



City of
Evanston[™]



Meals on Wheels Northeastern Illinois Mural | Artist: Damon Lamar Reed

EVANSTON

ANNUAL REPORT | 2024

A YEAR IN REVIEW

As we reflect on 2024, it was a year defined by planning for the future and laying the foundation for a stronger, more sustainable Evanston. Across the city, we worked collaboratively to shape policies and projects that will guide our community for years to come. From advancing key environmental initiatives to reimagining our city's growth and operations, this past year was one of forward-thinking progress.

We took significant steps toward passing the Healthy Buildings Ordinance, a crucial effort to improve energy efficiency and sustainability in our built environment. At the same time, we engaged residents in the early stages of Envision Evanston 2045, our ambitious new comprehensive plan and zoning code update, ensuring that future development reflects our values of equity, resilience, and smart growth. Additionally, we prepared for a major transition in municipal operations, planning for the move of City headquarters to 909 Davis St., a shift that will enhance efficiency and accessibility.

These initiatives, along with many others, set the stage for an even more vibrant and sustainable Evanston. We are grateful for the engagement and dedication of our residents, businesses, and community partners, and we look forward to building on this momentum in the years ahead.





ABOUT EVANSTON

Nestled along the shores of Lake Michigan and bordering the northern edge of Chicago, Evanston is a diverse and dynamic community, blending urban vibrancy with suburban charm to create a truly unique living and working environment. Evanston is home to approximately 78,000 residents and renowned institutions such as Northwestern University and the award-winning Evanston Township High School. It is also the location of the corporate headquarters for Rotary International and the UL Research Institute. Known for its beautifully tree-lined neighborhoods, distinctive architecture, historic charm, lakefront beaches, and bustling commercial districts, Evanston's beauty and character delight visitors and residents of all ages.

The City governs a highly progressive community and takes pride in its innovative programs and initiatives, particularly its role as a national leader in discussions on racial equity, social justice, and environmental sustainability. Evanston celebrates the diversity of its opportunities and residents.

MISSION

Promoting the highest quality of life for all residents.

VISION

Creating the most livable city in America.

CORE VALUES

- 1 Excellent Customer Services
- 2 Continuous Improvement
- 3 Integrity
- 4 Accountability



