



DOWNTOWN EVANSTON 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

March 2023



DEAR DOWNTOWN EVANSTON STAKEHOLDERS:

Thank you for your support in 2022 as we all continued to adjust to the challenges from Covid-19 and create solutions to move forward as a community. As an organization, we focused on providing services to attract residents and visitors to the downtown area: maintenance and landscaping, hosting special events and marketing and advertising.

The maintenance and landscape contractor provided seasonal plantings, garbage removal, power washing and weeding to keep downtown clean and green. Staff organized and hosted events and promotions throughout the year both in public and at local businesses. Downtown Evanston launched a new brand, funded advertising campaigns for the downtown district and engaged with audiences on social media.

The Downtown Evanston 2022 Annual Report provides an overview of how the Downtown Evanston board and staff work to provide important services for your business and the entire Downtown Evanston community. As we move into 2023, we look forward to growing our communication efforts with all stakeholders, expanding our reach to bring more visitors to the area and providing additional support to businesses.

Sincerely,

Downtown Evanston
Executive Board

Mike Smylie, Chair
Angela Valavanis, Vice Chair
Andrew McDonald, Treasurer
Marilyn Faklis-Ruiz, Secretary
Alan Moy
Nathan Kostant
Gretchen Brauer



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, Activations
- Maintenance: Landscaping, Trash Removal, Seasonal Plantings
- Holiday Decor: Tree Lights and Decor at Fountain Square

NEW BRAND

In June 2022, Downtown Evanston launched the new Downtown Evanston brand. Downtown Evanston hired All Together to develop the new messaging, logo and marketing and collateral materials. All Together hosted a series of Board workshops, focus groups with business owners and community partners, and internal meetings with staff.

MESSAGE

We're the downtown, college town, and hometown of one of America's best places to live. Located steps from the shores of Lake Michigan, we connect Chicago to the North Shore. Our global food scene, rooftop bars with a view, and world-class arts and entertainment are ripe for (re)discovery. We've got Fountain Square, indie bookstores, iconic architecture, and Northwestern University right here in our backyard. Made accessible by transit, Downtown Evanston is where people come together—day and night—to have a good time.

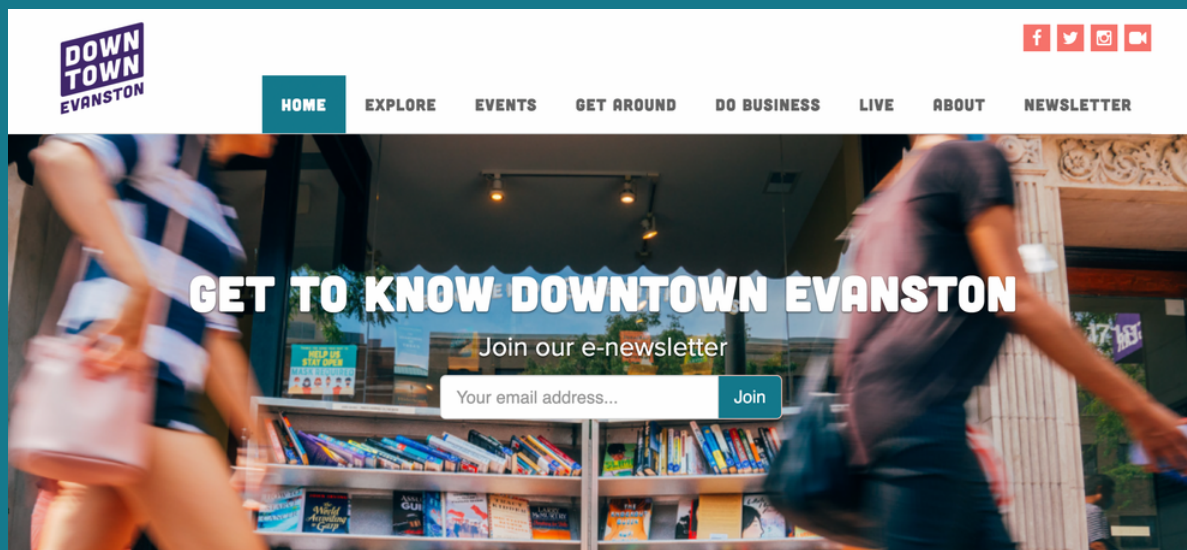
TAGLINE

Your town. Downtown.

