



ARTSCAPE



Dance Floor



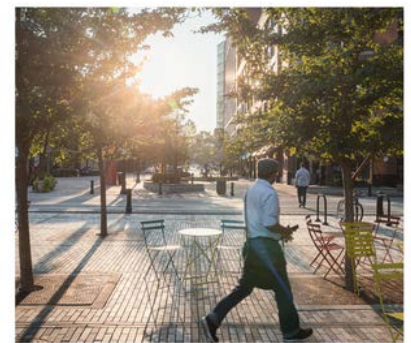
Music Venue



Playground



Garden in Bloom



Evening Commute



Listening Room



Market Place



GAME ROOM

DOWNTOWN EVANSTON 2021 ANNUAL REPORT

DEAR DOWNTOWN EVANSTON STAKEHOLDERS:

Thank you for your support to make 2021 another positive and forward-thinking year despite the Covid-19 pandemic staying power. As an organization, we triaged many of the obstacles facing our businesses and landlords and worked 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 advertising plans and launched Downtown Evanston Works, an office attraction campaign. Additionally, our staff led the effort in writing “Evanston’s Business Recovery Plan: A Funding Request for Recovery & Growth” which was presented to the City’s Economic Development Council on May 26, 2021.

Downtown Evanston responded to the ongoing pandemic by creating new events to help support small businesses and entrepreneurs. We replaced Thursday Night Live music series with Thursday Night Markets to provide an outdoor venue for vendors and place for people to gather. These smaller placemaking initiatives and events helped bring visitors and customers downtown in a safe way.

The Downtown Evanston 2021 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 2022, we look forward to launching a brand update for Downtown Evanston, building out existing events, and focusing on increasing visitors to Downtown Evanston.

In the next two months we will invite all businesses to participate in zoom meetings and surveys to gather input for the brand update, and we encourage you to bring your ideas to our board and staff at any time. On behalf of the Downtown Evanston board and staff, we look forward to working with you as we continue to recover from the pandemic.

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 come from the City of Evanston for waste management and from Northwestern University. In recent years, Downtown Evanston has raised money for the organization through special event and marketing sponsorships.

SERVICES

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

MARKETING

ADVERTISING

- **WGN "Our Hometown" Campaign**
 - 10 weeks radio ads (June - August)
 - One day spotlight featuring 13 interviews of Evanston business & community representatives
 - Digital takeover on wgnradio.com
 - Social media posts
- **WBEZ** - 2 weeks of radio ads during holidays
- **Better Magazine** - digital ads during holidays
- **Chicago's North Shore CVB** - ongoing website and newsletter ads
- **The Daily Northwestern** - ad to promote restaurants & events in Orientation issue
- **Evanston Now** - annual social media stream on homepage; display ads for special events
- **Direct Email Marketing** - 8 targeted emails to 49K recipients within 15-mile radius
- **RealtyAds** - digital ads on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram to promote Downtown Evanston Works campaign



SOCIAL MEDIA



- December 2020 (10,100)
- December 2021 (11,900)



- December 2020 (10,618)
- December 2021 (11,100)

Compared to similar organizations in peer communities, Downtown Evanston has an average of 7K more followers on Instagram.

