

Central Street Evanston

ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Artist Jay Ryan of The Bird Machine

centralstreetevanston.com

MARKETING

Hired Ripple Public Relations To Help Expand Our Reach

SPECIAL EVENTS

Shopping • Dining • Live Music • Family Fun • Holidays

BUSINESS ATTRACTION/ RETENTION

11 New Leases • 3% Vacancy Rate

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

Dear Central Street Business Community,

As I reflect on the past year, I'm incredibly proud of the energy, creativity, and resilience our Central Street district has shown. In 2025, we focused on strengthening Central Street as a destination. To help us think bigger and reimagine what our programming could be, we partnered with Ripple PR. Together, we explored new ideas while refreshing some of our existing events, and it was exciting to see our efforts gain wider recognition — including a feature on television that highlighted the vibrancy of our district.

One of the most exciting moments of the year was the launch of Busker Fest. This was a new kind of festival for us and pushed us to try things we hadn't done before, including securing sponsorships for the first time. It challenged us, but it also showed what's possible when our businesses and community come together around something creative and fun. We also ended the year with an incredibly strong retail environment, reaching just 3% vacancy at one point — a testament to the appeal and vitality of Central Street. While that number has shifted somewhat, we're encouraged by the momentum we built and by the wonderful new local businesses that joined our district. Most importantly, despite a challenging economic environment, we succeeded in bringing people out to Central Street and reminding them what makes this neighborhood special.

Looking ahead to 2026, our focus is simple but powerful: community. In 2026, we plan to lean even more into the sense of connection that makes Central Street unique. We will begin hosting quarterly meetups to bring together business owners so we can share ideas, strengthen relationships, and continue shaping the future of our district together. We will also continue to support and grow the events that bring people to Central Street and create moments of shared experience. These gatherings are essential — not just for our businesses, but for the sense of belonging that defines our neighborhood.

At the same time, we are preparing for what's next. We look forward to welcoming more new businesses to our district and ensuring they feel supported from day one. As the new stadium moves closer to opening, we will be thinking carefully about how Central Street can be ready to welcome visitors while preserving the character and charm that make this area so beloved.

Thank you for your continued commitment to Central Street. Our strength has always come from the people who care about this place — the shop owners, restaurateurs, neighbors, and volunteers who believe in its future. I'm excited for what lies ahead and grateful to be part of this community with all of you.

Take Care,

Stacia DeSalvo

Stacia Desalvo
President, Central Street Board



The Central Street Story



When you're local like Central Street, you stand the test of time. Designed around historic trolley and train systems, the District has been dynamic and independent from day one.

Today, as people reinvest in their communities, Central Street defines what a neighborhood destination should look like. Throughout the corridor, bakers, coffee roasters, and ambitious makers set up shop. Boutiques and museums open their doors to those looking for cultural and creative inspiration. Families play in the park.

The District continues to evolve and grow, staying true to its roots, and remains timeless as ever.

Gratitude.



The success and growth of the Central Street District would not be possible without the ongoing dedication of our Board of Directors, the community that shows up every day to support our local businesses, and the sponsors that help bring our events to life. Together, anything is possible.

