

# City of Evanston

## Economic Development Work Plan Update

Since 2010, Economic Development has been a City Council Goal. The Vision Statement adopted in 2010 has served as a guide for economic development activities for the past five years. Work Plans adopted in subsequent years have provided additional guidance for everyday work of the City on economic development matters. This document serves as an update to the economic development work plan. It is divided into two parts:

- **Part I will review and summarize economic development activities completed to date; and**
- **Part II will review economic development plan work activities that will guide the City's economic development efforts.**

## PART I: REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES TO DATE

In 2010, the City Council identified Economic Development as one of its top priorities for the City. This coincided with recovery from an economic downturn known as the Great Recession. The desire to focus on economic development was driven by a necessity to diversify Evanston's tax base, support small businesses that make up Evanston's day-time population and provide goods and services to the community and region, connect better with Northwestern University on entrepreneurship opportunities, and create jobs for individuals at all skill and ability levels.

**In January 2010, the City Council adopted a two-page Economic Development Vision statement that identified areas of focus. These have included:**

- Retain and support expansion of existing businesses through improved communication, development of finance programs, with a focus on small business;
- Attract new businesses that are not currently present in Evanston; utilize key partnerships with major institutions to bring new businesses to Evanston;
- Support commercial revitalization and redevelopment in corridors with identified plans and work with neighborhood business associations to achieve economic development priorities; and
- Develop a new Economic Development website that becomes a functional component of the City's marketing strategy and a major interactive portal for engagement.

**In 2011 and 2012 staff provided updates to the Vision that included a work plan that added additional focus to the aforementioned areas that included:**

1. focus on quality of place initiatives as they related to economic development that continue to further the City of Evanston's goal to be the most livable city;
2. support of entrepreneurship and growth-oriented start-ups;
3. support of arts and entertainment-related businesses;
4. retention and expansion of existing and attraction of retail businesses to Evanston's commercial districts; and
- 5) support of efforts to employ individuals in Evanston's workforce.

*The summary of City-led efforts is presented in the following pages.*



## RETENTION AND SUPPORT OF EXISTING BUSINESSES

The City's business retention and expansion efforts seek to better understand the needs of local businesses and respond accordingly to promote a healthy local business climate. It is Evanston's individual businesses that offer unique character and charm to business districts across the City.

Since 2010, the City has adopted a more robust façade improvement program that has assisted in the rehabilitation or introduction of new signage at over 25 storefronts throughout Evanston's business districts. Additionally, the City has supported the retention of key manufacturing businesses such as IRMCO, Ward Manufacturing, and FEW Spirits through direct financial assistance for rehabilitation of existing facilities or funding to support equipment purchases. In 2014, through the City's continued extension of a sales tax sharing agreement and a TIF funding agreement for rehabilitation of a vacant property made it possible for Evanston's only car dealership, Autobarn, to expand. This expansion effort will result in more than 30 new jobs, of which Autobarn is committed to working with Evanston Township High School to fill these jobs with local employees.

Entrepreneurship is a significant element of Evanston's business community as a result of not only Northwestern University startups, but because of the infrastructure Evanston affords entrepreneurs in the form of a lively downtown retail and restaurant district, train station business districts, a variety of office spaces, quality housing, and excellent schools.

**Evanston's entrepreneurship and high growth company network spans the entire growth spectrum including:**

1. the independent professional (i.e. freelancers) based in coffee shops and home based offices;
2. the more established independent professional or "solopreneur" paying for space in one of Evanston's two co-working spaces;
3. early stage startups based in the Technology Innovation Center or Northwestern University's incubator;
4. the high growth "gazelle" companies in 3,000 to 5,000 square foot offices in downtown Evanston; and
5. supportive professional services and institutions including banks, accountants, legal services, etc.

With Evanston's private sector partners, staff has coordinated two Evanston Edge Startup Showcase events featuring five Evanston based entrepreneurs given the opportunity to pitch their business for five minutes before crowds of 150 fellow entrepreneurs, mentors, northwestern faculty, elected officials, and the general public.

