

## Section 2: Constraints & Opportunities



# Central Street: Master Plan

---

## Section 2: Constraints + Opportunities

The following is a summary of issues and opportunities that exist along the Central Street corridor. The information is based on:

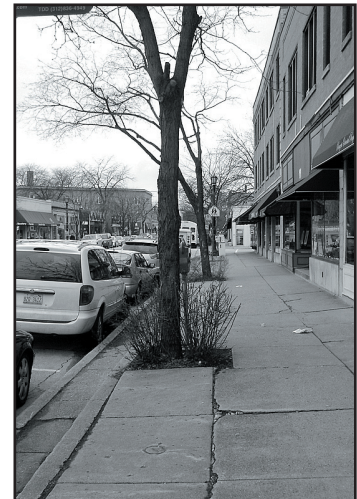
- The comprehensive analyses of land use, zoning, infrastructure, transportation, and streetscape conditions conducted by the consultant team.
- Meetings, interviews, and workshops conducted with City staff, plan commissioners, council members, business owners, and the community.

A more detailed discussion of existing conditions is presented in the Appendix of this report.

## Constraints/Issues/Negatives

### Overall Physical Conditions:

- Narrow, deteriorated or non-existent sidewalks detract from the walkable, pedestrian-friendly character of Central Street.
- Some recent developments have caused concerns regarding building height, scale, massing, lack of open glass storefronts, narrow sidewalks, architectural design, poor materials, and physical character.
- Some building facades need improvement. Some buildings have long solid walls without windows, which breaks up the pedestrian shopping “feel” of the street, and others appear unattractive or dated.
- Parking lots lack adequate screening and landscaping. Also some lots have inefficient layouts or lack proper drainage.



Some commercial blocks along Central Street have deteriorated sidewalks and tree grates.

### Commercial:

- Some commercial and mixed-use buildings have been built too close to the curb, leaving sidewalk widths that are inadequate for a pedestrian-oriented shopping street.
- Some narrow alleys cause conflicts between commercial uses/deliveries and residents attempting to access their garage.
- Some residents perceive that certain commercial uses are over-represented, such as banks, ATMs, real estate offices, medical offices, and general office space. These uses often

do not provide retail foot traffic and require significant parking for workers. Some also preferred that Central Street have additional professional/medical offices for the convenience of area residents.

- Some sidewalks and crosswalks are in poor shape and some are not accessible to those with disabilities.
- Some residents expressed a concern that tall buildings on the south side of Central could cast longer shadows over the street.
- There is a concern that retail space depths in new mixed-use developments may not be adequate for active retail businesses and may encourage service-oriented uses.
- Pedestrian lighting in some commercial areas is perceived to be “too dark,” which creates an unsafe perception at night.
- In commercial areas, the placement, maturity and protection of street trees vary greatly.
- Some business signage is dated, aging, or unattractive.
- Auto body shops and gas stations lack screening and landscaping.



"Gateway" to Evanston at the intersection at Central, Gross Point and Crawford has an abundance of asphalt and minimal landscaping.



New building at Central Park built at property line resulting in narrow sidewalks.

### Commercial Blocks (Gross Point/Crawford)

- This “gateway” intersection to the City is highly visible, has high volumes of traffic, and includes underutilized and inefficient parking lots, deteriorated sidewalks and crosswalks, a lack of screening and buffering, and older/dated/unattractive building facades.
- The CVS parking lot has an inefficient design and lacks proper screening and landscaping.
- The entire intersection lacks the City's pedestrian-scale lighting and marked crosswalks.
- Some residents do not feel the “strip mall” development on the southeast corner of Central and Crawford fits with the character of Central Street.

### Commercial Blocks (Central Park to Ewing)

- Lack of consistent sidewalks and narrow sidewalk width has negatively affected the area's walkability, detracting from the pedestrian-oriented character of the shopping district

# Central Street: Master Plan

## Section 2: Constraints + Opportunities



The CVS pharmacy at Crawford Avenue has a dated facade and a parking lot that lacks screening and landscaping.

and reducing visibility for motorists turning to/from side streets.

- Residents report that parking is difficult in this area at certain times, including weekends.
- Some residents expressed concern that service/office uses are over-represented in this area, which reduces foot traffic and creates a higher demand for employee parking.

