

CHAPTER 7

COMMON GROUND (1983-1995)

A new era emerged in 1983 which would witness a much broader public-private sector partnership and multiple initiatives pursuant to a “common ground” philosophy. In 1984 the City of Evanston, Northwestern University and ten other of the largest employers in Evanston formally joined forces to create Inventure, a non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening the long-term economic viability of the community. This was an especially important mission, because of the loss by one means or another of numerous manufacturers and corporate headquarters in Evanston. Although the focus of Inventure did not specifically include the traditional downtown, the new organization became a catalyst for future downtown initiatives and organizations. Its recruitment campaign for new businesses, entitled “The Smart Move” (to Evanston, of course) paid great dividends, as did the technical expertise of its staff led by Director Ronald Kysiak, hired in 1984 (Details in Chapter 8).

In fact, 1984 became a banner year. The Downtown II redevelopment project experienced a complete metamorphosis when Northwestern University approached the city with a new vision for that key triangle -- a high-tech research park. Agreeing in principle to this vision, the City and University initiated efforts to create the Northwestern University/Evanston Research Park. The first success occurred the same year when U.S. Representative Sidney Yates announced a federal grant to assist development of a \$26 million, 130,000 square foot research laboratory, now located at the intersection of Maple Avenue and Clark Street.

Keeping alive the construction momentum in downtown, Evanston Venture completed its 11-story, 147,000 square foot headquarters building in 1984 at Church Street and Oak Avenue on the site of the former Wiebolt’s department store. Evanston Venture was a partnership of Bruce Goodman, Joe Levy, Gordon Prussian, and Harvey Walken. The new building (designed by Helmut Jahn) was to be the headquarters of a rapidly expanding Evanston firm, Shand Morahan.

The firm moved from Evanston in 1998. Today the building is known as the Hearn Building.

Ground was broken that year by the Carley Capital Group for the first of two office buildings to be known as 1800 Sherman on the site of the failed Cushman-Wakefield/Buck-Irvine development. The architect was ELS Design Group of Berkeley, California, assisted by Perkins & Will of Chicago. Construction was completed in 1986.



Shand Morahan Headquarters



1800 Sherman

For two years many Evanston citizens had been hard at work under the guidance of the Evanston Arts Council, and in 1984 Evanston's Comprehensive Long-range Cultural Plan was completed, one of the first in the U.S. It was clear evidence of the cultural and economic importance of the arts in this community. Among its recommendations was that "a coalition of arts organizations be formed to develop a plan to establish a downtown performing arts complex." Several efforts were undertaken in the 1980s and 1990s to include such a facility in a new private development, but without success. Nevertheless, in 1987 there were approximately 150-175 non-profit arts organizations in Evanston spending \$4.4 million or more per year on goods, materials, rent, salaries and other personnel costs and generating more than \$5.2 million related to patron spending in Evanston, much of it downtown.

Concurrently, the Preservation League of Evanston held a national design competition for adaptive reuse of the historic Chicago North Western Railway Davis Street train station, originally designed by Frost and Granger and constructed in 1908. The winner was architect Lawrence Okrent of Evanston.

Also in 1984, the City Council enacted an ordinance permitting package liquor stores. The first license was issued for Evanston First Liquors at 1019 Davis Street.

In 1985 the City Council adopted ordinances creating a tax increment redevelopment project and district for the Downtown Two area encompassing 24 acres (TIF District No. 1). This action opened the door for financing to assist public improvements and private/institutional investment in the area, and for the elimination of longstanding blighting influences. Evanston Inventure published the first Economic Development Strategic Plan for Evanston in 1985. While recognizing that Evanston was losing manufacturing businesses and jobs, and that its strength as a retail center was reduced, Inventure was optimistic about the potential growth of service businesses, eating and drinking places, health care, high-technology businesses, and cultural and educational activities. Its strategies focused on retention, attraction, new business formation, and enhanced public and private sector development incentives. Inventure also stressed the need for city-wide marketing and a specific downtown development plan and strategy.

The Evanston Plan Commission published its recommended draft of the updated Comprehensive General Plan in 1985. Its general policies included:

- Develop incentive programs to stimulate private development;
- Reinforce the "Headquarters City" concept;
- Build upon the concept of Evanston as an Arts Center;
- Redevelop selected commercial areas to provide new opportunities for growth and investment;
- Improve parking, vehicular circulation, and pedestrian facilities.

Its downtown policies included:

- Establish opportunities for mixed-use development;
- Pursue refinements in the Zoning Ordinance to stimulate revitalization;
- Use creative financing techniques.

Also in that year the city released a new parking study that identified 7,200 existing parking spaces and a need for 900 more spaces. By 1989 the supply of parking had reached 8,400 spaces.