NEWSLETTER

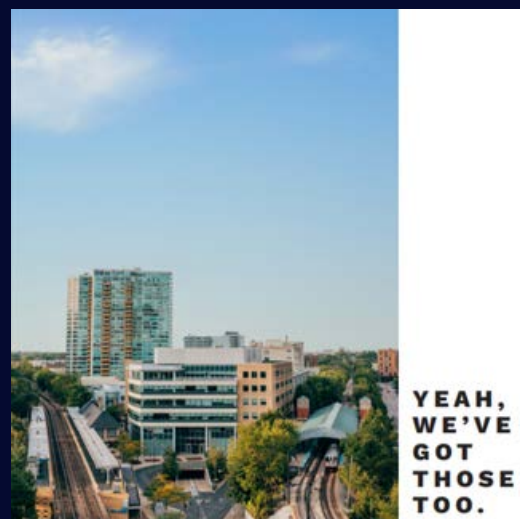
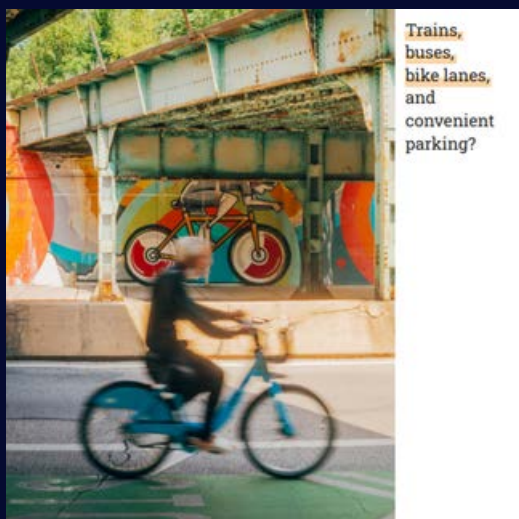
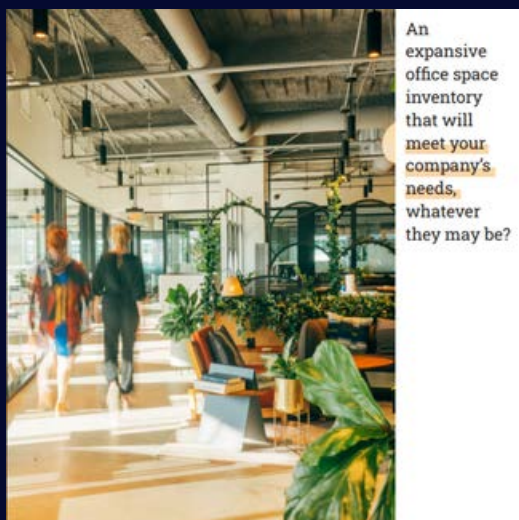
Distributed 30 e-newsletters, on average 2 per month, featuring business promotions, community events, COVID updates and other announcements to 9,000 opt-in subscribers.

MARKETING

DOWNTOWN EVANSTON WORKS CAMPAIGN

In October 2021, Downtown Evanston in partnership with the City of Evanston, launched Downtown Evanston Works, a business attraction campaign designed to capture the interest of growing companies to downtown. The pandemic turned the entire office world upside down, but it also has begun to chart a new path of what work-life looks like—one that positions Downtown Evanston as an ideal location for flexible workspace in a vibrant and accessible setting.

The campaign features a new website, downtownevanstonworks.com, video, and brochure which will be used in a year-long targeted advertising campaign on RealtyAds and other digital media.



Example ads running on RealtyAds, an AI-based advertising platform for commercial real estate. Ads placed on LinkedIn, Instagram & Facebook.


MARKETING

EVANSTON GIFT CARD

In May, Downtown Evanston spearheaded the launch of the Evanston Gift Card, a community-based, digital gift card that *keeps local dollars local*. This e-gift card is purchased and sent online; recipients can use it at any of the 70 participating businesses in Evanston.

Downtown Evanston coordinated sponsorships for two buy-one-get-one (BOGO) promotions, the first to launch the gift card and the second to promote holiday gift card sales. From May to December 2021, 461 gift cards totaling \$18,868 were purchased and \$5,250 have been redeemed at local businesses.

BOGO GIFT CARD SPECIAL! → **BUY A GIFT CARD OF \$25 OR MORE & GET A \$10 BONUS GIFT CARD!**



AVAILABLE WHILE SUPPLIES LAST. LIMIT OF 2 PER PURCHASER. BONUS CARDS GOOD THROUGH JULY 15, 2021.



Holiday Gift Card Buy-One-Get-One

BUY AN EVANSTON GIFT CARD OF \$25 OR MORE AND GET A \$10 BONUS GIFT CARD!



-THE- EVANSTON GIFT CARD
\$10 BONUS GIFT CARD
SPONSORED BY Northwestern
SUPPORT OUR LOCAL BUSINESSES!

AVAILABLE WHILE SUPPLIES LAST. BONUS GIFT CARDS EXPIRE 90 DAYS FROM PURCHASE DATE.



BONUS GIFT CARDS SPONSORED BY **Northwestern**



-THE- EVANSTON GIFT CARD
SUPPORT OUR LOCAL BUSINESSES



SPEND \$25 AND GET A \$10 BONUS GIFT CARD!
HOLIDAY BOGO!

AVAILABLE WHILE SUPPLIES LASTS.
LIMIT 2 BONUS GIFT CARDS PER PURCHASER.
BONUS GIFT CARDS MUST BE SPENT IN 90 DAYS.

