

CHAPTER 9

EVMARK

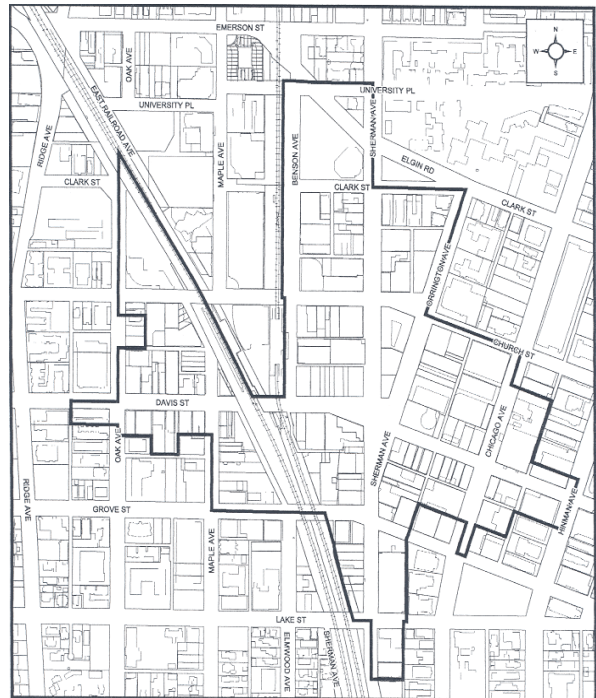
Illinois State Statutes enable City Councils to designate an area within the city to receive special services not normally provided to all other areas of the city, such services to be paid for by an additional tax on real property located within the area served. Special Service Area #1 was created by the Evanston City Council in 1974 to finance streetscape improvements along Sherman Avenue between Grove and Lake Streets. Special Service Area #2 was also created in 1974 to finance streetscape improvements elsewhere downtown; and Special Service Area #3 was created in the mid - 1990s to finance streetscape improvements in the Main Street Business district (outside downtown). All of these projects dealt with physical improvements in the public realm and were administered by city staff. Private sector input was provided mainly by the Chamber of Commerce and private sector responsibility was limited.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Ira Golan, together with Washington National Insurance Company corporation counsel Thomas Pontorelli (also Chamber President in 1987) recognized that downtown revitalization went far beyond physical improvements, that the private sector needed a dedicated day-to-day presence, and that experience throughout the nation indicated that a public-private partnership was the most promising alternative. With support from the Chamber's Board of Directors, Evanston Inventure, and city staff they recommended a new downtown revitalization management organization called "EVMARK" -- meaning Evanston Marketing.

EVMARK is a not-for-profit corporation established for the purposes of :

- Marketing and promoting downtown Evanston as an attractive place to shop;
- Providing an environment in which businesses can succeed and bringing new businesses to the area;
- Maintaining and improving the physical environment of downtown.

In 1989 the City Council, with overwhelming approval from all but two of the 130-150 downtown property owners, created Evmark and Special Service Area #4 to implement and finance the EVMARK concept. The enabling ordinance required that no less than 50% of the funds be utilized for marketing, meaning that 50% or less could be utilized for other purposes such as physical improvements and maintenance. A limited budget not to exceed \$20,000 was adopted for the first two years. Furthermore, a "sunset" clause of five years was adopted, meaning that EVMARK would expire in 1992 unless approved again by property owners and the City Council.



Special Service Area #4
Source: City of Evanston

For the first two years staff support for EVMARK came from the Chamber of Commerce. Experience soon established the fact that the unique responsibilities of EVMARK went well beyond the role and expertise of the Chamber. Therefore, in May, 1990 EVMARK hired an independent Executive Director, Terrance Jenkins, a former Washington National Insurance Company executive and Chamber president.

Fortuitously, the City's Plan Commission under Chairman Albert Belmonte had published a Plan for Downtown Evanston in 1989. The Chicago Chapter of Lambda Alpha International (a prestigious land economics honorary society) was invited to send a local assistance team of professionals to Evanston to review the downtown and its new plan, and to make recommendations for implementation. An all day conference of over 90 community leaders was held in June, 1990 to hear the assistance team's recommendations and discuss next steps in the revitalization process. Consensus was reached to designate EVMARK as the lead organization for future actions.

Mr. Jenkins worked one-half to two-thirds time to develop a structure, a mission and a strategy approved by the Board of Directors of EVMARK. The strategy included: organization and finance; marketing; promotional events; business retention and recruitment; physical maintenance (in cooperation with the city); and communication. Independent contractors were hired on a periodic basis to assist implementation of the strategy. A budget of \$250,000 per year for three more years was approved.

The Board of Directors was composed of 23-27 persons elected as needed (no term limits) and representing four categories: the City Manager and Director of Public Works; the Chamber President and Executive Vice-President; property owners; and other. Property owners must make up over 50% of the Board.

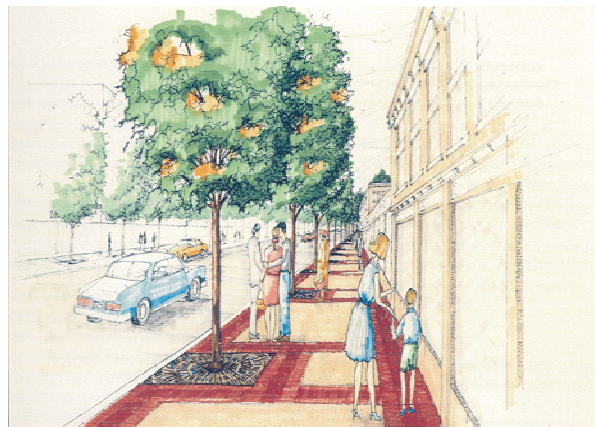
During his first years as Executive Director, Mr. Jenkins devoted substantial effort, with the help of Mr. Kysiak of Inventure, to answering the questions of property owners and community representatives, such as:

- What had downtown become and why?
- Where was it going under current trends?
- What were its opportunities and potentials?