SPONSORS

Northwestern
NEIGHBORHOOD AND
COMMUNITY RELATIONS™

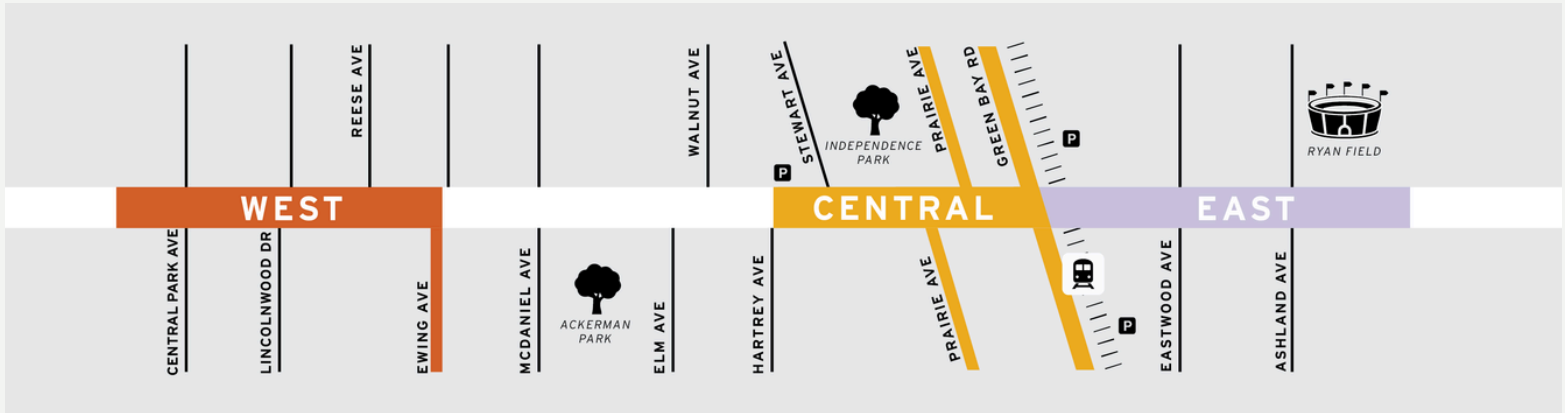


Lauren Weiss

@properties CHRISTIE'S
INTERNATIONAL REAL ESTATE



About Us.



Central Street Evanston is a 501(c)(6) non-profit corporation that manages Special Service Areas (SSAs) #7 and #8 along the Central Street and Green Bay Road corridors.

Our purpose is to enhance and promote the SSA districts, support businesses, and create a vibrant sense of place for residents and visitors.

We are funded through a self-imposed tax levy on commercial properties within the SSA Boundaries. Without the financial support of our businesses, we would not exist.



SERVICES PROVIDED

Central Street Evanston provides the following services to businesses and the District:

- Marketing & Advertising
- Programming & Special Events
- Placemaking
- Public Way Aesthetics
- Holiday Decor
- Business Retention & Attraction



About Us.

VISION

Be a vibrant, eclectic and artistic neighborhood business district.

MISSION

Provide excellent services to support local businesses and foster a strong sense of community.



VALUES

- 1) To promote the common interests of Central Street businesses, residents and organizations.
- 2) To foster a sense of neighborly well-being along Central Street.
- 3) To respect the contributions of all businesses, residents and organizations on Central Street.
- 4) To reach out to and foster relationships with the broader neighborhood and environs.
- 5) To build relationships and pursue joint activities when appropriate with other business districts and Special Service Areas.

THE BUSINESS COMMUNITY:

- More than 90% of our businesses are independent, and many owners live right in the community.
- More than 50% of our businesses are woman-owned.
- Many business owners juggle business ownership with parenting.
- We have legacy businesses that are 50-100 years old.
- We ended 2025 with a 3% vacancy rate.

Marketing

EXPAND OUR REACH

Central Street Evanston is promoted via social media, targeted digital advertising, print advertising, direct mail, posters, banners, newsletters, and the Central Street website. We retained Ripple Public Relations to help expand our reach outside of our current fan base through enhanced programming.



MARKETING GOALS & HIGHLIGHTS

EXPAND OUR REACH

Hired **Ripple Public Relations** to help expand our marketing reach beyond current fan base through public relations and enhanced programming.

FILL VACANCIES

- Outreach to brokers and business prospects
- Ended year with 3% vacancy rate
- 11 leases signed in 2025

INCREASE SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

- 13% Instagram follower growth
- Ended year with 77K monthly Instagram views (25% non-followers)
- 4% Facebook follower growth

