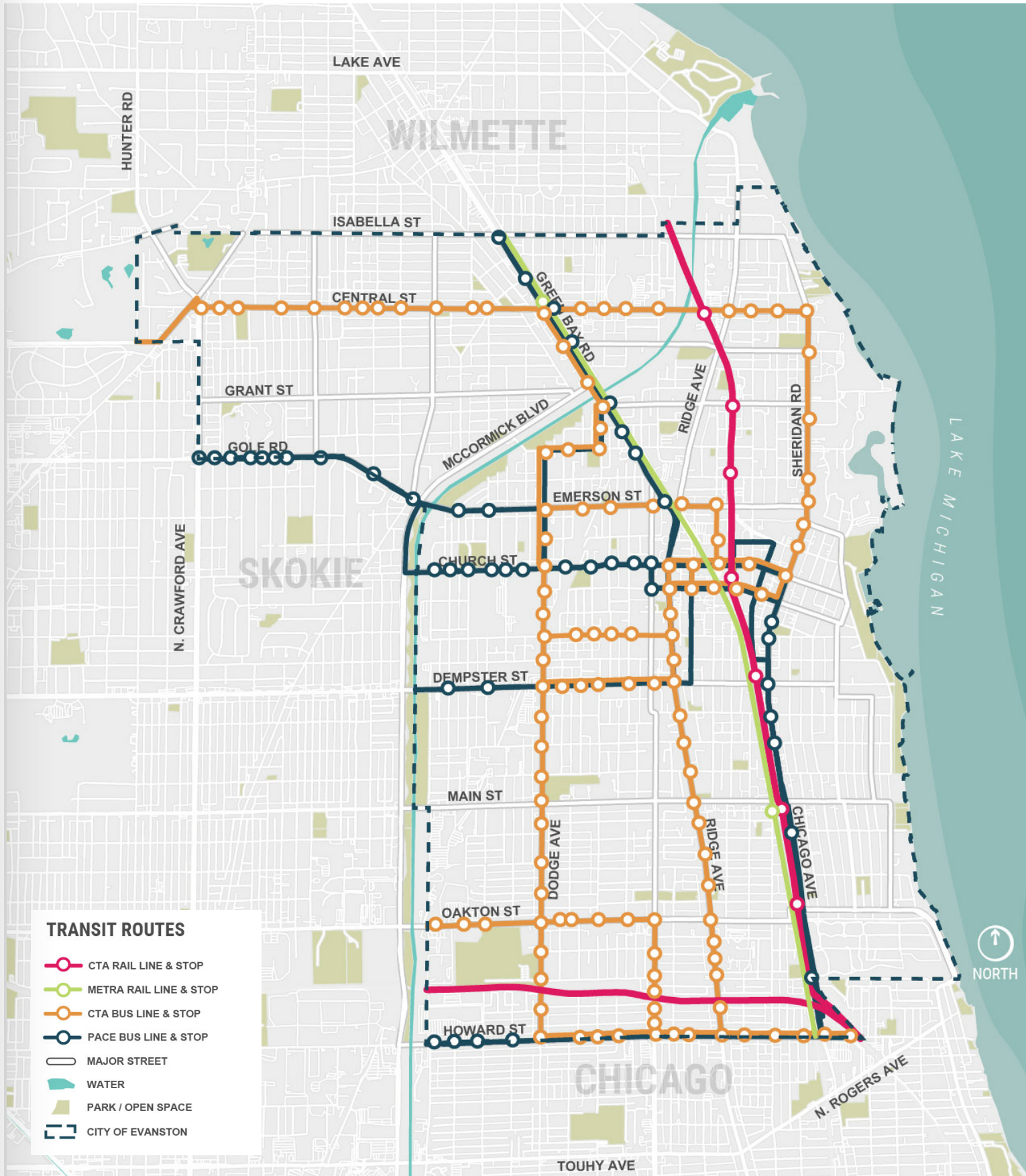


Figure 3 Source: City of Evanston

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BICYCLING AND OTHER ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

Biking is a popular means of transportation and recreation within Evanston, supported by local bike shops and groups that promote cycling through events year-round. For example, Downtown Evanston, in partnership with the Evanston Transit Alliance and Chicago Family Biking/Evanston Kidical Mass, hosted monthly bike rides for adults and families throughout the summer of 2024. Additionally, the Evanston Bicycle Club organizes the annual North Shore Century event, attracting around 2,000 cyclists from across the region for rides of up to 100 miles. Numerous other community biking events are held throughout the year.

Evanston offers a variety of biking facilities, including both protected and unprotected bike lanes, bike routes (shared lanes with cars), and shared-use paths (shared with pedestrians). While nearly all major roads in Evanston are designated as bike routes, protected bike lanes are limited to certain segments, such as Sheridan Road by Northwestern University, Dodge Avenue, and Church Street in Downtown. Shared-use paths are typically located within green spaces like James Park, the North Shore Channel Trail, and lakefront parks. For added convenience, many transit stops and retail areas offer bike racks, and the City also provides secured, covered bike parking in two municipal garages.

As of 2024, Evanston's bike share program includes 14 docking stations and 140 bikes. This system contributes to reducing the carbon footprint of travel, alleviating roadway congestion, and providing first- and last-mile connectivity, while also supporting outdoor recreation.



Source: Adobe Stock

EXISTING BIKE FACILITIES

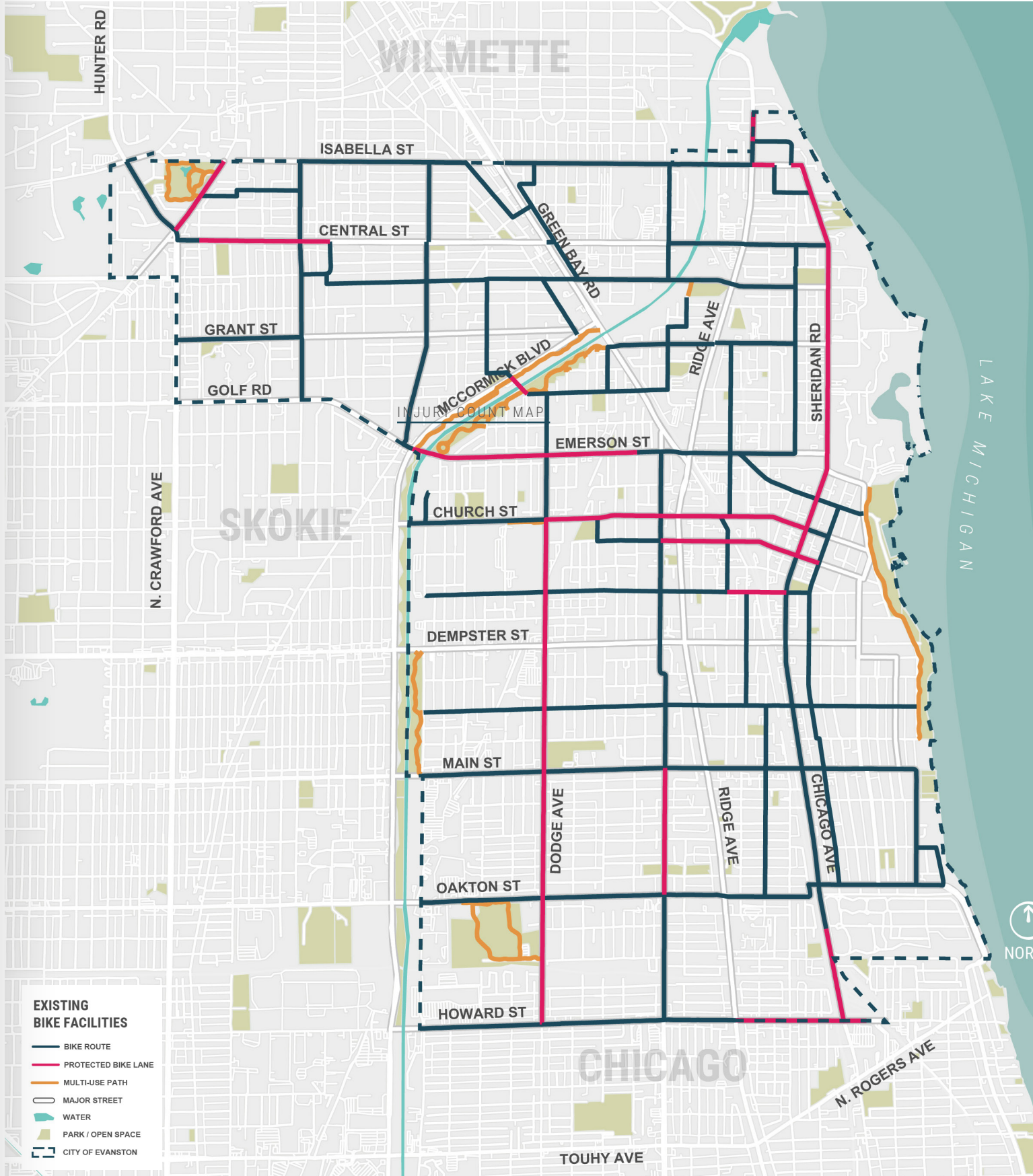


Figure 4 Source: City of Evanston

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DRIVING

Driving is the most common mode of commuting for Evanston residents. About 47.1% of workers aged 16 or older commute by car, whether driving alone or carpooling—a rate lower than that of Cook County (65.1%) and the CMAP region (71.1%). Evanston car commuters drive an average of 10,996 miles per year, with vehicle miles traveled per person annually in Cook County and the CMAP region approximately 20% and 42% higher, respectively.

Most Evanston households own at least one vehicle. According to the 2018–2022 American Community Survey 5-year estimates, around 16% of households do not own a vehicle, while 34.5% own at least two cars. This is slightly lower than in Cook County (41.4%) and the broader CMAP region (51.1%)

ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

Evanston’s primary north-south thoroughfares include Chicago Avenue/Sheridan Road, Dodge Avenue, Ridge Avenue, and Green Bay Road, while major east-west routes include Dempster Street, Central Street, and Oakton Street. These key thoroughfares carry most vehicular traffic within Evanston, as indicated by average annual daily traffic data from the Illinois Department of Transportation (Figure 19). Several of these roads also serve as access points across the North Shore Channel to I-94, the nearest interstate. Additionally, some major roads within Evanston, such as Dempster Street, parts of Central Street, and Church Street, are under state ownership (Figure 05).

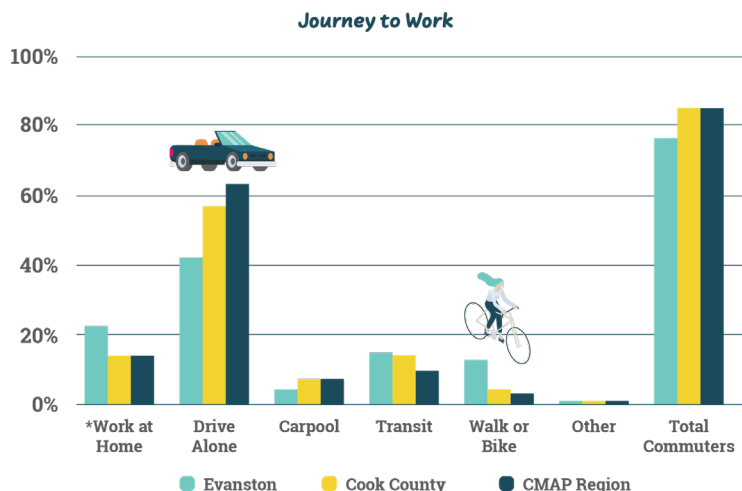
Evanston also has more than 300 unpaved alleys, which the City periodically grades to address potholes and ruts caused by weather and vehicle use. While regular maintenance improves travel and reduces puddling, only alley paving, typically funded through a special assessment process, provides a lasting solution. Paved alleys would reduce wear on refuse trucks and other vehicles, mitigate backyard flooding, enhance safety for alley users, eliminate standing water, improve year-round garage access, reduce particulate air pollution from unpaved surfaces, and facilitate easier access for public safety and delivery vehicles.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES (EV)

The electrification of vehicles is a central focus of transportation policies at the federal, state, and local levels to help mitigate climate change.

In Cook County, EV registrations saw significant growth over the five years leading up to March 2024. In Evanston, the number of registered EVs increased from 316 to 1,239 during this period. The City currently provides 17 EV charging ports across five locations, complemented by additional public chargers operated by other entities.

Vehicle electrification is also a key component of Evanston’s Municipal Operations Zero Emissions Strategy, which aims for net zero municipal carbon emissions by 2035. The City has committed to transitioning its entire municipal fleet to zero-emission vehicles by 2035. As of 2024, Evanston’s municipal fleet includes over 20 electric vehicles.



*Not included in total commuters
Universe: Workers 16 years and older
Source: City of Evanston

ROADWAY CLASSIFICATIONS

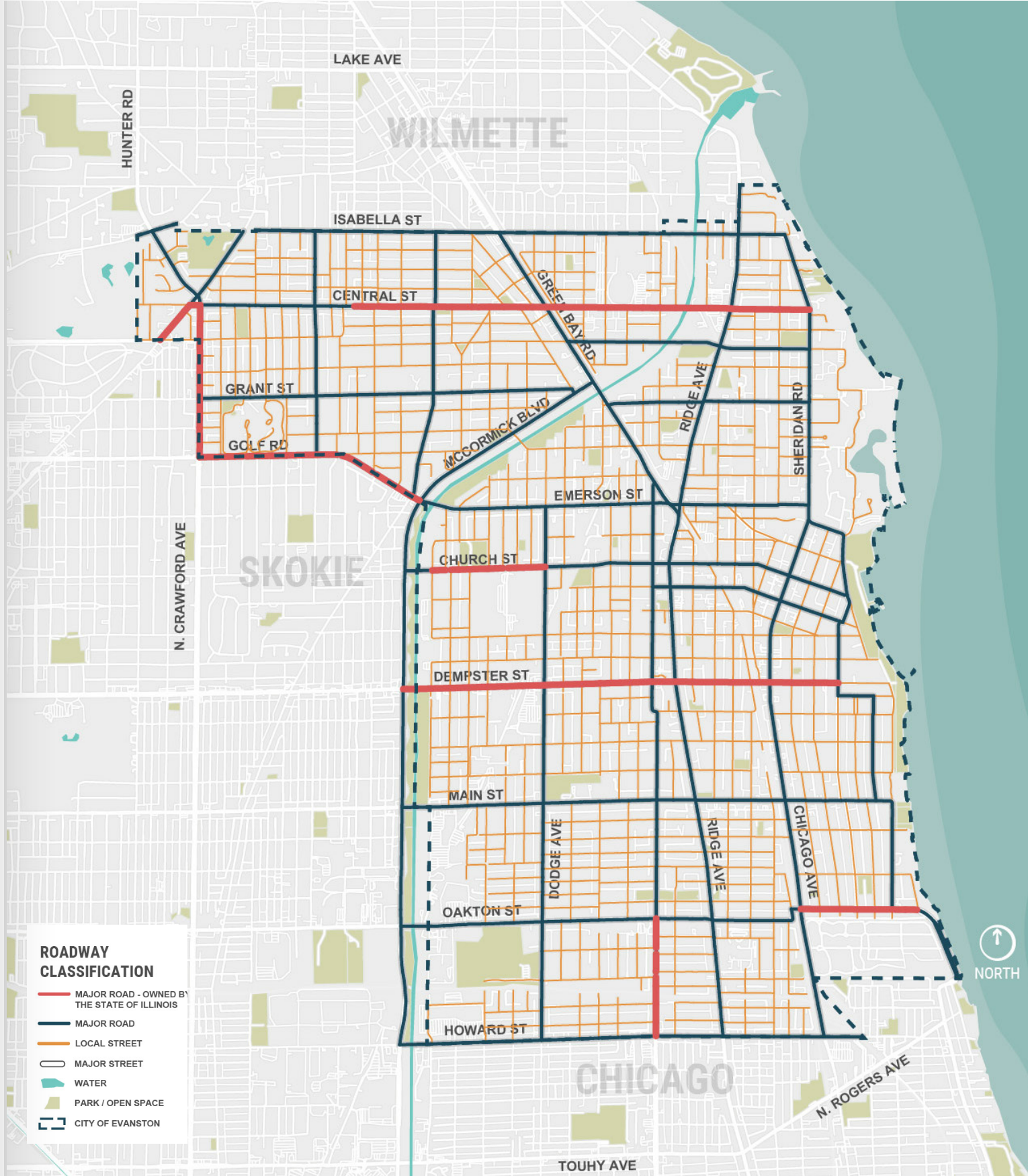


Figure 5 Source: xxxx

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PARKING

The City of Evanston owns and operates three parking garages and 37 surface lots throughout the city. Real-time occupancy data for City-owned garages and lots is available on the City's website. Use of these parking spaces generally requires a fee. In Downtown Evanston, the City charges for on-street parking Monday through Saturday, with garage fees collected 24/7.

Outside of Downtown and other business districts, most residential streets offer on-street parking, both with and without permit requirements. Historically, developments in Evanston have been required to provide a minimum number of off-street parking spaces.

TRUCK AND DELIVERY SERVICES

Efficient movement of goods in and out of Evanston is essential to ensure residents and businesses have access to needed products. Recognizing the significance of freight activity in northeastern Illinois, the State of Illinois, CMAP, and Cook County have developed plans to support a robust multimodal freight network capable of meeting current and future demands while progressing toward decarbonization.

In Cook County, trucks and trains are the primary freight transportation modes, accounting for approximately 60% and 25% of freight movement, respectively. Despite regional freight activity, Evanston experiences relatively low truck traffic; heavy commercial vehicles make up only 3% or less of the average annual daily traffic on Evanston's roads. To manage freight traffic, the City has designated specific roads, such as Chicago Avenue and Central Street, as truck routes, while truck restrictions apply to other roads, including sections of Ridge Avenue and Sheridan Road.

Evanston's limited freight traffic is largely due to its location away from major truck routes. Although the Union Pacific railroad runs through the city, it primarily supports passenger rail services, with minimal freight tonnage passing through Evanston.

COMPLETE AND GREEN STREETS

The Complete Streets approach aims to plan and design streets that provide safe and efficient travel for all users—regardless of age, ability, or mode of transportation. This concept emphasizes equitable access, particularly for communities whose transportation needs have historically been underserved, including seniors, children, people with disabilities, carless households, and communities of color. However, Complete Streets does not require a one-size-fits-all solution; strategies should vary based on local context, community priorities, and project scope. Typical elements include protected bike lanes, crosswalks, median islands, landscaping, curb extensions, and public transit stops.

In Envision Evanston 2045, the Complete Streets approach is recommended as one of several contemporary options, especially for projects involving comprehensive road rehabilitation rather than basic repairs or resurfacing. This flexible application ensures the approach is implemented where it provides the most benefit, particularly in enhancing connectivity and safety across the transportation network. Additionally, the Complete Streets approach is integral to developing a robust active transportation network that supports safe, efficient routes for bicycles, e-scooters, and other sustainable, small-scale modes of transportation.

Green Streets complement the Complete Streets philosophy by incorporating stormwater management solutions that use both natural and engineered systems to manage and filter runoff from impervious surfaces like streets and sidewalks. Common Green Streets strategies include permeable paving, vegetated swales, and stormwater planters, which can be incorporated into the public right-of-way. These systems work alongside Complete Streets elements to create safer, more resilient infrastructure, particularly benefiting vulnerable road users such as pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit riders.