On June 22, 1992, EVMARK and the City Council agreed to extend Special Service Area No. 4 by five years with an annual budget of \$250,000 for marketing and maintenance. In 1997 they agreed on another ten year extension with an identical budget. During the late 1990s, EVMARK was successful in getting one property owner outside the designated SSA (Arthur Hill & Co.) to contribute \$22,000 annually on a voluntary basis. Additional funds brought the total budget to \$325,000 per year (\$359,000 is budgeted for FY 2005). The virtually unanimous support for these extensions and budgets was due largely to Mr. Jenkin's and his successors commitment to one-on-one networking throughout the life of EVMARK.

In 1990 EVMARK retained five Evanston planning and design firms to work collaboratively under the name "EVMARK Design Group" to prepare a comprehensive Appearance Plan and Streetscape Design Plan for downtown. These firms were:

- Teska Associates, Inc.
- Land Design Collaborative, Inc.
- Barton-Aschman Associates, Inc.
- A.M. Kinney Associates, Inc.
- CH2M Hill



Source: Evmark Design Group, Streetscape Revitalization Plan, 1992.

The merits of this design plan convinced the EVMARK Board and the City Council to approve Special Service Area #5 in 1993 specifically for the purpose of constructing the new streetscape in the mid-1990s. SSA #5 had similar, but slightly different, boundaries as SSA#4. The three-year, \$15 million construction project was completed in 1997. The SSA share was approximately \$6-7 million, amounting to an annual cost of \$400,000 for the debt service on the 20-year municipal bond issue, bringing the total SSA annual budget to \$650,000 for an extended period of years.

Following Mr. Jenkin's resignation in 2000, the position of Executive Director was filled in 2000-2002 by Bridget Lane, also on a part-time basis, and by Diane Williams, beginning in 2003.

Since its inception EVMARK has engaged in a multitude of projects directed toward achieving its mission, including:

- EVMARK logo; DownTown Evanston logo; and DownTown Evanston Revitalization logo;
- Numerous marketing brochures;
- Local & regional advertising in area newspapers and periodicals;
- Radio spots on several news/talk stations and advertisements on cable television;
- Printed feature articles in major publications;
- Informational public meetings;
- Newsletters;
- Music festivals;
- World Jazz Dance Festival;
- Banners;
- Road races and walks;
- Retailers seminars;
- Vacant window displays;
- Flower boxes and planters;
- Comprehensive anti-panhandling program;
- Business recruitment;
- New resident gift baskets;
- Window washing program;
- Holiday lighting;
- Shopper attitude surveys;
- Conference center feasibility study;
- International Council of Shopping Centers deal making sessions;
- Sidewalk cleaning and snow removal;
- Assistance to the city's Facade Improvement Program;
- Assistance to the city's streetscape construction and repair program;

- Business disruption mitigation program during the 3-year construction period;
- Transit ridership promotion program;
- Big Bite Night;
- Cooperative events with the Chamber.

In May, 2004 Evmark's By-Laws were amended, retaining the same four classes of Directors but reducing the size of each class to bring the size of the Board down to a range of 17-22 Directors.

In 2005-2006 EVMARK has made a concerted effort to more precisely identify downtown's customer demographics and to establish a targeted marketing campaign with a process for measuring success. In the spring of 2007 EVMARK will introduce a "Shop by Bike" initiative. It is also actively engaged in creating a new internal wayfinding system for the downtown. Already evident are the orientation maps located in the lobby of the new Sherman Plaza parking garage.

Homelessness is an ongoing challenge being dealt with throughout Chicago and the suburbs. The Evanston community has several non-profit organizations with an extraordinary track record of responding to the need for temporary, transitional, and permanent housing. These efforts are coordinated by an umbrella Homelessness Task Force. EVMARK participates in this task force and provides financial assistance while at the same time managing the issues of panhandling, loitering, etc.

Clearly, the role of EVMARK has been central to Evanston's downtown revitalization success. However, once again in 2007 Special Services Area #4 will face a "sunset". Its future and, perhaps, downtown's future will be the focal point of public and private discussion. The unique difference between this decision point and former decision points is that virtually all property owners in past years have been commercial property owners. With the emerging presence of multi-story condominium buildings in the downtown, a large portion (perhaps more than 50%) of all property owners in 2007 will be home owners with little or no prior knowledge of EVMARK and its mission. In addition, fewer commercial property owners have local roots. Another new age is dawning.



Business Directory
Source: Evmark

Parking in Downtown Evanston is as easy as 1-2-3 when you know where to look.
If you're parking for more than 2 hours- check out the city garages. Your first hour is free, there are over 2000 spaces to choose from ... and you can't beat the rates!

1800 Maple Self Park
First Hour - **Free** Sunday - **Free**
Movie Patrons - first 4 hours **Free** with validation

1-2 hours \$1	4-5 hours \$4	12 - 18 hours \$9
2-3 hours \$2	5-6 hours \$5	18 - 24 hours \$11
3-4 hours \$3	6-12 hours \$6	Monthly \$75

Visa, MC, AE, Discover, Diners

If you're parking for **less** than 2 hours, meters were designed for you!
But don't forget they are in effect from 8 am to 9 pm (**Free** Sundays and certain holidays).

Church/Chicago Self Park
First Hour - **Free** Sunday - **Free**
In after 6 pm - out by 11 pm - **Free**

Same rates as
1800 Maple Self Park apply
overnight pays normal hourly rate

ENJOY DOWNTOWN EVANSTON! **MORE DOWNTOWN PARKING SPOTS**

Parking Directory
Source: Evmark