The tagline is a concise and memorable snapshot of the brand. The Downtown Evanston tagline was designed to be flexible to include and highlight special interest areas and help you to tailor messaging to specific target audiences. The main tagline, used on promotional materials, should always include Your town. Downtown. But when crafting messaging for various target audiences, an additional descriptor can be included before “town”.



WEBSITE



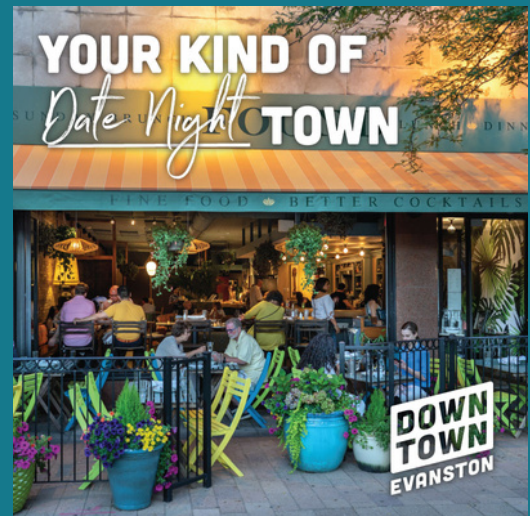
BRANDED MATERIALS



MARKETING

ADVERTISING

- **XRT Radio (June - September; December)**
 - 12 weeks radio ads to promote summer events and holiday shopping/dining
- **Chicago's North Shore CVB (Year-Round)**
 - monthly website and newsletter ads
- **The Daily Northwestern (August)**
 - Print ad to promote restaurants & events in Orientation issue
- **Evanston Now (Year-Round)**
 - Annual social media stream on homepage
 - Display ads for special events
 - Direct email campaign to subscribers
- **Roundtable (Seasonal)**
 - Digital ads to promote events
- **Chicago North Shore Moms (Year-Round)**
 - Monthly newsletter and social media ads to promote events
- **RealtyAds (January - April)**
 - Digital ads on LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram to promote Downtown Evanston Works campaign



SOCIAL MEDIA



- December 2021 (11,900)
- December 2022 (12,600)



- December 2021 (11,100)
- December 2022 (11,800)

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, and other announcements to 9,000 opt-in subscribers.

MARKETING

ADVERTISING

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.



Examples of ads, kiosk posters and newsletter graphics showing use of new brand components.



PR & MEDIA COVERAGE

- Distributed 10 press releases to local and regional media outlets
 - Hygge Fest (January 2022)
 - Evanston Holi Fest (March 18, 2022)
 - Easter & Passover Specials (April 12, 2022)
 - Downtown Evanston Flower Power Events (April 18, 2022)
 - Thursday Night Markets (May 23, 2022)
 - Downtown Evanston Launches New Brand (June 25, 2022)
 - Downtown Evanston Sidewalk Sale (July 14, 2022)
 - Evanston Fall Fest (September 2022)
 - Holiday Events: Small Business Saturday, Warm Bevvv Walk & Light Celebration (November 21, 2022)
- Media Coverage
 - Numerous articles covering topics listed above appeared in the following publications:
 - Evanston Now
 - Evanston Roundtable
 - The Daily Northwestern
 - Chicago Tribune

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

- Panelist in "A Tale of Two Cities" at American Planning Association IL State Conference (Chicago, September 2022)

SPECIAL EVENTS

HOST EVENTS (** indicates a new event in 2022)