The City's adoption of the Complete and Green Streets policy in 2014 encourages a shift toward active transportation and infrastructure that supports these goals, while the 2017 update introduced an implementation framework offering flexibility and metrics for planning, design, and construction of public right-of-way projects. This framework also provides guidelines for exceptions where the policy may not apply. The accompanying Livability Checklist serves as an evaluation tool for City staff to ensure each project aligns with broader goals for livability, active transportation, and connectivity, while addressing the specific requirements of each location.

PARKING MAP

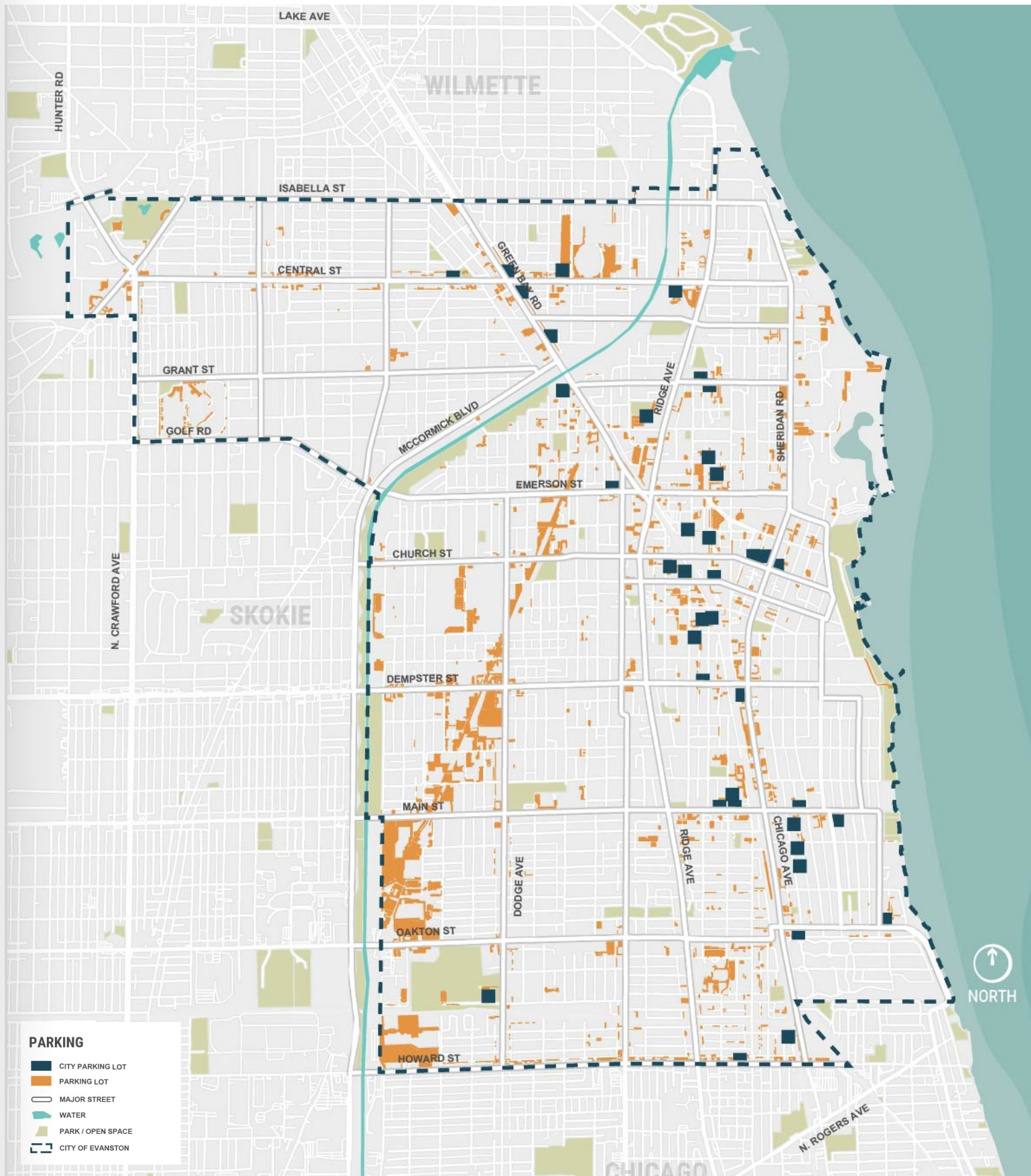


Figure 6 Source: City of Evanston

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KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

TRANSIT

Evanston benefits from public transit options that connect the community internally and with surrounding areas. However, several barriers remain that affect equity, efficiency, and usability, as highlighted by the community throughout the planning process.

Transit Network Connectivity. While the rail network provides solid north-south connectivity along Evanston’s eastern corridor and links to neighboring areas, connectivity in the western part of the city is limited. East-west connectivity within Evanston is also challenging. East-west bus routes tend to be circuitous and make frequent stops. Many bus lines converge in Downtown Evanston, while other areas—such as neighborhoods along the western edge and southeastern Evanston—have limited bus access, restricting connections to CTA or Metra stations. For example, buses do not run east of the CTA and Metra railway tracks in the southeast, leaving stations like Main Street, South Boulevard, Dempster, Noyes, and Foster without east-west bus connections, which complicates commutes for residents who are not within walking distance of a rail station.

Transit Service Limitations. Transit service hours and frequency are limited. Several bus lines offer minimal service throughout the day, do not operate on Sundays, and typically end service by 9 p.m., which is earlier than closing times for many food, beverage, and retail establishments. This impacts service workers who rely on public transit to get home and limits residents’ options for evening transportation. Additionally, the infrequent service and inconsistent schedules affect students’ access to schools and after-school activities, with many buses running at 30-minute intervals and often off-schedule. Public feedback from engagement sessions indicated that both bus and rail services are insufficiently frequent and occasionally delayed.

Transit Infrastructure Challenges. Transit infrastructure presents accessibility challenges. Currently, only one Purple Line station, Davis Street, is ADA-accessible, and it is located Downtown, more than half a mile from hospital services—an inconvenience for those with disabilities. While Metra stations in Evanston have ADA-accessible ramps, none are equipped with elevators. Additionally, some rail stations are set back from main pedestrian corridors and lack activity-generating features, such as nearby retail or food establishments.

Limited shelter at bus stops poses another barrier. Lack of protection from extreme weather, seating, and lighting can make transit less accessible, uncomfortable, and reduce perceived safety for those waiting.

Transitioning to Low-Emission Transit. At present, no carbon-neutral transit services operate in Evanston. Pace has committed to a 100% zero-emission fleet by 2040, and CTA aims to electrify its bus fleet by the same year. While CTA trains are electric, the power source is not yet zero-emission, and Metra UP-N trains are currently diesel-powered, though plans are in place to gradually adopt zero-emission locomotives.

Each bus or train ride begins with some form of travel—walking, rolling, or biking—to the transit stop, making it crucial to ensure the journey to transit is as safe, accessible, and comfortable as the transit experience itself.



Source: Adobe Stock

WALKING

Community members at workshops and engagement sessions shared several issues related to walking in Evanston, primarily focusing on safety and gaps in infrastructure.

Sidewalk Gaps and Accessibility Issues. Some areas in Evanston have missing or inadequate sidewalks, creating accessibility barriers, particularly for residents using wheelchairs or other personal mobility devices. In certain neighborhoods, sidewalks are either present only on one side of the street or are narrow vehicle step-outs insufficient for pedestrian or wheelchair use (Figure 16). Residents also expressed concerns about uneven sidewalks, which pose obstacles for wheelchair users and present tripping hazards for pedestrians.

Safety Concerns. Pedestrians often feel unsafe when crossing streets. In 2022, there were 30 pedestrian injuries and 31 bicyclist injuries from crashes, similar to the figures in 2021 (33 pedestrian and 30 bicyclist injuries). Common factors include high-speed traffic, distracted driving, and limited crossing opportunities, which often force residents to either rush across streets or take lengthy detours to reach safer, designated crossings. Pedestrian and bicyclist crashes are predominantly concentrated in and around Downtown, especially on Ridge Avenue, Church Street, and Lake Street. Emerging hotspots outside of Downtown include areas in the southern part of the city, along and near Dodge Avenue, Ridge Avenue, and Chicago Avenue.

Conflict Points on Sidewalks. With the rising popularity of bicycles, scooters, and other personal mobility devices, more residents are sharing limited sidewalk space, creating potential conflict points and occasional collisions. Participants in focus group discussions noted that the absence of a safe, cohesive on-street cycling network often leads cyclists to use narrow sidewalks, further compromising safety for all users.

Impact on Vulnerable Populations. Injury rates across age groups were similar, suggesting that safety issues affect vulnerable groups, including children and the elderly, at similar levels as other pedestrians. This underscores the need to address these safety concerns, as vulnerable populations may have a limited ability to avoid injury in hazardous situations.



Source: Adobe Stock

BIKING AND OTHER ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION MODES

Evanston has made significant progress toward creating a bike-friendly environment, but challenges remain that limit options for those who choose biking for recreation or transportation.

Safety Concerns Due to Inadequate Infrastructure. Although many streets in Evanston are designated as bike routes, they often lack physical barriers separating bikes from cars, leaving cyclists exposed to potential danger. Public feedback indicates that streets such as Main, Dempster, Central, and Green Bay Road are particularly concerning. IDOT crash data presented in the walking section supports these concerns, highlighting the risks cyclists face in Evanston.

These unsafe conditions not only pose safety risks to current cyclists but also deter others—especially kids, seniors, and less experienced riders—from choosing biking as a transportation option.

Sidewalk Biking and Shared Use Concerns. Biking on sidewalks is permitted in some areas outside Downtown and other business districts, providing cyclists with safer alternatives on narrow or busier streets. However, this can create conflicts with pedestrians sharing the same space. As active transportation options continue to evolve, the City should regularly assess policies and infrastructure to support safe shared use.

Challenges with Affordable Access. The costs associated with purchasing a reliable bicycle, safety equipment, and necessary accessories, as well as maintenance, can be prohibitive for many residents. To address this, the City has established a bike share program aimed at improving access for those facing financial barriers to biking.

Need for Education and Awareness. Most community members have not received formal training in cycling safety or broader traffic safety skills. Supporting educational opportunities as part of City policy is crucial to ensuring safe biking practices throughout Evanston.

Gaps in the Cycling Network and Trail Connectivity. Evanston's cycling network is incomplete, with many locations requiring cyclists to use busy streets with minimal or no protection. Additionally, several regional trails lack cohesive connections within Evanston, making it challenging to access certain destinations directly.

For example, the North Shore Channel Trail, a popular seven-mile shared-use path extending from Lawrence Avenue in Chicago to Green Bay Road in Evanston, has a gap on the western side between Dempster and Church Street. Cyclists must navigate residential streets to rejoin the trail. Similarly, many bike lanes end abruptly with no clear continuation route.

Lakefront trails and paths are also non-contiguous, especially along the southern edge where private property restricts continuity. This forces both cyclists and pedestrians to travel on roadways, creating potentially complicated and unsafe experiences.

SHARED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

The network of docking stations for shared active transportation is not well integrated with public transit. While docking stations are located near key destinations, they are often distant from transit stops. For instance, four of the seven CTA stations in Evanston lack nearby docking stations, and docking stations are not consistently sited near bus stops, which could facilitate easier transfers between transportation modes.

Challenges with Access and Payment Options. Accessing the shared bike system can be challenging for users without a smartphone and cashless payment methods. Divvy requires both a smartphone and a debit or credit card to operate. Although eligible residents can pay for a membership with cash, subsequent Divvy use still requires a smartphone. Conversely, bike rentals without a smartphone are available at kiosks but are limited to single-ride passes, which typically cost more per ride and still require debit or credit card payment. This access and payment structure may disadvantage lower-income users or potentially exclude them from using the system altogether.

MOBILITY CONFLICT POINTS

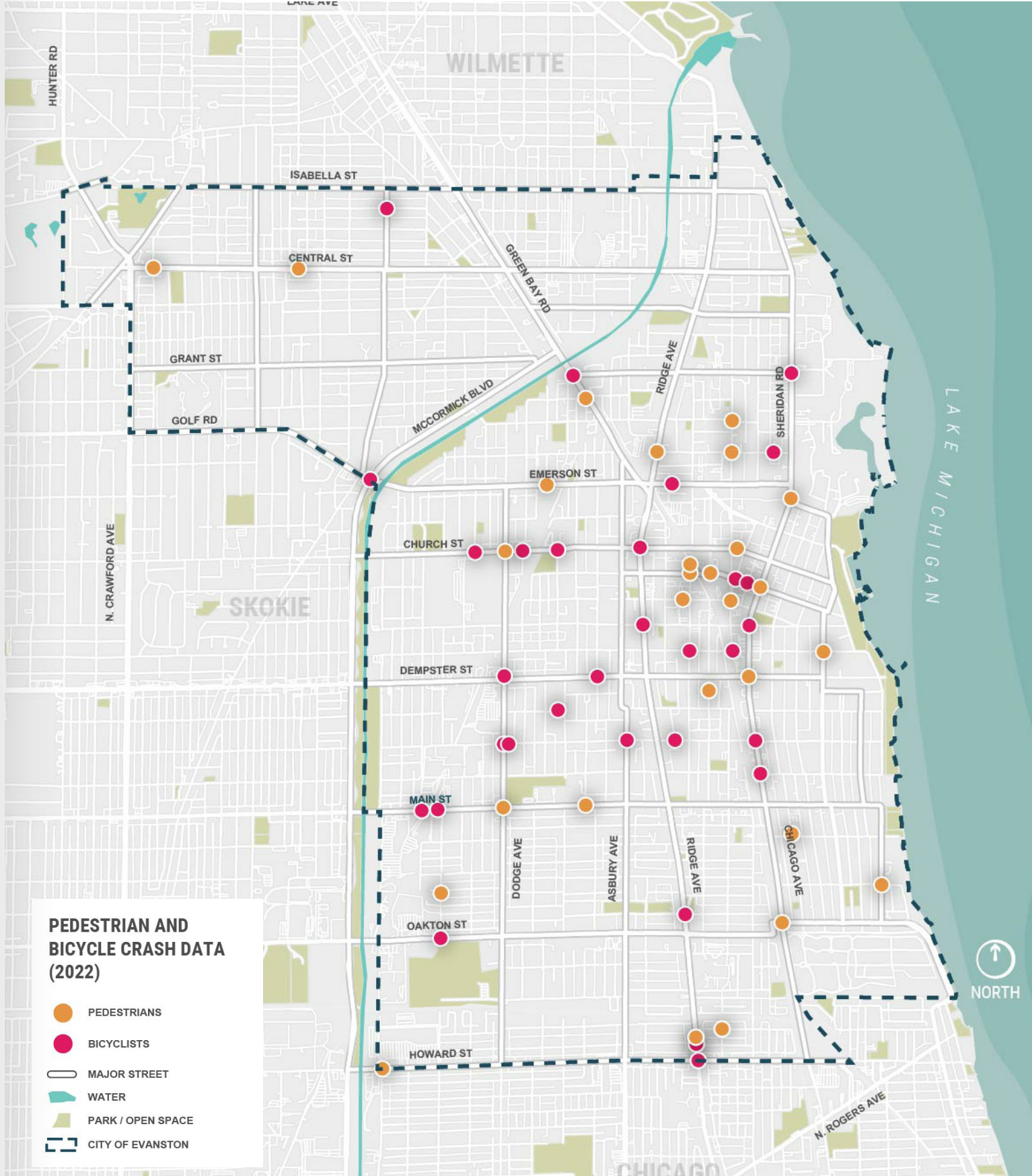


Figure 7 Source: City of Evanston

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DRIVING

Driving imposes significant economic and environmental costs on Evanston. Cars are a fuel-, space-, and material-intensive form of transportation. Increased car use has led to rising economic costs, including lost time due to traffic congestion. According to a 2022 study by Inrix, a mobility analytics firm, the average U.S. driver loses roughly an hour each week to congestion—an increase of 15% from 2021. Chicago ranked second in the U.S. in total traffic delay times, with drivers losing an average of 96 hours to congestion in 2023.

In addition, fuel consumption from driving and idling in traffic has negative environmental impacts. Transportation has become the leading source of carbon emissions in the United States, and continued reliance on cars will exacerbate climate change and its associated impacts. Furthermore, the individual costs of car ownership can make driving financially challenging or inaccessible for many Evanstonians.

Although Evanston's proportion of car commutes is lower than that of Cook County and the CMAP region, car use remains a dominant travel mode for residents. To create a more sustainable future, efforts are needed to reduce driving and encourage shifts to alternative modes of transportation. The City's 2018 Climate Action and Resilience Plan emphasizes this need, recognizing transportation as a key driver of climate change and setting a strategic goal to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

Balancing EV Promotion with Investments in Transit and Active Transportation. While electric vehicles (EVs) are encouraged as part of greenhouse gas reduction efforts, they do not alleviate traffic congestion or reduce the spatial demands of roadways, as they occupy the same space as traditional vehicles. Investments in EVs should not detract from funding and attention needed for active transportation infrastructure. Investing in high-quality transit and active transportation options will support the City's goals to reduce car dependency and offer residents a range of sustainable travel alternatives.

Challenges with Speeding and Distracted Driving. A culture of speeding and distracted driving poses additional safety concerns on Evanston's roads, highlighting the need for continued education, enforcement, and infrastructure solutions to improve safety for all road users.

Use of Autonomous Vehicles (AVs). While autonomous vehicles may have the potential to meet mobility needs of residents in cities, cities will need to take proactive measures to ensure that the benefits of this mode of transportation outweigh the costs. For instance, AVs should help to solve first and last-mile connection issues and not replace public transit; AVs, like EVs, still occupy limited roadway space and can contribute to more congestion; high costs of using AVs may exclude lower-income households.

PARKING

Evanston has a substantial parking network Downtown and many residential parking opportunities. However, there are still some challenges and opportunities that would help ensure parking in Evanston is safe and convenient for everyone.

Land Use and Alternative Potential. Parking facilities occupy a substantial land area, limiting opportunities for alternative uses. Parking lots cover approximately 5.5% of Evanston's total land area, with a larger percentage in Downtown. Many of these lots remain vacant for much of the day, space that could potentially be repurposed for housing or other community needs.

Impact of Minimum Off-Street Parking Requirements. Beyond City-owned surface lots, minimum off-street parking requirements compel private developments to dedicate additional space to parking, which could otherwise support community and economic uses, green spaces, bike lanes, and more. These parking facilities, whether garages or surface lots, often occupy street frontage along main streets and retail districts, disrupting the continuity of the urban walking experience.

Consequences of Reducing Parking Fees. Reducing parking fees, while potentially making driving to Downtown and other business districts more convenient, could also increase traffic congestion and related economic and environmental costs. Lower fees may encourage longer parking stays, reducing turnover and limiting space availability for other visitors, which could affect local businesses by limiting customer access.

Financial Sustainability. Parking fees are essential to cover the operations and maintenance of these facilities. Reduced parking revenue would require reallocating other public funds, thereby diminishing resources available for important municipal services.

TRUCK AND DELIVERY SERVICES

Managing truck and delivery services in Evanston presents unique challenges due to high demand on limited curbside space from a variety of users.

Demand on Limited Curbside Space. Although Evanston experiences relatively lower freight traffic volumes on its roads, challenges arise as commercial trucks compete with other transportation modes for limited roadway space. The growth of e-commerce has increased last-mile deliveries to homes and businesses, further intensifying competition for roadway space and contributing to congestion.



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock

Need for Curbside Space. In addition to roadway competition, commercial trucks and delivery vehicles require curbside areas for loading, unloading, and deliveries. Curbside spaces are also in high demand by other users, including vehicle parking, parklets, ride-hailing services, emergency vehicles, food trucks, and mobile vendors.