### Commercial Blocks (Hartrey to Eastwood)

- Parking meters with 2-hour time limits may not allow enough time for evening activities, such as restaurant dining.
- Double-parking by delivery trucks and shoppers between Hartrey and Prairie impedes traffic flow at certain times in this popular part of Central.
- Some residents expressed concern that the growing number of regional and national franchises is weakening the area's unique, small independent retail character.
- The plaza on the southwest corner of Green Bay lacks attractive streetscape furniture and landscaping.



The use of some architectural elements, such as colonnades or arcades, should not be encouraged over sidewalks.



Some storefronts near Lincolnwood clutter windows with excessive signage.



Some residential buildings near Ashland have blank walls that front the street.

### **Residential:**

- Although most are adequate, the physical transitions between residential and commercial uses could be improved in some locations with additional setbacks, screening, or fencing.
- Most residential buildings appear to be well maintained, but fair to poor conditions are found in some locations, including a building on the southwest corner of Central and McDaniel.
- Some residents expressed concern that the overall area may be unaffordable for a greater range of households, including young families and lower-income households.

### **Zoning:**

- C1 and C2 districts are not appropriate for encouraging mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented land uses along Green Bay to the north and south of Central.
- Some districts may allow building heights or number of stories that are inconsistent with surrounding uses.
- Parking ratios may be too high for mixed-use developments near transit stations.
- Front setbacks and corner side yards in B1a and B2 Districts are too narrow to provide adequate streetscape/sidewalk zones in a shopping district.

# Central Street: Master Plan

---

## Section 2: Constraints + Opportunities



The Metra viaduct acts as a barrier to pedestrian movements between retail areas.

### **Infrastructure:**

- The Metra viaduct at Green Bay appears to lack sufficient drainage structures.
- The Metra viaduct acts as a physical, visual, and mental barrier between more viable retail to the west and “struggling” retail blocks to the east.
- Sidewalks under and near the viaduct are narrow and cause congestion for transit riders near the Metra station.
- The Ryan Field parking lot does not drain effectively, resulting in standing water on pavement.
- The Ryan Field parking lot lacks landscaping and its fencing, driveways and asphalt are in fair to poor condition.
- Pavement, sidewalk and crosswalk conditions are deteriorated and in need of replacement along several stretches of Central, particularly in commercial districts.
- Alley conditions are generally poor with deteriorated paving, potholes, standing water and drainage problems. Obstructions including utility poles and loading/service areas are present in many alleys.



Steps and deteriorated sidewalk conditions at Green Bay Road.



Some blocks have narrow, deteriorated and/or obstructed alleys.

### **Transportation:**

- West of Lincolnwood, Central Street is striped as one lane in either direction but is considerably wider than a standard lane. The street is approximately 52 feet wide and includes



# Central Street: Master Plan

## Section 2: Constraints + Opportunities



Deteriorated paving conditions and pooling water on the Ryan Field parking lot.

space for parking lanes. The spaces are not marked, which makes it difficult for drivers to determine if Central is two lanes or one lane. This causes confusion among drivers and contributes to potential speeding problems on the west end of Central.

- With higher volumes of vehicle and pedestrian traffic, pedestrian safety has become a concern, especially along active retail blocks.
- The five-point intersection at Central/Broadway/Poplar near the Metra station and viaduct is perceived as unsafe due to its confusing configurations and difficult sight lines.
- The intersection at Central and Green Bay adjacent to the Metra viaduct has difficult sight lines and turning movements due to the older column configuration supporting the viaduct.



The commercial area west of Lincolnwood has wide roadway conditions and narrow sidewalks.



The presence of a turning lane, bus stops, and cars dropping off commuters results in congestion at the CTA station near Girard Avenue.

- Several offset intersections, particularly the intersection at Lincolnwood, has caused confusion for some drivers.
- Some alleys are narrow, which causes conflicts with adjacent residential neighborhoods. Delivery trucks can block a narrow alley, affecting access for residents trying to access their garages.
- The lack of separate left-turn lanes at many intersections may result in confused or erratic driving movements.
- Congestion on Central Street is causing some “spill-over” effects onto residential streets, as drivers attempt to bypass traffic or search for parking spaces.
- Some crosswalks are poorly marked, have faded markings, or have confusing/inconsistent signage.
- The CTA and Metra stations lack drop-off/pick-up areas, and stopped vehicles contribute to congestion.
- A two-step grade change is a barrier for some pedestrians at the northwest corner of Central and Green Bay.
- Some residents have said they do not feel safe while riding bicycles on Central. Some suggested creating a bike lane, and others suggested bikes use parallel residential streets.