City of
Evanston™

2024 CITY COUNCIL



Daniel Biss
Mayor



Clare Kelly
1st Ward



Krissie Harris
2nd Ward



Melissa A. Wynne
3rd Ward



Jonathan Nieuwsma
4th Ward



Bobby Burns
5th Ward



Thomas M. Suffredin
6th Ward



Eleanor Revelle
7th Ward



Devon Reid
8th Ward



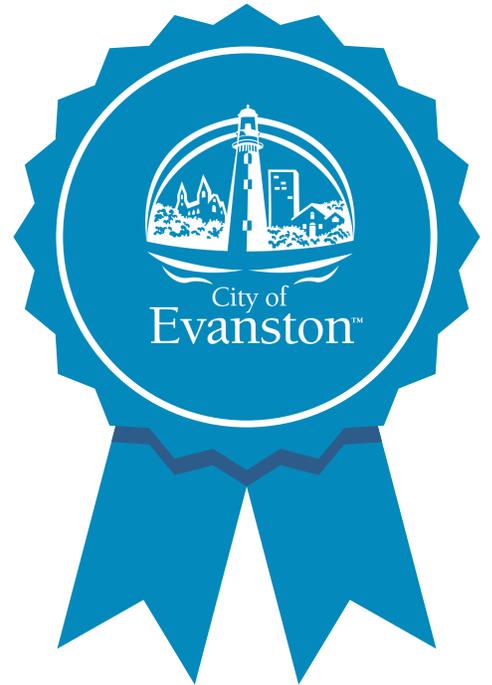
Juan Geracaris
9th Ward



Stephanie Mendoza
City Clerk

AWARDS

- Tasheik Kerr was recognized by [FirstRepair](#) as an "Outstanding Public Administrator" for her work to help launch the nation's first municipal reparations program for the Black community.
- Evanston was named the [#5 Best Place to Live in Illinois by Travel + Leisure](#). The article highlights our beauty, cultural diversity, architectural significance, parks, and local business scene!
- The City received the [Government Finance Officers Association Distinguished Budget Presentation Award](#) again this year for its fiscal year 2024 budget, with particular acknowledgment for performance measures.
- The City was named the [#8 Best Place to Live in Illinois by Niche](#) and the [#1 spot in Cook County](#). This ranking is based on multiple criteria, including public schools, housing, diversity, cost of living, and more.
- The City won the [2024 Strategic Plan Award from APA-IL for its One Howard Street Economic Recovery Plan!](#) This innovative project, developed in collaboration with the Rogers Park Business Alliance and MUSE Community + Design, focuses on revitalizing the Howard Street corridor.
- Three City projects were celebrated at the [Design Evanston Awards](#). Recognized for their positive impact on the community's designed environment, these projects showcase innovation and dedication to enhancing Evanston:
 - Robert Crown Community Center for New Construction
 - Howard Street Theater & Theo Ubique for Rehabilitation and Renovation
 - Evanston Skate Park for Landscape Design





NEW CITY OF EVANSTON FLAG

Evanston's new city flag, designed by 7-year-old Bernie Allen-Harrah, emerged from Mayor Daniel Biss' Youth Flag Redesign Contest during the '23-'24 school year. Launched in August 2023, the contest invited K-12 students across Evanston to submit designs, ultimately receiving over 200 entries. A panel of local graphic designers selected nine finalists, collaborating with them to refine their concepts. Bernie's design was chosen for its strong Evanston symbolism and abstract appeal.



SYMBOLISM

The flag's forest green background symbolizes Evanston's lush urban tree canopy, while a central white star represents the Grosse Point Lighthouse and its guiding light. A blue stripe signifies Lake Michigan, a vital natural resource, and a parallel golden band reflects the city's sandy beaches. Inspired by an aerial view of Evanston, the design integrates these key elements into a cohesive and visually striking emblem.



FIRE

Upgraded medical equipment: The department implemented new Stryker medical equipment through the ALS360 program, replacing 15 outdated pieces of equipment. This ensures access to the latest life-saving technology, with a flat-rate payment model over 10 years.

Enhanced incident management technology: The department introduced the Tablet Command system, which provides Battalion Chiefs with improved incident management tools, including accurate notifications, mapping, routing, and standardized command and control.

Improved water rescue capabilities: The City of Evanston, in partnership with the Villages of Wilmette and Winnetka, purchased a joint rescue boat, enhancing emergency response times for water rescues and strengthening regional collaboration.

Digitized fire prevention plan reviews: The Fire Prevention Bureau transitioned to digital plan reviews, improving efficiency, communication, and real-time collaboration while reducing paper use.

Expanded health and wellness initiatives: The department provided mental health services for fire/EMS personnel through well-being checks and counseling sessions integrated into annual physical exams.

Achieved ISO Class 1 rating: The department once again earned the highest rating from the Insurance Services Office (ISO), placing it in the top 1% of fire services nationwide.





POLICE

Updated technology to streamline processes: Signed an agreement with Tyler Technologies for their Enterprise Computer Aided Dispatching and Records Management System, enhancing data collection, effective policing, and efficient resource deployment. Additionally, the department implemented a software platform to streamline efficiency in the Office of Professional Standards.

Planned for the future: Completed a strategic planning initiative that covers a period of five years, focusing on community, culture, crime reduction, and the organization.

Engaged with the community: Continued Coffee with a Cop, National Night Out, First Responders Open House, First Friday, and Community Police Academy programming from previous years while introducing new programs and events, including a Police & Kids Chess Event and a Holiday Book Drive.

Increased staffing levels: Maintained a strong focus on hiring and retaining sworn officers. As a result, 19 police officers were hired, leading to a 15% increase in sworn-in staffing levels. The department also successfully promoted 11 positions, including five commanders and six sergeants.

Solved high-profile cases: Conducted swift and strategic investigations into multiple high-profile cases, ensuring violent offenders were brought to justice. These efforts led to arrests and felony charges in multiple shootings. The department also secured indictments in a sensitive concealment of death case and successfully apprehended juvenile offenders involved in multiple robberies.

Arrested narcotics traffickers: The Special Operations Group (SOG) launched Operation "Main Event" in response to narcotics complaints. Using surveillance, informants, controlled buys, vehicle trackers, and phone records, investigators built a case, ultimately introducing an undercover officer. With support from the Warrant Service Team and Wilmette Police, SOG arrested four traffickers, seizing drugs, cash, vehicles, an RV, and firearms.