City and library staff have coordinated over 30 entrepreneurship seminars serving approximately 250 people through the NextChapter Evanston entrepreneurship support program taught by local business owners. Unique in the Chicagoland area, NextChapter provides a platform for career changers, individuals with an idea but lacking startup know how, and home based businesses to learn from private sector success stories. The seminars are free due to the generosity of Evanston's business community. Staff has also remained engaged in the local entrepreneurship ecosystem through periodic meetings with Northwestern University faculty and staff; coordination of high growth company peer to peer networking sessions (e.g. RISE!, Evanston Entrepreneurs League); and individual one on one meetings.



## ATTRACTION OF NEW BUSINESSES

While retention has remained a key focus of Economic Development efforts, bringing new businesses that can complement the existing Evanston businesses has been a key activity for Economic Development staff. Since 2010, Evanston has significantly expanded its dining options with the addition of nearly 20 new eateries across Evanston. The new eateries have helped promote evening activity in business districts. A variety of options for lunchtime dining have also created unique and dynamic options for people living and working in Evanston. Key new businesses that have been attracted to Evanston through City efforts and support have included: Trader Joe's, brew-pubs Smylie Brothers Brewing Company and Peckish Pig as well as production and nano-breweries, Sketchbook and Temperance. GFS Marketplace, Little Beans, small retailers like Oliver's Trains & Toys, Brew Camp, Corrado Cutlery, Homestead Meats, and Stumble & Relish.

The closure of two Dominick's grocery stores in late 2013 resulted in work to attract new large grocers to the area. Fortunately, coordination with City elected officials, staff, and property owners resulted in the attraction of two new stores—a Whole Foods Market and Valli Produce, both slated to open in mid-2015.

## COMMERCIAL REVITALIZATION AND REDEVELOPMENT

Commercial revitalization and redevelopment in several Evanston business districts has been made possible by the efforts to build capacity among existing businesses throughout Evanston. Since 2010, the City has worked to build capacity across all of Evanston's business districts. This work has included the creation of several new business groups including Howard Street Business Association, West Main Street Merchants Association, West End, West Village Business Association, Central Evanston Business Association, and the Noyes Street Merchants Association. The work to organize these businesses and coordinate communication has improved the City's ability to disseminate information to businesses as well as identify areas that could be improved or support business attraction efforts to reduce vacancies.

Additionally staff has worked to implement plans identified within Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Plans as well as neighborhood plans that were established. Commercial revitalization work along the Howard Street corridor as well as west side neighborhood business districts continues to be ongoing as the City works to enhance and stabilize these key business districts through new businesses, job opportunities for residents, and business district beautification. Additionally, staff has worked to create two new TIF districts, one around commercial property at Chicago Avenue and Main Street and then other to support redevelopment efforts at the Evanston Plaza shopping center.



## DEVELOPMENT OF NEW ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT WEBSITE

The City created [www.EvanstonEdge.com](http://www.EvanstonEdge.com) in 2012 to provide pertinent information on Evanston for existing and potential businesses. The information contained on the pages includes information on various City processes and available commercial properties for lease or purchase as well as feature stories on unique and interesting aspects of Evanston's business community.

In addition to a dynamic website that changes on a weekly, if not daily basis with new information, the City's Economic Development Division also increased its presence on social media. Social media has given the City the ability to promote events in Evanston's business community in real-time and capture the unique and interesting stories for people to learn more about through social media. To date, the followers on Facebook have grown to nearly 700 and Twitter to nearly 600.

A bi-weekly newsletter has also been in distribution since [www.EvanstonEdge.com](http://www.EvanstonEdge.com)'s debut. The newsletter highlights noteworthy events in the business community, upcoming events and other pertinent information for the business community. To date, the distribution list is comprised of slightly more than 2,300 subscribers. On average each newsletter is opened by between 30% and 40% of the subscribers. Based on benchmark industry data on open rates for email newsletters, open rates for subscriber based emails are between 15% and 20%.



## PART II: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN UPDATE

Moving forward, the City’s economic development efforts will be guided by a desire to promote triple bottom line sustainability and enhancing Evanston as the most livable community. The plan outlined below provides an update to previous work plan’s and promotes aspects of quality of place, augmenting business district vitality efforts, and continuing to build on business retention and attraction efforts.

