



# DOWNTOWN EVANSTON 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

## DEAR DOWNTOWN EVANSTON STAKEHOLDERS:

Thank you for your support to make 2020 a positive and forward-thinking year despite the many challenges we all faced. Throughout the year, Downtown Evanston's staff and board continued to work to provide the services that are most beneficial to our downtown businesses and residents. Our maintenance and landscape contractor provided seasonal plantings, an annual power wash of sidewalks, weeding and garbage removal. The Downtown Evanston marketing committee helped develop campaigns and advertising plans. Our staff serves on the Mayor's Covid-19 Business Task Force that communicated important information regarding state and local guidelines, funding opportunities, and resources available to small businesses.

Although Downtown Evanston could not host our usual community events – Thursday Night Live, Oktoberfest, Sip N Stroll and others – we created safe placemaking initiatives and smaller scale events that helped bring visitors to shops, restaurants, and other businesses in a safe way. We also continued to advertise during Covid-19 to help attract customers to downtown businesses.

The Downtown Evanston 2020 Annual Report provides an overview of how the Downtown Evanston board and staff work to provide important services to your business and the entire Downtown Evanston community. As we move into 2021 and prepare for life after the pandemic, we encourage you to bring your ideas to our board and staff. We will also be inviting you to zoom conference meetings in the coming months as we begin the work to update our strategic plan.

On behalf of the Downtown Evanston board and staff, we look forward to seeing you, at least virtually, in the near future.

Sincerely,

Andrew McDonald  
Board Chair  
Downtown Evanston





## ABOUT DOWNTOWN EVANSTON

Downtown Evanston is a 501(c) (6) corporation established in 1987 that works with commercial and residential property owners, businesses, nonprofits and the City of Evanston to enhance and promote the downtown district. The organization is the sole service provider to Special Service Area (SSA) #9 and is funded through an additional levy on commercial properties within the SSA district boundaries. Additional funds are provided by the City of Evanston's Economic Development Fund and a portion of funding comes from Northwestern University. In recent years, Downtown Evanston has also raised money for the organization through special event and marketing sponsorships.

### SERVICES

- Advertising, Promotions & Events
- Business Retention & Attraction
- Placemaking (street pole banners, public art)
- Maintenance (landscaping, trash removal, seasonal plantings)
- Holiday decor on streetlights and at Fountain Square

# MARKETING

## ADVERTISING

- WSCR | The Score - 1 Month
- WGN Radio – 10 Weeks
- WLS Radio – 10 Weeks
- Better Magazine
- Evanston Now
- Email Marketing (49K recipients within 15 mile radius)
- Digital billboard on Edens Expressway (1 month - 2,562,000 impressions)



## SOCIAL MEDIA



- December 2019 (7,500)
- December 2020 (10,100)



- December 2019 (9,405)
- December 2020 (10,618)

## NEWSLETTER

Distributed 2 e-newsletters every month featuring business promotions, community events, COVID updates and other announcements to 7,000 opt-in subscribers





# MARKETING

## CAMPAIGNS

- #WithoutAid
- Small Biz Saturday – Gift Card Edition
- Evanston – Perfect Weekend Getaway
- Make Lemonade
- Take Out Evanston Pledge
- Keep Evanston Open
- Keep Evanston Awesome Raffle
- Keep Evanston Awesome T-Shirt sales
- Shop Safe Shop Unique Shop Small
- Find Your Silver Lining in Downtown Evanston (including video)



## PR & MEDIA COVERAGE

- WGN Morning News “Around Town” to promote Hygge Fest (15 minutes)
- Creation of “Evanston Loves” video to demonstrate the City’s response to Covid-19 (9.8K views)
- Interview with John Williams on WGN to promote the “Perfect Getaway” Campaign
- Interview with Ana Devlantes on WGN to promote “Make Lemonade”
- Interview on WBBM to discuss “Make Lemonade”
- 4 news articles covering Make Lemonade (Patch, Daily NU, Evanston Now, Roundtable)

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Webinar Presentation to the International Downtown Association Placemaking Series to discuss Hygge and Make Lemonade
- Guest Speaker at American Planning Association’s Winter Cities Conference to present on Hygge
- Moderated a Virtual Workshop for the International Downtown Association Annual Conference on Marketing Best Practices



# SPECIAL EVENTS

## HOST EVENTS

- Hygge Fest | February  
Businesses hosted 20 events with "hygge" theme
- Art Connects Evanston | May & Memorial Day weekend  
Businesses hosted art in windows and hired street performers for a "reopening" celebration
- Sidewalk Sale & Chalk Art Contest | July  
Annual sidewalk sale with chalk art contest and balloon decorations
- Small Business Saturday | November  
Silver Lining Shopping Passport program on Nov. 28 every Saturday through holiday season; 30 businesses participated
- Drive By Santa at Fountain Square | December  
Invited families to see Santa and holiday performers (200 cars)

## PARTNER

- Evanston Made – Maker's Market in the Maple Ave Garage
- Evanston Loves Rotary – Drive in Movies supporting 9 downtown Evanston restaurants totaling \$4700







**HYGGE FEST AT THE LIBRARY (FEB. 2020)**



**SIDEWALK SALE BALLOON INSTALLATION**



**CHALK ART CONTEST WINNER**



**MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND EVENT**



**MAKE LEMONADE INSTALLATION**



**SHOP LOCAL - FIND YOUR SILVER LINING**





## PLACEMAKING

- Make Lemonade – Scavenger hunt focused on supporting local businesses (36 businesses, 3 hotspots, 100 players)
- Installed Pride décor
- Sidewalk Sale Chalk Contest and Balloon Installation in Fountain Square and at
- Evanston Arts Connects & Art Under Glass
- Street Pole Banners – Installed 90 banners with new design by local artist
- Refreshed our Connections for the Homeless Donation Stations
- Holiday Window Decorating Contest (December)



