Evanston Economic Development Committee:

We are writing to express our support to the Economic Development Committee to approve the request for funding of Chicago’s North Shore Convention and Visitors Bureau (CNSCVB). We recommend their funding in our roles as economic development practitioners and leaders of the Special Service Area (SSA) districts that rely on this partnership which helps us reach consumers outside of Evanston, as well as regional, national and international visitors. Without the CNSCVB partnership, we could not reach these extensive audience with our limited advertising dollars. Downtown Evanston, Main Dempster Mile and Central Street have taken advantage of the CNSCVB co-op advertising programs to purchase radio ads on CTA trains and digital media ads that have affectively promoted summer events and holiday shopping. Without the reduced pricing offered by their volume buying power in addition to their co-op programs, this type of advertising would be out of reach for our organizations.

For most of 2020 and first quarter 2021, many of Evanston’s small businesses were barely surviving. Since meetings and travel were severely restricted, the CNSCVB shifted their advertising to heavily target consumers in communities in the North Shore and Chicago to generate traffic to our businesses. They created campaigns to promote takeout delivery, local shopping and boosted social media posts for the SSAs (see attached for data). In addition, they supported 150 individual businesses in Evanston, some of whom are outside the boundaries of the SSA districts and do not have marketing support if not for the CNSCVB.

If Chicago’s North Shore Convention and Visitors Bureau does not receive their annual funding request, the City of Evanston’s membership will be terminated, which means that all individual businesses that are currently members will no longer be able to participate in the bureau (per their bylaws). Furthermore, Evanston would become the only municipality with hotels in the Chicagoland area not receiving bureau representation. Without bureau representation, Evanston will lose access to state tourism funding that is granted to each state-certified bureau. It is important to note that once a municipality end their relationship, they cannot rejoin the bureau and receive any of this additional regional marketing support for three years. Most importantly, the CNSCVB meeting/conference sales leads will be directed to Skokie, Glenview, Northbrook, and other surrounding suburbs. This type of business and tourism attraction provided by the CNSCVB is not provided by Evanston hotels, the SSA organizations or the City of Evanston. The benefit to having meetings/conferences at Evanston hotels impacts Evanston restaurants, retailers, and other service providers, and ultimately increases Evanston sales taxes. It puts Evanston at a significant disadvantage to not have an organization bringing in business and leisure travel.

We hope you will support their request. We are better working together.

Warmest regards,

Annie Coakley, Downtown Evanston

Katherine Gotsick, Main-Dempster Mile

Laura Brown, Central Street Evanston