

EVANSTON THRIVES

RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

INTERFACE STUDIO | MJB CONSULTING | NINIGRET PARTNERS | ALL TOGETHER

PUBLIC UPDATE



TODAY'S AGENDA

1. Outreach & Timeline
2. Preliminary Recommendations - Part 1
3. Q&A
4. Preliminary Recommendations - Part 2
5. Q&A

EVANSTON THRIVES

RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

- Reimagine our neighborhood business districts, balancing market realities with bold and creative design.
- Protect and reinforce our city's most precious assets at the neighborhood level.
- Celebrate the unique identity of each district—past, present and future stories—through branding and placemaking.
- Identify the ideal use of ground floor space for each district and citywide.
- Build a toolkit to ensure more equitable investment and support for local businesses
- Inform the City's business recruitment and retention efforts in these areas.

Ebony
**CENTRAL
EVANSTON
THRIVES**
RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

**CENTRAL
THRIVES**
RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

**DOWNTOWN
THRIVES**
RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

THE PRACTICAL
THEATRE CO.

**HOWARD
THRIVES**
RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

**EVANSTON
PROSPERA**
EVANSTON PROSPERA PLAN DE ACCIÓN DEL DISTRITO COMERCIAL

WWW.CITYOFEVANSTON.ORG/BUSINESS/EVANSTON-THRIVES

**DID
YOU
KNOW?**



The Peacock Ice Cream Co. factory was housed at 2144 Ashland. Their signature flavor was peach, and they created other custom flavors for Ravinia and the Drake Hotel.

WWW.CITYOFEVANSTON.ORG/BUSINESS/EVANSTON-THRIVES

**NOYES
THRIVES**
RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

**WEST END
THRIVES**
RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

**HILL ARTS
THRIVES**
RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

**MAIN-
DEMPSTER
THRIVES**
RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

**EVANSTON
THRIVES**
RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

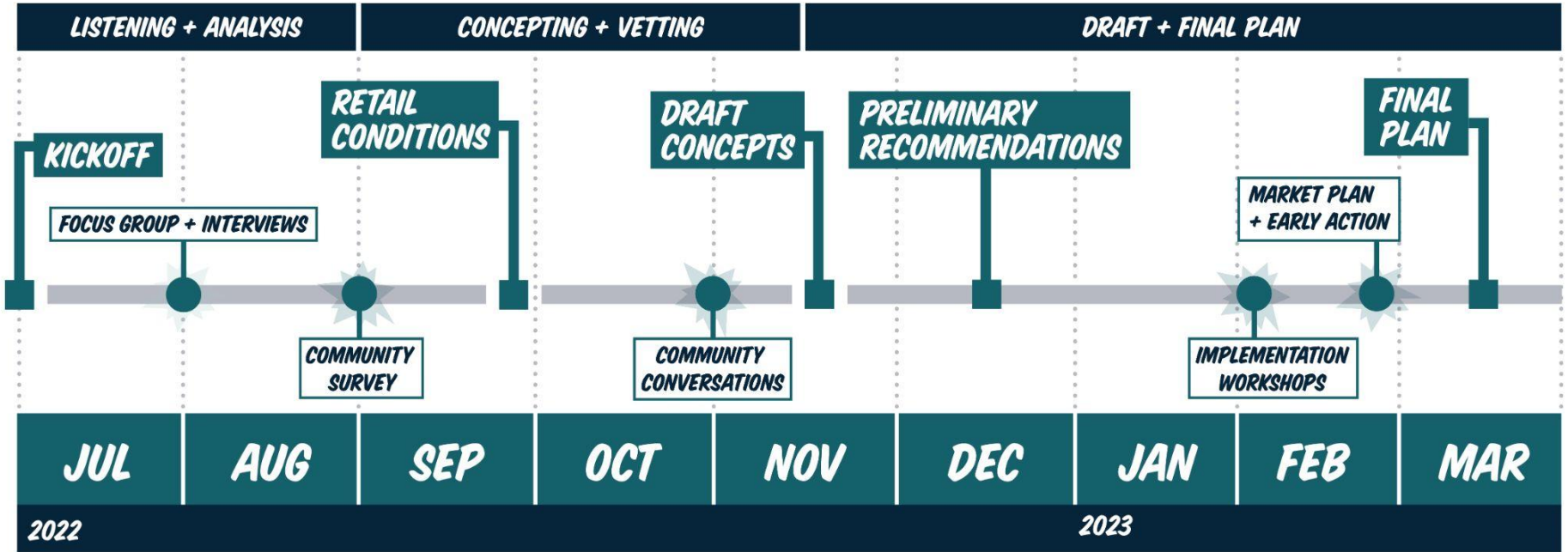
Evanston Thrives! is an action plan to revitalize our retail districts.