A confusing array of parking signs at Northwestern University's Ryan Field parking lots.

# Central Street: Master Plan

---

## Section 2: Constraints + Opportunities



The large parking lot at Lincolnwood Drive is owned by a bank.

- Buildings too close to corners and narrow sidewalks may limit “sight lines” for vehicles making turns to/from side streets.
- Transit use may be discouraged by the lack of consistent, marked bus stop signage, benches, and shelters.
- The fence at north end of the Community Center/American Legion/Golf Course parking lot obstructs sight lines for motorists entering Central Street.

### **Parking:**

- Parking is perceived as difficult to find in some locations at peak times, including near the retail district between Hartrey and Green Bay.
- Two-hour parking limits may not be sufficient for uses such as restaurants, the library, or the parks along Central Street.
- Some vehicles wait in the City lot at Stewart until a space becomes available, which adds to congestion in this lot.
- The parking lot at Stewart has an awkward configuration that makes it hard to navigate. Left turns into the lot from Central also causes stacking on eastbound Central.



Mature trees along one of Central Street's residential block.

- Double-parking and customer drop-offs are common near certain businesses, such as Starbucks, which causes congestion and safety concerns.
- The Chase parking lot is frequently used by non-bank customers. Residents report that non-bank customers are allowed to park in the bank lot during hours when the bank is closed, but the signage is confusing and indicates that outside users will be towed.

### Open Space:

- Independence Park provides recreational activities for children but lacks adequate seating areas, amenities, and programmed spaces for adults.
- Central east of Green Bay lacks a public park, although the North Shore Channel and the golf course do provide some open space.

## Opportunities/Strengths/Positives

### Overall Physical Condition:

- Many residents like the small-scale “Village feel” of Central Street and appreciate the “funky,” eclectic, “hodge podge,” “quirky” character that encourages people to walk, shop and interact.
- Residents expressed appreciation for the independent, “Mom and Pop” retailers along the corridor.
- Many residents support implementation of environmentally friendly, “green” building design and adaptive reuse.
- Central’s “walkability” is generally considered good, and residents/leaders expressed support for an even better pedestrian environment.
- Most of northern Evanston and parts of Wilmette and Skokie are within a half-mile walk of Central.
- Several residents expressed a fondness for the area’s traditional qualities, including the human-scale of buildings and the presence of auto-service businesses.
- The wide roadway width of Central west of Lincolnwood would allow traffic lanes to be narrowed to create wider streetscape/sidewalk zones.

# Central Street: Master Plan

---

## Section 2: Constraints + Opportunities

- The triangular intersection of Central Street, Gross Point Road and Crawford Avenue could provide a more attractive western gateway to Central Street.
- Commercial blocks between Lincolnwood and Reese have good pedestrian character. Large mature trees that line this block and wide sidewalks help establish a pedestrian-oriented environment.
- In residential areas, street trees provide a healthy, mature canopy that creates an attractive, streetscape, sidewalks and parkways are generally in fair to good condition.

### **Infrastructure:**

- The area's combined and relief sewer system has enough capacity to support some new development and improvements to the Ryan Field parking lot.
- Catch basins can be installed at the Metra viaduct and the Ryan Field parking lot and connected directly to nearby relief sewers to improve drainage.
- The water distribution system will have more than adequate capacity to support new development once planned water main improvements are completed.
- Several infrastructure improvement programs are under way or planned, including improvements to signals, water mains, and roadway pavement.



The Metra station provides connections to Downtown Evanston and Chicago.



Specialty shops and services on retail blocks between Hartrey and Green Bay that contribute to eclectic feel in this part of Central Street.



# Central Street: Master Plan

---

## Section 2: Constraints + Opportunities

### **Transportation:**

- Central Street is an important gateway to Evanston, Northwestern University and Evanston Hospital (ENH).
- The Metra and CTA stations provide excellent transit access.
- CTA and PACE buses, as well as hospital and university shuttles, provide transit connections and access to Downtown Evanston.
- Some residents expressed support for better east-west transit opportunities along Central Street, such as improved weekend service, a shared trolley or commuter shuttle.
- The wide roadway width west of Lincolnwood may be narrowed without affecting traffic flow or on-street parking capacity. Narrowed, better defined lanes may also help avoid confusion and conflict among motorists.
- “Bump-outs” along Central and Prairie provide pedestrians a safer crossing environment and gives vehicular traffic a visual cue to slow down.