Curbside Management. Implementing a comprehensive curbside management plan, similar to the Chicago Curbside Management Plan, could help manage and optimize curbside usage to balance the needs of diverse users effectively.

COMPLETE STREETS AND GREEN STREETS

The effectiveness of Evanston’s Complete and Green Streets policy faces challenges due to limited funding and enforceability. Many policy guidelines are suggestions rather than requirements, making it difficult to ensure consistent implementation. Balancing these goals with other transportation options is essential to create a sustainable and accessible transportation network.

While the policy encourages private developments to adopt Complete and Green Streets principles, developers are only required to follow these guidelines if their projects meet specific thresholds, which many developments do not. As a result, funding and implementing these principles citywide remains challenging, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach that includes various transportation modes.

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

TRANSIT

1. Work with regional transit partners to improve Evanston's transit network coverage, enhance service levels, and advance transit vehicle decarbonization efforts.

- T 1.1 Promote the expansion of transit lines, including arterial rapid transit, to improve access to both regional and local destinations, with a focus on enhancing east-west connections.
- T 1.2 Collaborate with transit partners on opportunities to decarbonize the transit system.
- T 1.3 Support the advancement of CTA's All Stations Accessibility Program and the Red and Purple Line Modernization projects.
- T 1.4 Work with transit agencies to review service needs and increase service frequencies in areas where existing service is insufficient.
- T 1.5 Support reduced fare and ride-free programs to enhance affordability.
- T 1.6 Partner with regional, state, and federal agencies to secure additional funding for transit services in Evanston and the surrounding region.

2. Enhance Evanston's transit infrastructure and programs to ensure transit is safe, accessible, affordable, desirable, and convenient for all.

- T 2.1 Ensure all transit stops and stations are ADA-accessible.
- T 2.2 Develop programs and policies to expand the installation of shelters, benches, and other street furniture to improve the transit experience.
- T 2.3 Remove barriers that limit access to transit stations.
- T 2.4 Implement placemaking strategies around rail stations and key bus stops (e.g., Dempster and Dodge) to create inviting community gathering spaces.

3. Facilitate development that prioritizes safe, convenient access to public transit.

- T 3.1 Update zoning regulations to support development and redevelopment near transit stations.
- T 3.2 Coordinate with transit agencies to align decisions, strategies, and investments with the City's land use objectives.
- T 3.3 Develop and implement specific station area mobility plans in collaboration with transit agencies to provide seamless transitions between transportation modes and providers.
- T 3.4 Establish designated passenger pick-up and drop-off zones at transit stations to support ride-share services, improve pedestrian safety, and enhance traffic flow.
- T 3.5 Integrate curbside provisions for paratransit services, placing them as close as possible to primary entrances at transit stations.

WALKING

4. Invest in upgrades and policies that support a safe, accessible, and convenient pedestrian network for all users.

- T 4.1 Improve existing sidewalks to ensure ADA compliance.
- T 4.2 Prioritize safe travel for all, with a focus on vulnerable populations.
- T 4.3 Identify and install crosswalks to improve access to key destinations and enhance safety for pedestrians and vehicles.
- T 4.4 Invest in pedestrian safety measures and traffic calming designs.
- T 4.5 Review and amend City Code and policies related to sidewalks, driveways, crosswalks, speed limits, alleys, parkway plantings, and other elements impacting pedestrian safety.
- T 4.6 Collaborate with neighboring communities and organizations to develop, connect, and strengthen regional trails, such as the North Shore Channel Trail.
- T 4.7 Provide public amenities, including benches, drinking fountains, and restrooms, to support people of all ages and abilities.

5. Support walking as a preferred mode of transportation and recreation through targeted infrastructure and programs.

- T 5.1 Review and update the Safe Routes to School program as school attendance boundaries change.
- T 5.2 Develop programs to promote and incentivize walking for health and recreation.
- T 5.3 Identify locations for temporary or permanent pedestrian malls or car-free streets.



Source: Adobe Stock

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

6. Enhance Evanston’s active transportation network to support safe, convenient local and regional travel for people of all ages and abilities.

- T 6.1 Develop a complete, cohesive, and low-stress network of separated bike lanes, identified bike routes on main arterials and major collectors, and traffic-calmed streets, allowing active transportation with minimal car interaction while addressing pedestrian and traffic impacts.
- T 6.2 Increase bike lane visibility through measures such as painting lanes at key conflict points, using bike traffic signals, and adding bike turn boxes at high-traffic intersections.
- T 6.3 Prioritize infrastructure improvements that support safe access to schools for children using active transportation.
- T 6.4 Focus on infrastructure improvements that connect the lakefront path with the protected bike lane on Sheridan Road and future improvements on Chicago Avenue, creating a continuous north-south route from Wilmette to Chicago.

- T 6.5 Explore opportunities to deploy electric battery charging stations for active transportation.
- T 6.6 Collaborate with neighboring municipalities to identify gaps in Evanston’s regional bicycle network and trail system, coordinating active transportation planning to enable comfortable travel between municipalities and across the region.

7. Enhance biking infrastructure to promote the use of Evanston’s bike lane network.

- T 7.1 Install additional bike racks near commercial, retail, and institutional sites both inside and outside Downtown Evanston to encourage short bike trips. Consider providing a map of public bike parking locations.
- T 7.2 Support improved bike parking, such as covered and access-controlled options at major destinations, bike parking in garages and lots, and bike parking at all transit stations outside Downtown. Work to improve security and reduce bike theft.
- T 7.3 Explore the installation of bike repair stations along key bike and transit routes and at popular biking destinations, such as the North Shore Channel Trail, lakefront, and Downtown, and work to identify site locations.

8. Support programs and initiatives that make cycling more accessible to community members of all backgrounds and skill levels.

- T 8.1 Support, develop, and expand programs that facilitate bicycle ownership and access for community members with diverse needs.
- T 8.2 Support, develop, and expand programs that improve access to bicycle skills training, services, and maintenance.
- T 8.3 Provide community access to educational programs that teach cycling safety and traffic skills.
- T 8.4 Engage broadly with the community to welcome and encourage cycling participation, empowering members to lead in shaping how cycling can serve their needs.
- T 8.5 Collaborate with area schools, including District 65, District 202, and Northwestern University, to provide education on safe biking and commuting practices.

SHARED ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

9. Integrate shared active transportation options into existing networks to enhance accessibility and maximize effectiveness.

- T 9.1 Expand the bikeshare network by adding stations, prioritizing locations that connect existing transportation hubs (e.g., CTA stations) with popular origins and destinations. Periodically review station and network usage to optimize locations.
- T 9.2 Partner with third-party providers to develop additional shared active transportation programs, increasing transportation options for the community.
- T 9.3 Evaluate and consider alternative shared active transportation models, such as lending library programs or purchase incentive programs.
- T 9.4 Reduce financial barriers to participation by offering reduced-cost programs for vulnerable populations.
- T 9.5 Promote the collection and analysis of data on active transportation usage patterns and impacts to guide policy adjustments and infrastructure investments.

10. Create a framework that supports active transportation infrastructure and fosters safe, positive interactions among all users.

- T 10.1 Establish a clear and adaptable regulatory framework that enables the rapid integration of new active transportation technologies while prioritizing public safety and environmental sustainability. Regularly update codes and policies to accommodate emerging technologies related to vehicle lanes, bike lanes, pedestrian paths, and sidewalks.
- T 10.2 Build an engaging brand for the active transportation network by installing custom wayfinding signs and enhancing key bike and walking corridors to accommodate active transportation traffic.

DRIVING

11. Encourage a greater adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) to reduce emissions and support sustainable transportation options.

- T 11.1 Support car-sharing options through partnerships with existing third-party vendors or Evanston-specific providers.
- T 11.2 Invest proactively to decarbonize and electrify all City fleet vehicles in alignment with the City's Zero Emission Strategy.

12. Develop policies and infrastructure improvements that encourage the use of electric vehicles (EVs) throughout the city.

- T 12.1 Create a plan to expand the network of EV charging stations for public use, focusing on areas of high demand as well as broad geographic distribution to support citywide EV access. Identify publicly owned properties that could serve as EV charging and mobility hub sites, and provide a publicly accessible map.
- T 12.2 Develop pilot programs for curbside, public right-of-way, streetlight, or utility pole charging to provide charging access for residents without off-street parking options.
- T 12.3 Explore infrastructure and programs to establish EV charging solutions that reduce barriers for lower-income households.

13. Promote alternative transportation options to reduce overall vehicle miles traveled within the community.

- T 13.1 Support the use of public parking and strategically placed bike infrastructure to encourage mass transit use.
- T 13.2 Leverage events like "Bike to Work Day" to promote and encourage alternative forms of transportation.

14. Support policies and infrastructure that enhance road safety and encourage responsible driving

behavior.

- T 14.1 Reduce driving speeds where appropriate and in accordance with state law.
- T 14.2 Promote safety campaigns, including educational and enforcement efforts, that encourage seat belt use, reduce distracted driving, and mitigate speeding.
- T 14.3 Implement policies and infrastructure that encourage slower vehicle speeds, reduce conflicts between different transportation modes, and improve visibility at key points.
- T 14.4 Establish research partnerships with Northwestern University to study the safety impacts and feasibility of autonomous vehicles (AVs) on Evanston’s transportation network.

PARKING

15. Encourage the repurposing of surface parking lots to support vibrant, community-oriented development.

- T 15.1 Implement recommendations from the 2024 Putting Assets to Work report.
- T 15.2 Develop street-activating programs by allowing businesses along key corridors to create parklets.

16. Utilize data-driven strategies to optimize parking management and improve user experience.

- T 16.1 Pilot automated parking garages to increase parking capacity within a smaller footprint.
- T 16.2 Enhance mobile payment options for parking to enable real-time tracking of parking availability.
- T 16.3 Collect data on general parking conditions and usage of off-street parking lots over time. Use trends and insights to inform future parking policies, such as setting parking maximums or reducing parking lots.

17. Adjust parking pricing strategies to optimize usage and align with community needs.

- T 17.1 Review recommendations from the 2022 parking study conducted by WGI and implement relevant actions, such as a dynamic pricing program.

TRUCK AND DELIVERY SERVICE

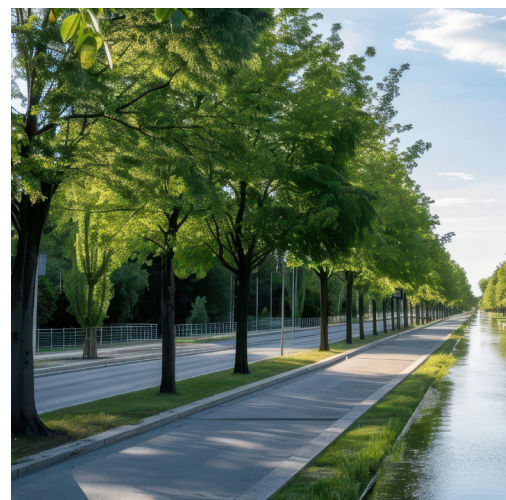
18. Support local businesses by managing commercial truck use to minimize negative impacts on the community.

- T 18.1 Collaborate with industrial and commercial businesses to coordinate delivery times and reduce impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.
- T 18.2 Direct loading and unloading to rear alleyways or service roads, encouraging coordinated deliveries to minimize disruptions to sanitation and recycling services.
- T 18.3 Manage truck deliveries to prevent safety hazards for other transportation modes, such as blocking bike lanes, sidewalks, or creating sightline issues.

COMPLETE STREETS AND GREEN STREETS

19. Create a comprehensive network of Complete and Green Streets to support sustainable, multimodal travel throughout Evanston.

- T 19.1 Identify and prioritize corridors for potential Complete and Green Streets implementation.
- T 19.2 Evaluate all modes of travel in street design to ensure a balanced, multimodal approach.
- T 19.3 Require a transportation impact fee for new developments to fund active transportation infrastructure, mitigating land use impacts.
- T 19.4 Review and update municipal code to include guidelines and examples for Complete and Green Streets features, ensuring alignment with best practices.



Source: Adobe Stock

CHAPTER 4 :
PARKS AND O

OPEN SPACE








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PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

INTRODUCTION

Parks and open spaces play a crucial role in enhancing people’s physical, mental, and environmental well-being. They improve community health and fitness, elevate quality of life, foster a sense of community, connect people to the natural world, and help preserve natural areas. Providing high quality parks that are designed with demographic input parameters will increase equitable access and address environmental injustices. Developing a park replacement schedule that includes equitable components will help decision makers assess how effectively parks are meeting the needs of user populations and determine which parks should be repaired or replaced for the greatest community good.

Parks and greenspaces are a quality-of-life amenity for a community. These areas have a direct impact on our population’s physical and mental well-being. Communities with high quality parks command higher property values and are more desirable communities in which to live. By focusing on the health and well-being of our community members, equity components of the park system, and environmental resilience we can improve all aspects of the cultural, economic, emotional, environmental, intellectual, physical, and social aspects of our community. Parks are a mechanism to reverse the impacts of inequitable practices from the past.

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
1	Evaluate existing park and recreation programming.	
2	Ensure park facilities are age-appropriate based on user demographics.	
3	Assess and invest equitably in parks.	
4	Increase city investment to maintain and operate park and recreational facilities.	
5	Evaluate and establish a plan for an accessible public bathroom system.	

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Evanston is rich in parks, with 89 in total of various sizes and with diverse amenities. It is a community-centric system composed of 221.5 acres of neighborhood parks with active recreation fields, facilities, and playgrounds that serve at a local scale. In addition, there are 63 acres designated as community parks, which are larger and offer active fields, diverse facilities with specialized uses, and community centers. Evanston also has 11.2 acres of beaches, 1.3 acres of tot lots, and 61 acres of undefined open space, ensuring a varied and inclusive recreational landscape for its residents.

The park system is divided among several owners and operators. The majority of parkland, 213.1 acres, is owned by the City of Evanston. Regional entities, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago and Cook County, own land bordering the North Shore Channel of the Chicago Area Waterway System that runs from Evanston's northeast border with Wilmette to the southeast corner bordering Chicago and Skokie, and Perkins Woods, a one-block forest preserve in northwest Evanston. In addition, three independent park districts, Ridgeville, Lighthouse, and Skokie, own and manage varying portions of parkland in different parts of Evanston which can complicate the City's work to meet community needs.

Evanston takes pride in its well-distributed and accessible park system. Responses to the Parks and Green Spaces Community Survey, conducted in 2023 by ETC Institute, substantiate this, with 98% of the 469 residents who participated in the study reporting they had visited at least one park, recreation center, beach, or other public recreation facility in the last 12 months. In addition, 29% of those who visited a park rated the overall condition as excellent and 56% as good. However, the accessibility of parks doesn't necessarily correlate with meeting the growing and changing needs of its users. In addition, Evanston has only 5 acres of parkland per thousand residents, a little more than half of the national average. The Evanston Parks and Recreation Department offers over 2,875 fitness, sports, aquatics, environmental, and recreation classes and special events to the community each year. This results in heavy park usage and potentially a higher than normal rate of degradation. Increased investment in maintenance and additional recreational opportunities outside of the park system can help to alleviate these pressures. Park designs that take maintenance demands and limitations into account can also improve the user experience.

The extensive network of public spaces in Evanston (Fig 34) includes open and natural spaces in which residents can be active and enjoy nature, including the lakefront and trails along the North Shore Channel. Other spaces, including plazas in the downtown, community centers, and libraries, are more urban and civic in nature and provide for communal gatherings and social interactions and functions.

The park system is well loved, but the investment in maintenance has been insufficient to provide the level of experience that people using parks expect. Increased and equitable investment in facilities and services, including early childhood development, senior services and recreational offerings, throughout Evanston will improve the quality of life and community pride, and increase property values and tourism. Having parks and recreational facilities that are designed with a public need focus with robust community engagement can improve current offerings. A dedicated replacement schedule with appropriate funding will ensure that these assets provide safe, relevant, and healthy opportunities for all. Inclusion of early childhood development components can provide all children the opportunity to work on social/emotional, motor, cognitive, and literacy skills. Intergenerational design elements increase the appeal and relevance of the parks for everyone.



Source: Adobe Stock

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Parks are easy to access, but there is insufficient acreage per resident. Evanston (including the Ridgeville, Lighthouse, and Skokie park districts) has one park for every 987 residents, but only five acres of parkland per thousand residents, a little more than half that of the national average. Although accessibility to a park is high, the supply does not necessarily meet the community's growing needs or provide equitable facilities and services.

The system offers diverse amenities, unevenly distributed. Amenity mix is determined by calculating the number of a certain amenity per thousand residents. Evanston offers a greater quantity of amenities than peer cities, but these amenities are not evenly distributed. In the North Central and Southeast areas of Evanston, residents have access to over six types of amenities within walking distance, including things like ice skating rinks, dog parks, and tennis courts. Conversely, residents in areas in west Evanston along the Skokie border have much less variety.

Uneven conditions and outdated facilities. The quality of individual parks and amenities differ substantially. Community members have emphasized the need for enhanced park infrastructure and focus on daily maintenance. Improving park infrastructure including outdated equipment, restrooms, water fountains, seating amenities, and pathways was frequently mentioned to address this. In addition, park infrastructure and amenities do not always match the needs based on neighborhood demographics. Taking these parameters into consideration will improve the relevance of park spaces for users.

Improve access to natural experiences, the water, and lakefront amenities. Connecting with the natural world was identified as highly desirable in future park planning with emphasis on natural play elements, native landscaping, and unprogrammed spaces that immerse people in nature. Altering design and maintenance practices by using an ecological approach to plant selection, minimizing non-native turf grasses in parks, and analyzing historical habitats to predict future plant selection will mitigate the negative impacts of climate change. Improving access to beaches and waterfront facilities was consistently mentioned as a top priority for investment.

Improve inclusion and access. Residents shared a variety of barriers that limited their participation in programs and park spaces. Chief among them was limited time and lack of awareness. Financial and physical constraints limit some residents' ability to engage with the City's parks and participate in programs. In focus groups, youth and senior residents expressed a shared desire for more inclusive programs and accessible facilities that cater to individuals of all ages and abilities, emphasizing the importance of diversity and accessibility in Evanston's park system.



Source: Adobe Stock

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

1. Increase investment to maintain and improve equitable park and recreational facilities.

- PO 1.1 Develop a staffing and training plan to maintain existing facilities.
- PO 1.2 Assess the condition of park facilities and identify equity, inclusivity, and proper amenities needed to align with the demographics of the geographic areas served
- PO 1.3 Develop a multi-year capital improvement and funding plan that includes a park replacement matrix with components related to equity to support the delivery of inclusive programs for people of all ages and abilities.

2. Assess existing park and recreation programming and investment levels in all neighborhoods.

- PO 2.1 Evaluate program lifespans, park usage, and attendance in accordance with the City's Parks Master Plan
- PO 2.2 Recognize and evaluate national trends in recreation and leisure studies and be on the forefront of supplying these opportunities to address current and future programming needs
- PO 2.3 Determine a threshold for the programming a park can support to prevent over programming an area that would decrease the positive impacts of the space.

3. Align and expand existing park programming to provide inclusive programs for people of all ages and abilities.

- PO 3.1 Develop outdoor education programs in partnership with schools and conservation organizations that encourage youth engagement in forest stewardship, wildlife monitoring, and environmental restoration efforts.
- PO 3.2 Support local community groups and organizations in their activities related to improving habitat in green spaces.
- PO 3.3 Invest in right sizing the staffing needs to meet the expectations of the community.