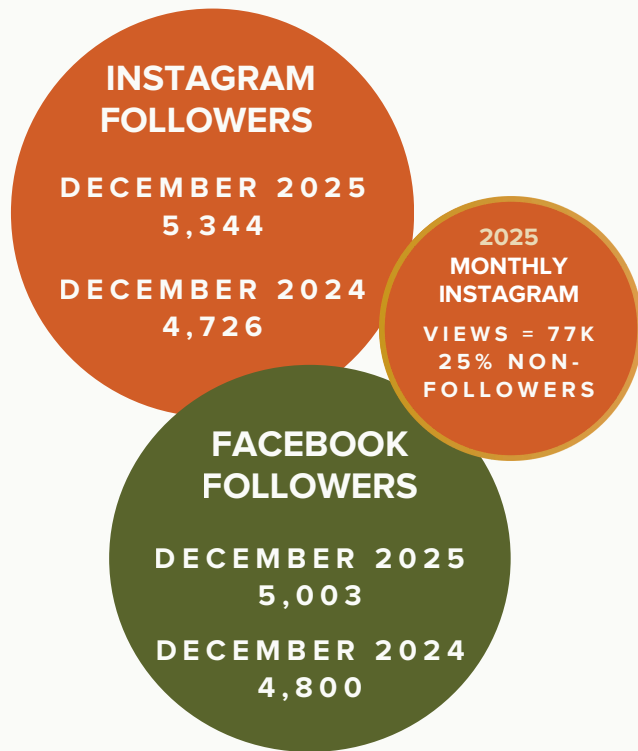
INCREASE NEWSLETTER SUBSCRIBERS

32% Subscriber increase

WEBSITE

We ended 2025 with 31K users vs. 26K users in 2024.
• 19% user increase

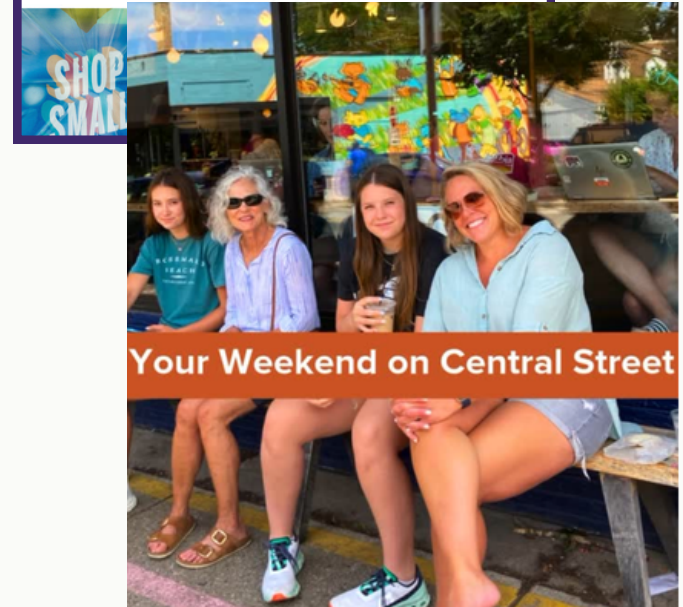
SOCIAL MEDIA



E-NEWSLETTER

Monthly e-newsletters are sent to the businesses and community with event and District announcements. Additional special e-newsletters are sent on an as-needed basis.

- **32% subscriber increase**



Destination Central Street: A Strategic Roadmap for Growth & Engagement

Wednesday March 5th, 2025
Northwestern University – Dean’s Consulting Alliance
2025 Kellogg Cohort

Northwestern | Kellogg

Students at Kellogg analyzed the student traffic to Central Street for class credit and shared insights and ideas for attracting more students to the District.

Public Relations.

We retained [Ripple PR](#) to expand our reach beyond the current fan base. Ripple helped us to conceptualize destination events and promote the District to new media outlets. We launched a new series of events, including our first-ever Central Street Busker Fest. For Busker Fest, Ripple prepared sponsorship materials and assisted with sponsorship outreach. Ripple also secured live TV segments.