Disrupted Auto Thefts: SOG partnered with local agencies for overnight operations targeting car thieves, leading to multiple arrests and the recovery of 26 stolen vehicles. This effort disrupted theft rings and strengthened interagency cooperation.

Performed Rescue Task Force Training: Between July and September, SOG and the Evanston Fire Department conducted Rescue Task Force Training. After an initial eight-hour instructor course, members led six training sessions for firefighters. Approved by the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board, the training prepared personnel to respond to active threats, perform life-saving medical procedures, and coordinate under high-risk conditions.



Opened the Innovation Station: In 2024, the Evanston Public Library launched the Innovation Station, a creative DIY space located on the third floor of the Main Library. This space provides tools and resources for makers to bring their ideas to life, whether working on personal projects or collaborating with the community.

Hosted the Mobile Living Room: In December, both library locations began hosting the Mobile Living Room, a Turning Point Behavioral Health mobile service. This welcoming space offers expert support for individuals experiencing a mental health crisis, free of charge.

Presented 1619: The Journey of a People: The library received a \$25,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to bring 1619: The Journey of a People back to Evanston for a six-show run. This funding supported partnerships with Fleetwood-Jourdain Theater and Northwestern University, along with complementary programs and 75 complimentary tickets per show for community members.

Implemented NEA Big Read: The library was awarded an NEA grant to distribute free copies of Catalog of Unabashed Gratitude by Ross Gay. In partnership with Hive Center for the Book Arts, the initiative included events focused on themes of joy and gratitude, running from September 2024 through May 2025.



Launched Crisis Alternative Response Evanston (C.A.R.E) Program: Developed a program to provide a non-police response to certain low-risk service calls. A team of trained professionals was created to respond to situations involving mental health, homelessness, substance use, and more.

Expanded concession services: Opened the Café at the Arrington Lagoon and introduced seasonal concession services at Clark Street Beach, Dempster Street Launch Facility, Fleetwood-Jourdain, and Robert Crown Community Centers.

Increased access at Dempster Street Beach Launch Facility: Implemented policies to reduce waitlists for rack storage, resulting in 75 new households gaining access. Two kayak/SUP trees were added, with two more planned for 2025, creating 24 additional rack spaces. Additionally, 108 households benefited from a new double-stacking policy, allowing a paddleboard and a kayak to be stored on a single rack.

Established D65 partnership for sports programming: Partnered with School District 65 to manage 4th and 5th-grade sports leagues. The City oversees registrations, scheduling, and communications, while the District provides facilities. Participation has grown from 550 to 925 children, with surveys collected each season for continuous improvement.

Opened a new community center: Opened the Dr. Jorge and Luz Maria Prieto Community Center, providing a dedicated space for Accessible Recreation programming and the Inclusion & Accessibility Division. The center offers inclusive opportunities for all ages, with programs expanding across various divisions, including gymnastics programming and drop-in preschool play. The center also features a sensory room.

Enhanced Accessibility Services: Renamed Special Recreation to Accessible Recreation to reflect affirming language, expanding programs to serve more of the disability community. New accessibility features at beaches include updated signs for low vision, updated warning flags with written identifiers, and the creation of "No Throw Zones".

Implemented Sliding Scale Fee Assistance: Partnered with the Parks and Recreation Board to implement a sliding scale fee assistance program, which allows up to 75% off of programs and provides at least a 10% discount for households that do not qualify for the free or reduced lunch income guidelines.

Enhanced Parks and Recreation Programming: Engaged 35,000 participants in diverse recreational, cultural, and community activities, hosting nearly 2,600 programs and dozens of events, including the annual Starlight Concert & Movie Series, Zombie Scramble, Harvest Fest, and Glow in the Park.



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Created a future for Harley Clarke Mansion: Awarded Celadon the Harley Clarke redevelopment project to transform the facility into a wedding event space while ensuring community access to the grounds, dining facilities, and meeting space.

Approved planned developments: Approved two planned developments at 1621-23 Chicago Avenue and 910 Custer Street, contributing to the City's growth and revitalization.

Supported landlord and tenants: Amended the Residential Landlord and Tenant Ordinance (RLTO) to support tenants and landlords, including a 90-day notice of lease renewal or non-renewal for tenants and removal of interest on security deposits for landlords.