4. Evaluate and establish a plan to create an accessible public bathroom system.

- PO 4.1 Develop a list of existing and potential placement of public bathrooms.
- PO 4.2 Identify park and public space where the current infrastructure could be accentuated by the placement of a bathroom for programming offerings.

CHAPTER 5 :
ENVIRONNMENT



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ENVIRONMENT

INTRODUCTION

The climate we live in, the air we breathe, our water and natural resources, and our ability to sustain them are of foundational importance to all other aspects of life in Evanston. This chapter examines key aspects of Evanston's natural resources, ecosystems, green infrastructure, and urban tree canopy. Nature-based solutions can lessen the impacts of climate change, pollution, and resource scarcity. As the City continues to grow, investing in its natural assets is paramount to ensuring a sustainable future for all residents.

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
1	Incorporate climate resilience measures into infrastructure projects to mitigate future climate impacts, including increased flooding, heat waves, and storm events.	
2	Effectively manage natural resources to optimize ecosystem health.	
3	Effectively manage the tree canopy to optimize the benefits of the urban forest.	
4	Employ land-use practices that optimize soil health.	
5	Manage land along the lakeshore and the North Shore Channel to limit habitat degradation and protect and preserve water quality.	
6	Ensure a sustainable water supply by protecting Lake Michigan and promoting water conservation practices across residential, commercial, and industrial sectors.	 
7	Prioritize stormwater management strategies that protect water quality, manage flood risks, and enhance the natural function of wetlands, floodplains, and water bodies.	
8	Increase circularity of materials and resources to reduce burdens on the environment.	

EXISTING CONDITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

Although the majority of land in Evanston is densely developed, the City maintains a diverse array of natural resources. Green infrastructure serves as both functional and educational tools for promoting environmental stewardship through recreational opportunities, programming, and community engagement. Working to protect this infrastructure during planning and development is critical to maintaining ecosystem health. Existing planning regulations and development guidelines emphasize the preservation of green spaces, which helps protect ecological corridors throughout the city. Protecting these spaces also maintains community members' access to a variety of natural amenities such as parks, green spaces, and the lake shore. Access to these spaces is supported by a growing network of trail systems that offer both recreational and transportation benefits, effectively connecting neighborhoods with natural and urban spaces.

However, Evanston faces some environmental health challenges. The Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Screen contains data pertaining to Evanston's environmental health and air quality. It shows that Evanston has elevated levels beyond national averages of particulate matter, ozone, nitrous dioxide, and diesel particulate matter.

In addition, the lake shore and the areas along the North Shore Channel are potentially vulnerable to flooding events. The lake shore is particularly susceptible to changing water levels in Lake Michigan, which creates management challenges for both built infrastructure and ecosystems. Overcoming these challenges is crucial for improving the community's resilience to extreme weather events and changes in climate patterns.

WATERBODIES

Evanston boasts 4.25 miles of shoreline along Lake Michigan, a defining feature of the city. The City is also home to six beaches along the lake. Lake Michigan is part of a globally significant ecoregion known for its freshwater supply and biodiversity. People have settled near the Great Lakes for approximately 10,000 years, using the lake for fishing and transportation. Today, it serves as the largest public drinking water supply in Illinois, supporting nearly 6.6 million people. If the Great Lakes are not managed carefully, this vital resource may be threatened by invasive species, climate change, pollution, and habitat destruction.

Apart from Lake Michigan, the North Shore Channel is Evanston's main water corridor. The North Shore Channel was built in the early 20th century to evacuate sewage, and has become an important habitat corridor for migratory birds and other wildlife. This three-mile channel also offers numerous recreation opportunities with trails, canoes, rowing, and fishing opportunities.



Source: Adobe Stock

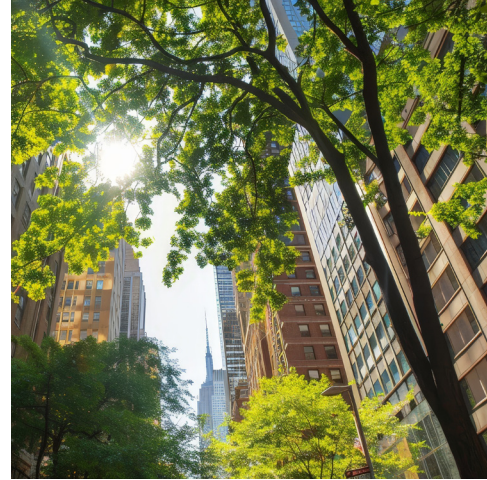
ECOSYSTEMS AND TREE CANOPY

Region-wide, northeastern Illinois is composed of a mosaic of prairies, woodlands, and wetlands. Forest preserves cover nearly 70,000 acres, or 11 percent of Cook County, and many follow river valleys or creeks. These areas are core habitats for native species and are an integral part of the local ecosystem. The integration of urban development into these habitats is a key focus for Evanston, and the City supports preserving these natural communities through its policies, practices, and community initiatives.

Evanston's robust tree canopy and location along Lake Michigan contribute to its reputation as a leader in environmental stewardship through recognitions like Tree City USA, Bird City Illinois, and the Mayors' Monarch Pledge. Evanston's urban forest includes over 32,000 trees throughout the City's parkways, parks, and other public spaces. According to LiDAR data analyzed by the Chicago Region Trees Initiative, Evanston's tree canopy cover is estimated at 38%, which is higher than other local communities with similar population density. Among other benefits, the urban forest improves water and air quality, reduces the potential for flooding, minimizes the urban heat island effect, provides shade that reduces summer energy use, and generally improves the well-being of people in the community.

However, tree canopy cover is not uniform throughout the city. Some areas of eastern and northern Evanston have canopy coverage above 44%, while some areas in western and southwestern Evanston are below 20%. As average temperatures continue to increase and extreme weather events become more frequent, people living in neighborhoods with lower tree canopy cover will be at higher risk of heat-related illness, increased cooling costs, greater exposure to environmental toxins, and other negative impacts. Evanston must continue to develop strategies to mitigate these impacts of a changing climate.

In addition, urban trees are subject to harsh conditions, including limited soil volume, poor soil composition, necessary trimming to raise branches above streets and sidewalks, disruptions to root structure for utility installations and infrastructure development, and physical damage from community activity around trees. These stressors make trees susceptible to invasive pests, disease, and structural deficiencies. Furthermore, Evanston's tree canopy lacks age diversity. As the city's mature trees reach the end of their natural life, there are fewer mid-sized canopy trees to take their place.



Source: Adobe Stock

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

As development continues throughout Evanston, the City must balance accommodating growth while also preserving the natural environment and mitigating the effects of climate change. How do we plan for future growth while continuing to enhance our natural resources?

Climate change predictions for northeastern Illinois include a general increase in average temperatures, an increase in the quantity and impact of extreme weather events, a shorter dormant season, and polar vortex events during the winter. Precipitation patterns are also changing and becoming more erratic, with instances of prolonged drought accompanied by an increase in events with disproportionately larger amounts of precipitation per hour. These new climate conditions are stressful for native plants and provide opportunities for invasive species, mosquitoes, ticks, and other disease vectors to migrate into the area and thrive. Nationally, water insecurity is a growing concern, which adds local pressure to conserve Lake Michigan water. It is important to maintain high water quality for both people and native aquatic species. Climate changes in other parts of the country are projected to result in people migrating to the Great Lakes region, requiring land use strategies that can accommodate an unknown number of climate migrants.

Proper management of natural resources involves a collaborative effort between public entities, private developers, and community members. Publicly-owned natural resources, like parks and other green spaces, are managed by the City, which is responsible for maintaining ecosystem health through invasive species control, habitat restoration, and water quality monitoring. Natural resource management also extends beyond public space. Entities proposing new development or changes in land use should be responsible for conserving and managing green infrastructure, reclaiming and reusing building materials, and reducing emissions and embedded carbon through innovative building techniques. Other opportunities include protecting and improving tree canopy cover, planting native and site-appropriate species, and managing stormwater infiltration.



Source: Adobe Stock

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

1. Incorporate climate resilience measures into infrastructure projects to mitigate future climate impacts, including increased flooding, heat waves, and storm events.

- ENV 1.1 Require higher building envelope standards and storm and flooding-resilient designs for new developments and redevelopments.
- ENV 1.2 Incentivize green infrastructure efforts that mitigate heat island effects and provide access to green spaces, such as native tree replacement, green roofs, and community gardens.
- ENV 1.3 Designate “resilience hubs” – community-serving facilities activated during emergency events – to support community members, coordinate communication, distribute resources, and reduce carbon pollution.
- ENV 1.4 Support emergency management, preparedness, and response efforts through Community Emergency Response Team training, education, early warning systems, and neighborhood networks.
- ENV 1.5 Educate the community on climate change and resilience.

2. Effectively manage natural resources to optimize ecosystem health.

- ENV 2.1 Monitor ecosystem health through assessments, inventories, and active management practices.
- ENV 2.2 Protect and preserve habitat for native flora and fauna, using best practices as recognized by industry professionals.
- ENV 2.3 Protect and manage larger green spaces, such as parks and the Ladd Arboretum, that provide critical habitats for native species.
- ENV 2.4 Promote opportunities for education and outreach to community members on ecosystem management and support community organizations that work to protect and restore habitats.

3. Effectively manage the tree canopy to optimize the benefits of the urban forest.

- ENV 3.1 Maintain an updated public tree inventory to capture species diversity and assess trends, patterns, and opportunities to guide urban forest management.
- ENV 3.2 Promote urban forest health around vulnerable populations, prioritizing neighborhoods, public parks, schools, and transportation corridors.
- ENV 3.3 Identify funding opportunities that support urban forest health, including removing hazardous trees and planting new trees.
- ENV 3.4 Support efforts to improve the tree canopy cover on private property in areas where it is limited, including in the western parts of the city.

4. Employ land-use practices that optimize soil health.

- ENV 4.1 Require developers to use environmental preservation methods during construction, including protective fencing and designated pathways.
- ENV 4.2 Implement grading and erosion control standards to maximize vegetative buffers, replanting, and post-construction soil amendment and restoration.
- ENV 4.3 Use best soil management practices, including reducing impervious surfaces and retaining vegetation during construction.

5. Manage land along the lakeshore and the North Shore Channel to limit habitat degradation and protect and preserve water quality.

- ENV 5.1 Protect shoreland areas by encouraging buffer zones to maintain vegetative cover and reduce pollution into water bodies.
- ENV 5.2 Maintain low-impact recreational infrastructure that allows public access to water bodies while maintaining ecosystem health.
- ENV 5.3 Encourage watershed-based planning that considers human activities, land/water interactions, and impacts on aquatic life in making development decisions.

6. Ensure a sustainable water supply by protecting Lake Michigan and promoting water conservation practices across residential, commercial, and industrial sectors.

- ENV 6.1 Continue to monitor water quality and make strategic investments to maintain long-term water supply stewardship.
- ENV 6.2 Collaborate with regional and state regulators as well as community partners to support water conservation and protect Lake Michigan as a water source.
- ENV 6.3 Enforce restrictions on watering lawns in the middle of the day during summer months and require new developments to reduce irrigation demand.
- ENV 6.4 Continue to use technology that allows water users to track their usage and encourage water-saving technologies in both new developments and retrofits.
- ENV 6.5 Expand public education programs focused on protecting water sources, reducing water use, and promoting responsible irrigation practices.

7. Prioritize stormwater management strategies that protect water quality, manage flood risks, and enhance the natural function of wetlands, floodplains, and water bodies.

- ENV 7.1 Encourage green infrastructure techniques in residential and commercial developments that slow, capture, and filter stormwater, helping to reduce runoff, prevent flooding, and protect waterways from pollutants.
- ENV 7.2 Enhance public infrastructure by investing in modern stormwater drainage systems that prevent flooding and support long-term community resilience to extreme weather events.
- ENV 7.3 Continue water quality monitoring programs, including monitoring emerging pollutants like PFAS and microplastics to assess pollution levels and identify areas for intervention.
- ENV 7.4 Support development that increases stormwater retention, such as bioswales, in both public and private developments to reduce the burden on municipal infrastructure.
- ENV 7.5 Support incentives for rainwater harvesting and infiltration systems, including permeable pavement, cisterns, and rain barrels.

8. Increase circularity of materials and resources to reduce burdens on the environment.

- ENV 8.1 Recover food and compost organics to better manage waste locally.
- ENV 8.2 Reclaim and reuse building materials.
- ENV 8.3 Make it easier to recycle effectively, including through educational and marketing campaigns.
- ENV 8.4 Encourage waste reduction practices.
- ENV 8.5 Attract more circular businesses like package free shops and thrift stores.
- ENV 8.6 Install better infrastructure and services to avoid litter in business districts.
- ENV 8.7 Support local procurement of goods and services to build a circular economy.
- ENV 8.8 Investigate embedded carbon in building materials and explore opportunities to reduce emissions through innovative building material technologies.



Source: Adobe Stock

CHAPTER 6 :

ECONOMIC D



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DEVELOPMENT














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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

Economic development is the process by which a community enhances its economic well-being and improves quality of life for its residents. Successful economic development results in a more dynamic and sustainable economy, creates quality jobs that are advantageous to community members’ economic prosperity, and enhances quality of life. To foster a vibrant and resilient local economy, strategic planning and investments in business support, workforce development, and physical infrastructure are essential. Evanston can be a city that exemplifies how transforming local economies goes beyond simply creating jobs but also entails creating places that people can and want to live, work, and play.

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
1	Increase economic mobility, especially those who have the lowest median household incomes.	 
2	Increase the number of families who choose to live in Evanston.	
3	Provide support for the growing senior population.	 
4	Continue to create and preserve attractive public spaces and vibrant retail streets which contribute to Evanston’s unique identity.	 
5	Expand workforce development.	 
6	Continue revitalization efforts of the local retail economy.	
7	Increase digital presence and awareness of Evanston as a desirable place to do business, to live, and to have fun.	

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Evanston's economy has evolved over time. The importance of Northwestern University's founding can not be understated. Two commuter rail lines and the creation of train station retail and services differentiated Evanston from its suburban neighbors to the north. Evanston evolved as the downtown of Chicago's north shore with department store retail, services, and dining. A number of corporate headquarters, desiring close proximity to the university, built office buildings, creating an office submarket unusual for a city of Evanston's size so close to a global city like Chicago, including Rotary International which continues to call Evanston home. In the 1960s, the City was also a thriving industrial hub, home to at least 71 manufacturing companies producing goods from textbooks and food products to machinery. As in many older midwestern cities, manufacturing relocated to larger greenfield sites or closed entirely due to globalization. Over the years, recognizing the value of the transit hub, Evanston evolved to include high rise residential buildings, resulting in the creation of new retail shops and food establishments. This was timed with the growth of a knowledge-based and creative population and a workforce strongly focused in healthcare and education.

Examining employment, occupational, and economic data and statistics can help shed light on the makeup of Evanston's economic landscape and the health of the economy.

EMPLOYMENT

As of March 2023, there were approximately 2,500 establishments, which collectively provide around 40,000 jobs in Evanston. Of these jobs, only about 12% of workers also live in the City while the rest commute into Evanston from neighboring cities.

The labor force averaged around 39,000 people in 2023, representing about 61% of Evanston's total population. This percentage is similar to that of Chicago (about 61%) and Cook County (62%). The unemployment rate in the same year was 3.6% on average, which was less than the average for Chicago (4.7%) and Cook County (4.4%). In 2024 so far, while unemployment in Evanston has risen to 5.7% in June, Evanston performed slightly better compared to Chicago (7.1%) and Cook County (6.7%) for the same month.

Within the city, the unemployed population is largely concentrated in the western and southern neighborhoods, which generally coincide with neighborhoods where median household incomes are lower. Helping households secure quality jobs is a priority of economic development efforts, consistent with one of the goals of this plan to create equitable opportunities for all.



Source: Adobe Stock

KEY INDUSTRY SECTORS

Education and healthcare are the dominant industry sectors in Evanston, accounting for approximately 30% and 25% of total jobs, respectively. This can be attributed to the presence of Northwestern University, a leading private research and teaching university that has been closely linked to Evanston’s growth as a city, and two hospitals. These industries also represent the top two employers of Evanstonians. About 15% of Evanston’s total labor force work in one of these sectors while the remaining jobs in these sectors are held by workers living outside of Evanston.

Public administration, retail trade, professional services, and accommodation and food services are other major sectors providing employment, each constituting about six to eight percent of total jobs in Evanston. These include jobs in local government, school districts, retail shops, hotels, food and beverage establishments, accounting, consulting, and similar types of professional service firms. Many of these jobs are likely held by Evanstonians, as about 12 and nine percent of the labor force are employed in professional services and retail trade respectively.

Jobs in the retail trade and food services are particularly important to the economy as they primarily comprise small to medium local businesses that help define neighborhoods.

However, this sector is also susceptible to shocks. The pandemic, for instance, upended the retail and hospitality industry nationwide; in Evanston, over 30 businesses closed by the end of 2020. The City has since prioritized the rejuvenation of its retail sector through an action plan called Evanston Thrives Retail District Action Plan.

OCCUPATIONS AND WAGES

Since only about 12% of people who work in Evanston also live in Evanston, it is worth examining the occupational profile of Evanstonians besides looking solely at jobs that are physically based in Evanston. Occupational and wage data illustrates the kind of jobs that Evanstonians work in and the potential of attracting those industries to locate in the city.

Education instruction and library occupations form the largest job category of jobs held by Evanston residents, accounting for about 13% of the labor force. Sales and related occupations are the second largest group (about 8%), followed by computer and mathematical occupations (about 6%), and healthcare practitioners and technical occupations (about 6%). Service occupations, which include healthcare support occupations, food preparation and serving related occupations among others, collectively represent about 13% of all jobs.