PR & MEDIA COVERAGE

LIVE TV/YOU TUBE SEGMENTS:

CBS, WGN, STORIES FROM THE 78

CBS NEWS
CHICAGO



Celebrating street performance at Busker Fest in Evanston

(09:52)



Central Street Busker Fest 2025 | Evanston's First-Ever Street Performance Festival
78 Stories From The 78 2,17K subscribers

OTHER MEDIA COVERAGE

- Evanston RoundTable
- Evanston Now
- The Daily Northwestern
- Chicago Tribune/Pioneer Press
- Eater Chicago
- Chicago Parent
- Daily Herald
- Shaw Media
- MSN.com
- Patch
- North Shore Weekend
- Chicago NS Moms

Advertising

PAID ADVERTISING REACH

Chicago's North Shore CVB (year-round)

Monthly website and newsletter ads

- E-news: 12.5K subscribers
- Website: 30K unique monthly users

Digital Ads (event-based)

- Patch 1M Impressions

Direct Mail Postcard Campaign (Sidewalk Sale)

- Co-op pricing through Chicago's North Shore CVB
- Mailed to 25K households

Our Evanston Print Advertising: (Quarterly)

- ½ page ads x 20K printed

AD FOR CHICAGO'S NSCVB



DIRECT MAIL POSTCARD

Sidewalk Sale

Come out for the **BIGGEST** sales of the year!

— WEEKEND —

JULY 24-26, 2025
THURSDAY-SATURDAY • 10AM - 5PM

*SUNDAY INDOORS AT PARTICIPATING BUSINESSES
FREE 2-HOUR PARKING ALONG CENTRAL STREET FROM EASTWOOD TO HARTREY

[CENTRALSTREETEVANSTON.COM](https://www.centralstreetevanston.com)

OUR EVANSTON PRINT ADS



Events!



Special Events.

We enhanced our programming and hosted 11 events. This included our annual events along with a series of new concepts. Our marketing goal this year was to expand our reach beyond our usual fan base, so we focused on producing destination events. Ripple PR helped us reimagine our annual events, create new events, and contributed to the launch our very first Busker Fest.



InSidewalk Sale

This annual fall and winter clearance sale helps retailers clear seasonal items and make room for new spring merchandise.



Takeout Picnic

This annual event encourages people to order take out from Central Street restaurants and picnic in the park while enjoying live music. We partnered with Evanston's Starlight Concert Series to present music by The Sullivan Sisters



Restaurant Week | New Event!

Central Street hosted its first-annual Central Street Restaurant Week featuring specials and special menus from 13+ participating businesses.



Trick or Treat

Central Street's annual Halloween event brought 900+ attendees to enjoy Halloween-themed crafts, trick-or-treating at 40+ Central Street businesses and an after trick-or-treating costume party.



Spring's ALIVE | New Event!

A kickoff to the First Fridays after-hours event series. 25 businesses offered spring-themed promotions and special experiences to bring the community together.



Holiday Stroll & Tree Lighting

This annual holiday event features a day of shopping and dining specials, holiday festivities, followed by a tree lighting ceremony in Independence Park.



Pride's ALIVE | New Event!

The second event of the First Fridays series celebrated Pride Month. 20 businesses offered Pride-themed promotions, entertainment, decor, and more.



Small Business Saturday

This annual event highlights local businesses with a promotional push to support small business.



Sidewalk Sale

The biggest sale of the year, shops promoted summer clearance. Special additions included live jazz and dining offers.



Late-er Night Thursday

This annual event promotes extended holiday shopping after-hours and dining specials until 7 PM. 25+ businesses participated with a special promotion.



Busker Fest

In an effort to create destination programming and bring more arts and culture to Central Street events, we hosted our very first Busker Fest. We had 26 performances by talent from the Chicagoland area and Evanston, including our juggling Mayor Biss. Having Chicagoland performers helped us expand our reach and attract visitors from other areas. The word spread to talent as far away as New Mexico and Oregon. Busker Fest would not have been possible without sponsorship and PR support. Ripple PR created a sponsorship deck and helped with sponsor outreach, in addition to securing live TV segments.



Independence Park.

Central Street's hub of the community, Independence Park, underwent a \$2M+ complete park renovation. The renovations included a new playground, plaza, stage, lighting, landscaping, seating, and an outdoor dining edge with cafe seating and lighting.



MKSK/Shigley Photo

Public Way Aesthetics.

“Central Street feels like being in Stars Hollow...or in a Hallmark movie.”

The holidays are magical on Central Street. During the winter season, lights are placed in the trees and wrapped around lamp posts. The District glistens with peace, love, and light. Community members say that visiting the District feels like being in Stars Hollow or in a Hallmark movie!



Public Way Maintenance.