### **Parking:**

- The City has a metered parking lot available at Stewart across from the popular retail blocks east of Hartrey.
- Northwestern’s parking lot at Ryan Field, which is within walking distance of the Metra and CTA stations, is used on non-game days by Evanston Hospital (ENH) and some commuters.
- Some large surface lots, such as those serving the banks or Ryan Field, are possible locations for additional shared parking for shoppers, commuters, visitors and residents.

### **Commercial:**

- Central Street has many quality specialty shops and restaurants that contribute to the area’s growing reputation as a unique regional retail destination.
- Local retailers and their commitment to quality are considered a community asset.
- Attracting a wider and more varied mix of businesses to Central Street will increase interest and allegiance among shoppers.

- There is strong support for the retention of convenient retail and services, including auto-oriented services.

### **Residential:**

- Most residential buildings are well-maintained and offer a variety of high-quality housing types and styles.
- New residential opportunities could be attractive to young professionals, as well as older residents seeking to stay in the community.
- Some residents expressed support for slightly higher densities near transit stations, as long as the massing and character of the area is preserved.
- Residents expressed support for affordable housing opportunities.
- Central Street has numerous long-time residents.

### **Open Space:**

- Bent, Ackerman and Independence Parks provide a range of both active and passive recreational activities, including tennis courts, playgrounds and seating areas.
- Independence Park has the potential to become a more multi-generational activity space and “Village Green.”
- There is potential for landscaped areas and plazas in front of Northwestern University's Ryan Field.



Independence Park.



### Activity Generators

The Central Street corridor has numerous activity generators that attract shoppers, restaurant patrons, employees and visitors on a regular basis.

Activity generators, both along and near Central Street, include:

#### Institutions:

- North Branch Public Library
- U.S. Post Office
- Schools
- Chandler-Newberger Community Center
- American Legion
- Evanston Hospital (ENH)
- Ryan Field
- Mitchell Museum of the American Indian

#### Transportation:

- Metra Union Pacific District North Line Station
- CTA Purple Line Station
- Edens Expressway

#### Businesses:

- CVS Pharmacy
- FoodStuffs (groceries)
- Restaurants
- Specialty shops, such as Paper Source

#### Open Space:

- Bent Park
- Ackerman Park
- Independence Park
- North Shore Channel
- Peter Jans Community Golf Course
- Howell Park

## Redevelopment Opportunities

Several development or redevelopment opportunities were identified throughout the corridor. These sites or blocks were identified based on current land uses, vacant or deteriorating buildings, underutilized sites, key corner locations, and/or potential to consolidate small parcels of land to create larger sites (See Figures 2.1 to 2.3: Constraints and Opportunities).

- **2600-2628 Gross Point** – Medical office buildings, auto repair shop, Citgo gas station.
- **2500-2600 Crawford** – Professional office buildings, Hot Dog Island
- **3333 Central** – CVS Pharmacy
- **2600-3320 Central** – Single-family homes, rowhomes, townhomes
- **3101 Central** – Auto repair shop
- **2600 Central Park** – Mitchell Museum of the American Indian
- **2942-2966 Central** – Spa, Gas Station, Small retail shops and services
- **2925-29 Central** – First Bank & Trust of Evanston, Real Estate Office
- **2829 Central** – Bryan’s Garage
- **2800-2822 Central** – White Hen, Blockbuster, The Frame-up
- **2500-2536 Central** – Apartment Building
- **2200 Central** – Dental Office
- **2100 Central** – Public parking lot
- **2004-2012 Central** – Single-story retail shops
- **1925-1933 Central** – Vacant Shop, Bank of America ATMs
- **1900-1915 Central** – Chase Bank and parking lot, Rug emporium
- **2500 block of Green Bay** – Epco Paint and adjacent properties
- **1713-1801 Central** – Medical Offices, Transmission Shop, Florist
- **1613-1633 Central** – Mustard’s, Printing Press

## Central Street: Master Plan

---

### Section 2: Constraints + Opportunities

- **2524-2537 Ashland** and **1600-1610 Central** – Single-family homes
- **1501 Central** – Ryan Field parking lot
- **1031 Central** – adjacent to CTA Purple Line station





**City of Evanston: Central Street**  
Constraints + Opportunities

- Commercial District
- Opportunity Site
- Recent/Planned/Proposed Development
- Potential Facade Improvements
- + Potential Corridor Gateway/Entrance
- \* Activity Generator

