

## CHAPTER 12

### AMENITIES

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Downtown revitalization is much more than the construction of building space. It involves the creation and maintenance of an inviting, hospitable, and rewarding environment for people and their interaction. Historically, Evanstonians have (concurrently) taken pride in and criticized, but have always been concerned with and often acted to enhance, the environment of downtown. The community has passionately protected the integrity of abutting residential neighborhoods, which in turn has reinforced the compactness of the central business district and avoided the deterioration of peripheral areas that is apparent in many other communities. This virtually seamless connectivity represents a fundamental amenity that is indicative of strong public policy. Therefore, living in immediate proximity to, even within, the downtown is a long established tradition, not a revelation - - a tradition that has witnessed its own revitalization in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Parks are traditional amenities, jealously protected, the most important of which is the lakefront. Although technically outside the boundaries of the downtown, the short separation of two blocks is no deterrence to having an aesthetic benefit on downtown, to offering a place of passive retreat or active exercise for downtown employees during the workday, or to being a frequent venue for large-scale community events that support the vitality of downtown. The city has been a constant steward of the lakefront, evidenced by its forestry program, beach and shoreline protection program, and its restoration of the lagoon (circa 1911) opposite the ends of Davis Street and Church Street. The 1984 restoration was designed by Teska Associates, Inc.

A small gem of the Evanston park system is the Merrick Rose Garden, located near the southwest corner of the downtown. It is here that the original Centennial Fountain was relocated in 1951. The fountain and the roses create a unique environment, one often utilized by wedding parties and other groups in addition to individuals seeking beauty and serenity.



*Lakefront Lagoon*



*Merrick Rose Garden*

Raymond Park, set aside in the original plat of Evanston, exhibits many of the characteristics of a New England village green, though its location is on the edge of downtown, rather than at its center. This location in the midst of a relatively intense urban setting has allowed it to remain a predominantly open, grassy, multipurpose park. Surrounded by several churches, it complements their architecture and their daycare programs for children (weekdays as well as Sundays), even their programs and facilities for the homeless. In the late 1960s the Beautification Committee of the Evanston Plan Commission, headed by Dorothy Bohnen, proposed garden-like enhancements to the park. Surprisingly, they were strongly opposed by citizens and groups that preferred a more flexible green space (even if less attractive) for a variety of informal activities. The most significant improvement in recent decades occurred in the 1990s in response to a citizen campaign to replace out-of-date playground equipment. Otherwise, little has changed -- a popular public choice.



**Raymond Park**

Oldberg Park is of more recent vintage, having been created as a result of the Emerson-Clark Street connector construction in 1962. Little more than a grassy area for several decades, the city granted permission to Northwestern University to be the steward of this park in 1998. Today the park is lavishly landscaped and well maintained by the university and is a popular leisure spot for students as well as a gateway enhancement to downtown. It is graced by a life-sized bronze sculpture of a horse, titled "Duna", designed by Deborah Butterfield and installed in 1998.



**Oldberg Park**

Historic preservation has been a public issue in recent decades. Clearly, many downtown buildings might have been, and some still are, worthy of eligibility for preservation -- by local, state or even national standards. Some have been preserved solely at the discretion of their owners, such as the headquarters of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and the Union Pacific (Metra) railroad station, the U.S. Post Office, and several churches. However, many have been replaced over the years by new construction, e.g. the City Hall, the original State National Bank building, and the Valencia Theater. Some were destroyed by fire, e.g. the Rood Building. Others have experienced adaptive reuse, e.g. the Varsity Theater for retail stores, Marshall Field's for residences and small businesses, and the First Church of Christ Scientist for a music institute.



**Women's Christian Temperance Union**

The public realm focuses on the streetscape, including public plazas. Overall, the Evanston streetscape was historically characterized by streets lined with trees (Elms), bordered by grass parkways and sidewalks, and lit by fixtures uniquely designed for Evanston by Thomas E. Tallmadge. Except for Chicago Avenue, however, most downtown streets were void of trees.

In the 1960s Dutch Elm disease ravaged the Chicago area, the city's lighting system was becoming obsolete, and downtown concrete sidewalks were in need of repair. Furthermore, many citizens felt that Fountain Square itself was obsolete. The City contracted with Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc. to design a comprehensive new streetscape, which included modern "Shepherd's Crook" streetlight fixtures, the introduction of brick tiles to edge the sidewalks, and Locust trees to provide greenery and shade. Fountain Square was redesigned to become a people place, rather than simply a war memorial. New brick columns were constructed to preserve the names of fallen service men and women from Evanston.



**Tallmadge Fixture**



**Shepherd's Crook**

From the outset, the brick tiles suffered from the adverse effects of a northern climate and became a frequent and expensive maintenance problem. After approximately 20 years, the streetscape became "tired" and the city's Public Works Department declared underground wiring for streetlights to be obsolete. Public satisfaction with the "Shepherd's Crook" streetlight fixtures waned.

Elsewhere in the city, municipal efforts to install taller, brighter and more modern streetlights ran into a groundswell of opposition, resulting in a compromise solution incorporating modern fixtures along arterials and the replacement of Tallmadge fixtures in residential neighborhoods and in pedestrian zones of the downtown.