- #1. **Central Street**
2022 Central Street
- #2. **Noyes**
910 Noyes Street
824 Noyes Street
- #3. **Hill Arts**
2121 Ashland Avenue
- #4. **Central Evanston**
1901 Church Street
1823 Church Street
- #5. **Downtown**
710 Church Street
- #6. **West End**
2000 Dempster Street
- #7. **Main-Dempster**
860 Chicago Avenue
- #8. **Howard**
623 W Howard Street

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PROJECT TIMELINE



ENGAGEMENT

Interviews:

- Evanston's Council Members
- Mayor Biss
- Parks & Recreation
- SSA Managers (Central, MDM, Downtown)
- Local Commercial RE Broker Interviews (X5)

Focus Groups:

- Open Call to Businesses (breakouts by Districts: MDM, Central, Downtown, Howard, and West End)
- Creative, Arts, & Entertainment Businesses
- Newly-opened Businesses
- Black Business Consortium representatives
- (rescheduled) MBE Business Owners
- Downtown Residents (X2)

Other engagement:

- Kick-off presentation to Department heads
- Update presentation to the City of Evanston Economic Development Committee
- Pop-Up at MDM, Church & Dodge, and Downtown Fall Fests
- Participation in Monthly/Quarterly meetings: Hill Arts District, Howard, and Central
- Presentation to CEOs group & Northwestern leadership
- Engagement with ETHS (Superintendent & Director of Safety)