Developed a comprehensive plan: Created the 2025-2029 Comprehensive Plan for HUD entitlement grants to guide funding and development efforts.

Enhanced building standards: Adopted the 2021 International Existing Building Code (IEBC) to strengthen building standards, improve safety, and ensure compliance with modern construction and renovation practices.

Planned for the future: Conducted extensive community outreach to develop a first draft of the comprehensive plan and draft zoning code for Envision Evanston 2045. These documents will serve as long-term planning tools to guide Evanston's growth, development, and land use through 2045.

Created a new rental inspection program: Implemented a new rental inspection program requiring annual registration and inspections based on property violations, focusing on safety, habitability, and compliance with the Property Maintenance Code to ensure safe living conditions for renters.

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

Managed increased financial processing: Processed over 3,100 invoices, reflecting a 23% increase from the previous year, while also handling a 30% rise in service requests without compromising service level agreements.

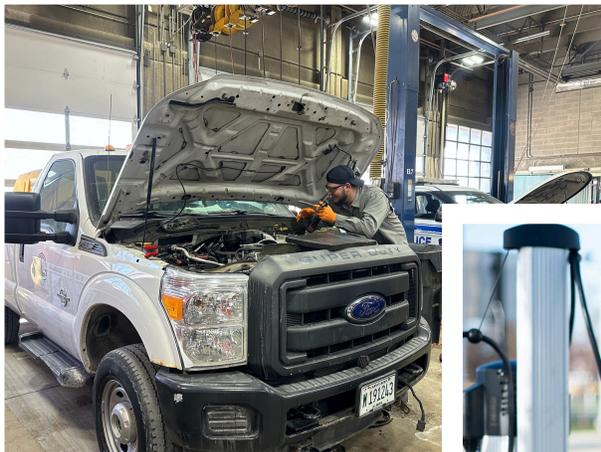
Improved operational performance: Enhanced fleet preventative maintenance efficiency, achieving an 85% efficiency rate in 2024—a milestone not seen in years. This marks a 17% increase from 2023.

Expanded EV infrastructure: Procured and installed charging stations for the City's fleet, overcoming logistical and financial challenges to support sustainability goals.

Enhanced digital evidence management: Developed a Digital Evidence Management System to improve EPD investigators' ability to collect, analyze, and securely store digital evidence.

Upgraded 911 system: Replaced the Computer-Aided Dispatch servers supporting the 911 Center, strengthening cybersecurity and system performance for emergency response.

Digitized City records: Worked with the City Clerk's Office to digitize records for the Community Development Department and the Clerk's Office, with plans to expand digitization efforts to the Law Department.



Celebrated 150 years of public health: Marked the department's 150th anniversary with Mayor Biss declaring October 24 as Evanston Public Health Day and hosted a celebratory dinner. Throughout its 150-year history, the department has led key public health initiatives, from advocating for fluoride in water to managing epidemics like polio, the Spanish Flu, and COVID-19.

Improved beach water Safety: Introduced and embarked on an advanced scientific method known as the qPCR beach water testing method to monitor the safety of beach water. This advanced science expedites beach water testing results, allowing for quicker public health decisions for all Evanston beachgoers.

Enacted a flavored tobacco and menthol products ban: Continued the City's legacy of statewide leadership in tobacco control by being the first community in Illinois to pass a comprehensive flavored tobacco and menthol products ban. The ban went into effect in April 2024.

Prevented communicable diseases: The Communicable Disease Prevention Unit works to limit and prevent the spread of diseases in the community through monitoring, education, surveillance, outbreak investigation, and response. In 2024, the unit conducted over 1,000 disease investigations.

Protected food safety: The Department's food protection program oversees the licensing of food operations, establishes food safety standards, and conducts inspections to ensure compliance. In 2024, staff performed nearly 1,300 inspections at over 400 food establishments across Evanston.

Developed our workforce: The ASPIRE program, a collaboration between the City and Endeavor Health, invests in community members through internships, scholarships, and job shadowing. In 2024, the program reached a record high of over 70 participants and remains a key initiative under the Workforce Development Division of the Health and Human Services Department.

Provided Housing Services: Addressing homelessness and providing essential wraparound services remains a priority for the department. In 2024, the Human Services Division staff worked to stabilize housing and connect 180 Evanston community members with vital housing resources.