In 1990-91 the Evmark Design Group, composed of Teska Associates, Inc., Land Design Collaborative, Inc., Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc. A.M. Kinney, and CH2MHill produced designs which included both modern and historic streetlights, full paver bricks to supersede the brick tiles, cast iron tree grates, concrete planting boxes for perennial and seasonal plant materials, and more street trees. Chicago Avenue was designed to strengthen its character similar to a European "boulevard". Gateways to downtown along Emerson-Clark Streets and Sherman Avenue were enhanced with landscaped medians. A reinvigorated banner program, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, was instituted. And, Evmark established a creative program of colorful planters maintained by non-profit organizations. The streetscape program incorporated creative designs by artist David Csicsko, including tree grates, sidewalk mosaics, pedestrian wayfinding signage, etc., many of which have been installed throughout the downtown.

Fountain Square itself was redesigned, but not reconstructed at this time because of cost. Today, it exhibits continued deterioration and awaits improvement as previously designed or with a new design.



**Sidewalk Art by David Csicsko**

In 1980, Design Evanston was founded as a non-profit organization of Evanston professionals - - planners, architects, landscape architects, graphic designers, interior designers, etc., to promote the theme, "Good Design is Good Business." Over the years, Design Evanston has offered pro-bono advice to property owners wishing to enhance existing buildings, their facades, display windows, or signage; has sponsored public forums on design excellence; and has granted over 150 awards for completed projects of merit.

Art in public places is also a key amenity. Perhaps the first such example was the gracefully sculpted Centennial Fountain. The U.S. Post Office at 1101 Davis Street, designed by John Carlisle Bollenbasher and built in 1938, incorporated art in its facade and its interior. In 1991 Rotary International installed a sculpture, at 1560 Sherman Avenue, designed by the renowned sculptor Glenda Goodacre, to celebrate the 1985 founding of its international campaign to eradicate polio worldwide.

In 1991 the City established a Public Art Program under the auspices of the Evanston Arts Council and a Public Arts Committee appointed by Mayor Lorraine Morton. This included a commitment of 1% for the arts in all new municipal buildings.

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| <p>2004 PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE</p> <p>Tom Boggs<br/>Adrienn N. Hirsch<br/>Robert Jacobi<br/>Lester Jacobs<br/>Buche Jones<br/>Tony Kelly<br/>Ronald Kysiak<br/>Dorothy A. Laudati<br/>Sally Lupel<br/>Geraldine Mascasai<br/>Lyn Delli Quadri<br/>Laura Saviano, Chair Person<br/>Michael Seligman<br/>Lawrence E. Wilson<br/>Cheryl Wollin</p> |
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In 1993 the Arts Council announced a national competition for three pieces of artwork within the main lobby of the new Public Library. The pieces selected and installed are now a source of community pride. The Arts Council also announced a national competition for one or two separate pieces of art (sculptures) on the exterior of the new building atop the two center piers on the west facade where they can enhance the view from Church Street. The two pieces selected are titled "BookEnds," welded stainless steel sculptures designed by Richard Hunt and installed in 1997.

Recently, the Public Art Committee has published a colorful brochure, Your Guide to Public Art in Evanston, and has plans to broaden the influence of this program.

Public art can help define a community. Unfortunately, it can also become contentious. For example, the new Maple Avenue parking garage was to have been adorned by "Nimbus", a sculpture designed by Chicago artist Lincoln Schatz and selected in a competition sponsored by the Evanston Public Art Committee. In 2001 Schatz was commissioned to craft the five 15 ft. x 30 ft. plexiglass and stainless steel oval discs and was paid \$51,000, a deposit on the \$170,000 agreed-to cost for the sculpture. Schatz subsequently told the city he underestimated the cost and city officials questioned whether the sculpture could actually be mounted on the garage.

Schatz refused to return the \$51,000. In 2004, to avoid law suits, he and the City Council agreed that he would provide another completed sculpture (Penelope), at no additional cost. It is composed of several geometric shapes in steel and plexiglass and is over eight feet tall. Some aldermen have voiced a dislike for the sculpture and object to it being placed on the parking structure. At least one alderman suggested selling it on E-Bay. Ultimately, it was installed at the southeast corner of Emerson Street and Ridge Avenue.



*Gateway at Elgin Road & Benson Avenue*



*Rotary International Polio Plus by Glenda Goodacre*



*U. S. Post Office*



*Library "Book Ends" by Richard Hunt*



*Penelope*

Maintenance of the public realm remains an issue in 2003. The City, because its budget is stressed, declines certain responsibilities and looks to Evmark for expanded investment in maintenance. Evmark, because of the cap on its tax rate and non-marketing expenses, is also financially stressed. In some cases, particularly new real estate development, some responsibilities are being transferred to the adjacent property owners. Generally, this issue remains a challenge, though negotiations continue.