- Maintenance of 18 planters with seasonal plantings
- Maintenance of street banners throughout entire district
- Holiday Installation of LED lights on 69 trees
- Holiday Installed C9 lights atop 12 buildings

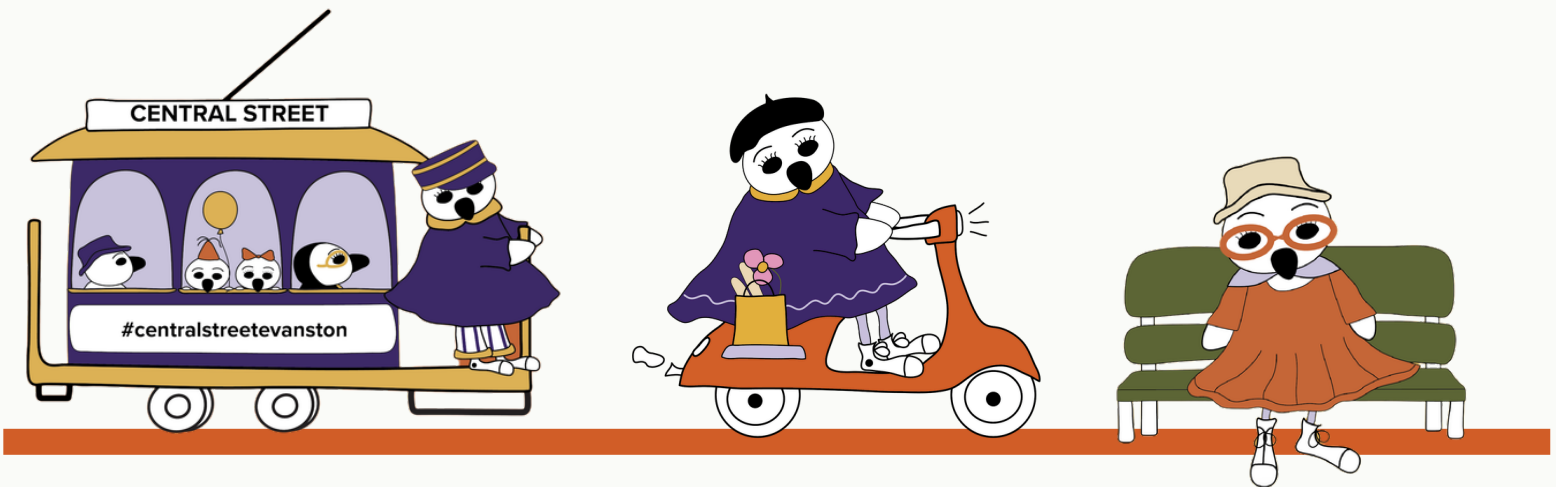


Creative Placemaking



Meet Bella! Bella is our new Central Street mascot. Central Street Evanston began implementing Hello Lamppost, an interactive visitor experience that provides tailored information on events, dining, arts, parks and exploration to help visitors further explore the area. When visitors interact with the AI-powered assistant, Central Street is able to collect visitor information about where people are coming from and what information they are seeking. Based on data collected in this initial pilot, enhancements will be made in 2026.

We are grateful to the City of Evanston's Public Works Department for the time and dedication to getting the project installed on Central Street lampposts.



Retention & Attraction.

**11 Signed Leases
3% Vacancy Rate**

In 2025, one of our marketing goals was to attract tenants and fill vacant spaces. Aside from our focus on making Central Street the place to be, time was spent retail recruiting and reaching out to brokers. We ended the year with 11 new leases and a 3% vacancy rate, with new businesses coming to all three shopping areas - the East End Purple District, Central Central Yellow District, and the West End Orange District.