Maintained clean and safe roads/alleys: Repaired 169 utility openings, conducted three grading maintenance cycles in unimproved alleys, removed and mulched 512 loads of leaves (639.38 tons) during the fall leaf cleanup program, and used 3,400 tons of salt and 53,000 gallons of brine for snow and ice control.

Expanded waste diversion & recycling efforts: Increased access to composting with a new drop-off site at the Gibb-Morrison Center. Set a new record with nearly 550 tons of food scraps collected through the Food Scrap Franchisee Collective Resource Compost and 3,000 tons through the City's Food Scrap/Yard Waste program. Partnered with SWANCC and Skokie to host a successful household hazardous waste event at Niles North High School, attracting 660 attendees. Audited 849 households in the Monday collection zone, revealing that only 4 out of 10 households properly used their recycling carts.

Reduced Litter and Improved Waste Collection: Installed two litter stations at Clark Street and Lighthouse Beaches, designed by local student Liyana Rogers, to reduce pollution. Enhanced waste collection at community centers with new containers and signage at Levy and South End to promote better recycling.

Enhanced Tree Protection & Inventory Efforts: Launched the Private Tree Protection Ordinance, completed year two of the City's six-year public tree inventory, and secured an \$802,500 grant to inventory trees needing removal. Planted 498 trees throughout 2024 and celebrated Arbor Day with a tree planting at Ingraham Park.

Completed large capital improvement projects:

- **Evanston Skate Park at Twiggs Park:** Opened in December 2023, this 10,000 sq. ft. skate park features various ramps and street-style elements with sustainable design and LED lighting. The Grand opening took place in April 2024. The project was awarded Project of the Year from the local Suburban Branch of the American Public Works Association.
- **Main Street Corridor Improvement Project:** Completed in October 2024, with new streetscapes, sidewalks, lighting, and pedestrian crossings, enhancing the business district and traffic flow.
- **Greenleaf Street & Hartrey Avenue Improvements:** Completed in November 2024, improving sidewalks, ADA ramps, and street lighting for safer pedestrian access.
- **Evanston Animal Shelter:** Opened in October 2024, this \$7.2 million, eco-friendly shelter offers increased capacity and advanced animal care amenities.
- **Larimer & Independence Park Renovations:** Completed in December 2024, these park upgrades included new playgrounds, courts, lighting, and landscaping to improve safety and accessibility.



Prioritized staffing: Achieved full staffing for the first time in several years, allowing the department to handle approximately 80% of litigation cases in-house.

Collaborated with departments: Drafted over 90 Resolutions and 110 Ordinances in partnership with City departments and elected officials. Worked closely with the Evanston Police Department to prosecute hundreds of traffic and ordinance violations.

Spurred economic development: Played a key role in supporting community and economic development, as well as successful commercial and real estate projects. This included staffing Land Use Commission meetings, participating in numerous Preservation Commission meetings, and drafting ordinances for special use permits, major variations, and planned developments. Notably, the department contributed to the ongoing zoning rewrite for the City.

Focused on City finances: Reduced outside counsel costs by managing more litigation cases internally.

Enhanced employee safety: Expanded safety training programs, implemented employee medical surveillance programs for lead, silica, and hearing conservation, and developed the City's first Employee Safety Manual, set for release in 2025.



Trunk or Treat event.



Law staff at City holiday party.

Prepared to relocate municipal headquarters: On January 22, 2024, the Evanston City Council approved a lease agreement to move the City's municipal headquarters to a new office space at 909 Davis Street. After over 50 years at the Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center at 2100 Ridge Avenue, preparations for the move were led by the City Manager's Office in collaboration with all city departments and divisions. This included coordinating the packing and transportation of equipment, furniture, and records, ensuring a smooth transition with minimal disruption to services and operations.

Hired two new Deputy City Managers: The City welcomed two new Deputy City Managers in 2024 to strengthen leadership and enhance operational efficiency. Their appointments bring valuable experience and expertise to support the City's strategic goals and improve public service delivery.

SUSTAINABILITY

Launched Environmental Equity Investigation: Engaged the community to address environmental injustices and develop solutions-oriented initiatives.

Achieved record compliance for Benchmarking Ordinance: Ensured the highest-ever compliance rate for tracking energy and water usage in Evanston's largest buildings, a key step toward decarbonization.