### QUALITY OF PLACE

**Quality of place is defined as a composition of characteristics that can be found throughout Evanston that define its attractiveness to new and existing businesses, customers, residents, and visitors.**

**Richard Florida defines “quality of place” as;**

- 1 “The combination of the built environment and the natural environment;
- 2 a stimulating, appealing setting for the pursuit of creative lives;
- 3 Diverse people of all ethnicities, nationalities, religions, and sexual orientations, interacting and providing clear cues that this is a community where anyone can fit in and make a life;
- 4 The vibrancy of the street life, café culture, arts, and music;
- 5 the visible presence of people engaging in outdoor activities—altogether a lot of active, exciting, creative goings-ons”.



As Evanston strives to be the most livable community, the continued inclusion of this area within the Economic Development plan recognizes that there are a number of qualities within Evanston that make it a distinctive, attractive and compelling place to live, to visit and to start a business. The ability to offer high quality of place amenities and attributes gives Evanston a competitive advantage over other communities and neighborhoods in Chicago. Businesses make decisions whether to locate or remain in a community often based on the ability to access amenities that are often found to promote high quality of place. Locating a business in a place that is exciting, easily reached by public transportation, and offers unique mix of dining and entertainment opportunities is an important aspect of employee retention for companies, especially startups, seeking to attract creatively driven employees who desire a healthy “live/work” balance. In order to maintain this advantage, these qualities need to be protected, promoted, and preserved.

### **KEY ACTIVITIES ASSOCIATED WITH QUALITY OF PLACE WILL INCLUDE:**

- Support business districts with variety of planned events and activities to promote visitors and shoppers;
- Continue to support efforts to create health and wellness business “chamber of commerce”;
- Continue outreach to Evanston’s existing entrepreneur network to encourage and support businesses coming to Evanston that reflect technology/growth-oriented start-up culture;
- Continue to promote innovate food concepts such as shared kitchen, incubators, small markets, and small craft food production;
- Participate in B Impact Assessment efforts to assist businesses in determining how their business practices impact employees, community, and the environment;
- Support efforts to make Evanston a model community for being “age-friendly” and to prepare Evanston businesses to serve the aging baby boom population;
- Coordinate and promote unique and creative art projects throughout all of Evanston’s business districts;
- Promote new open streets programs that offer innovative and exciting ways to experience business districts;
- Expand the Parklet pilot program to include other business districts to offer “people places” in places where it is determined on-street parking spaces can safely accommodate structures; and
- Create historic walking tours phone app for areas around business districts to encourage visitors to explore business districts.



## BUSINESS DISTRICT VITALITY

Increasing Business District Vitality efforts will be a two-fold approach. The first will include improvement of physical infrastructure throughout districts. This is comprised of sidewalk repair and replacement, implementation of wayfinding signage in each business district, and replacement or installation of new street furniture (benches, garbage cans, newspaper stands). The second will continue to build on the work currently underway to enhance the capacity of business districts through communications, events, and other functions.

### Key activities associated with business district vitality will include:

- Enhance attractiveness of existing business districts through the investment of improved streetscapes; inclusive of planting of new trees/plantings, repair/replacement of broken sidewalks, removal of street furniture that is broken or addition of new street furniture;
- Installation of wayfinding signage in business districts to assist visitors to the area to find and better explore districts and locate businesses of interest;
- Coordination with property owners of long vacant commercial properties to create visually attractive vacant storefronts and continue to work with property owners to identify businesses to locate in spaces;
- Support coordinated events and activities throughout business districts year round that bring new visitors to business districts that engage existing “bricks & mortar” businesses;
- Update of EvanstonEdge.com to promote Evanston’s business districts through high quality and professional images of businesses and districts; increase in total feature stories about businesses in Evanston;
- Continue support of creation of special service area in the Main/Chicago/Dempster corridor to provide additional resources and support to these merchant districts; and
- Work with existing businesses districts to continue to improve capacity and function of individual business districts.