- **Hygge Fest | February**
Businesses hosted a mix of virtual and in-person workshops
- **Flower Power | April 22-May 9 ****
Earth Day Clean-Up, Spring Window-decorating contest, Sip 'N Stroll to promote businesses
- **Employee Appreciation Week | May 16-20 ****
Hosted a series of fun events at Fountain Square to welcome employees back to downtown. Events included free donuts, coffee break, big games and a happy hour.
- **Thursday Night Markets | June to September**
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 5 classes; 50 attendees)
- **Sidewalk Sale & Chalk Art Contest | July**
Annual sidewalk sale with chalk art contest, activity tent at Fountain Square to promote the new brand with giveaways
- **Fall Fest at Fountain Square | October 9**
Fall-themed event with artists/maker market, Swing Set Drum Set, live music stage, craft beer, food trucks, kids activities. Sponsors: City Volkswagen Evanston, Chiropractic First, Gearhead Outfitters (20 vendors; 750 attendees)
- **Big Bite Night | October 16**
Self-guided walking tour and food-tasting of downtown restaurants for Northwestern students. (26 restaurants; 400 attendees)



HYGGE FEST FIKA CRAWL



FLOWER POWER INSTALLATION

SPECIAL EVENTS

HOST EVENTS

- **Trick-or-Treat Stroll | October 29**
Organized a trick-or-treat walk at businesses (30 businesses; 500 attendees)
- **Small Business Saturday | November 26**
Shopping Passport program with a \$30 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 3**
Tree lighting with City Clerk Stephanie Mendoza and Santa and special holiday performers including Evanston Children's Choir, Purple Haze Acapella and On the Spot Brass Quintet. After, The Merion hosted Photos with Santa. Sponsors: Valli Produce, Colectivo Coffee and The Merion (700 attendees)

PARTNER EVENTS

- **Holi Fest | March 26**
Partnered with local business owner to host a Holi Fest celebration at Raymond Park
- **Umbrella Arts Festival | May 13**
Sponsored and helped organize a festival to celebrate the ASAPIA community with Kitchen Table Stories Project, Kids Create Change and Studio 3 Creative.
- **Evanston Made Maker's Market | June to October**
Co-hosted three markets at the Maple Garage with Evanston Made.
- **Evanston en Plein Air | July 17**
Weekend plein air event culminating in a contest and ceremony at Fountain Square. (50 participants; 200 attendees)



HOLIDAY LIGHT CELEBRATION



TRICK OR TREAT STROLL WITH NEW SWAG



THURSDAY NIGHT MARKET



FALL FEST



GET FIT FRIDAYS



CHALK ART CONTEST



EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION WEEK



PLACEMAKING

Fountain Square

- Flower Power balloon installation at Fountain Square (April)
- ASAPIA Heritage Month Colorful Fringe Installation (May)
- Holiday lights on trees throughout district, on street poles and wreaths in Fountain Square

Streetscape, Storefronts & More

- Flower Power Window Decorating Contest (April-May)
- Sidewalk Chalk Art Contest (July)
- Holiday Window Decorating Contest (December)

Public Way

- Mural by artist Max Slang on Metra wall on Davis Street; partnership with Evanston Mural Arts Program (August)
- Downtown Evanston Street Pole Banners (November)



MAINTENANCE & AESTHETICS

- Power wash district
- Garbage removal 6 days per week
- Installed lights on trees for the holiday season - 132 wrapped trunks & 34 full trees at Fountain Square and Orrington Plaza
- Lighted garland installed on street light poles at Fountain Square
- Replanted perennials and added protective mesh to 16 ground level planter beds on Maple Avenue
- Clean tables at Fountain Square 2 times per week



RETENTION & ATTRACTION

- Developed and launched a new Downtown Evanston brand to reinvigorate downtown visuals and message
- Hosted capacity building workshops:
 - Three part Social Media Series (March)
 - Intro to financial services with Allies for Community Business (March)
 - Bi-weekly newsletters to businesses with updates from the City regarding Covid, proposed ordinances, downtown projects and more.
- Key stakeholder in development of Evanston Thrives Retail Action Plan
- Ribbon cutting ceremonies