Developed Building Performance Standards: Proposed a targeted, community-led program to decarbonize the 500 largest buildings in Evanston, which account for approximately half of the city's greenhouse gas emissions.

Awarded over \$750,000 in sustainability grants: Provided funding to small businesses through the Sustain Evanston program for initiatives such as heat pump installations, compost programs, and electrified lawn equipment.

TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY

Launched Evanston Bike Access Voucher Program: Introduced a program designed to make cycling more accessible and affordable for residents. Through this program, eligible participants received vouchers to purchase new or refurbished bicycles, accessories, or essential bike repairs at participating local bike shops.

Secured Invest in Cook grant: Obtained funding to expand the Divvy bike share system.

Strengthened inter-agency partnerships: Collaborated with regional partners, including the Village of Skokie, Wilmette, CTA, IDOT, and local organizations, to advance transportation projects and infrastructure improvements.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Implemented \$3 million in ARPA-funded revitalization projects: Began work on Evanston Thrives initiatives, including new business district gateways, Civic Plaza improvements, train bridge lighting, and placemaking enhancements. Earned multiple awards for economic development efforts through the One Howard Street revitalization.

Distributed business grants: Provided funding to support 62 businesses through economic development programs, including the Storefront Modernization Program (\$102,486 for 15 businesses), Small Business Recovery Program (\$397,000 for 31 businesses), and Entrepreneurship Grant (\$42,717 for 16 businesses).

Registered 345 businesses: Processed registrations for 78 new businesses, fostering local economic growth.

FINANCE

Adopted FY2025 budget: Worked with City Council to approve a budget that advances goals related to housing, climate action, economic development, public safety, and health.

Published first PAFR: Created the Popular Annual Financial Report, a clear and concise summary of the City's 2023 financial activities.

Managed procurement and financial transactions: Oversaw 929 purchase orders and facilitated formal procurement for 25 bids and 41 requests for proposals. Processed a total of \$55 million across 37,935 transactions through the City's cashiering system, including \$49 million and 26,707 transactions conducted over-the-counter and via mail.

2025 ADOPTED BUDGET

EXPENDITURES SUMMARY

\$151,312,985 **\$7,325,216**
(5.09% vs. prior year)

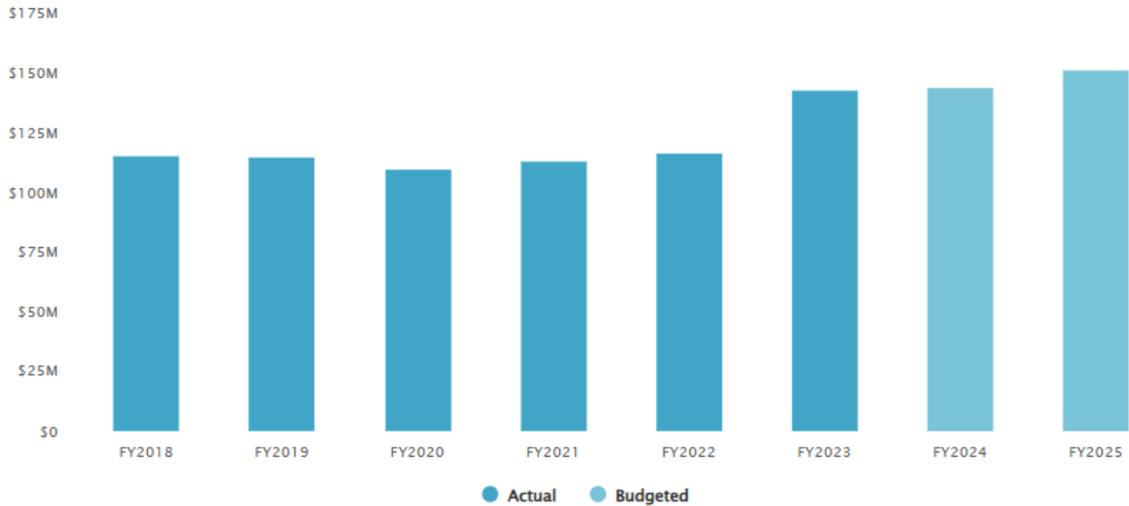
General Fund Overview Budget vs. Actual



REVENUES SUMMARY

\$151,278,402 **\$7,350,859**
(5.11% vs. prior year)

General Fund Overview Budget vs. Actual





City of
EvanstonTM