

Evanston Was the Place to Be in 2015

Evanston won a variety of accolades throughout 2015, including recognition as the World Wildlife Fund's [2015 US Earth Hour Capital](#) and Downtown Evanston being named one of the country's best downtowns by [Livability.com](#). A steady stream of "best-of" lists also named Evanston among the Most Educated Places in America ([NerdWallet](#)), Best Suburbs for Young Professionals ([Movoto.com](#)), Best Places to Raise a Family in Illinois, and Best Towns in America ([Niche.com](#)). *Politico* praised Evanston's progressive approach to planning and development in a lengthy article in October, dubbing Evanston "[The Suburb That Tried to Kill the Car.](#)"

Evanston's restaurant scene continued to earn the attention of local and national press throughout the year, with write-ups in publications including [Time Out Chicago](#), [Midwest Diner](#), [Thrillist](#), [The Daily Meal](#), and [Chicago Magazine](#). In September, the *New York Times* also published a "[Where to Eat and Drink in Evanston](#)" feature as part of the paper's Travel section. Evanston restaurants also dominated *Make it Better Magazine's* annual "[Best of the North Shore](#)" reader's poll, which saw 25 Evanston businesses take top honors in their respective categories. After only a year in operation, Peckish Pig was singled out by the Illinois Tourism Board to win one of its annual "[Delicious Destination](#)" awards.



Valli Produce opened its doors in the Evanston Plaza shopping center in July of 2015 with a ribbon cutting by Mayor Tisdahl and Ald. Braithwaite.

2015
By the
Numbers:

67

New
Businesses

\$16

Million
Sales Tax
Revenue

\$253

Million
Construction
Activity

New Businesses

Based on the City’s licensing data, **67 new businesses** opened in Evanston during 2015, including **Valli Produce** and Evanston’s third **Whole Foods Market**, filling both of Evanston’s former Dominick’s locations, boosting sales tax revenue, and generating hundreds of new jobs for Evanston residents. Indoor children’s play space and drive-thru coffee outpost **Little Beans Café** opened in a long-vacant retail building at Oakton Street and Asbury Avenue in February of 2015 and has quickly become a local favorite. Payment processing firm **Accuity** also relocated its headquarters to Downtown Evanston from Skokie, while consultants **ZS Associates** announced plans to stay in Evanston and expand. Also in Downtown, **PharmaCann** opened the first and only medical marijuana dispensary in Evanston.

These new businesses joined existing Evanston companies to create and maintain jobs and support the local economy. In total, the state distributed **\$16 million in Sales Tax** revenue to the City of Evanston during 2015, including municipal sales tax, home rule sales tax, and motor vehicle rental tax, which represented a slight increase over 2014.

The Economic Development Division has also supported the ongoing creation and implementation of the **Chicago-Main-Dempster Special Service Area**, which created a special taxing district at the request of local merchants’ associations to generate funding for neighborhood improvements and promotion of locally owned independent businesses. Retail businesses throughout Evanston participated in **Small Business Saturday** and holiday shopping promotions and events, including a window decorating contest, scavenger hunt, and warm beverage walk. Small Business Saturday activities will return in 2016.

Commercial Construction

Construction on the **E2** apartment development wrapped up in 2015, bringing 356 residential units and 4,000 square feet of retail space to Downtown Evanston. Construction also began on a new 112-room **Hyatt House** hotel in downtown. The mixed-use development under construction at the corner of Main Street and Chicago Avenue will eventually include 11,000 square feet of retail, 12,000 square feet of office space and 112 residential rental units. Construction also began on the new home of restaurants **LuLu’s** and **Taco Diablo** on Davis Street. The new building being constructed to house the two restaurants is being built in addition to a replacement of the former Pine Yard building across the street, which was

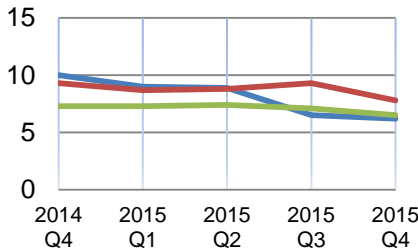


Construction began on a 2-story commercial building on Davis Street that will house LuLu’s and Taco Diablo when they reopen in 2016.

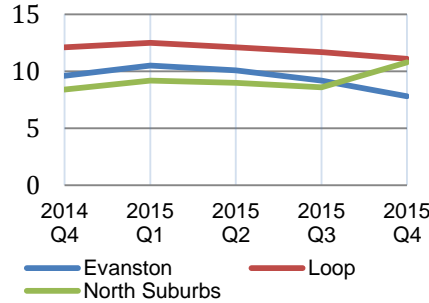
destroyed by a fire in late 2013. These projects, combined with ongoing construction work on the Northwestern University campus, generated an estimated **\$253.9 million** in construction and renovation spending in Evanston, yielding a total of **\$4.7 million** in building permit fees during 2015.