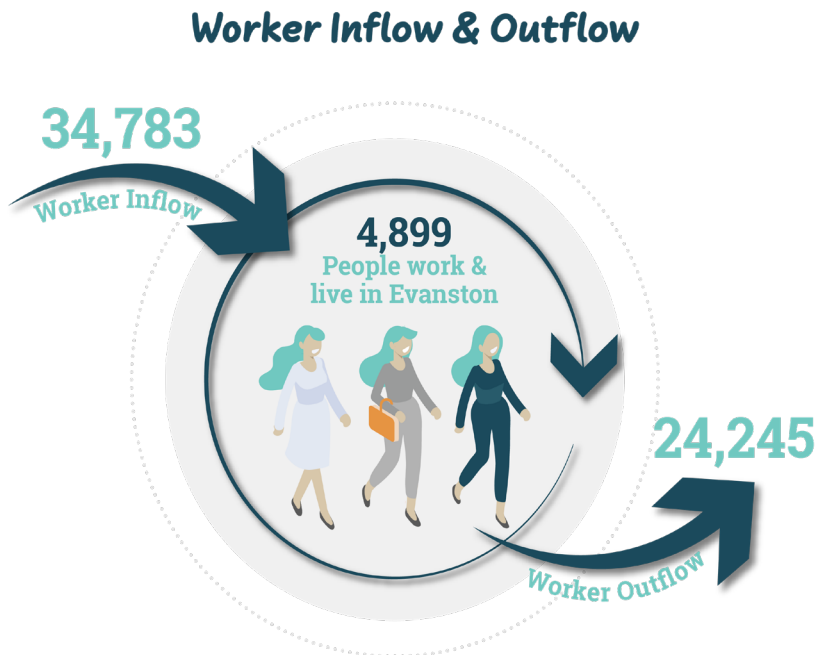


Figure 8 Source: HDR, Inc

UNEMPLOYMENT MAP

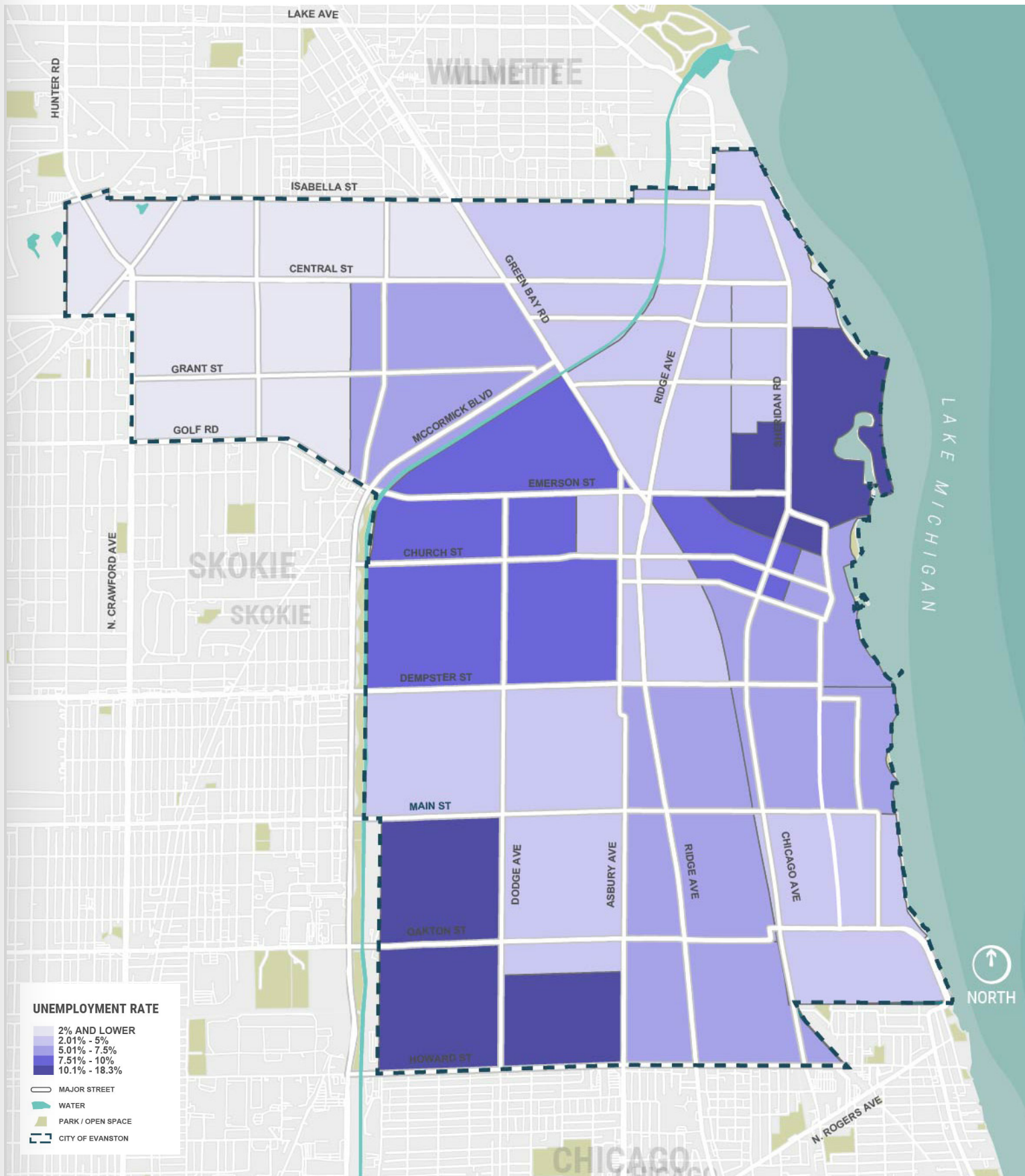


Figure 9 Source: HDR, Inc

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WORKFORCE

It is important for the City to ensure there will be enough jobs for its people and that there will be enough people equipped with the right skills for the jobs our society needs in the future. Understanding the composition of Evanston’s existing and future workforce is the first step in identifying gaps and long-term challenges that should be prioritized.

AGE

Evanston has a relatively older population than its neighbors. The median age in 2022 was 37.6, which is slightly higher than Chicago (35.3) and Cook County (37.5). Residents aged 20-24 years constitute the largest age group, making up about 10% of the population. However, despite a large proportion of young adults, which is likely attributed to the presence of college students in Northwestern University, changes in the proportions of other age groups suggest that Evanston might be showing signs of an aging population.

Working-age residents, defined as those aged 15-64, make up about 67% of the City’s population, a decrease of about seven percent from 2010. Overall, Evanston is trending towards a future with fewer younger people and more older people. This poses a risk to local economic development as older people are less likely to participate in the labor force, and there are insufficient younger people to replenish the workforce.

This aging trend also impacts the age dependency ratio, a measure of the proportion of dependent individuals (ages 0-14 and 65 and above) to the working-age population (ages 15-64). An increasing age dependency ratio could indicate that the working population might have to shoulder a greater tax burden in order to support the dependent population, thereby increasing their cost of living in the city.

This aging trend also impacts the age dependency ratio, a measure of the proportion of dependent individuals (ages 0-14 and 65 and above) to the working-age population (ages 15-64). Evanston’s figure was slightly under 54 in 2022, an approximately 16% increase from 2010 when the ratio was about 46. In other words, for every 100 working-age people, the number of dependents increased from 46 to 54 people. Chicago’s ratio in 2022 was about 50, which was a decrease from 51 in 2010. An increasing age dependency ratio could indicate that the working population might have to shoulder a greater tax burden in order to support the dependent population, thereby increasing their cost of living in the City.

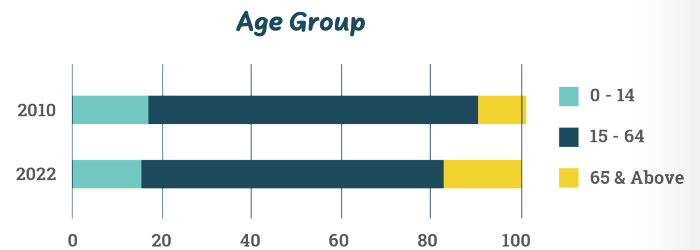


Figure 10 Source: HDR, Inc

Industries after Graduation

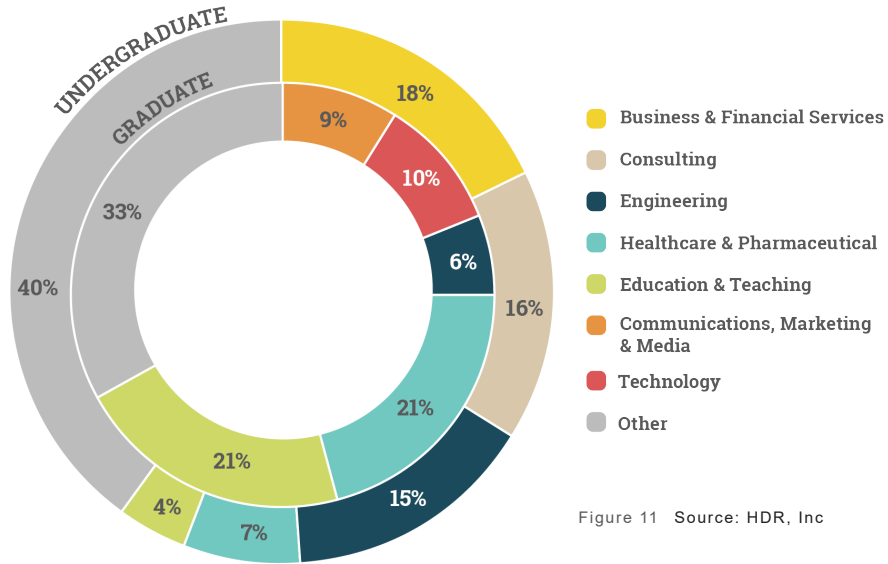


Figure 11 Source: HDR, Inc

Occupation Title & Median Wage

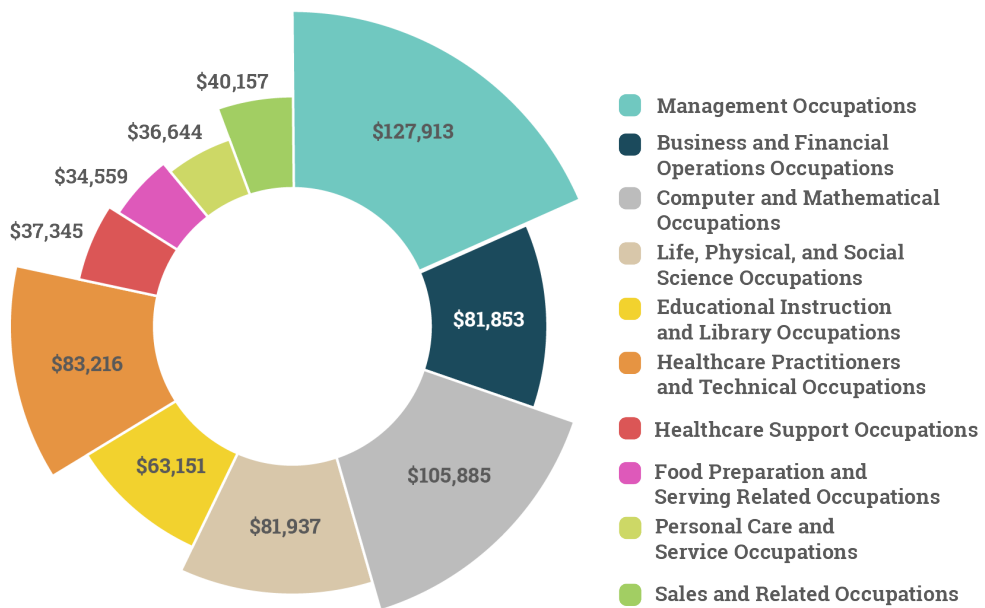


Figure 12 Source: HDR, Inc

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

The level of educational attainment in the workforce can indicate if workers in Evanston are likely to have the necessary skills and knowledge to take on available jobs in the city. Jobs in the education and healthcare sectors, the two dominant job providing industries in Evanston, tend to require a degree of higher education. Residents in Evanston are highly educated, as roughly 73% of Evanstonians aged 25 years and older hold at least an Associate’s Degree. More significantly, those with a Graduate or Professional Degree form the largest group, amounting to about 39% of Evanstonians aged 25 years and older. This proportion is about double of that in Chicago and Cook County. Moreover, the proportion of those with a Graduate or Professional Degree has increased by around six percent from 2000.

While Evanston has an overall higher level of educational attainment as a city, this observation does not apply equally across age groups and races. Given that occupations with higher wages tend to be education- and healthcare-related and require higher educational attainment, the data suggests that income and wealth inequality along racial lines could continue in Evanston unless addressed through specific policies.

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY (NU)

Northwestern University is a longstanding institution of Evanston and is now one of the top private research universities in the world. Research universities like Northwestern University can bring social and economic benefits to a city. Companies set up offices in these cities to recruit talent from these higher education institutions, creating more jobs for the local economy. Analyzing the kinds of programs offered and pursued by students, as well as their paths after graduation, shows if there is a mismatch between jobs in the city and graduates’ qualifications, as well as the extent to which talent from the university is retained.

Data from 2022 indicates that graduate students from Northwestern enter into education and teaching, and healthcare and pharmaceuticals. The high percentages of graduates entering the two biggest workforce sectors in Evanston suggest that Northwestern University is likely an important source of employees. Ensuring that Northwestern University continues to provide quality programs in these fields can help attract talents into Evanston.

Conversely, the City can take advantage of the high numbers of undergraduates in professional services and engineering by attracting more businesses from these sectors. Northwestern University’s recent survey of undergraduates from the class of 2023 indicates that most continue to stay in Illinois for work. Evanston can work toward greater retention of undergraduates in the city by providing good infrastructure and maintaining an affordable cost of living, in addition to connecting workforce opportunities to students’ expertise.

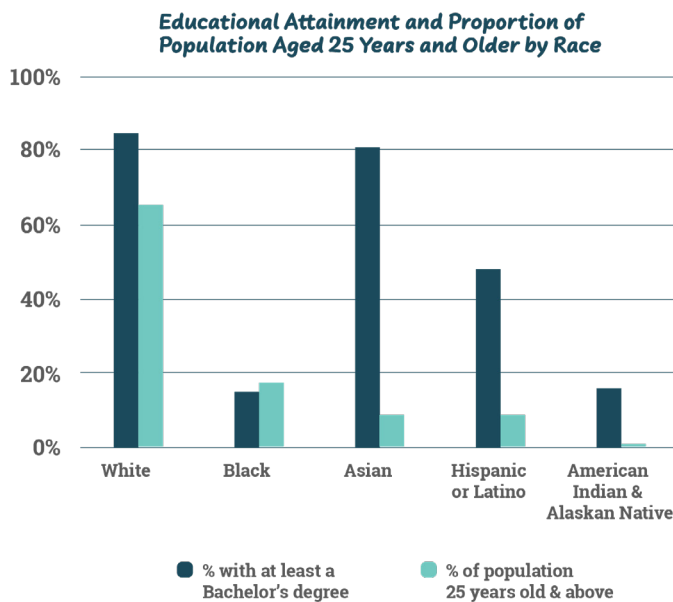


Figure 13 Source: HDR, Inc



Figure 14 Adobe Stock

TAX BASE

A robust and diversified tax base builds a strong foundation for a healthy economy. Analyzing tax revenues over time can reveal changes in local expenditures and help identify trends in certain segments of the local economy. Like most of Illinois' localities, Evanston's tax base is heavily reliant on property taxes. Expanding Evanston's tax base and diversifying Evanston's housing supply can bolster the City's ability to provide exceptional services without overburdening property owners or generating displacement.

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

EMERGING SECTORS

The State of Illinois' 2024 Economic Growth Plan, Open for Business, identified several key high growth sectors based on their potential for future growth and their existing foundation in institutions, businesses, and workforce in the state. These sectors include Life Sciences, Quantum Computing, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Microelectronics, Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy Production, and Manufacturing. To attract, retain, and expand businesses in these sectors, the state plans to provide funding for capital investment and workforce development.

Given the strong support from the state government, Evanston can capitalize on state resources to grow sectors which already exist in the City. For example, clean energy, life sciences, quantum computing, and AI sectors could benefit from the engineering programs as well as first class research at Northwestern University.

POST-PANDEMIC WORK AND CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to the growth of flexible work arrangements. Hybrid or fully remote work has become increasingly common, reducing the need for workers to commute daily to offices and the need for companies to occupy large amounts of office spaces. As a result, downtown offices across the nation have been experiencing higher levels of vacancies. Evanston is no exception.

Evanston needs to adapt to this new trend as changes in work locations and arrangements can also impact where people choose to live. Since many employees are no longer required to be in the office every day, some may choose to live in locations further away where cost of living is cheaper, and social and recreational opportunities are more abundant.

Besides office buildings, retail establishments downtown have also suffered due to the decrease in foot traffic from office workers. Part of this problem can be attributed to the rise in e-commerce, which intensified as a result of the pandemic. Shopping online takes away the need to visit stores in person, thus fueling the closure of brick-and-mortar shops in many cities across the country. In Evanston, however, market research suggests that e-commerce may not have had as much of an impact as anticipated. Regardless of the cause, it is critical for Evanston to strategize and revitalize its retail scene, so that the city remains attractive to existing and future workers that will contribute to the local economy.

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

1. Increase economic mobility, especially those who have the lowest median household incomes.

- ECON 1.1 Support the creation of mentoring programs to expose and connect students to internships and shadowing opportunities. Bolster workforce development initiatives.
- ECON 1.2 Support entrepreneurship initiatives for communities of color.
- ECON 1.3 Remove barriers to entry, using demographic data to understand workforce composition, identify gaps, and shape organizational strategy.
- ECON 1.4 Establish workforce development policies for City departments. Train individuals for certain certifications, licensing, or other qualifications needed.

2. Increase the number of families who choose to live in Evanston.

- ECON 2.1 Develop incentives and create zoning regulations to encourage child care providers to locate throughout the City.
- ECON 2.2 Encourage large buildings in strategic employment nodes to dedicate space within their buildings to house infant care and childcare services.

3. Provide support for the growing senior population.

- ECON 3.1 Partner with agencies to develop a community-wide aging plan so that workers who retire can continue to be connected through support networks and engaged in society through volunteering, employment and continuous learning.

4. Continue to create and preserve attractive public spaces and vibrant retail streets which contribute to Evanston's unique identity.

- ECON 4.1 Adopt a privately-owned public space plan that encourages developments in strategic locations to provide and maintain spaces that are publicly accessible.
- ECON 4.2 Continue funding for façade and storefront improvement incentive programs and provide design assistance through community partners.
- ECON 4.3 Highlight the historic architecture and heritage of downtown and Evanston's neighborhood business districts. Prepare and implement a historic building and legacy business interpretive program that describes individual building and business histories through signage, plaques, podcasts, and other digital formats to enrich the visitor experience.
- ECON 4.4 Establish clear gateways at the entrances of each district.
- ECON 4.5 Implement larger, more consistent and visible public signage and wayfinding.
- ECON 4.6 Invest in transformative physical interventions to support retail districts.

5. Expand workforce development.

- ECON 5.1 Partner with agencies and institutions to promote the healthcare and education sectors for workforce development. Provide incentives to draw innovative and emerging businesses into the city.
- ECON 5.2 Collaborate with hospitals to create health oriented districts (HOD).
- ECON 5.3 Collaborate with school districts and the university to develop and refine academic programs and degrees that support clean energy technology and life sciences industry needs.
- ECON 5.4 Support collaboration with industry partners to create internship or residency opportunities for students to gain relevant experience as part of their coursework.
- ECON 5.5 Support existing partners in growing workforce expertise in building deconstruction methods.
- ECON 5.6 Convert vacant office spaces downtown into tech incubator spaces and accelerators for businesses in these sectors.

6. Continue revitalization efforts of the local retail economy.

- ECON 6.1 Connect local businesses to business support organizations for advising services and resources.
- ECON 6.2 Consider new incentives and programs with private-sector partners that support entrepreneurial activity, including a venture fund that facilitates new restaurant and small business start-ups.
- ECON 6.3 Continue to support and grow programs that assist legacy businesses.

7. Increase digital presence and awareness of Evanston as a desirable place to do business, to live, and to have fun.

- ECON 7.1 Implement marketing strategies recommended in Evanston Thrives.
- ECON 7.2 Promote the new Enjoy Evanston website on social media and other media platforms to raise brand awareness of Evanston.

CHAPTER 7 :
HOUSING

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HOUSING

INTRODUCTION







This housing chapter provides a framework for increasing housing choice and supply, maintaining existing housing stock, preventing displacement, and preserving the racial and economic diversity of Evanston. Fair, safe, stable, secure, connected, healthy, attainable, and accessible housing are key tenets of this plan.

The United States has a deeply rooted history of inequitable housing and land use policies. While outright race-based zoning was deemed unconstitutional by the United States Supreme Court in 1917, other racially restrictive land use practices, including redlining and racial or religion-based restrictive covenants, took hold shortly after throughout the country including Evanston.

The Great Migration contributed to a rise in the Black population in Evanston and the primary response was segregation, with steering beginning as early as 1910. By 1940, Evanston had over 6,000 Black residents and the largest Black suburban population in Illinois, with over 80% living in the 5th Ward in smaller homes adjacent to industry and environmental hazards with limited access to amenities.

