

Evanston retail updates: New spots set to open, but drugstore closing

by [Jessica Mordacq](#)
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The “open” sign is lit Friday at Devil Dawgs in Church Street Plaza. The grand opening of the hot dog eatery is set for Monday. Credit: Brendan Mitchell

February 2024 will be a month of change on the Evanston retail scene. The city is set to get its second marijuana dispensary – this one paired with a bakery operation – at Howard Street and Chicago Avenue, and a Chicago-based hot dog business is opening a location in Church Street Plaza. On the other hand, a national drugstore chain is closing a downtown Evanston store.

Here are the details on the comings and goings ahead:

Okay Cannabis and West Town Bakery, opening Feb. 9

Evanston's second weed dispensary, Okay Cannabis, is now set to open Friday, Feb. 9 at 100 Chicago Ave. It will launch next to West Town Bakery and be the businesses' third combined location and West Town's sixth store, opening a few weeks behind schedule.



A rendering shows the Evanston Okay Cannabis store, set to open Feb. 9 at 100 Chicago Ave, on the corner with Howard Street. Credit: The Fifty/50 Restaurant Group

“Some of the inspections took longer,” said Scott Weiner, co-owner of The Fifty/50 Restaurant Group, which owns West Town Bakery and part of Okay Cannabis. Okay Cannabis and West Town Bakery were supposed to open in Evanston in January. “The biggest delay was that our millworker’s production plant burned down the day before Thanksgiving, so some of our specialty items were delayed a couple of weeks.” Weiner said Wednesday morning that the site had passed inspections Tuesday.

The Evanston Okay Cannabis location was initially set to open in July 2023. The cannabis store, which is 93% Black- and Brown-owned, is classified as a social equity dispensary and has a license specific to individuals from groups that have been disproportionately affected by marijuana-related arrests and prosecutions. Last year, the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation gave Okay Cannabis a 180-day extension to meet license requirements, which allowed it to push its opening date to January 2024.



A rendering shows the Evanston West Town Bakery that will be attached to the Okay Cannabis location. Credit: The Fifty/50 Restaurant Group

As Okay Cannabis and West Town Bakery gear up to open in Evanston following a delay in the inspection process and delivery of specialty items, the newest location has started hiring.

Devil Dawgs, opening Feb. 5

On Monday, Feb. 5, hot dog spot **Devil Dawgs** is set to expand beyond Chicago for the first time and open its fifth location, in Evanston's Church Street Plaza at 1711 Maple Ave.



Devil Dawgs, 1711 Maple Ave., is set to have a soft opening Thursday ahead of a Feb. 5 grand opening. Credit: Jeff Carlin

“Coming out of COVID, we’ve reevaluated the market,” said Jeff Carlin, a partner at Devil Dawgs. “We feel these suburban markets offer us a little better opportunity than the hectic environment that we’re seeing in the city of Chicago right now.”

The Devil Dawgs owners knew they wanted to start their suburban expansion near a college campus, similar to how they opened the first Devil Dawgs location in Lincoln Park, steps away from DePaul University, in 2010.

“Our most successful location now is State Street, which is right by Columbia College. It’s a really robust and enthusiastic market for us,” Carlin said.



The interior of Devil Dawgs features graffiti-style artwork. Credit: Jeff Carlin

The Evanston Devil Dawgs' interior and menu will be similar to that of the other locations, with a menu of hot dogs, burgers and fries. The Evanston location will be the first with a liquor license, selling cocktails and craft beer.

Though Devil Dawgs in Evanston will open Feb. 5, it will have a soft opening on Thursday, Feb. 1. The company is also hiring to staff the location.

CVS inside Target, closing Feb. 27

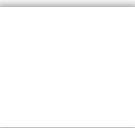
On Feb. 27, the CVS Pharmacy inside the Target at 1616 Sherman Ave. will close permanently, part of a nationwide move by the drugstore chain. From February through April, CVS will shut down several Target-based CVS stores across the country, said Amy Thibault, a CVS Pharmacy spokesperson.

CVS acquired Target's pharmacy business in 2015 and currently has around 1,800 nationwide locations, but that number will soon drop as CVS closes less than 100 locations inside Target. From 2022 to the end of the year, around 900 Target and non-Target CVS Pharmacies will close, which is only about 10% of CVS' total locations.

“The closures are part of our plan to realign our national retail footprint and reduce store and pharmacy density,” Thibault said. They “are based on our evaluation of changes in population, consumer buying patterns and future health needs to ensure we have the right pharmacy format in the right locations for patients.”

Before Feb. 27, CVS will transfer prescriptions to the CVS up the street at 1711 Sherman Ave. Employees at the 1616 Sherman Ave. location will be offered comparable roles at CVS, Thibault said.

Editor's note: This story has been revised to add a photo of Devil Dawgs and update with a new opening date for Okay Cannabis and West Town Bakery, and to note that the site has reportedly passed inspections.





Ume Tea opening soon downtown, offering more than just boba

by **Jessica Mordacq** January 29th, 2024

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