Another issue has surfaced at the City Council level -- waste in the public realm generated by fast food businesses generally. Although all such occupancy permits are issued by the city with cleanup responsibility specifically attributable to the businesses, some such businesses have been lax in cleanup, and the city has been lax in enforcement. Therefore, in March 2003 the City Council denied a new business permit and vowed to enforce the cleanup responsibility on existing businesses.

Many Evanston citizens want to go even further to enhance the amenities of the community and its downtown. In February, 2003 a group of citizens formed a new non-profit organization -- Friends of the Arts (FOA). It has three basic purposes:

- To support a donor-advised fund within the Evanston Community Foundation that will fund unique arts activities and projects, including works of public art;
- To provide financial support for those arts programs and projects that require private matches to public or outside funding and to act as a private applicant for such funds as needed;
- To promote the importance of the arts to the overall quality of life in Evanston and to make the arts more viable within the daily lives of all Evanstonians.

Downtown Evanston has fifteen railroad viaducts, most of which exhibit advanced deterioration or need of maintenance. In the 1980s a new CTA viaduct of functional, yet not artistic, merit was constructed of steel at Lake Street. In 1989 a more attractive CTA viaduct was constructed of concrete to accommodate the extension of Clark Street to Maple Avenue. In 2001 the Downtown Transit, Circulation and

Development Study strongly recommended the need to replace CTA viaducts and abutments at Davis Street and Church Street with new facilities that are not only functionally satisfactory but attractively designed. The study also recommended the removal of two Union Pacific viaducts, the reconstruction and landscaping of abutments, and the refurbishing of two remaining railroad viaducts.



*Clark Street Viaduct*

Handicapped access has become a nationwide goal, anchored by the federal Americans with Disabilities Act. In downtown Evanston, new street and sidewalk improvements have incorporated gentle ramps for the handicapped at intersection crosswalks; parking garages and the CTA Transportation Center incorporate elevators; and new inclined ramps leading to and from the Union Pacific (Metra) platform were completed in 2002 with attractive lighting fixtures and landscaping.



*Handicapped Access Ramp on Maple Avenue*

Amenities include more than physical improvements. As far back as the 1960s the Orrington Hotel offered the sole outdoor sidewalk café in downtown. From time to time it also offered horse and carriage rides throughout the downtown. Although the hotel discontinued its sidewalk café in the 1980s, other restaurants introduced new sidewalk cafes beginning in the 1990s. By the year 2003 there were over 25 sidewalk cafes in the downtown, greatly enhancing its appeal as a people place, not simply a dining center. In 2005 the restored Hotel Orrington will reestablish its sidewalk cafe.



**Sidewalk Café**

Other amenities recently added in 2000-2005 include a city-wide wayfinding signage system designed by Jack Weiss Associates. The firm has also designed a similar pedestrian-oriented wayfinding signage system for downtown, yet to be installed.



**City-wide Wayfinding Signage System**

Downtown Evanston has also become a trend setter in “green architecture,” a concept gaining acceptance throughout the nation. Several new mixed-use developments, some already constructed and some approved and under construction incorporate this environmentally sensitive upper-story landscaped terraces and roof gardens.



**Upper Story Roof Garden at Optima Horizons**

Completion of Sherman Plaza in 2006 included new streetscape around virtually the entire block. A site at the corner of Sherman Avenue and Davis Street was reserved for a sculpture as part of the city’s Public Art Program associated with new construction projects-- in this case the new parking garage.

In response to a widely circulated Request for Proposals, the City’s Purchasing Division received proposals from 155 experienced artists located in 33 states and 10 countries outside the U.S. The RFP stated the City’s desire for “a monumental work of art” that is “imaginative and aesthetically pleasing”. A Selection Committee of Evanston representatives was appointed and met on several occasions to evaluate all proposals and select five finalists.

The finalists submitted scale models for review by the committee and general public. They participated in a public forum to present their design concepts and answer questions. Subsequently, the Selection Committee recommended to the Public Art Commission and the City Council the contemporary sculpture designed by Takaski Soga of Utica, NY. This unique sculpture features a ring which mysteriously floats in the breeze within the space provided in its vertical wall.

It is anticipated that installation of the sculpture will be completed in 2007 for a total cost not to exceed \$300,00.

### Sherman Plaza Sculpture Selection Committee

#### Voting Members

Valerie Calloway, Evanston Arts Council Executive Committee  
Dan Coffey, Garage Architect  
Lyn Delli Quadri, Public Art Committee Co-Chair  
Paul Giddings, Parking Committee  
Barbara Goldsmith, Sculptor  
Dan Kelch, Lulu's Owner  
Gerry Macsai, Public Art Committee Co-Chair  
Ann Rainey, 8<sup>th</sup> Ward Alderman  
Laura Saviano, Ross Barney + Jankowski Marketing Director  
Bob Teska, Teska Associates Chairman of the Board

#### Non-voting Members

Judy Aiello, Assistant City Manager  
Jeff Cory, Cultural Arts/Arts Council Director  
Doug Gaynor, Parks/Forestry & Recreation  
David Jennings, Public Works Director  
Max Rubin, Facilities Director



**Selected Sculpture for Sherman Plaza**  
Source: City of Evanston