In January, 1986 the City of Evanston and Northwestern University reached agreement to create a partnership that would implement a research park vision in the Downtown II area. TopCorp, Inc., owned equally by the City and the university, was created as a for-profit corporation to approve and oversee land transfers and budgets of Research Park, Inc. RPI was created as a for-profit corporation to act as the operating company for the research park. (See Chapter 8 for more about the Research Park.)

In 1986 the City of Evanston issued a Request for Proposals to prospective developers for the half-block east of Chicago Avenue between Clark and Church Streets. RESCORP, whose parent corporation was the Savings and Loan Network, was selected to construct a mixed-use project, including an 800-space public parking garage and 190 luxury rental apartments. Ground breaking for Evanston Place occurred in 1988; construction was completed in 1989. John Macsai and Associates was the architect. The city purchased the parking garage with the proceeds of a \$7 million tax-exempt bond issue that was marketed in the fall of 1987.

American Hospital Supply Corporation, headquartered at 1500 Sherman, merged with Baxter and vacated its building in 1987. Fortunately, Rotary International, which needed to expand and could have relocated almost anywhere in the world, made the decision to purchase the building and keep its world headquarters downtown.



Evanston Place



Rotary International Headquarters

A new multi-modal transportation center incorporating CTA, Pace, Metra and taxis had been a goal of Evanston for several decades. Previous plans, e.g. 1977, were never implemented. However, in 1987 the City and the CTA collaborated to undertake another such plan. The consultant team of Environdyne Engineers, Teska Associates, Inc., Dubin, Dubin and Moutoussany, and Land Design Collaborative was selected to undertake the project. Later that year TAI published urban design guidelines for the Transportation Center, linking it functionally and aesthetically to adjacent blocks. Engineering and architectural designs were completed in 1988. Because the City of Evanston preferred a solution that would be architecturally significant, it agreed to assume the additional costs and issued municipal bonds to pay for them.



Transportation Center

Design excellence was also a high priority with the City and its Library Board. In 1987, they retained a consultant team led by Raymond Green & Associates, Architects, with Teska Associates, Inc., Grumman/Butkus, and Cost Systems to prepare a feasibility study and design guidelines for a new and expanded public library at the prominent corner of Orrington Avenue and Church Street. These guidelines were utilized in the 1990 announcement of a national competition for design of the new library. The winner in 1991 was Joseph Powell (only 28 years old), an independent architect from Philadelphia.



Public Library

Evmark took a major step forward in 1989 when it hired Terrance Jenkins as its first Executive Director. Mr. Jenkins had previously been a Vice-President of Washington National Insurance Co. and President of the Evanston Chamber of Commerce. He brought an intimate knowledge of downtown Evanston to this new assignment (Details in Chapter 9).

Also that year, the Evanston Plan Commission (chaired by Albert Belmonte) adopted and published a Plan for Downtown Evanston. Richard Carter was its principal author, assisted by Jeanne Kamps Lindwall. Recognizing that the existing Zoning Ordinance had become archaic in relation to downtown and other areas of the community, the City Council initiated a comprehensive update of the Zoning Ordinance and Map, adopted in 1993 after extensive public debate.

1989 PLAN COMMISSION MEMBERS

Regular Members

Albert Belmonte, Chairman
 Jeanne Breslin
 Lyle Foster
 Laurie Marston
 William C. Nevel
 Drew Petterson
 Stephen Prout
 Amy Seidman
 Libby Hill
 Phil Peters