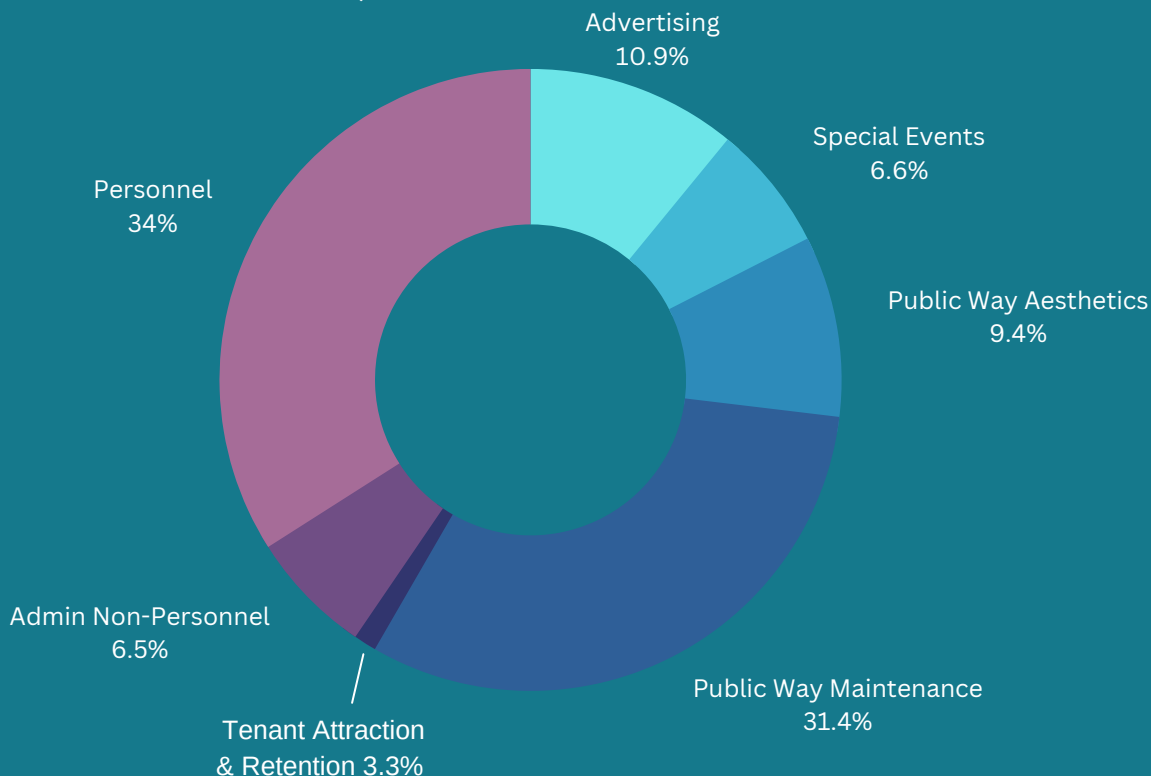


2022 BUDGET

INCOME: \$721,129

• SSA#9 Levy	\$660,995
• Northwestern Contribution	\$13,000
• Sponsorships	\$23,870
• Carryover	\$23,147

EXPENSES: \$656,499



BOARD OF DIRECTORS

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Mike Smylie, Chair, Smylie Brothers Brewing Co.
Angela Valavanis, Vice Chair, Creative Coworking
Andrew McDonald, Treasurer, Rotary International
Marilyn Ruiz, Secretary, Evanston resident
Gretchen Brauer, Wheel & Sprocket
Nathan Konstant, Golub & Co.
Alan Moy, Viet Nom Nom

DIRECTORS

Carol Bass, Downtown Resident
Marty Cless, Core & Rind Hospitality (1026 Davis St.)
William Flatt, Free Market Ventures
Dave Davis, Northwestern University
Karen Gollard, NAI Hiffman
Mitch Goltz, GW Properties
Garrett Karp, Evanston Chamber of Commerce
Marlena Karwowski, Hyatt House
Michael McLean, Condor Partners
Daryl Stabak, Park-Side Realty
Paul Zalmezak, City of Evanston