# MAINTENANCE

- Power Wash District
- Garbage Removal 6 Days per Week
- 130 Lighted Wreaths installed for holidays
- Lighted Garland installed at Fountain Square \* new in 2020
- Installed Rat Mesh on Sherman Avenue raised planters
- Provided additional street level plantings on Maple Ave
- Clean tables at Fountain Square 2 times per week



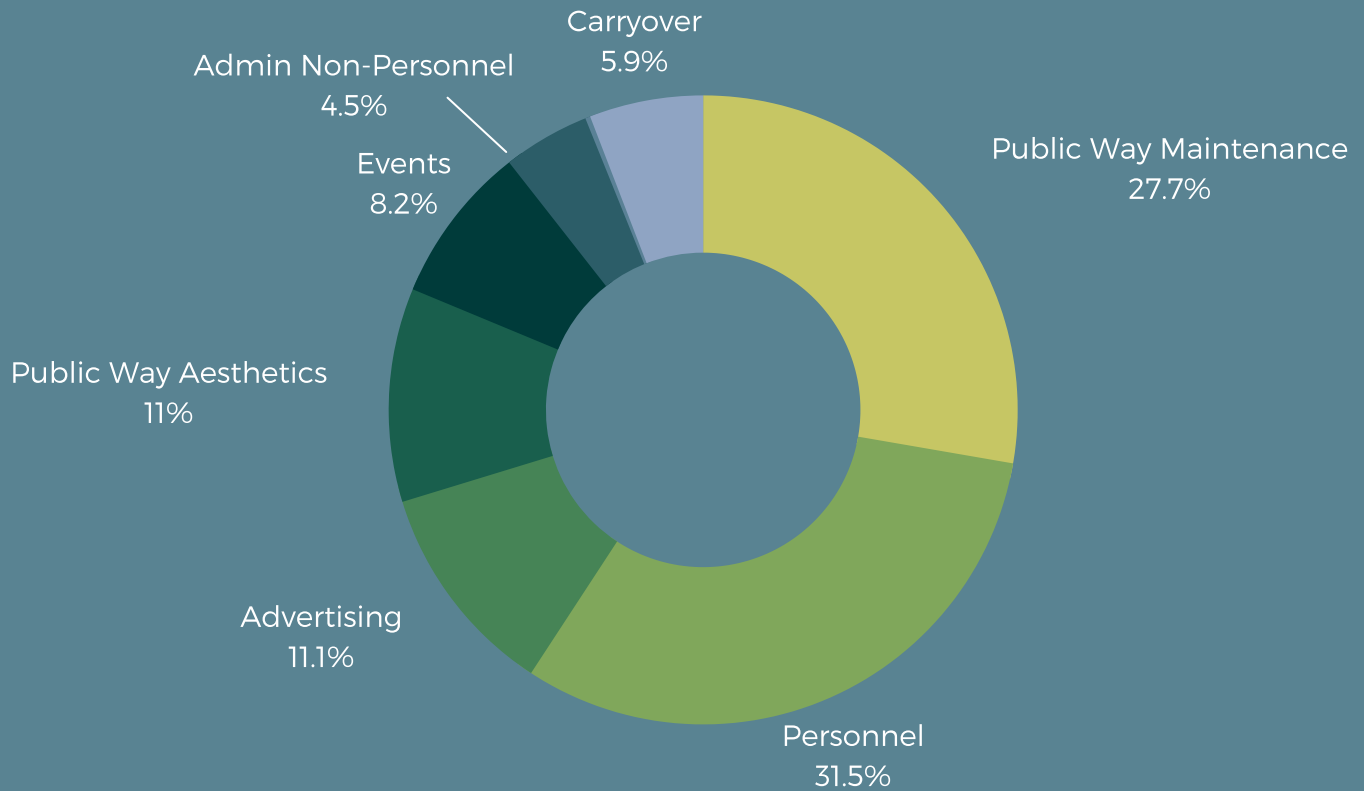
# RETENTION & ATTRACTION

- City of Evanston Covid 19 Economic Task Force
  - Assisted with resource checklist
  - Drafted Re-opening Guideline document
- Raised \$28K for LEND through 2 fundraisers – 5 DTE businesses received \$5K grants
- Hosted 3 webinars regarding loans/financing related to COVID relief
- Hosted 1 webinar for mental health during a stressful time
- Hosted 3 ribbon cuttings



# 2020 BUDGET

**Total Budget: \$654,180**



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Andrew McDonald, Board Chair,  
Rotary International  
Mike Smylie, Vice Chair, Smylie  
Brothers Brewing Co.  
Eric Krzystofiak, Wheel & Sprocket  
Marilyn Ruiz, Secretary  
Stefanie Olencheck, Hyatt House

### DIRECTORS

Farhan Ali, Highlands REIT (Sherman Plaza)  
Carol Bass, Downtown Resident  
Marty Cless, Core & Rind Hospitality  
(1026 Davis St.)  
Dave Davis, Northwestern University  
Patti McDermott, NAI Hiffman  
Gregory Stewart, Downtown Resident  
Angela Valavanis, Creative Coworking  
Paul Zalmazek, City of Evanston  
Renata Chergiceanu, Golub & Co. *\*BOD as  
of December 12, 2020*

**DOWNTOWNEVANSTON.ORG**