Associate Members

Michael Blue
 Alex Darragh

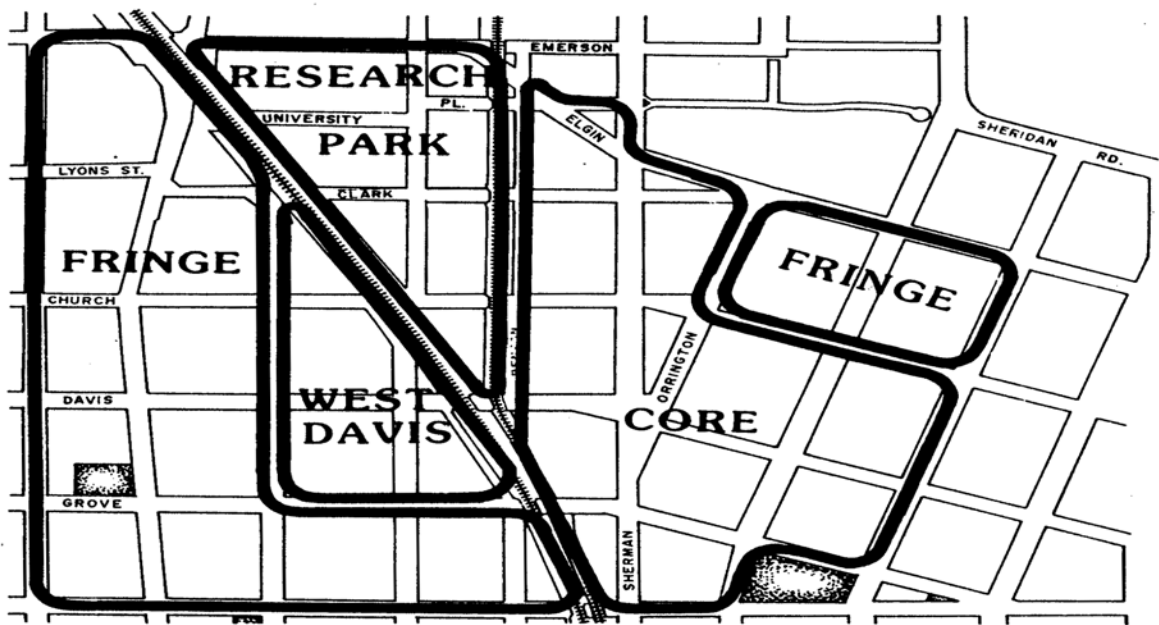
With so many activities underway simultaneously, coordination and leadership was a major concern of the Plan Commission. Therefore, in 1990 it convened an all-day workshop for civic organizations and leaders to review the recommended 1989 Downtown Plan, identify implementation actions and responsibilities, and select a lead agency. By general consensus, Evmark was requested to assume this critical role, which it accepted.

By the end of 1989 the new Clark Street CTA underpass and extension between Benson and Maple Avenues was completed at a cost of nearly \$3 million.

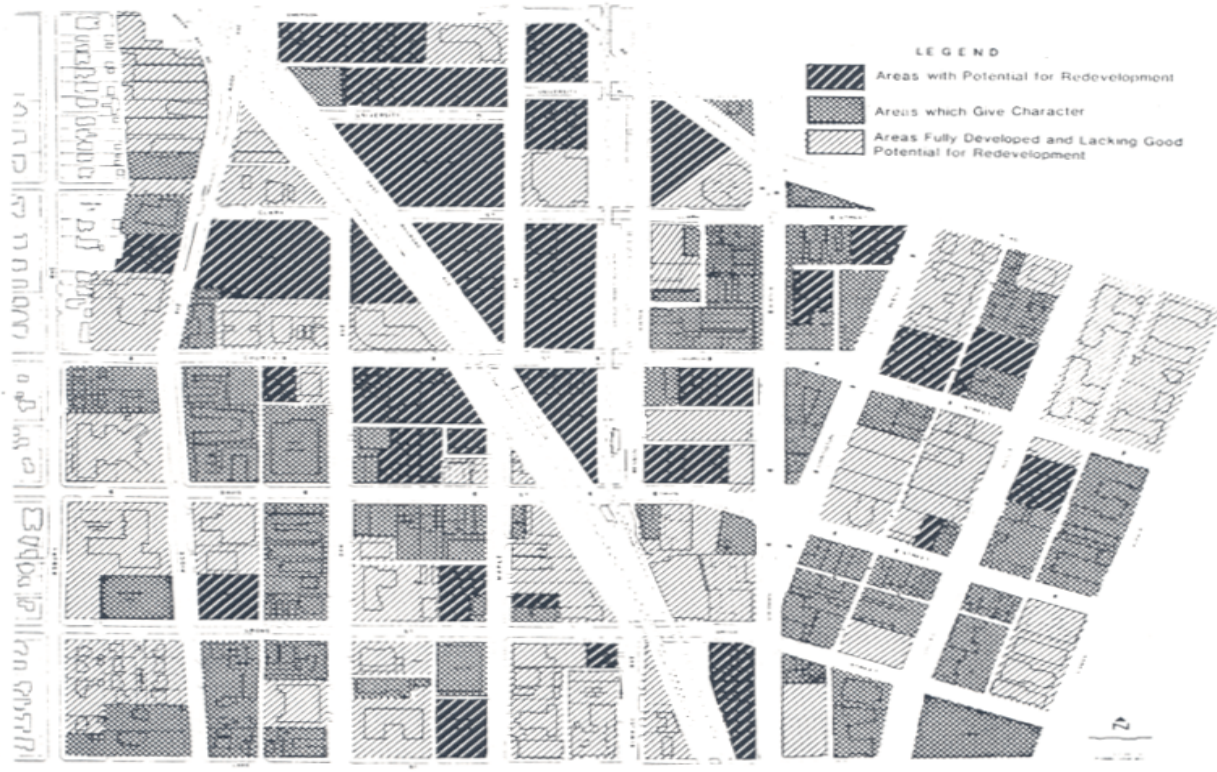
In 1990, downtown Evanston contained 8,378,000 square feet of building floor space, according to the City's Planning Department:

Residential	3,600,000 sq. ft.
Retail/Service	1,224,000 sq. ft.
Office	2,506,000 sq. ft.
Public & Institutional	<u>1,048,000</u> sq. ft.
	8,378,000 sq. ft.

