

City of Evanston Economic Development 2013 Work Plan

Introduction

This targeted, implementable, and measureable 2013 Work Plan is the result of an active 2012 featuring learning opportunities for economic development staff, city management, and elected officials. Our private and non-profit sector partners along with engaged citizens provided feedback, offered critiques and voiced their concerns through a number of forums including City Council, economic development committee, CDBG committee, the Economic Development Summit and the subsequent meetings inspired by the summit including those hosted by Inventure, RISE, the Evanston Community Foundation, EvanstArts, and one-on-one interviews with individual businesses and entrepreneurs.

As a result of the feedback provided by the local business community, residents, and the City Council and recognition of shifting lifestyle preferences and demographic changes updates to the adopted 2012 Economic Development Plan are proposed:

- Maintain focus on the sectors of Arts & Entertainment, Entrepreneurship Development & Growth Oriented Startups, and Water Industries)
- Add three additional areas of focus: retail attraction and retention; workforce development partnerships; and “Quality of Place”

While the 2012 plan recognized that the community must support baby boomers and our aging population, this update recommends addressing residents, workers, and visitors of all ages. In an article in January 2013 edition of Governing magazine, a representative from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) acknowledges that “most of the features that attract older people to a community are the same ones that draw younger residents.” Age-friendly communities feature “public transportation, different options for housing, lifelong learning opportunities, a robust arts and cultural scene, walkability and urban spaces.” Based on census population data, this trend appears to be playing out in Evanston – over 50 percent of Evanston’s population is part of the Generation X or Y cohort.

The addition of **retail retention and attraction** as a focus area helps support the ongoing health and vitality of Evanston’s business district. The retail market is in constant flux and the increasing competition posed by online retailing and the resulting downsizing of the national retail footprint poses unique challenges for Evanston. Staff has already started the tasks of data collection, developing relationships with retail brokers, and initiating proactive outreach to national and regional retailers to gauge their interest in Evanston. Staff is also exploring unique “incubation” models to encourage home based businesses to open in storefronts

City staff will work closely with **workforce development** focused non-profits to identify opportunities to support programs aimed at comprehensive training to help empower individuals of all ages overcome barriers to full participation in the workforce. Staff will

identify effective ways of linking Evanston's socio-economically diverse population to the network of workforce development resources.

Contrasted with traditional "quality of life" indicators such as climate, park acreage per resident, or school test scores, "**Quality of Place**" represents the elements defining a city's attractiveness to residents and businesses. As defined by Richard Florida, Quality of Place is:

"1. The combination of the built environment and the natural environment; a stimulating, appealing setting for the pursuit of creative lives; 2. 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. 3. The vibrancy of the street life, café culture, arts, and music; the visible presence of people engaging in outdoor activities—altogether a lot of active, exciting, creative goings-ons"

- Richard Florida, Urban Land Magazine 10/11/2012

Economic Development staff will explore opportunities to grow Evanston's economy by pursuing new and retaining existing businesses that continue to enhance Evanston's quality of place characteristics. The addition of "Quality of Place" to the 2013 update 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 that differentiate it from other Chicago suburbs and Chicago itself. These qualities need to be protected, promoted, and preserved.

Supporting Quality of Place

Purpose:

To achieve the City of Evanston's goal of being the most livable city in the United States, the Economic Development Division, with public and private partners, will encourage initiatives that continue to promote and enhance Evanston's Quality of Place by:

1. Promoting Evanston's authentic place characteristics such as lakefront, arts, walkable neighborhoods, vibrant downtown, restaurants, entertainment, quality housing, architecture, and transit access.
2. Pursuing retailers that appeal to Evanston's diverse and multi-generational residential population and Evanston workforce population.
3. Creating opportunities for unique / independent business growth in Evanston.
4. Encouraging growth of health and wellness businesses.
5. Supporting and promoting arts and entertainment venues.
6. Embracing Evanston's socio-economic and racial diversity.
7. Using evanstonedge.com and social media platforms to *show* Evanston through visually appealing photographs and video.

Work Plan Actions:

1. Survey businesses, employees and residents to identify preferred businesses.
2. Assist merchant groups with event planning and marketing of Evanston as only suburb with numerous unique and historic transit oriented neighborhood business districts
3. Support Downtown Evanston, Inc. with events planning.
4. Partner with merchant groups commercial district planning.
5. Lead effort to create a health and wellness business "chamber of commerce".
6. Create comprehensive listing/clearinghouse on evanstonedge.com for recreation and health and wellness activities
7. Support innovative food concepts such as shared kitchen, incubators, small markets, and small craft food production such as coffee roasting, craft beer, and small food shops.
8. Pursue companies focused on youth experiential activities housed in retail spaces such as inflatable play houses, miniature golf, children museum concepts, games, and arts and crafts.