In subsequent decades, demolition of “substandard” housing in “blighted” areas, including by the Land Clearance Commission, disproportionately impacted Black Evanstonians. Though the Fair Housing Act outlawed racially motivated redlining in 1968, its legacy persists today from both the significant past harms endured by Black Evanstonians and the continued harm caused by inequitable zoning, land use, and housing policies.

Safe and stable housing is a critical element of a healthy community and supports residents’ physical, mental, and economic well-being. The absence of high-quality, safe, and attainable housing has broad consequences for a community, harming our ability to maintain a healthy, diverse, and economically thriving community. The table below includes policy statements that will be used when making housing decisions and links them to the most relevant goals.

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
1	Increase housing supply and housing choice	
2	Preserve current homes and prevent displacement	
3	Expand support for non-traditional housing models including community land trusts, shared housing, and limited-equity cooperatives	
4	Focus on healthy buildings and neighborhoods	
5	Expand revenue for housing initiatives	
6	Build and leverage local capacity and partnerships	

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Evanston is a racially and economically diverse community yet segregation remains at the neighborhood level. The high demand to live in Evanston has led to a significant increase in housing costs that disproportionately impacts people with lower incomes, people living with a disability, people of color, and people experiencing unstable housing. Many community members are experiencing displacement pressures and policies and public and private investment will need to proactively address these pressures. Although there is little vacant land on which to build more housing, this plan lays out a path to increase housing choice and supply in all neighborhoods but specifically centers and corridors. By using a broad range of housing strategies, we can preserve racial and economic diversity while increasing the prosperity and vibrancy of the Evanston community.

TODAY

Evanston today is a racially and economically diverse community, but significant segregation remains within the City's neighborhoods. For many years there has been a high demand to live in Evanston. This has led to significant increases in housing costs, both for residents who rent and residents who own. This disproportionately impacts people with lower incomes, people living with a disability, people of color, and people experiencing unstable housing.

Long-time residents, including seniors on fixed incomes, families of color, and Northwestern graduates, are experiencing displacement pressures and children of residents, Evanston employees, and others are being priced out of returning and/or moving to Evanston. As public and private investments continue to enhance Evanston's neighborhoods, displacement pressures should be proactively addressed.

Though little vacant land is available, this plan lays out a path towards increasing housing choice and housing supply through gentle density, missing middle housing, and larger growth in key centers and corridors. This plan also addresses preserving existing homes and preventing displacement. Together, we aim to preserve the racial and economic diversity, while increasing the prosperity and vibrancy of the Evanston community.

HOUSING STOCK

Evanston's housing stock is aging. Over 42% of housing was built before 1940 (85+ years ago), 35% was built between 1940 and 1979 (45-84 years ago), and less than 23% since 1980 (in the last 45 years). Many older homes in Evanston have high levels of artistic and architectural value with opportunities for renewed life and vibrancy. The aging housing stock often presents challenges including high maintenance costs, lead paint and other health and environmental hazards, at the same time providing benefits through lower monthly rents as naturally occurring affordable housing.

Less than a third, 32%, of Evanston's housing units are single-unit detached buildings, about 19% are in buildings with two to four units, about 20% are in buildings with 5 to 19 units, and about 29% are in buildings with 20 or more units. A significant portion of Evanston is currently zoned for a single residential unit per lot, greatly limiting the ability to develop diverse housing types.

A slight majority (56%) of Evanston's occupied housing stock is owner-occupied and the remaining 44% is rental. Over 64% of owner-occupied units have three or more bedrooms and less than 8% are studios or one-bedroom units. Conversely, over 80% of rental units have two or fewer bedrooms and less than 4% have four or more bedrooms. This can make it difficult for larger households to find rental housing and difficult for many households to find attainable for-sale housing.

There are a variety of subsidized affordable housing units in Evanston. Over 440 units are restricted to income-qualified seniors and over 200 units are single-room occupancy. Over 100 units are for specific populations such as persons with disabilities and survivors of domestic violence. Over 90 units are from the City's Inclusionary Housing program. Additionally, over 550 Evanston households use Housing Choice Vouchers to afford monthly rent payments.

The three largest permanent supportive housing providers are Connections for the Homeless, Impact Behavioral Health Partners, and the YWCA Evanston/North Shore. Family Promise and Interfaith Action also provide emergency shelter for those in need.

Housing Stock

Distribution of Housing Types throughout Evanston (2019)

Key Finding: Single Family homes comprise roughly one third of Evanston's housing stock

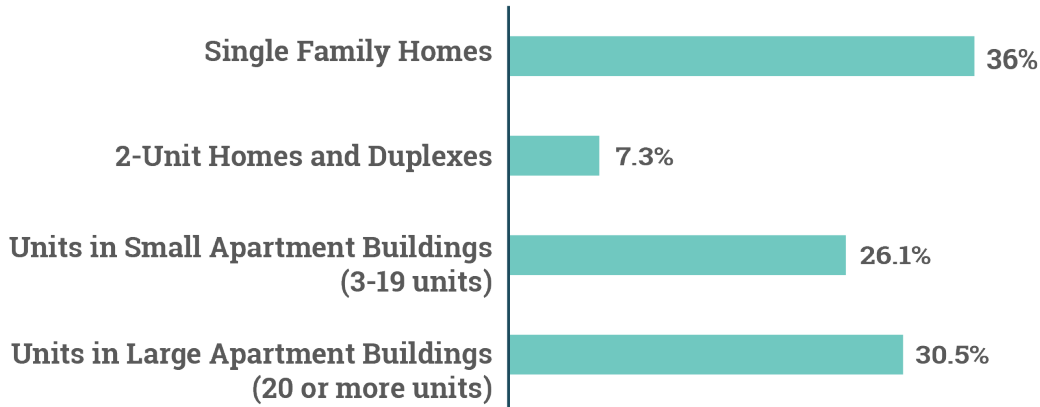


Figure 15 Source: <https://www.cityofevanston.org/home/showpublisheddocument/74636/637991738675470000>

HOUSING COSTS

More than one-third of Evanston households are cost-burdened, spending 30% or more of their household income on housing costs. However, this disproportionately affects renters - nearly half of Evanston's renting households (49%) are cost-burdened and more than 26% are severely cost-burdened, spending 50% or more of their household income on housing costs.

In the past ten years, Evanston's median gross rent, including utilities, has increased more than 41% to \$1,625 per month. In 2012, about 1,250 renter households paid gross rents of \$2,000 or more per month; in 2022 that number rose to over 4,000 households. Similarly, about 4,400 renter households paid less than \$1,000 per month in gross rent; in 2022 that number shrank to under 1,500 households.

Since 2012 the number of homeowner households without a mortgage has increased by over 55% to about 6,500 households. Less than a third of these households spend \$1,500 or more per month in housing costs. However, almost 90% of homeowner households with a mortgage spend \$1,500 or more per month in housing costs and more than 43% spend at least \$3,000 per month. The increase in households without a mortgage increases current housing affordability but also masks the cost for prospective homebuyers who will need a mortgage to purchase.

Housing cost burdens often stem from low incomes combined with a lack of affordable housing, with households struggling to pay for other essentials like food, transportation, and medical care. The issue is compounded by wages not keeping pace with rising housing costs. Additionally, traditional housing affordability formulas overlook transportation costs, which are typically a household's second-largest expense. Neighborhood amenities, such as walkability and access to jobs and services, heavily influence transportation costs. Compact, well-connected neighborhoods tend to be less affordable. According to the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation (H+T®) Affordability Index, Evanston households spend 50% of their income on housing and transportation, with 35% allocated to housing and 15% to transportation.

PERCENTAGE OF HOUSING EXPERIENCING COST BURDENS

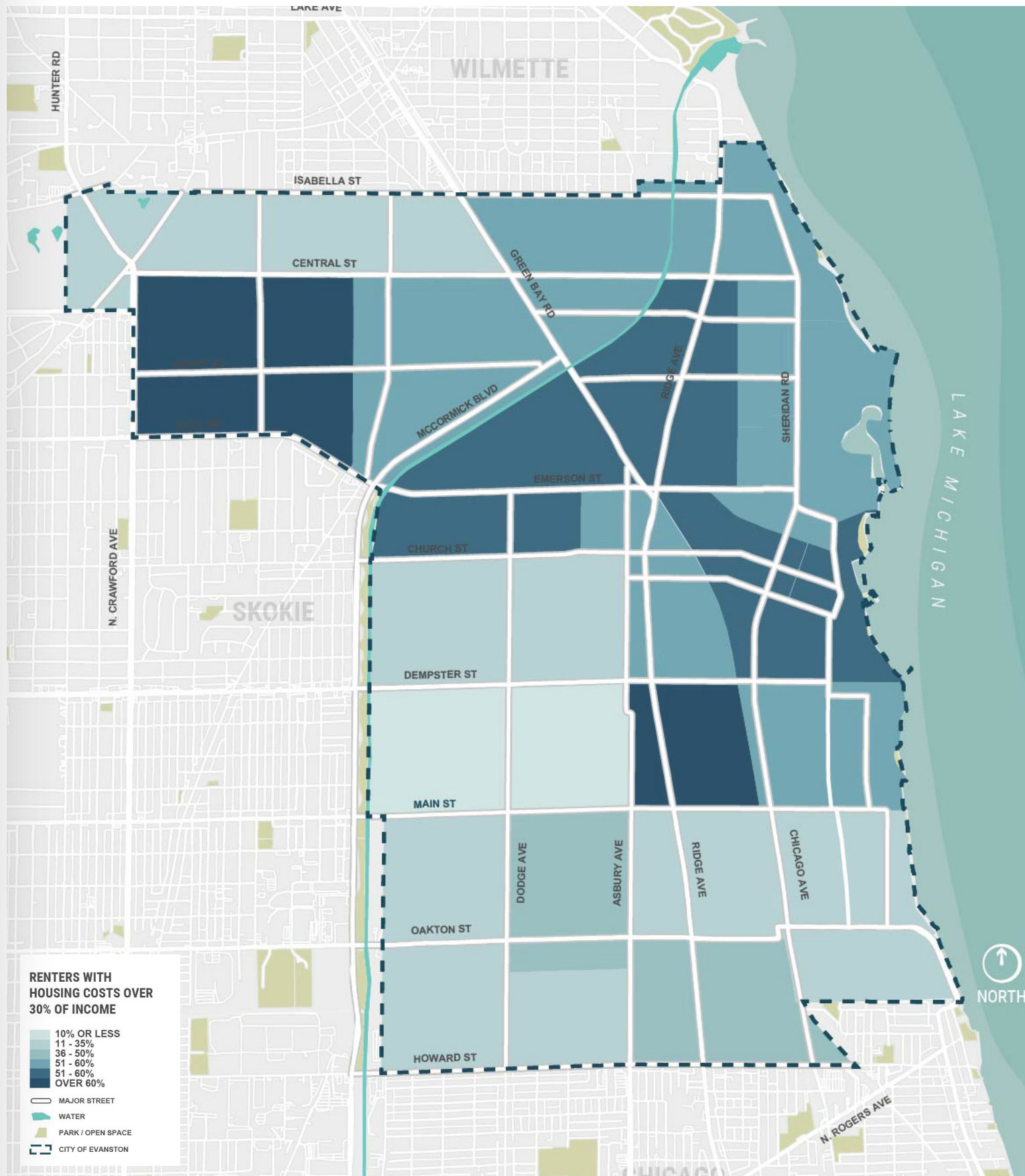


Figure 16 Source: City of Evanston

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HOUSING INSECURITY

Housing insecurity is a growing challenge both nationally and locally as housing prices continue to rise. Throughout Suburban Cook County, roughly 1,000 individuals experienced homelessness as of 2023.

The City's Human Services Division provides funding for income-eligible people and households experiencing housing insecurity and works in conjunction with local housing partners to support housing needs. Shelters are at full capacity, and there is an undersupply of emergency beds. Reducing barriers to providing a variety of housing options can help ensure that every Evanstonian has access to safe, stable housing. Expanding these options will address the current crisis and future needs.

STUDENT HOUSING

Evanston is home to Northwestern University's main campus, which has a substantial economic, cultural, and housing impact on the City. There are over 13,500 undergraduate and graduate students residing in Evanston, over 2,500 attending public institutions and about 11,000 attending private institutions, over 8,000 of which are Northwestern University undergraduate students. Making up over 17% of the city's population, students are an important demographic group, though student housing needs are by no means homogenous. Evanston's student incomes and assets vary widely, mirroring the total population. Student household compositions also vary and comprise individuals, partners, unrelated adults, including and without children. Some live with their parents or in student housing, others rent apartments, or own their homes.

Northwestern University requires first-year undergraduate students to live on campus for two years and transfer students to live on campus for one. The university provides over 35 undergraduate housing options, including dormitories, residential colleges, and fraternity and sorority chapter houses. Northwestern University also provides three graduate-student dormitories.



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock

PERCENTAGE OF NON-WHITE HOUSEHOLDS WHO OWN THEIR HOMES

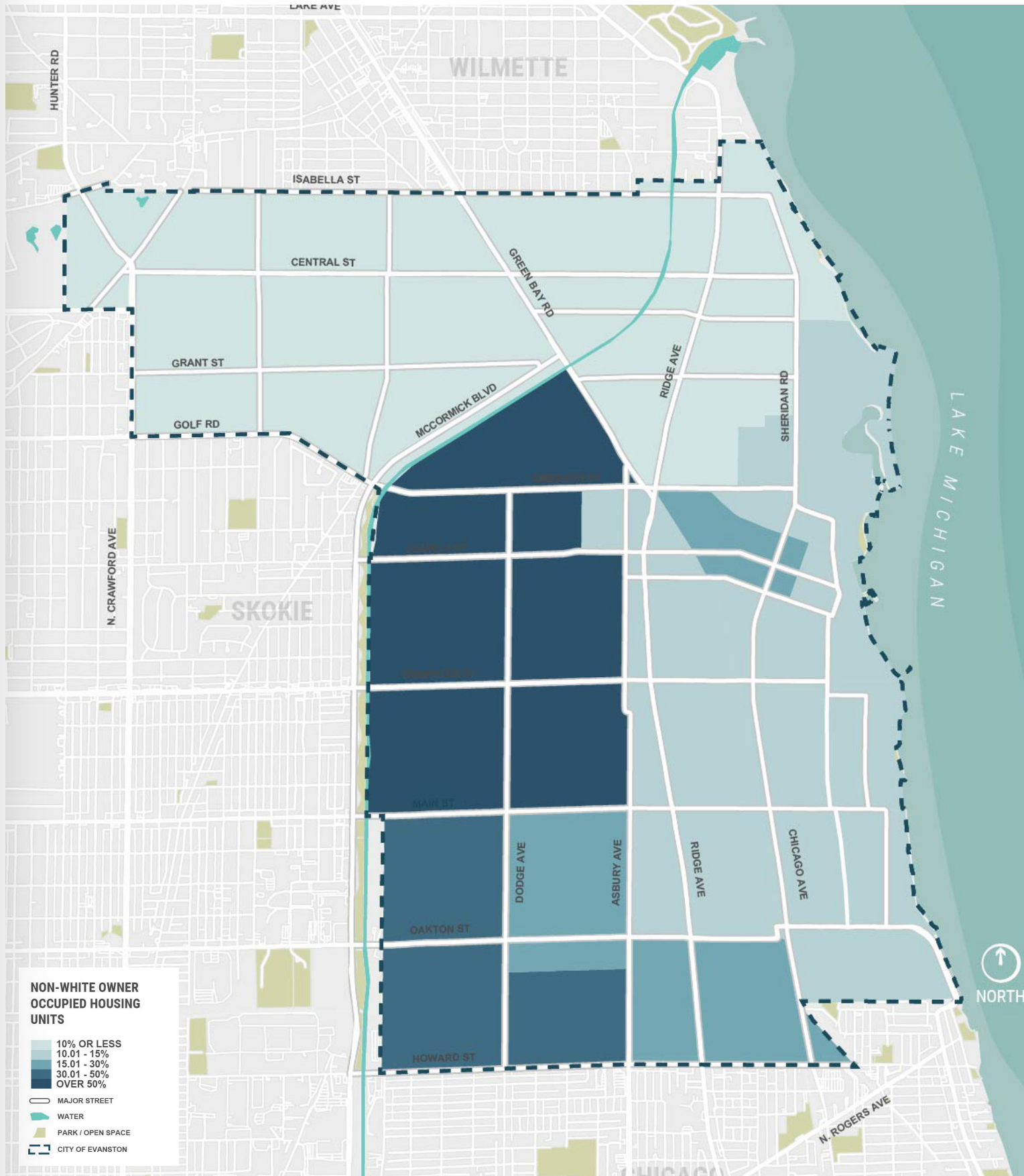


Figure 17 Source: City of Evanston

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KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Soaring Housing Costs. Housing construction is not keeping pace with demand, which pushes up housing costs. In June 2024, the Zillow Home Value Index that reflects the typical value for Evanston homes in the 35th to 65th percentile range, was approximately \$430,000, an increase of about 18% in the past five years. Over the same period of time, one-, two-, and three-bedroom home values in Evanston all increased by at least 24%. Zillow's index does not include many other costs of ownership, including but not limited to mortgage interest rates, insurance, closing costs, maintenance, property taxes, and HOA fees. The chronic underbuilding and underinvestment in housing has resulted in a nationwide shortage of 1.5 to 3.8 million homes. The National Low Income Housing Coalition reported that the affordable housing shortage has also grown nationwide due to rising rents, and goods and services, combined with wage stagnation and job losses. The situation in Evanston is consistent with national trends, with almost half of renters spending at least 30% of their income on rent and utilities.

Increase The Housing Supply. The Evanston housing market follows the basic economic principle of supply and demand—when demand exceeds supply, prices rise. As high housing costs are driven by a shortage of available homes, increasing the housing supply through new developments, higher-density zoning, and repurposing underutilized spaces can provide both renters and buyers more options. More housing benefits households at all income levels, from low to high. New market-rate developments give higher-income households options to move into, opening up availability of older units that have more attainable prices. Additionally, new market-rate developments with inclusionary housing units provide housing to both low- and moderate-income households and higher-income households.

Combat Displacement. While Evanston needs more residential development, concurrent development of an anti-displacement strategy is essential to protect Evanston's income diversity. The benefits of, and associated with that development need to benefit current residents. But, without an anti-displacement strategy and associated policies and funding, low- and moderate-income households, particularly renter households, may be forced to move out of Evanston. Cultural displacement is also common. The closing of community landmarks, like historically Black churches or local restaurants, can erase neighborhood history and with it a sense of community.

The City of Evanston can foster positive development by



Source: Adobe Stock

working with community institutions to ensure a successful revitalization that values culture, health, and positive human development, not just increased economic activity. Limiting development out of fear of displacement reduces opportunity for many long-time Evanston residents. Development without displacement is the key - instead of fighting against development, the City plans to meaningfully address displacement pressures so all Evanston community members can benefit from new resources, services, and opportunities.

ILLINOIS POLICY LANDSCAPE

Illinois provides little state-level leadership or mandates to address rapidly rising housing costs, unlike other states. California requires municipalities to plan to meet the housing needs of everyone in the community and Washington's growth management framework requires municipalities to plan for and accommodate housing affordable to all income levels. The Illinois Affordable Housing Planning and Appeal Act requires non-exempt municipalities with the most acute shortage of affordable housing, defined as having less than ten percent of total housing stock affordable to homebuyers at 80% and renters at 60% of the regional median household income, respectively, to develop a housing plan to meet that requirement. This lack of state leadership leaves the City of Evanston to tackle its affordable housing challenges in isolation.