Downtown Subareas



Potential For Physical Change



Source: 1989 Plan for Downtown Evanston

Following a national recession in the years of 1989-1992, the decade of the 1990s was clearly to become a decade of prosperity. A landmark in the retail industry was the opening of Barnes & Noble Book Sellers, during the period when the Public Library was under construction, followed not long after by Borders. Not only was Barnes & Noble located at the key downtown retail corner, it introduced a new and higher quality of retail experience than heretofore offered to Evanston residents, including longer operating hours seven days a week, and a hospitality with living room and library type seating plus a coffee shop. More and more customers frequented downtown on Sundays and in the evenings than ever before.



Tommy Nevins

Evanston business leaders began to realize that the streetscape improvements installed in the 1970s were tired looking and in need of maintenance. In fact, the City of Evanston found it necessary to plan for the rewiring of all street lights in the downtown, requiring major sidewalk reconstruction. Wise leaders concluded that this might be an appropriate time for a comprehensive redesign and reconstruction of downtown's streetscape. In 1990 Evmark quickly assumed its leadership role to select and retain an interdisciplinary team of urban design firms to undertake the preparation of an Appearance Plan to address public streets, sidewalks, and open spaces, and abutting private facades as well. The Appearance Plan was completed in 1992 and endorsed by the Evmark Board and the City of Evanston, leading to the adoption of ordinances creating Special Service Area 5 (Details in Chapter 9).



Barnes & Noble

About this time one new restaurant after another began to open in Evanston, including four owned by one local chain, the Clean Plate Club established by Steve Prescott: Davis Street Fishmarket (1985), Tommy Nevin's (1990), Merle's Smokehouse (1992), and Pete Miller's Steakhouse (1994). By the mid-1990s downtown could claim over 75 eating establishments and its title as "The Dining Capital of the North Shore." It became as difficult to find a curb parking space after 6:00 P.M. and on Sundays as during normal business hours. As a result, more and more stores remained open longer hours.

But, there was also bad news that year. The Washington National Insurance Co. announced that it was leaving Evanston and would pursue redevelopment of its site on Chicago Avenue. Washington National had been headquartered in Evanston since 1936 and was considered an excellent corporate citizen; it would be another big loss. The company selected John Buck and Company, with Harry Weese Architects, to prepare and announce a redevelopment plan for a major mixed-use project (Park Evanston). In 1993 the City Council gave the \$40 million project tentative approval, and in 1994 gave final approval for a 24-story, 265-unit luxury

apartment building plus parking garage and 40,000 sq. ft. of commercial space (the major anchor being Whole Foods). Concurrently, the City Council adopted ordinances creating a second downtown tax increment finance redevelopment district, including the Washington National Insurance Company site.

First Night Evanston was inaugurated on December 31, 1992. This extraordinary event has become an annual affair on New Year's Eve attended by 10,000 or more persons.

Construction began on the new 112,000 sq. ft. Public Library in 1992. In 1993 the Arts Council Public Art Program announced a national competition for three pieces of art to be placed in the main lobby and a second competition for two pieces of sculpture to be placed on the west facade of the building. With great pride the citizens of Evanston welcomed the opening of the library in 1994. During the construction period, the Public Library operated in space it leased in the Fountain Square Building.

The community was also able to take great pride in its new multi-modal Transportation Center which opened in 1993. With its clock tower, it not only became a significant architectural landmark, but its enclosed platforms introduced a new level of protection for transit users.

While these events were capturing the attention of most Evanstonians, many were becoming dissatisfied with the lack of progress with development of the Research Park. The recession at the beginning of the decade, coupled with other obstacles to real estate development financing, had taken its toll. The City Council, which had generously provided substantial funding for land acquisition and infrastructure, was concerned with its return on investment and was becoming impatient. The situation begged a solution.

CHAPTER 7 LOCATION MAP

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. NU/Evanston Research Park 2. Basic Industrial Research Laboratory 3. Evanston Venture/Shand Morahan 4. 1800 Sherman 5. CNWRR Station 6. Evanston First Liquors 7. RESCORP/Evanston Place 8. Rotary International 9. Transportation Center 10. Public Library | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 11. Clark Street Underpass 12. Barnes & Noble Booksellers 13. Davis Street Fish Market 14. Tommy Nevin's 15. Merle's Smokehouse 16. Pete Miller's Steakhouse 17. Park Evanston/Whole Foods |
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