Entrepreneurship Development and Growth Oriented Startups

Purpose

In our effort to help create jobs in Evanston through retention of growth companies and attraction of new companies, Economic Development staff will strive to elevate the status of Evanston as a premier place to launch a business by:

1. Creating and maintaining relationships with Evanston's business community
2. Helping identify investors for Evanston-based startups and growing companies
3. Identifying opportunities for new office development or retrofit of existing
4. Supporting events that connect startups and investors to one another
5. Using evanstonedge.com and social media platforms to promote Evanston
6. Helping develop a network of ambassadors to promote Evanston
7. Maintaining existing and exploring new partnership opportunities with Northwestern University

Work Plan Actions:

1. Partner with Evanston Inventure to expand economic development outreach through ambassador program.
2. Assist with the creation of an Evanston Women's Entrepreneurship Group
3. Create business attraction campaign for "serious" entrepreneurs
4. Host regular series of Evanston company founders (CEO's) events with topical focus such as staff recruiting needs, infrastructure needs, case studies, etc.
5. Participate in entrepreneurship events such as NU's Global Entrepreneurship Week, Chicago Idea Week, Built in Chicago, and Technori.
6. Identify and develop relationships with Evanston's high growth potential companies including healthcare, technology, and water industries through business interviews and networking events.
7. Work with growth focused Northwestern University faculty and staff in Kellogg and McCormick schools.
8. Recruit development partners to create or retrofit office space
9. Support quality of place initiatives appealing to Evanston's growth oriented entrepreneurs

Example Performance Measures

Activity	Measure
Attract New Startups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jobs Created• Funds Invested in Startups• Square Footage Occupied
Retain Growth Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jobs Added• Jobs Retained• Square Footage Expansion
Ambassador Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• # of Visits• # of Firms Converted• Total dollars invested
Entrepreneurship Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• # of Events

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• # of companies attracted to Evanston
--	--

Arts & Entertainment

Purpose:

Arts and culture contributes to Evanston's quality of place for residents and businesses alike. Arts and Entertainment businesses draw visitors, provide creative sector jobs and generate amusement and liquor tax revenue for the City. As a result, Economic Development staff will:

1. Support existing arts and theater organizations while exploring opportunities for new organizations that complement the existing offering.
2. Explore opportunities for additional live performance and other entertainment venues
3. Support the formal development of an Arts/Culture and Entertainment Ambassadorship

Work Plan Actions:

1. Staff and Arts & Entertainment partners will work to identify performance space, supportive arts programming, investors/benefactors, and marketing
2. Conduct a detailed study of opportunities for live performing arts venues through a National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grant
3. Implement plan for live performing arts venues per NEA study
4. Identify funding to ease the development of new galleries and artist housing
5. Conduct business visits with Arts & Entertainment businesses to share ED vision, offer assistance, and to promote via social media and evanstonedge.com

Example Performance Measures

Activity	Measure
Performing Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documented increased revenues• Documented increased attendance by new patrons• Documented increase in total subscriptions
Visual Arts Performance Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documented increase in total available space devoted to artist gallery, teaching visual arts, studio space
All Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Total number of media impressions / articles that recognize activities in the arts for Evanston.

Retail

Purpose:

Retail formats continue to evolve to smaller footprints as an increasing volume of transactions occur online. To protect their interest, 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 proactively pursue a multifaceted effort to expand the retail sales tax base balancing unique local retail with desired national retailers by:

1. Pursuing national retailers in targeted categories
2. Seeking expansion or relocation of appealing independent retailers from throughout Chicago area
3. Cultivating the expansion of home based retail into vacant storefronts
4. Supporting creation of new retailers through incubation and other means
5. Developing strong relationships with the retail brokerage community

Work Plan Actions:

1. Conduct retail preference survey of residents, employees, employers and students, to identify retail opportunities.
2. Identify and pursue national retailers, regional chains, and Chicago neighborhood businesses seeking to expand or relocate.
3. Design and implement a retail incubation program supporting the creation of storefront spaces for home-based businesses or individuals with ideas but limited capital.
4. Actively pursue favorite out of town shops for potential Evanston expansion
5. Repurpose and rebrand Façade Program as Storefront Improvement Fund to include interior build out in addition to façade.
6. Stay abreast of latest market conditions including creating a list of retail leads, researching typical space needs of desired retailers; identify leakage opportunities through ESRI Business analyst, and monitoring Evanston retail vacancies.
7. Work closely with Bonnie Management to identify tenants for Evanston Plaza.
8. Identify indoor family oriented activities including children's museum, bowling, inflatable play/bounce house; creative studios (e.g. Make a Messterpiece or Robot City Workshop).

Example Performance Measures

Activity	Measure
National / Regional Retail Pursuit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New retailers opened/attracted • Visits to retailers outside of Evanston • National retailers contacted/converted • Number of targeted home based into a storefront
Retail Incubator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new businesses created • Number of new jobs created • Sales Tax Revenue Generated
Storefront Improvement Fund (repurposed façade improvement program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Total new retailers attracted/expanded • New jobs resulting from improvement • New retailers attracted as a result of fund
Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of responses • Retailers attracted

Workforce Development Partnerships

Purpose

To help empower individuals of all ages overcome barriers to full participation in the workforce, City staff will work closely with the existing network of workforce development non-profits to identify opportunities to support programs aimed at comprehensive training in an array of fields including entrepreneurship and self-employment education for youth and career changers.

Work Plan Actions:

1. With non-profit partners, pursue available private, state and federal funding for workforce development training for Evanston residents for vocation/skill certifications.
2. Pursue the expansion of the City of Evanston apprenticeship program for Evanston residents
3. Work with Oakton Community College to provide vocational and certificate training courses at Evanston Township High School, the Evanston Public Library, and other appropriate locations.
4. Partner with the Library/Youth Job Center/IL WORK NET/ to create provide additional training programs in the community including opportunities for guided online education.
5. Negotiate local employment covenants for all future redevelopment agreements.
6. Expand the Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program and Youth and Young Adult Career Pathways Program.
7. Explore opportunities to improve the Local Employment Program based on best practices.

Example Program Measure

Activity	Measure
Job Creation	# of participants placed in jobs # of participants certified/trained # of new jobs in Evanston # of participants Mayor's Summer Youth Employment Program # of participants completing Career Pathways Program