## BUSINESS RETENTION AND ATTRACTION

As major projects are completed, business retention will be a cornerstone of economic development efforts. Retention efforts will include working with existing businesses to identify areas of potential technical assistance or opportunities for expansion. Additionally, efforts will include the attraction of complementary businesses to support our existing businesses.

As highlighted in previous plans, nearby shopping centers reportedly restrict their tenants from expanding within a specific radius. As a result, Evanston’s ability to attract a broad range of national retailers is limited. Therefore Evanston economic development staff will continue to proactively pursue a multifaceted effort to expand the retail sales tax base by balancing unique local retail with desired national retailers.

Support of Evanston businesses also includes assessing opportunities for new job growth and employment of Evanston residents where possible. Businesses applying for business licenses and city financial assistance are encouraged to work with Evanston’s extensive network of workforce development partners including National Able, Oakton Community College, and the Youth Job Center.



Support of Evanston’s entrepreneurial spirit will continue to be an intentional and coordinated effort. Brad Feld, author of *Startup Communities: Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem in Your City* argues that the role of government is to support entrepreneurs, not create them. He suggests government should “use the bully pulpit to stimulate the agenda versus investing directly in entrepreneurs.” He also recommends government emphatically “ask the entrepreneurs what they need!”

Staff proposes to continue to support this range of business activity with a primary focus on intentional - peer to peer networking, professional development, and early stage business development support.

**Key activities associated with business retention and attraction will include:**

- Repurpose and rebrand Façade Program as Storefront Improvement Fund to include interior build out in addition to façade;
- Coordinate with ownership of Evanston Plaza to identify tenants for shopping center;
- Support opening of Little Beans Café at 430 Asbury Avenue and identify additional indoor family-oriented activities including children’s museum, bowling, inflatable play/bounce house; creative studios;
- Design and implement a retail incubation program supporting the creation of storefront spaces for home-based businesses or individuals with ideas but limited capital;
- Identify and pursue retailers from Chicago neighborhood businesses seeking to expand or relocate;
- Work with Evanston Chamber of Commerce, Now We’re Cookin’, Evanston Inventure, and other partners to create a Women’s Entrepreneurship Group;
- Host regular series of Evanston company founders (CEO’s) events with topical focus such as staff recruiting needs, infrastructure needs, case studies, or other areas of desired interest;
- Refine Next Chapter to determine effectiveness and opportunity to provide additional resources to support entrepreneurs/increase frequency of programming and options;
- Support/“embed in” entrepreneurship-oriented activities such as RISE!, Inventure, Now We’re Cookin’, and Startup Evanston; and
- Continue outreach to NU faculty, faculty startups, and student-led startups (Kellogg, McCormick, INVO, etc.).



## BUSINESS DISTRICT PLANS

Economic Development staff will continue to work to implement and execute on the business district plans identified in 2013 for the various business districts throughout Evanston. Work is organized geographically on the following pages.

Central Street is the longest east-west arterial within Evanston, anchored to the east by North Shore University Health System and stretching west to Gross Pointe Road. Central Street has its own “village” feel and is host to a multitude of small locally-based shops and boutiques specializing in everything from antiques and spices to kids clothing and couture wedding gowns. The walkable stretches of shops make this a destination for residents and visitors.

Northwestern University Athletics is also located on Central Street with Ryan Field prominently positioned to Big Ten sports enthusiasts. Both the CTA Purple Line and the Metra Union Pacific Line have stops on Central Street, making it a convenient place for shoppers, foodies and residents alike.

### **Central Street Objectives and Projects Include:**

- Streetscape improvements on Central Street sidewalks. Central Street has a strong local retail corridor. A good pedestrian environment is essential to supporting a healthy retail environment. In order to retain and continue to attract these retailers, this infrastructure is essential.
- Support leasing of new retail and restaurant space east of Metra tracks at Central Station Apartment development. The large tract of land previously occupied by Evanston Theatres created a void that will now be filled by the construction of the new Central Station Apartments. The property will feature ground floor commercial space that can be filled by retail, services, or food services.
- Support capacity-building efforts. Identify opportunities to build capacity among merchant districts either through additional support at the business district level or through other placemaking resources such as the National Main Streets Center, Inc.