**Central Street: Master Plan** City of Evanston, Illinois

Figure 2.1: Constraints & Opportunities - Crawford Avenue to Ewing Avenue





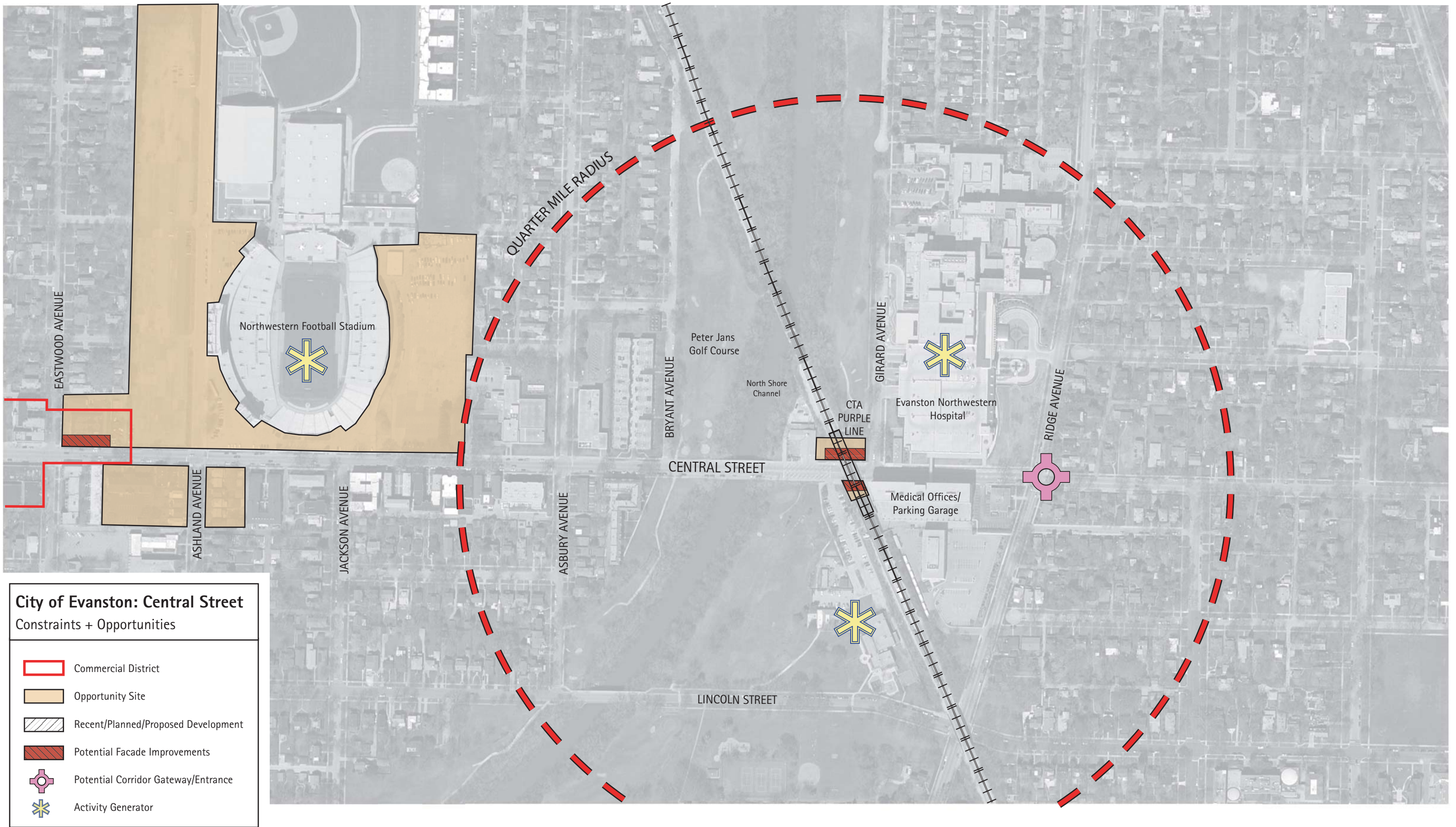
# Central Street: Master Plan

City of Evanston, Illinois

Figure 2.2: Constraints & Opportunities - Ewing Avenue to Eastwood Avenue







# Central Street: Master Plan City of Evanston, Illinois

Figure 2.3: Constraints & Opportunities - Eastwood Avenue to Ridge Avenue