Another challenge is the state's ban on rent control, which limits the City of Evanston's ability to stabilize rents. Lacking this tool, Evanston must rely on strategies such as inclusionary housing and rental assistance which impact a smaller number of Evanstonians due to limited funding. This leaves the City with fewer tools to protect residents from rising rents and displacement. In addition, this patchwork approach creates greater disparities between municipalities and exacerbates the lack of affordable housing on a regional and statewide scale.

COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

Collaboration with local and regional organizations, anchor institutions, philanthropic organizations, and financial institutions will allow Evanston to address housing attainability on a broader scale by developing workforce housing, pooling resources for larger initiatives, reducing duplication of efforts, and unlocking grants, tax credits, or technical assistance. These partnerships will help the City of Evanston leverage our limited resources by tapping into the expertise, funding streams, and networks of these partnerships.



Source: Adobe Stock

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

The policies and actions provide a multifaceted approach to increase housing choice and supply, preserve existing homes, prevent displacement, and preserve the racial and economic diversity.

1. Implement a comprehensive housing strategy

- H 1.1 Develop and execute a strategic housing plan to guide the City's housing investments and initiatives
- H 1.2 Complete a housing needs assessment to determine the types and qualities of housing needed for Evanston's population.
- H 1.3 Collect and analyze local housing data routinely to make data-driven housing decisions

2. Increase the housing supply and housing choices

- H 2.1 Allow housing types such as townhomes, small flats, and cottage clusters by right in all neighborhoods, and a range of higher-density housing options in centers and along corridors.
- H 2.2 Reduce minimum lot and dwelling sizes, and remove parking minimums to allow more housing units and reduce development costs.
- H 2.3 Facilitate the use of new and innovative construction technologies, such as manufactured, modular, and mass timber construction and remove barriers in plan review, permitting, and inspection processes.
- H 2.4 Update live/work and occupational use regulations to allow a broader range of businesses and services.
- H 2.5 Streamline zoning approval and entitlement processes, building plan review, permitting, and inspection processes to facilitate development.
- H 2.6 Institute a fast-track entitlement process for developments that significantly exceed the percentage of inclusionary units required by the Inclusionary Housing Ordinance.
- H 2.7 Update building codes to accommodate more energy and cost-efficient building designs, while continuing to prioritize safety.
- H 2.8 Explore developing pre-approved design plans for ADUs, duplexes, triplexes, cottages and other neighborhood-scale housing to expedite approval processes and reduce development costs.

- H 2.9 Develop an ADU financing and technical assistance program to accelerate development of ADUs that provide income for low- and moderate-income homeowners and income-restricted housing units in high-cost neighborhoods.
- H 2.10 Redevelop underutilized City properties to expand the supply of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income households, and integrate housing into new construction and rehabilitation of City assets.

3. Preserve existing housing stock

- H 3.1 Increase funding to rehabilitate housing affordable to low- and moderate-income residents to maintain decent, safe housing, and incorporate energy-efficiency and climate resilience features.
- H 3.2 Develop funding sources to assist owners of naturally occurring affordable housing (NOAH) to decarbonize and remove environmental hazards.
- H 3.3 Collaborate with local housing providers to protect naturally occurring affordable housing.
- H 3.4 Develop a housing database to proactively monitor and preserve existing housing stock.

4. Prevent displacement of Evanstonians

- H 4.1 Develop and finetune an anti-displacement strategy to address the changing development landscape in Evanston.
- H 4.2 Evaluate policies and programs and update existing or introduce new programs that help renters, particularly those with lower incomes, maintain stable housing.
- H 4.3 Research and develop technical and financial support for shared-equity housing models including community land trusts and limited-equity cooperatives.
- H 4.4 Expand the availability of and access to programs including financial literacy, education, workforce development and career pathways to help lower-income households build economic stability and self-sufficiency.

5. Promote healthy buildings and healthy neighborhoods

- H 5.1 Adopt and enforce zero emissions building codes and standards to improve indoor air quality, maintain natural light, achieve energy efficiency, and remove environmental hazards like lead to ensure dwelling units contribute to a healthy living environment.
- H 5.2 Incentivize and facilitate the construction of all-electric dwelling units, installation of solar panels and heat pumps, and other technologies that address climate change and improve sustainability.
- H 5.3 Promote green building practices, such as LEED certification, WELL standards, passive house, and universal design, in new and renovated housing projects.
- H 5.4 Prioritize housing development on sites with access to green spaces, parks, pedestrian and bike infrastructure, and other amenities that promote physical activity and mental well-being and improve climate resilience.
- H 5.5 Incorporate public health data and best practices into planning and residential and commercial entitlement processes to ensure they meet health and safety regulations and support community wellbeing

6. Seek out and expand revenue sources for housing initiatives

- H 6.1 Develop a comprehensive funding strategy that includes current, anticipated, and new revenue sources to support the housing goals of this plan and the strategic housing plan.
- H 6.2 Evaluate and implement new revenue sources such as development linkage or impact fees to increase, diversify, and provide more consistent funding for affordable housing
- H 6.3 Work with surrounding cities, counties, and the state to establish a funding source to invest in and preserve unsubsidized, or “naturally occurring,” housing.
- H 6.4 Encourage community and regional financial institutions to explore potential private financing for small-scale, locally owned, multi-unit developments and home improvements.
- H 6.5 Pursue additional federal, state, and county funding to address housing needs.

7. Build and leverage local partnerships to expand housing availability and affordability

- H 7.1 Leverage public-private partnerships with philanthropic foundations, regional and community banks, nonprofit organizations, and REITs to increase funding for housing.
- H 7.2 Engage Evanston institutions and businesses to develop programs that expand housing availability and affordability within institutional campuses such as Northwestern University and Continuing Care Communities, and employer-assisted housing programs.
- H 7.3 Establish strategic partnerships with transit agencies, school districts, and faith-based organizations for housing (re)development
- H 7.4 Initiate education, outreach, and engagement efforts that leverage social marketing best practices and leveraging storytelling to highlight the need for attainable housing and the community benefits it provides
- H 7.5 Cultivate relationships with developers, real estate professionals, home builders, and residents who own their homes to continue to remove barriers to housing development

CHAPTER 8 :
PLACEMAKING, A



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ARTS, AND CULTURE



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PLACEMAKING, ARTS, AND CULTURE

INTRODUCTION

PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is a multifaceted approach to planning, designing, and managing public spaces that emphasizes community engagement, cultural expression, and the creation of vibrant, inclusive environments. Placemaking can take many forms, from the creation of lively public squares and pedestrian-friendly streets to the integration of public art and cultural events and activities that reflect a community's unique identity.









Effective placemaking strategies create a strong sense of belonging and transform uninteresting and common public spaces. The intention of what is known as arts-based placemaking is not to focus on the art itself, but to use art as a creative means to bring community members together to engage in discussions, share ideas, and establish bonds. This approach and the associated policies that follow will allow Evanston to achieve its goal of celebrating arts and culture.

ARTS AND CULTURE

This chapter summarizes existing conditions, identifies challenges and opportunities, and suggests policies and actions to achieve the goal of celebrating arts and culture. Arts and culture play an important role in shaping the identity and enhancing the livability of Evanston. It is a driver of economic development and fosters social cohesion, and can stimulate multi-cultural dialogue within the community.

There are several opportunities to use art including dance, music, murals, theater, and sculpture, to create welcoming public spaces that improve the community's overall health and happiness. Evanston is positioned to capitalize on placemaking strategies through the arts as it is home to ten times more artists and community members employed in arts-related work than the national average.

Of the various art forms, murals are among the most common and visually captivating in Evanston. They have been an effective placemaking tool because many are created with the community, contributing to a sense of pride and neighborhood sense of place. The Evanston Mural Arts Program, a public art initiative launched in 2017, has been a major contributor of murals in the city. Additionally there are a number of public art pieces throughout the City created by local artists.

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
1	Make public spaces more accessible and friendly to all ages and abilities.	
2	Encourage more ground-up placemaking initiatives in the community.	
3	Align placemaking strategies with climate adaptation and mitigation goals.	
4	Connect public spaces through a network of active transportation infrastructure.	
5	Enhance cultural arts activities that increase participation in local arts and culture and engage all ages and abilities.	
6	Integrate arts and culture in City decision making.	
7	Promote equity by including historically underrepresented communities in the creation and preservation of placemaking, arts, and culture.	
8	Expand the use of public space for creative and cultural activities.	

EXISTING CONDITIONS

PLACEMAKING

The City of Evanston understands the importance of placemaking and is committed to creating quality public spaces in which residents and visitors can relax, socialize, and engage in activities. As covered in the Economic Development Chapter, the Evanston Thrives Retail Action Plan supports revitalization of Evanston's local business districts and highlights the importance of supporting placemaking in and outside of these areas. It encourages the City to invest in placemaking and connections between public spaces to enhance accessibility. Placemaking plans tailored to each of the nine retail districts in Evanston are in the action plan. These locations are in the identified centers and corridors and include installation of street furniture, landscaping, play infrastructure, lighting, public art, and streetscape and right-of-way improvements.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Public art, whether it be permanent sculptures and murals or temporary activation and installations, connects people emotionally and socially to the neighborhood and each other. The city encourages art that embodies inclusion, engagement, and interaction. Public artwork can already be found in many parts of Evanston. There are many opportunities to complement the existing network and integrate public artwork as public and private investment occurs.

EVANSTON ARTS COUNCIL

Public art is supported through the Arts Council. The Arts Council recommends funding and provides expertise in sourcing, curating, and maintaining permanent and temporary public art throughout the City. Funding is typically derived from the City's Capital Improvement Fund and supplemented by donations or grants.



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock



Source: Adobe Stock

EXISTING AMENITIES



Figure 18 Source: City of Evanston

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OTHER ART AND CULTURE OFFERINGS

In addition to public art, community members and visitors can enjoy a wide range of cultural events and festivals in the city. Evanston boasts a vibrant arts scene and should continue to remove barriers to organizing special events as a catalyst for both artistic and cultural expression and economic growth.

Evanston is rich in performance arts and is home to more than 20 performing arts companies and organizations such as the Evanston Dance Ensemble, Evanston Symphony Orchestra, Piven Theatre and Fleetwood-Jourdain Theatre Company.

Evanston also houses a variety of galleries and studios that support local artists and actively promote art. Galleries provide space for art exhibitions in all styles and media. The City and local galleries offer classes and workshops in ceramics, woodworking, and figure sculpting for community members of all ages and experience.

These events and venues are important to Evanston as they provide creative outlets for residents to pursue their interests and, in general, make the city more vibrant and livable. They also serve as grounds for creative placemaking opportunities to take form, which, according to the National Endowment for the Arts, has been shown to grow social cohesion and enhance community well-being.

KEY ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Designing inclusive public spaces. This plan highlights the growing proportion of older people and the decreasing number of children in Evanston. Public spaces should be designed to be inclusive and welcoming to all, placemaking strategies should also prioritize the needs and preferences of the older community members. Even with a decreasing number of children, it is still important to ensure that public spaces are meaningful and safe for them.

Prioritizing investment in placemaking, arts and culture.

While Evanston has invested resources into placemaking and the arts and culture, there is room to improve on those efforts. The following policies and actions summarize ways through which the city can enhance placemaking efforts and further promote the arts and culture. The Evanston Thrive Retail Action Plan is primarily focused on revitalizing retail districts through interventions in the built environment and programming. Outside of retail districts, it is also important to create meaningful public spaces near residents' homes so that they have access to good public spaces even if they are not shopping.

Supporting community-based placemaking, arts, and culture.

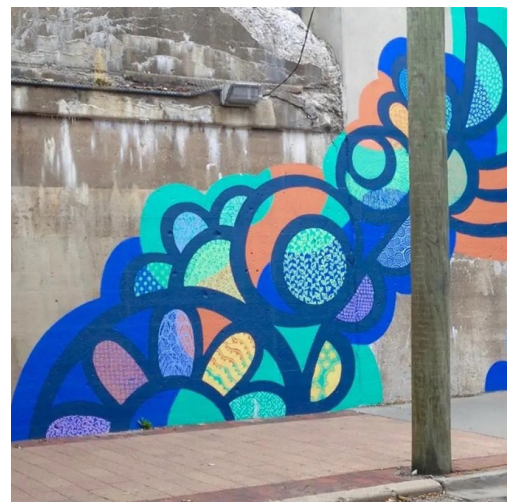
Community members understand the neighborhood's history, issues, daily workings, and what makes the

neighborhood special and meaningful. Resources should therefore be set aside to enable ground up initiatives suggested by the local community. These initiatives can range from painting sidewalks or streets to turning a vacant lot into an evening gathering spot.

Adapting our public spaces to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Design of public spaces should consider changing weather patterns and climate conditions so that they can remain accessible and usable throughout the year. Where possible, they should also play an active role in supporting climate mitigation efforts.

Connecting people and places. Creating walkable and bikeable connections between public spaces increases accessibility for more community members, especially those who may not have access or can use a car, and the use of active transportation contributes to greenhouse gas reduction goals.



Source: City of Evanston

PUBLIC ART

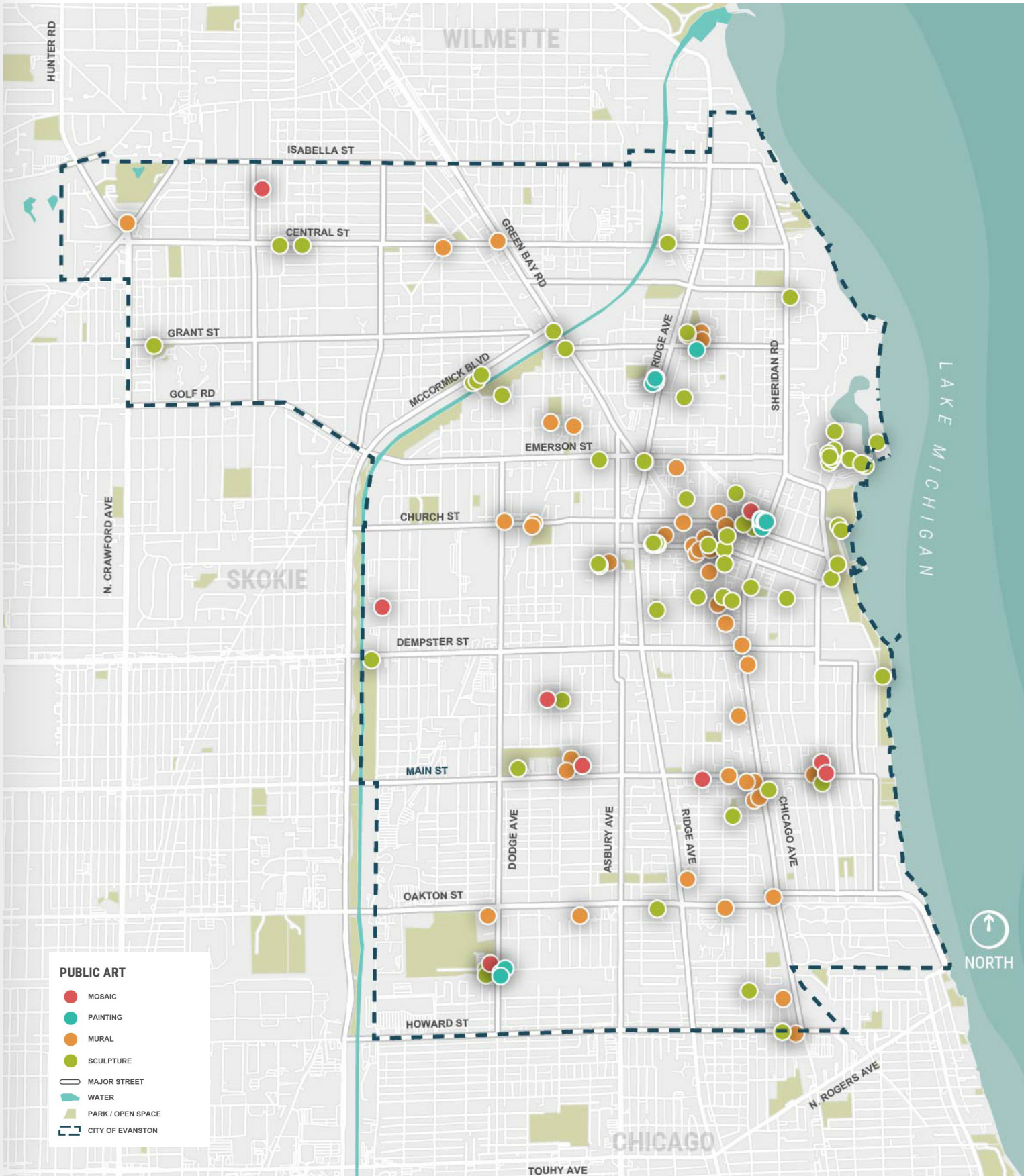


Figure 19 Source: City of Evanston

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POLICIES AND ACTIONS

The following policies and actions support placemaking, arts, and culture opportunities outlined above to achieve the goals of Envision Evanston 2045.

1. Make public spaces more accessible and friendly to all ages and abilities.

- PAC 1.1 Invest in public spaces to elevate their conditions and amenities.
- PAC 1.2 Identify areas throughout the city to create more public spaces.
- PAC 1.3 Explore and develop incentives for private developments to include accessible public spaces.
- PAC 1.4 Remove barriers that prevent spaces such as cafes and bookstores, on street corners, and other strategic locations in neighborhoods outside of retail districts.
- PAC 1.5 Ensure city policies and regulations allow spaces to host a variety of performances, exhibitions, special events, and celebrations.
- PAC 1.6 Improve access to electricity for special events and public use.
- PAC 1.7 Support art incubators, maker spaces, and studio spaces.
- PAC 1.8 Integrate art in public spaces.
- PAC 1.9 Ensure public spaces are accessible and friendly to all ages and abilities and promote intergenerational activities.

2. Encourage more ground-up placemaking initiatives in the community.

- PAC 2.1 Explore allocation of funding for community placemaking projects in addition to public art funding.
- PAC 2.2 Encourage public-private partnerships via technical assistance and financial support to implement the community-driven ideas related to placemaking.
- PAC 2.3 Streamline and expedite the approval process for community-initiated special events and activities.
- PAC 2.4 Collaborate with community partners to facilitate cultural arts programming that promotes local histories and community dialogues.

3. Align placemaking strategies with climate adaptation and mitigation goals.

- PAC 3.1 Design public spaces to withstand extreme heat, cold, and increased precipitation.
- PAC 3.2 Identify locations and deploy green infrastructure and solar lighting.
- PAC 3.3 Design public spaces and community facilities to function as disaster or emergency shelters.

4. Connect public spaces through a network of active transportation infrastructure.

- PAC 4.1 Identify key centers and corridors in the city and prioritize investment in active transportation infrastructure improvements.
- PAC 4.2 Install wayfinding signage along corridors to guide people to public spaces.

5. Enhance cultural arts activities that increase participation in local arts and culture and engage all ages and abilities.

- PAC 5.1 Facilitate ongoing communication and collaboration to improve arts and culture programming.
- PAC 5.2 Redesign and program city facilities to include spaces that bring community members together.
- PAC 5.3 Explore additional funding sources to support arts, culture, and historic preservation.
- PAC 5.4 Strengthen and promote collaborative cultural initiatives between arts-based entities and cultural organizations.