BONUS GIFT CARDS SPONSORED BY:
Northwestern

Examples of gift card promotions for the Evanston Gift Card launch and holiday BOGO offer.



PR & MEDIA COVERAGE

- Distributed 10 press releases to local and regional media outlets
 - Evanston Winter Games (February 2021)
 - Evanston Gift Card Launch (May 2021)
 - Thursday Night Markets (May 2021)
 - Evanston Fall Fest (October 2021)
 - Small Business Saturday (November 2021)
 - Holiday Light Celebration (November 2021)
 - Santa for a Day (December 2021)
 - Various Ribbon Cutting Releases (Urban Athlete, Madison Grace, Tapville)
- Media Coverage
 - Interview with John Williams on WGN to promote the “Evanston Winter Games” (February 2021)
 - "Evanston Fall Fest Celebrates Local Artists & Businesses," Chicago Tribune, October 21, 2021
 - Numerous articles covering topics listed above appeared in the following publications:
 - Evanston Now
 - Evanston Roundtable
 - The Daily Northwestern

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Panelist for a Virtual Workshop for the International Downtown Association Annual Conference on District-wide Gift Card Programs (Virtual, April 2021)
- Panelist in "Why Cities Should Tap into the Power of Joyful and Playful Interventions" at Walk, Bike Places Conference (Indiana, June 2021)
- Panelist at the Illinois State Tourism Conference (Chicago, October 2021)

SPECIAL EVENTS

HOST EVENTS (** indicates a new event in 2021)

- **Hygge Fest | February**
Businesses hosted 10 virtual workshops and events (*10 businesses*)
- **Bloody Mary Trail | May ****
Hosted a passport program for restaurants offering Bloody Mary's over Memorial Day weekend. (*6 restaurants; 40 attendees*)
- **Thursday Night Markets | June to October ****
Hosted an artist & maker market at Fountain Square the first Thursday of each month with music, craft beer and games. Sponsor: Byline Bank (*75 vendors overall; 250-500 attendees each market*)
- **Get Fit Friday | June to August**
Fitness studios hosted free classes outdoor at Fountain Square. (*5 businesses hosted 10 classes; 75 attendees*)
- **Sidewalk Sale & Chalk Art Contest | July**
Annual sidewalk sale with chalk art contest, spin-to-win prizes including 25 \$10 gift card giveaway to promote local spending, games & face-painting at Fountain Square (*25 businesses; 250 attendees*)
- **Big Bite Night | October 3**
Self-guided walking tour and food-tasting of downtown restaurants for Northwestern students. (*25 restaurants; 500 attendees*)
- **Fall Fest at Fountain Square | October 16 ****
Fall-themed event with artists/makers, Swing Set Drum Set, DJ music, craft beer, outdoor games. Sponsors: Fulton Grace, First Northern Credit Union. (*20 vendors; 750 attendees*)



EVANSTON WINTER GAMES



THURSDAY NIGHT MARKETS

SPECIAL EVENTS

HOST EVENTS (** indicates a new event in 2021)

- **Trick-or-Treat Stroll & Pet Costume Contest | October 30**
Organized a trick-or-treat walk at businesses with a photo op and pet costume contest at Fountain Square (*30 businesses; 1000 attendees*)
- **Small Business Saturday | November 27**
Shopping Passport program every Saturday with \$20 Evanston Gift Card giveaway for shoppers that spent \$100 or more at local businesses (*24 businesses; 75 passports redeemed*)
- **Holiday Light Celebration at Fountain Square | December 4**
Tree lighting with Mayor Biss and Santa and special holiday performers from The Actors Gymnasium, Evanston Children's Choir & Purple Haze Acapella. Sponsors: Valli Produce, Fulton Grace, Altomere & Associates Agency. (*500 attendees*)
- **Noon Year's Eve | December 31 ****
End-of-year celebration for families with DJ, festive photo booth, and a countdown with a ball drop at Fountain Square. (*150 attendees*)

PARTNER EVENTS

- **Evanston Winter Games | January & February ****
Evanston-wide "competition" to celebrate living in a Winter City using a scavenger hunt including outdoor games and activities, specials at local businesses and volunteer opportunities. Sponsors: Byline Bank, Amita Health, Gearhead Outfitters and The Family Institute at Northwestern University. (*250 participants; 75 businesses/organizations participated*)
- **Evanston Made Maker's Market | June to October**
- **Evanston Made Shop Evanston Holiday Market | November - December**