Chicago Avenue/Dempster/Main Streets district represent two business districts located within steps of the CTA Purple Line Dempster Street Station and south of downtown Evanston. Each offers a range of retail and culinary destinations as well as a number of neighborhood-serving retail and services. Three major grocery stores and Evanston’s only car dealership anchor the districts.

### **Chicago Avenue/Dempster/Main Streets Objectives and Projects Include:**

- Coordination of consideration of Special Service Area (SSA) designation. The introduction of new businesses as well as a desire to support the environment that the existing businesses have had for a long time is driving the desire to create an SSA. Work will be done in 2014 and 2015 to identify opportunities for the creation of an SSA.
- Development & Support of food-related/culinary businesses in the area. This area currently has three major grocery stores. Adding destination food businesses will further support the businesses in this area.
- Support Leasing of vacant retail spaces west of the CTA and Metra Tracks. The deteriorating viaducts that bisect Dempster and Dempster Streets have long created a division between the west and east portions of this business district. As a result there are several key vacancies in the western corridor. With the new CTA bridges completed, the “barrier” between the two districts is less severe and with targeted marketing, that area will likely see new tenants.



- Implementation of Infrastructure Projects in the Main/Chicago TIF District. If adopted, the Main/Chicago Implementation Plan identifies several major district improvements that will enhance the attractiveness of the district. Included, but not limited to these improvements are: streetscape improvements, street repaving, alley paving, and new lighting. These improvements will support a more vibrant and attractive business district.
- Development of an energy-efficient/green building plan for older buildings. Many of the commercial buildings in these districts are Evanston's oldest and also offer some of the least energy efficient measures (older windows and doors, inefficient heating and cooling systems). Working with local utility providers and other green stakeholders, the City will develop a financial incentive program for properties in and outside the Chicago/Main TIF district.

Downtown Evanston is a dynamic city center that offers a dynamic day-time population of over 20,000 employees that works in approximately 2 million square feet of offices throughout the district. This is in addition to approximately 14,000 residents within a half mile of Sherman and Church. . Combined together, post-modern inspired office towers and contemporary condo buildings dominate the skyline of Downtown Evanston. Within the downtown there are over 100 dining options for every taste.

**Downtown Evanston Objectives and Projects Include:**

- Coordinate with Downtown Evanston on retention efforts, recruitment of new businesses and marketing initiatives. Downtown Evanston plays a key role in supporting recruitment of new businesses to Evanston and marketing events that draw thousands of visitors to Evanston.
- Leasing of major vacancies 1,500 square feet or greater. The real estate downturn and the contraction of many national and local retailers have resulted in a number of sizeable ground floor vacancies. Over the course of the year the City will work with brokers, property owners, building managers, and prospective retail tenants to reoccupy these spaces with uses that are complementary to Downtown Evanston
- Redevelopment of major land vacancies to highest and best use to support day-time population. The downtown has several large vacancies that either have plans in process of formation or development. The redevelopment of these properties to support a vibrant day-time population is critical to the ongoing success of Downtown Evanston.
- Implementation of NEA Grant and EvanstArts Report. Continue to support the implementation of the EvanstonArts Report through work with the City's Cultural Arts Coordinator. Finalize work on the Downtown Performing Arts Task Force.
- Attraction and retention of growth oriented companies for existing and new office space. Evanston is headquarters to a number of small and medium sized companies who benefit from a vibrant downtown and transit access. The city will continue to identify growth oriented companies for retention, expansion and attraction into office space and work with entrepreneurs to develop support programming and networking opportunities.
- Coordinate workforce development opportunities to benefit targeted population. Businesses are regularly seeking employees to fill vacant positions but some are having difficulties matching the skills of applicants to available positions. Workforce Development in the area will help fill these voids and decrease the unemployment rate in the City. Pursue Washington National TIF funding as potential source of funding.