6. Integrate arts and culture in City decision making.

- PAC 6.1 Implement marketing and placemaking strategies laid out in the Evanston Thrives Plan.
- PAC 6.2 Encourage the installation of public art and placemaking strategies in conjunction with capital improvement projects.
- PAC 6.3 Integrate arts and culture aspects in City strategic planning efforts.
- PAC 6.4 Encourage the use of the arts to educate and promote City priorities, such as sustainability and equity.

7. Promote equity by including historically underrepresented communities in the creation and preservation of placemaking, arts, and culture.

- PAC 7.1 Prioritize access to arts and cultural programming for historically underrepresented and underserved communities.
- PAC 7.2 Support artists from underrepresented communities and cultures.
- PAC 7.3 Engage with the community to create events and activities that build upon and celebrate Evanston's unique cultural heritage and ethnic diversity.

8. Expand the use of public space for creative and cultural activities.

- PAC 8.1 Identify and create public spaces that accommodate a variety of performances, exhibitions, special events, and celebrations.
- PAC 8.2 Develop policies and remove barriers to arts incubators, maker spaces, and live-work studio spaces.
- PAC 8.3 Regularly review and update policies that regulate the use of public spaces and streets, such as sidewalk cafes, sales and on-street dining, to create a more vibrant walking experience while maintaining the needed sidewalk capacity and ADA compliance for walking.



Source: Adobe Stock

CHAPTER 9 :
PRESERVATION



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PRESERVATION

INTRODUCTION

Historic preservation plays a pivotal role in Evanston’s future by maintaining the cultural, architectural, and historical resources that establish a sense of place and define our community. Preservation can be used as a foundational land-use tool to successfully balance and implement the City’s long-term economic development, housing, sustainability, and cultural goals. By integrating historic preservation into all future planning, Evanston will retain its identity and collective memory of place while fostering new housing development, revitalization goals, and heritage-tourism for future generations.

The City of Evanston first adopted its Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1978 to identify and preserve “areas, properties, structures, sites and objects having a special historical, community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value to the City and its citizens,” and to foster “civic pride” in Evanston’s unique architecture, landmarks and districts. The Historic Preservation Ordinance also seeks to protect important buildings and resources through the designation, restoration, and rehabilitation of local landmarks and districts. The Evanston Historic Preservation Commission oversees the ordinance’s implementation, including the ongoing survey and inventory of buildings, sites and structures; the designation of local landmarks and districts; and the issuance of Certificate of Appropriateness for improvements, additions, and demolition of City Landmarks as well as projects within Local Historic Districts. The City of Evanston was one of the first municipalities to be designated a Certified Local Government in 1985 by the State of Illinois, recognizing its expertise relating to historic preservation. This designation gives Evanston access to state and federal historic preservation grant programs as well as other preservation-related activities through the Certified Local Government Program, established by the U.S. Congress in 1980 and managed by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, and Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.

POLICY	POLICY STATEMENT	GOALS
1	Support adaptive use and rehabilitation of historic buildings to support the City’s economic development and housing goals.	 
2	Continue to survey and document properties eligible for historic designation and protection.	 
3	Promote historic preservation tools and approaches in line with the City’s growth, housing, and economic development goals.	
4	Preserve spaces that embody historic, social, and cultural periods, people, and events.	
5	Promote inclusive economic development in historic areas.	 
6	Establish, maintain, and leverage a range of incentives and programs to address neighborhood rehabilitation and stabilization needs.	 
7	Include residents, educational institutions, and other partners in preservation efforts.	

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Evanston has a strong commitment to preserving its historic, cultural, social, and architectural heritage. It is known regionally for its diverse architecture, especially its rich collection of Victorian and 20th Century Period Revival, Prairie, Craftsman, Mid-Century Modern and Contemporary-styled homes, in a landscape of mature trees and expansive parkways. It is the City of Evanston's desire to build on its architectural and historical resources so they continue to be celebrated in future generations. Evanston was described as "the most beautiful city in the world" by Daniel Burnham, a prominent architect and urban designer who developed the 1909 Plan of Chicago, and recognized in the 1917 Plan of Evanston written by Daniel Burnham Jr., Dwight Perkins, and other influential Evanstonians, for its architectural heritage that encompasses not only stately mansions but also smaller-scale vernacular structures. Evanston was later known as the "City of Homes" due to the variety and artistic value of its housing stock, a foundation that remains today and contributes to Evanston's desirability. These historic homes, many designed by some of the country's foremost architects, are preserved and celebrated for their architectural, cultural, and historical significance, and artistic merit, and feature high-quality materials and construction techniques rarely seen in new construction today.

Evanston's commitment to historic preservation ensures that its heritage is celebrated and protected for future generations. Preservation efforts are supported by organizations like the Evanston Preservation Commission, which since the 1970s has worked diligently to identify, protect, and actively manage significant structures, buildings, objects, sites, and landscapes. The Commission's efforts, along with those of local history-based partner organizations and community groups, help preserve Evanston's cultural and historical heritage. The Evanston History Center (housed in the Charles Gates Dawes House, a National Historic Landmark), the Shorefront Legacy Center, Northwestern University, and the Mitchell Museum also play pivotal roles in preserving and interpreting the City's rich and diverse built and cultural histories, including those that are less often acknowledged and may not be represented in the built environment.



Source: Adobe Stock

HISTORIC DISTRICTS

National Register Historic Districts are geographically defined areas that possess a significant concentration of sites, buildings, structures, or objects that have historical, architectural, or archeological significance. The National Register is maintained by the U.S. Department of the Interior. Local landmarks and local historic districts are areas designated by a local ordinance as recommended by the Historic Preservation Commission. Designation as a local historic district or landmark offers protections and active management through the Preservation Ordinance while federal designations are largely celebratory unless State or Federal funding or permits are sought or required. The City contains five National Register Historic Districts, all of which, with the exception of the Oakton Historic District and the northern half of the Northeast Historic District, are overlaid as local historic districts. Additionally, the Women's Christian Temperance Union District is a local district but is not on the National Register.

Women's Christian Temperance Union District. Located on the west side of Chicago Avenue between Church and Clark Street, this district was established to provide local protections for the campus of buildings associated with the Women's Christian Temperance Union and Women's Suffrage Movement. These buildings are also listed as National Historic Landmarks, the highest federal designation, because of their historic and social significance to the United States.

Lakeshore Historic District. Located in southeast Evanston in the former town of Evanston and Village of South Evanston with Lake Michigan as its eastern border, this district has a total of 774 primary structures and 557 secondary structures, is primarily residential and a premier example of late 19th and early 20th Century inner-ring suburban development. It features a grid plan with rectangular blocks and alleys. Most major streets run north-south with deep parkways lined by mature trees and ornamental lamp posts. Buildings comprise a wide range of architectural styles, and Burnham Shores, Centennial, Clark Square, Dawes, Elliot, and Garden Parks, and Kelly and Snyder Tot Lots are dotted throughout the district.

Ridge Historic District. Defined by the area's topography that made it desirable to pioneers who settled on the highest, and therefore, driest, land in the 1830s and 1840s. Over time, the district continued to develop and was shaped by residents with professional, merchant, and manufacturing interests following the Chicago Fire. Land use in the district is predominantly residential, with large two and two and a half story owner-occupied detached homes on large and deep lots with ornamental streetlights creating a uniform streetscape with open and spacious parkways. The architectural fabric of the district is varied with 397 primary structures, 129 of which are of architectural significance and another 136 which contribute to the overall history of the district.

Northeast Evanston Historic District. Located north of the Central Business District, this district includes 546 primary buildings and structures within a long and narrow area of approximately twelve blocks within the former town of Evanston and Village of North Evanston. Detached homes are the most common building type, while multi-unit buildings, university offices, educational facilities, and parks are found within the district as well. Architectural styles are highly varied as a result of buildings constructed from 1860 to the present. Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Tudor Revival are the predominant styles, which were popularized during the height of development that paralleled the City's streetcar system on Sherman Avenue and Central Street, on lots ranging from 4,000 to 35,000 square feet, similar to the Ridge Historic District and Evanston Lake Shore National Register Historic District. The district's streetscape benefits from one of the widest rights of way at approximately 100 feet, resulting in generous sidewalks and expansive parkways lined with mature street trees and ornamental street lights, similar to the Ridge Historic District. The Northern half of the District, north of Lincoln Street is not overlaid with a local historic district – leaving these significant resources vulnerable to development pressure, including demolition and improper alterations.



Source: Adobe Stock

HISTORIC DISTRICT

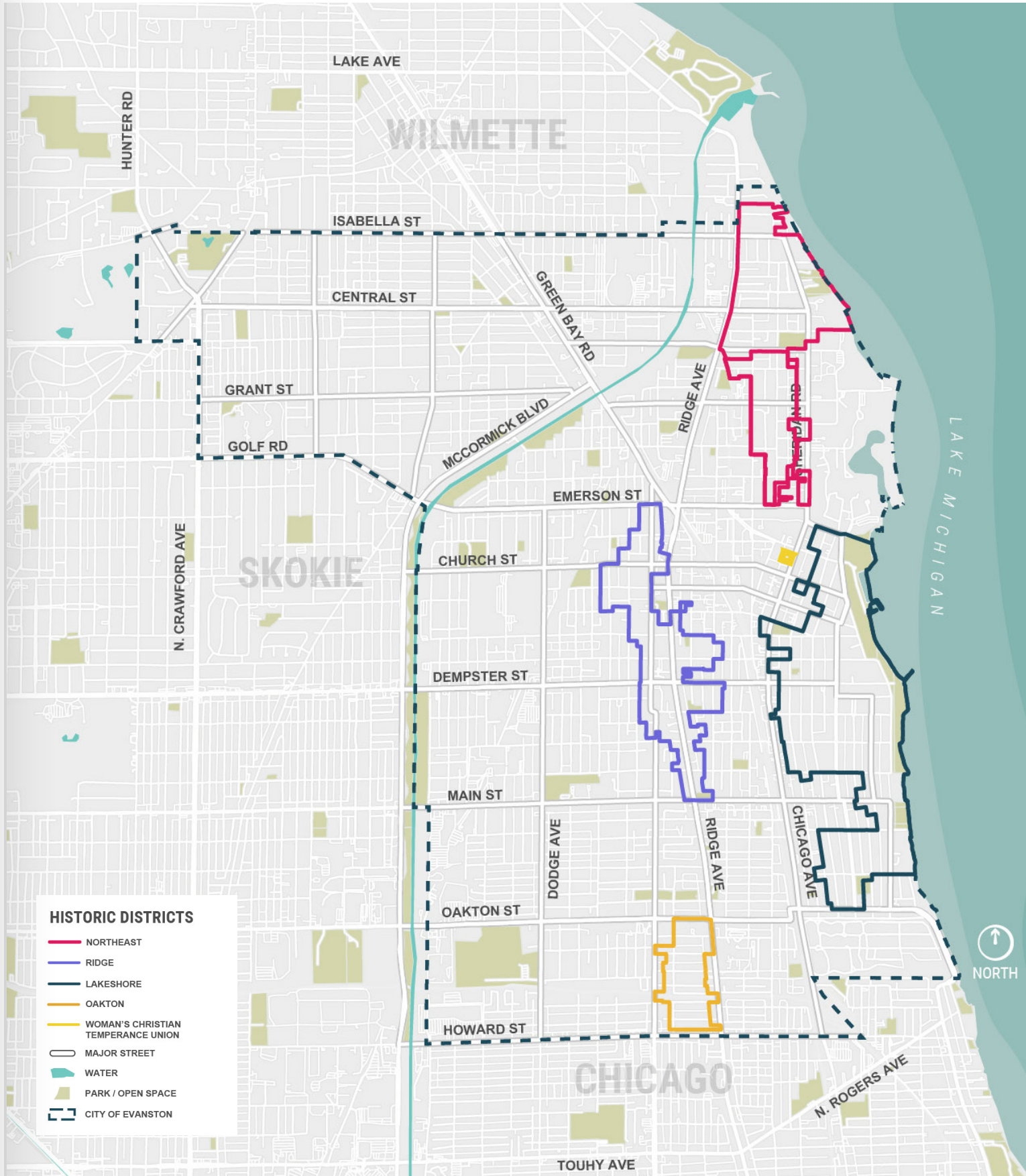


Figure 20 Source: City of Evanston

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Oakton Historic District Located at Evanston's southern border with Chicago, 203 primary buildings and 134 outbuildings shape this residential district. Detached homes, the primary housing type, intermixed with duplexes, apartment buildings, and townhouses were constructed between 1913 and 1964. Like other historic districts, it features a variety of architectural styles on lots that range from about 4,300 to 8,500 square feet, slightly smaller than in the Northeast Evanston and Ridge Historic Districts. Building setbacks are generally consistent, similar to other historic districts. Despite its narrower right of way width of approximately 62 – 63 feet, streets have sidewalks and parkways with mature landscaping and the ornamental lamp posts found in other districts. Like the northern half of the Northeast Historic District, the Oakton District is also vulnerable to increased development pressures, including demolition and improper additions and alterations due to the area not being overlaid as a local historic district.



Source: Adobe Stock

Northwest Evanston Historic District (eligible) The Preservation Commission has identified the Northwest Evanston Historic District as eligible although it has not been nominated for national or local designation. Explored as part of the Illinois Historic Structures Survey of 1972 by the State of Illinois for a potential historic district and previously identified as an intensive survey area, northwest Evanston was surveyed in the late 1980s with funding from a Certified Local Government Grant, and is currently listed as eligible for designation by the Preservation Commission due to its architectural significance. It includes over 60 landmarked properties and additional properties that are likely to be eligible for landmarking or designation as contributing structures. The area is southwest of and adjacent to the original village of North Evanston, with Harrison and Golf/Simpson Streets forming its north and south boundaries, Lawndale and Pioneer Avenues its west and east boundaries, and Bennett Avenue on the southeast. It merits consideration as both a national and local historic district as a distinct type (single-unit) and period (1895 to 1937) and includes the work of several master architects of that period.

Suburban Apartment Buildings Refers to 48 buildings dating from 1890 to the 1920s that exemplify the suburban apartment building styles popular in Evanston during the unprecedented building boom of the 1910s and 20s and range from rowhouses, duplexes, three-plexes, railroad apartments, to courtyard buildings. These suburban apartment buildings contain elements common to detached homes such as projecting bays, sun porches, gables, chimneys, and decorative façade treatments. Layout of units and hallways are designed to promote passive light and ventilation. These apartments offer a generous amount of green space, typically in the form of courtyards with manicured lawns, flower beds, benches, and fountains.

LANDMARKS

In addition to the National Register and Local Historic Districts, 56 properties are individually listed in the National Register, and dozens more have been identified by the State Historic Preservation Office as eligible. The City also has over 850 registered individual Local Landmarks, about 430 of which are not in a Local Historic District, but most are in the federal-only portion of the Northeast Historic District and the proposed Northwest Evanston Historic District. The majority of landmarks outside a district are single and multi-unit residential structures or institutional buildings, including a number on Northwestern University's campus, and other local historic school buildings. In addition to these, the Preservation Commission maintains a list of over 60 properties eligible for local designation based on surveys conducted in Evanston's downtown and Chicago Avenue corridor that have been identified as eligible and are not within an existing historic district.

KEY CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Balancing Historic Preservation And Development Needs.

Evanston's historic resources are major factors that define Evanston's built environment and identity. As the City removes barriers to housing production, addresses climate mitigation and resilience, and supports economic development, synergies exist with historic preservation. Like many communities, Evanston's historic preservation focuses on its more significant architectural resources – the high-style residential property types and some vernacular structures. Historic structures that reflect Evanston's working-class, marginalized, and ethnic populations were not identified or registered to the same extent. Cultural heritage and resources should be researched, identified and documented. Historic preservation efforts play a critical role in advancing racial equity while addressing housing affordability and preventing displacement. By engaging historically excluded communities in preservation, incorporating protections for local businesses, and providing financial assistance for community-led projects in historically significant neighborhoods, Evanston can promote inclusivity and economic resilience while sustaining affordable housing opportunities.



Source: Adobe Stock

POLICIES AND ACTIONS

The following policies and actions highlight the important role preservation plays in achieving the goals of Envision Evanston 2045.

1. Support adaptive use and rehabilitation of historic buildings to support the City's economic development and housing goals.

- P 1.1 Remove barriers and streamline the permit review process for adaptive use of historic properties.
- P 1.2 Provide technical and financial assistance for owners of historic properties, including support for decarbonization retrofits.
- P 1.3 Promote preservation-based economic development strategies in the City's existing human-scaled commercial environments, downtown, and neighborhood business districts.
- P 1.4 Explore regional and national membership programs that support local businesses and districts.
- P 1.5 Support the adaptive use of significant institutional structures, such as schools and buildings of assembly, to increase residential density while preserving their historical, architectural, cultural, and social value to the community.

2. Continue to survey and document properties eligible for historic designation and protection.

- P 2.1 Implement the survey and documentation recommendations of Preserve 2040.
- P 2.2 Conduct a cultural landscape survey of Evanston.
- P 2.3 Support landmark nominations for eligible properties.

3. Promote historic preservation tools and approaches in line with the City's growth, housing, and economic development goals.

- P 3.1 Support National Register nominations for Evanston's historic income-producing resources to provide access to financial incentives and tax credits that spur rehabilitation and adaptive use efforts.
- P 3.2 Designate historic districts in areas where cohesive artistic and architectural compositions occur or where concentrations of existing individual landmarks exist.
- P 3.3 Establish technical assistance and incentives for building deconstruction and materials reuse over demolition.
- P 3.4 Improve procedures for designating commercial landmarks that identify where change should be minimized and highlight where flexibility is appropriate.

4. Preserve spaces that embody historic, social, and cultural periods, people, and events.

- P 4.1 Allow for landmark designations based on cultural and social significance and provide additional flexibility in design review.
- P 4.2 Collaborate with local community organizations to support the collection of oral histories and personal narratives from residents of color and underrepresented population groups and identities to inform future designations.
- P 4.3 Require appropriate names for new developments and streets to foster and retain the cultural and historical aspect of the community.
- P 4.4 Support creation and designation of a cultural historic district that celebrates residents of color and other underrepresented populations.

5. Promote inclusive economic development in historic areas.

- P 5.1 Strengthen programs that recognize and support businesses owned by historically marginalized communities, offering financial aid, marketing support, and partnerships to prevent displacement.
- P 5.2 Use asset mapping to identify culturally significant businesses and areas vulnerable to development and market pressures and ensure they receive targeted support to maintain their presence.

6. Establish, maintain, and leverage a range of incentives and programs to address neighborhood rehabilitation and stabilization needs.

- P 6.1 Create funding programs or partnerships to support community-led projects aimed at revitalizing and preserving landmark buildings and resources associated with historically underrepresented and marginalized neighborhoods in Evanston.
- P 6.2 Protect naturally occurring affordable housing and prevent displacement through the creation of conservation districts.
- P 6.3 Promote heritage tourism to expand knowledge of cultural history.

7. Include residents, educational institutions, and other partners in preservation efforts.

- P 6.1 Collaborate with community partners in advancing preservation efforts and decision making.
- P 6.2 Spread awareness of preservation efforts and increase education and advocacy efforts to foster civic pride.
- P 6.3 Encourage private historic protection measures by providing information on incentives to property owners.
- P 6.4 Ensure that the City of Evanston leads by example and follows preservation best practices in municipal decision making and capital improvements.
- P 6.5 Support the value and policy statements within Preserve 2040, and continue implementation of the plan's initiatives through 2045.
- P 6.6 Increase consultation with Tribal Historic Preservation Officers, whose ancestral homeland includes Evanston, to ensure potential archaeological resources are treated with the sensitivity and respect they deserve.

APPENDIX



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