SIDEWALK SALE CHALK ART CONTEST



SIDEWALK SALE BALLOON PHOTO STATION



TRICK OR TREAT STROLL



FALL FEST AT FOUNTAIN SQUARE



SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY



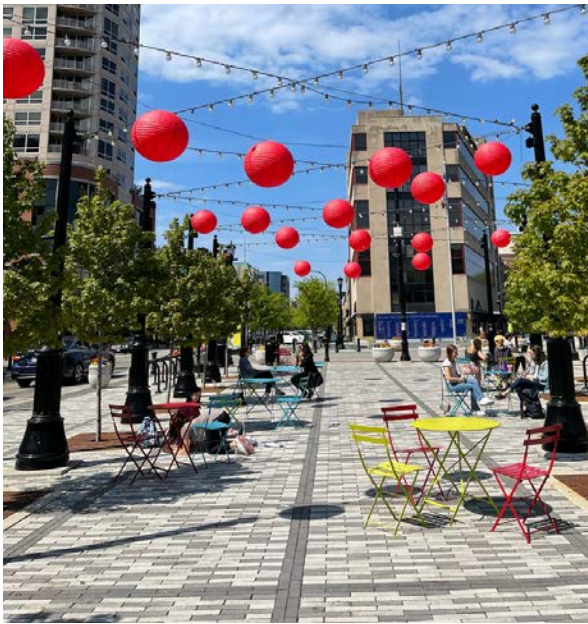
HOLIDAY LIGHT CELEBRATION



HOLIDAY WINDOW DECORATION CONTEST



NOON YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION



PLACEMAKING

Fountain Square

- Evanston Winter Games ice sculpture event & winter activation (February)
- ASAPIA Heritage Month installation of red lanterns on festoon lights (May)
- Ongoing decorations on festoon lights in summer & fall (PRIDE Month, Welcome Back NU, Fall Fest)
- Fun Times Square turf and picnic table installation with game trunk
- Holiday light decorations on street poles and trees

Streetscape, Storefronts & More

- Evanston Winter Games: provided businesses with LED lights for storefronts to add light and promote the Olympic theme (February)
- "Winter Wonderland" outdoor art installations & events with Evanston Made at Canal Shores (February)
- Sidewalk Chalk Art Contest (July)
- Holiday Window Decorating Contest (December)

WHAT IS PLACEMAKING?

- Placemaking inspires people to collectively reimagine and reinvent public spaces as the heart of every community.
- Strengthening the connection between people and the places they share, placemaking refers to a collaborative process by which we can shape our public realm in order to maximize shared value.
- More than just promoting better urban design, placemaking facilitates creative patterns of use, paying particular attention to the physical, cultural and social identities that define a place and support its ongoing evolution.

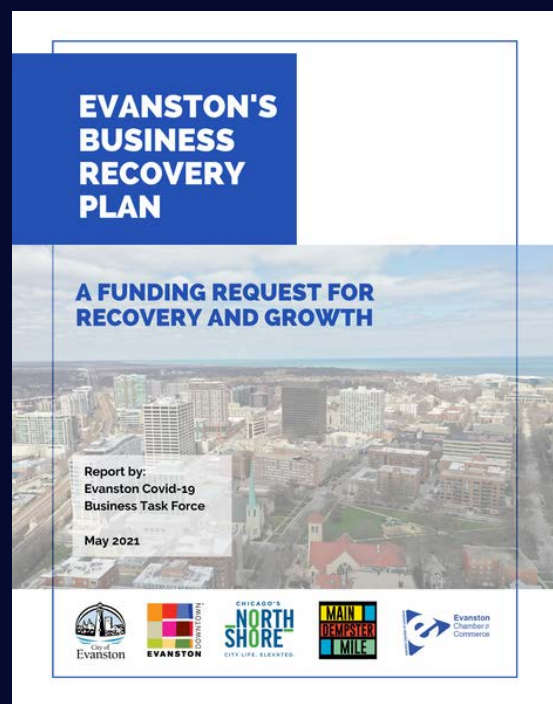
MAINTENANCE

- Power Wash District
- Garbage Removal 6 Days per Week
- 130 Lighted Wreaths installed for holidays
- Lighted Garland installed at Fountain Square
- Provided additional street level plantings on Maple Avenue
- Clean tables at Fountain Square 2 times per week