Howard Street is a revitalizing mixed-use corridor sharing a municipal boundary with the City of Chicago. Along Howard Street you will find a mix of unique specialty stores, a variety of housing choices, and destination eateries. The district is anchored on the east by the Howard Street CTA station that offers Red, Purple, and Yellow Line service. The district spans west to Ridge Avenue. The corridor is comprised of mixed-use buildings that range from vintage 1920s commercial buildings to a modern high-rise apartment building. Evanston's Howard Street Business Association is the driving force behind the revitalization of this district and meets monthly to discuss projects, new business activities, and other critical items.

**Howard Street Objectives and Projects Include:**

- Redevelopment of City-Owned Properties on Howard Street. The City currently owns six properties in this corridor: 623-627 ½ Howard Street (home of Peckish Pig brew-pub); 633 Howard Street (Police Outpost); 629-631 Howard Street (multi-story mixed use building housing Ward Eight and two occupied residential units); 727-729 Howard Street (vacant one-story building); 721-723 Howard Street (vacant one-story building); and 717 Howard Street (one-story building slated for demolition).
- Support for the Howard Street Business Association. Since the summer of 2010, the City has provided support and management for the business association along Howard Street. Prior to the summer of 2010, the businesses had never convened a meeting nor had coordinated activities. As new businesses have arrived on Howard Street and more individual businesses have convened to work together to improve the area, the City's involvement in the management and organization of this group can be reduced. The City will remain involved in the association, since it owns several properties on the corridor.
- Continue work to convene Food Truck Festivals. Since 2011, the City has coordinated a "food truck festival" at the annual Starlight Concert at Brummel Park. The City will again coordinate this festival that brings hundreds of visitors to the park.

Noyes/Foster Street business district represents two concentrations of Evanston businesses that sprouted near the CTA Purple Line stations for which the districts are named. The businesses located here offer an eclectic mix of shops and restaurants that serve the residents of both the single-family homes and the Northwestern student body. The City of Evanston's Noyes Cultural Arts Center anchors Noyes Street and offers a wide range of arts and theatre programs. The businesses surrounding the Noyes Cultural Arts Center reflect the eclectic and unique character of this district.

**Noyes/Foster Street Objectives and Projects Include:**

- Development and support of business district organization. The businesses currently located in this district have started the process to create a formal association. Several have indicated an interest in stronger organizational coordination to promote the performing arts offerings and connect these groups to the food, retail, and service offerings in the immediately surrounding neighborhood.
- Capital investment in Noyes Cultural Arts Center. The City's adopted Capital Improvement Plan identifies a number of improvements necessary to complete at the Noyes Cultural Arts Center to continue to make it a viable space for Arts groups.
- Support special events coordinated by the emerging merchant district. As the merchant district continues to build its capacity, special events coordinated around the Noyes Cultural Arts Center and surrounding merchant district will be an important component of defining the business district.



Southwest area of Evanston encompasses several shopping centers that are home to large format national retailers. Main Street Commons, located south of Main Street includes a Marshalls, Starbucks, Food 4 Less, and Sam's Club. West on Oakton Street, includes a Home Depot, PetSmart, grocery stores ALDI and GFS Marketplace, as well as Steak n' Shake. Finally along Howard Street in the Evanston Center shopping district, includes an Office Max, Jewel/Osco, Best Buy and Target.

**Southwest Objectives and Projects Include:**

- Attract complementary tenants to develop on large tracts of undeveloped land in these districts. At the Evanston Center, there are currently four outlots that were never developed. The properties were recently listed for sale and several fast casual restaurants have indicated interest in locating at these parcels. On West Oakton, the property behind the new GFS Marketplace has yet to be developed.
- Develop a plan for utilization of the former Evanston Recycling Center. In 2011 and 2012 there were extensive discussions regarding the future of this property. Concepts for redevelopment ranged from an indoor recreation facility to a salt dome.
- Coordinate workforce development opportunities to benefit targeted population. Businesses are regularly seeking employees to fill vacant positions but some are having difficulties matching the skills of applicants to available positions. Workforce Development in the area will help fill these voids and decrease the unemployment rate in the City. Pursue Howard/Hartrey TIF funding as potential source of funding.
- Support development and support of business district organization. The businesses located the West Main Street/Dodge Avenue areas have started to organize to establish a merchant association. Staff will continue to assist in these efforts of self-organization.