Vacancy rates for industrial, retail and office space all declined over the course of the year, reflecting strong demand for commercial space in Evanston. The biggest change was seen in the vacancy rate for industrial properties in Evanston, which declined sharply in late 2015, a change almost entirely attributable to the upcoming opening of **The Autobarn's** new facility at 222 Hartrey Avenue, with over 128,000 square feet of previously vacant industrial space. The new facility will house the service departments for Autobarn's Fiat and Mazda dealerships while also providing storage for the company's inventory of pre-owned vehicles.

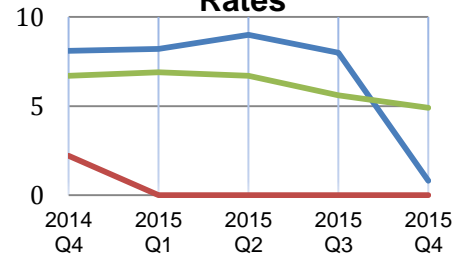
Retail Vacancy Rates



Office Vacancy Rates



Industrial Vacancy Rates



Entrepreneurship & Workforce Development

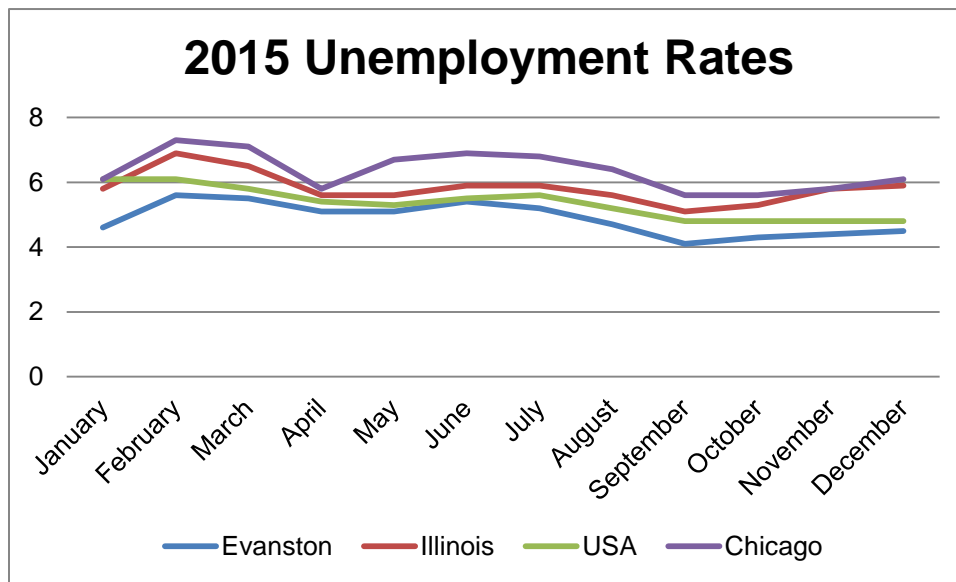
In entrepreneurship and workforce development, staff worked to sponsor **three startup showcase events** throughout the year, which collectively had over 600 registered attendees. These events bring together entrepreneurs, students, funders, developers, and designers to hear Evanston companies pitch their latest products, services and technologies. The **NextChapter** series of small business workshops hosted at the Evanston Public Library held an additional 13 events attended by 81 people.

During the summer, **550 teens and 27 local employers participated in the annual Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program**, a 10% increase in the number of teens participating compared to 2014. [CBS 2 News](#) visited Evanston in May for a story about the workforce development partnership between the City and Northwestern University, which provides six Evanston residents with paid apprenticeships at NU that allow them to train for jobs in the building trades. Six more participants are expected to be added to the program in 2016.



In November, **Sunshine Enterprises** held a graduation ceremony for the first class of 18 Evanston entrepreneurs to complete its **Community Business Academy**. The 12-week program, which began in Evanston in September, provides comprehensive training on business and management topics to entrepreneurs and small business owners in minority communities. The program will serve three more cohorts of 25-30 participants each during 2016 with support from the Economic Development Fund.

Based on data provided by the Illinois Department of Employment Security, Evanston's unemployment rates remained below local, state, and national averages for the duration of 2015.



2016 and Beyond

Several of the large construction projects begun in 2015, including the Hyatt House, **Main + Chicago**, and the downtown building that will house LuLu's and Taco Diablo, are slated for delivery in 2016. As those projects finish, new projects are already in the pipeline, including a new mixed-use development in Downtown Evanston at **1571 Maple**, which has already announced **Bowtruss Coffee** as a ground-floor tenant. The plan to bring a theater space to Howard Street will also continue to move forward following the announcement of Ross Barney Architects as the architect hired to develop plans for the project. Work on the Ryan Fieldhouse and Walter Athletic Center on the Northwestern University campus began in November of 2015 and is expected to continue throughout 2016. The multimillion dollar lakefront athletic complex will include indoor playing fields and training facilities as well as office space and meeting rooms for Northwestern's sports teams.