RETENTION & ATTRACTION

- City of Evanston Covid 19 Economic Task Force
 - Attended weekly meetings (January to May)
 - Completed report "A Funding Request for Recovery & Growth"
- Hosted webinars regarding PPP, Employee Retention Credits and ARPA funding
- Weekly communication to businesses about Covid updates from State of IL, Cook County and City
- 4 Ribbon Cutting Ceremonies
- Created and launched Downtown Evanston Works office attraction campaign

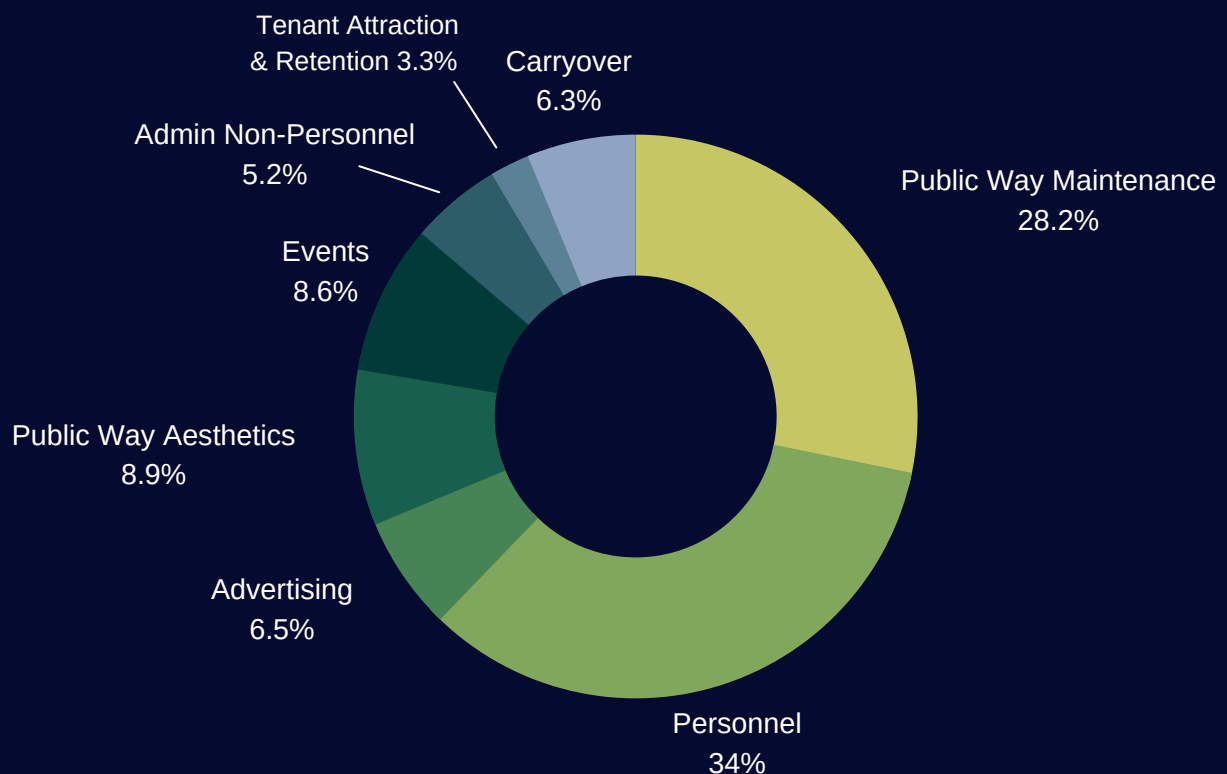


2021 BUDGET

INCOME: \$709,000

- SSA#9 Levy \$610,000
- COE Waste Management \$50,000
Contribution for Garbage Removal
- Northwestern Contribution \$13,000
- Sponsorships \$36,000

EXPENSES:



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Andrew McDonald, *Board Chair*, Rotary International
Mike Smylie, *Vice Chair*, Smylie Brothers Brewing Co.
Renata Gherghiceanu, *Treasurer*, Golub & Co.
Marilyn Ruiz, *Secretary*
Gretchen Brauer, Wheel & Sprocket
Angela Valavanis, Creative Coworking
Alan Moy, Viet Nom Nom

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
Paul Zalmezak, City of Evanston