The West Side is comprised of several commercial areas. Located adjacent to Evanston Township High School is the area of Church Street and Dodge Avenue. This area features several neighborhood businesses and services. The Evanston North Shore Contractor's Cooperative is under construction at 1817 Church Street. Fatty's Burgers & More and C&W Market add retail and restaurant options to the intersection of Church Street and Dodge Avenue.

The Dr. Hill neighborhood at Simpson Street and Green Bay Road features former ice cream factories and other industrial spaces converted to live work offices which now house Brella Productions, a fast growing multimedia production company, Mighty Nest, a web based natural, organic, and non-toxic product retailer, smaller independent startups, as well as the Now We're Cookin' culinary incubator which is a state-of-the-art facility that offers shared kitchen space, cooking classes, and a packaged food business incubator.

On the western edge of downtown Evanston is the Emerson Street corridor. Located at the corner of Green Bay Road and Emerson is Hecky's Barbeque which attracts fans from throughout Chicagoland to the experience their famous barbeque sauce.

**West Side Objectives and Projects Include:**

- Continued support and facilitation of merchant groups. Assist in the work of Central Evanston Business Association incorporating businesses based at Church & Dodge, Dr. Hill, Green Bay & Emerson, and Emerson/Dodge/Dewey. These commercial areas operate largely independent of each other with fairly limited cohesive activity.
- Pursue redevelopment of key properties along Church Street between Dewey and Brown. This corridor is key to West Side development. There are opportunities to create partnerships and make a commercial intersection that draws in residents and visitors from Evanston and surrounding areas.



- Initiate planning process for cultural / heritage trail. This effort could spur on tourism in the area, lead to more commercial activity as visitors follow the trail and bolster community pride. Coordinate workforce development opportunities to benefit targeted population. Pursue West Evanston TIF as potential source of funding.
- Support expansion of growth businesses in Dr. Hill district The Dr. Hill district has a number of small successful start-up businesses that are growing and in need of larger space and more employees.
- Proactively seek out storefront improvement opportunities. There are a number of existing empty storefronts which could be physically improved and filled with growing start-up businesses looking for space.

The West End is conveniently located one mile west of Downtown Evanston and three miles east of the Edens Expressway (Interstate 94) is Evanston’s West End. Once home to Evanston’s largest employer, the Clayton Mark steel forging company (now site of Evanston Plaza shopping center), the area is now home to the West End Business Association - a tight network of small to mid-size commercial enterprises, modern manufacturing and technology companies.

**West End Objectives and Projects Include:**

- Support innovation and modernization of industrial uses within district.
- Directional Signage for West End District- Use the Wayfinding Signage Program currently being designed by UrbanWorks to assist in directing people in and around the West End business district. Use current district logo to keep the cohesive look of the area.
- Pursue options to leverage TIF and/or economic development fund to support workforce development opportunities in partnership with West End employers and existing workforce development non-profit organizations.

The West Village, centered at Dodge and Dempster, is distinctly independent and artistic. Florence Avenue is home to a small strip of storefronts that local historians say were once owned by butchers, bakers, and other storekeepers. Also located in this area is the Heartwood Center for Body Mind and Spirit which is a unique holistic health services center (an incubator of sorts) committed to providing excellence in care. Anchored by the new Valli Produce and Dance Center Evanston, the revitalization of Evanston Plaza shopping center is underway.

**WEST VILLAGE OBJECTIVES AND PROJECTS INCLUDE:**

- Pursue retail tenants for Evanston Plaza in partnership with property owner. The 200,000 square foot shopping center is under new ownership after a recent sale and several years of receivership. A renewed focus on filling vacant retail space with desirable retailers and services to drive sales tax revenue and job growth.
- Support revitalization of Florence Avenue and Greenleaf business district.
- Support efforts to enhance Dodge Avenue and Dempster Street intersection. The introduction of Starbucks to the building formerly occupied by KFC and an exterior upgrade to Burger King will continue to bring new investment to this key Evanston intersection.