CENTRAL CENTRAL

- Allere
- Arfit dog rehab and fitness
- Moo Joe's - New owner
- Parlor On Central
- Outdoor Cafe
- Tallgrass



EAST END

- Feel Great Personal Training & Wellness Studio
- No Longer Human Tea Shop
- Poplar Pastries
- Tokaido General Store



WEST END

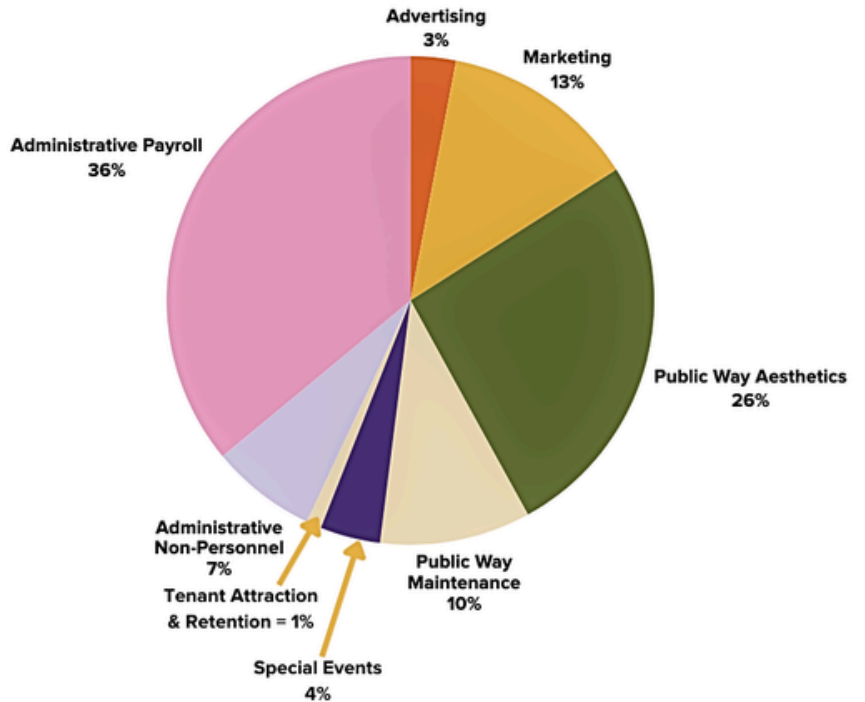
- Chicago North Shore Mac & PC (New Ownership of Lapin)
- Tails Together

2025 BUDGET

2025

Central Street Evanston Budget

Central Street Revenue	208,398
Prior-Year Carryover	-
Loss Collection	(6,198)
Total Income	202,200
Advertising	6,500
Marketing	32,396
Public Way Aesthetics	68,420
Public Way Maintenance	25,000
Special Events	11,000
Tenant Attraction & Retention	750
Administrative Non-Personnel	18,851
Administrative Payroll	91,000
Total Expenses	253,917
Budgeted Net Income	(51,717)



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Stacia DeSalvo, President (DeSalvo's Pizza)
- Dylan Johnson, Treasurer (Sona Fitness)
- Eric Green, Secretary (Ten Mile House)
- Karen Graham (Sew on Central)
- Bane Srdjevik (Lock Chicago)
- Drew Beckmann (Heroines & Heroes)
- Sarah Weitz (The Fat Shallot)
- Jim Konrad (Northwestern University)
- Paula Danoff (Evanston Art Center)
- Paul Zalmezak (City of Evanston)

STAFF

- Angela Shaffer, Community Director

CENTRALSTREETEVANSTON.COM

CENTRAL STREET BRAND

Est'd 2022

BRAND

Est'd 2022

#evercentral

COLOR PALETTE



#cac1dd



#3f286b



#e196b9



#59642c



#d15d27



#ead9b5



#e3ae41



INDIVIDUAL FONTS

Aa

Proxima Nova

aa

Tan-Waverly

THE BRAND

In 2022, Central Street rebranded and adopted a new logo, color palette, font, and messaging. The Central Street shopping district is made up of three distinct areas that are designated by colored banners and planters. East Central is our Purple District. Central Central and Green Bay Road make up our Yellow District. West Central is our Orange District.



Thank you for your support!

“It's been great to see how things are growing here and only going to get better. Central Street is a "destination" now, I feel, anyway, and even at 'lil Joe and The Juice, our numbers are up over last year; that's not a coincidence. Thank you for your efforts and hard work!”

- **Central Street Resident/Joe & The Juice Manager**

CENTRALSTREETEVANSTON.COM