2,100 Surveys Completed

BUSINESS SURVEY

224

Business
Owners

30%

16-20+
Years of
Business

60%

Rent
Space

53%

Women-
Owned

EVANSTON THRIVES

RETAIL DISTRICT ACTION PLAN

Business Support

Tenancing & Attraction

Marketing

Events & Programming

Placemaking

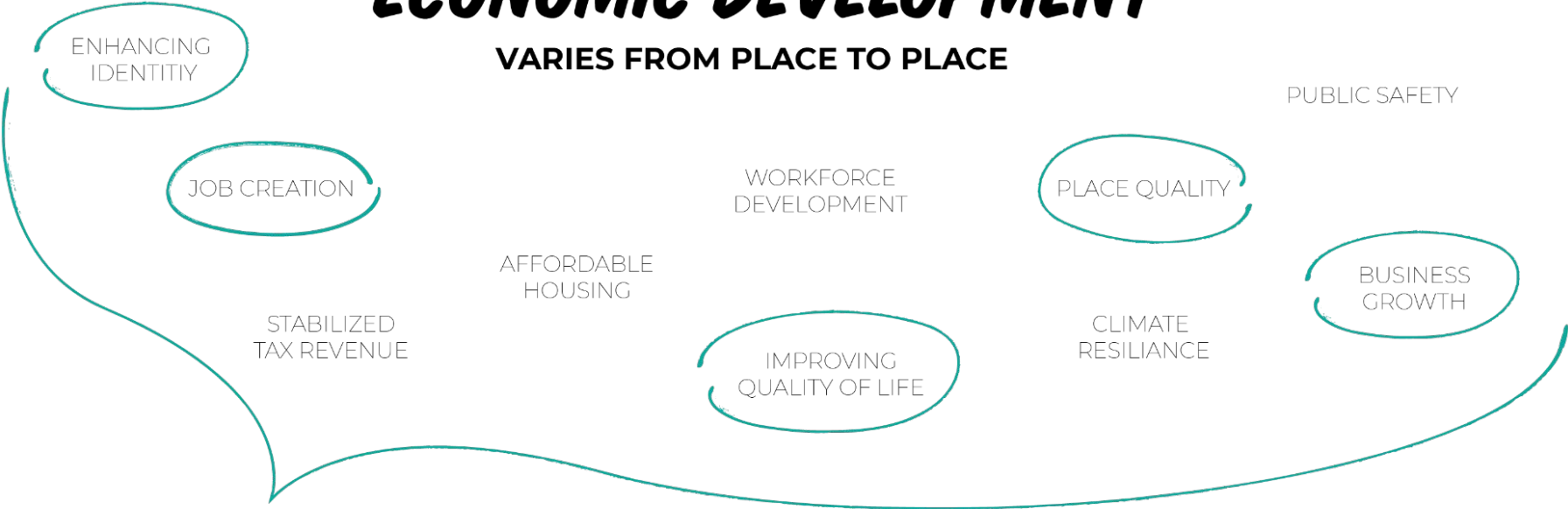
**BUSINESS
SUPPORT**

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HOW IT WORKS NOW

THE ROLE OF ***"ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT"***

VARIES FROM PLACE TO PLACE



EVANSTON'S FOCUS

HOW IT WORKS NOW

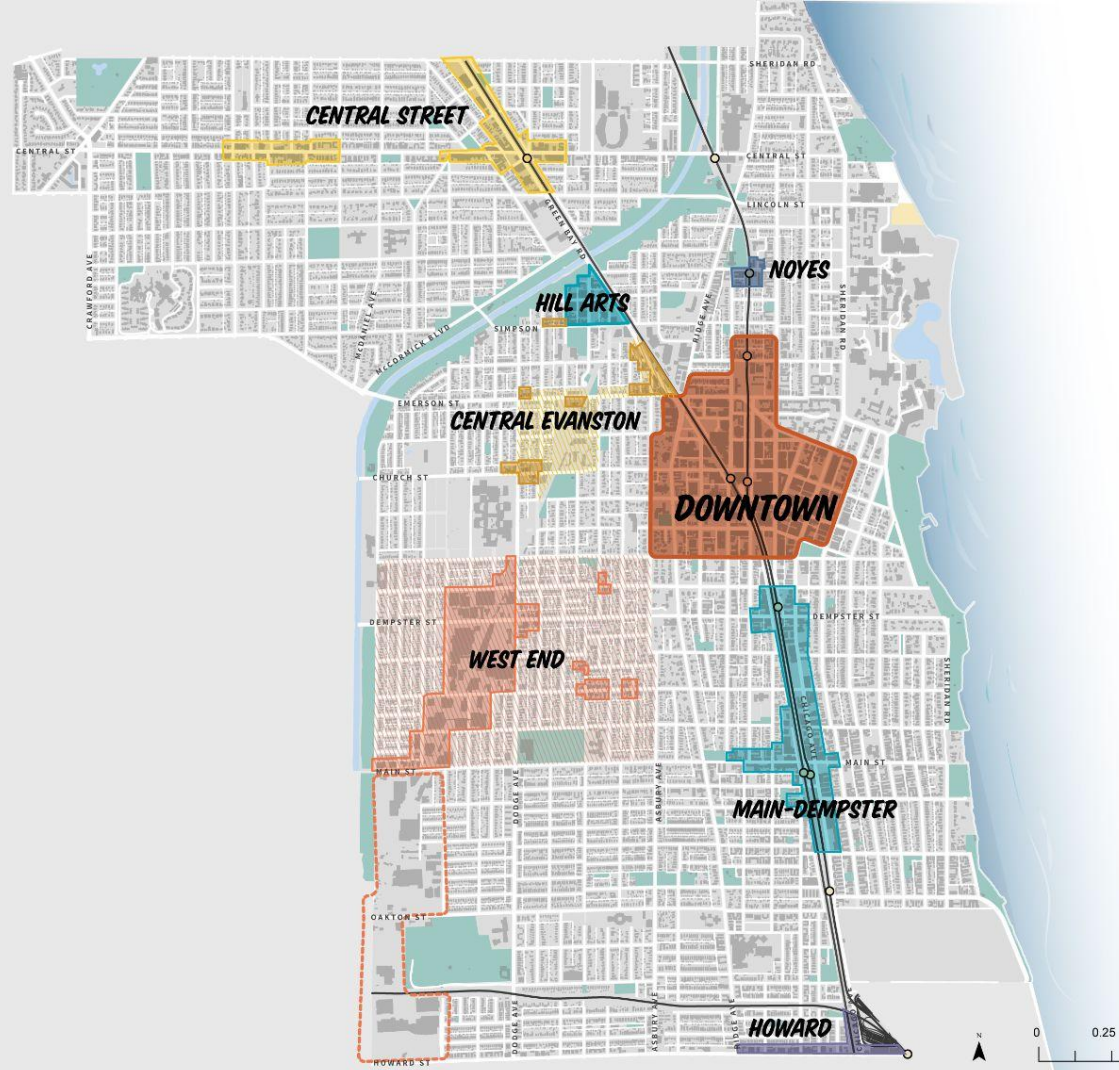


HOW IT WORKS NOW

What's a "Special Service Area (SSA)"?

- **Downtown Evanston, Central Street, and Main-Dempster Mile** areas are SSA's.
- Marketing, business development, advocate/maintain public way improvements.
- Tax Levy Established by Ordinance for a defined area for a defined period (10 years).

The same support is provided by the City's Economic Development team for non-SSA Districts



WHAT WE HEARD

"I was able to go to the City and get what I need done in one visit... now I don't even know if there will be people in the building..."

"The west end and the 5th ward seem to be overlooked..."

"From my understanding new businesses usually do not qualify for the storefront program, at least mine doesn't, so how can we improve or repair storefronts when the buildings are old and property management doesn't do it either?"

"Davis Street used to be the Northshore leader in restaurants"

"[Permitting] process feels more ad hoc than it should. [Businesses] get to a point where they feel they are "done" then something else comes up."








"The City's ED team should work to spearhead more business development."

"I didn't answer the section about Economic Development because I am unclear as to which of those are done by that department vs DTE."

Supporting business and economic growth was the #1 priority for **55.8% of business owners.**

(Evanston Thrives! Survey data)

OUR EVALUATION

-  Explore the City's business license database
-  Review and compare Evanston's tax structure
-  Review Evanston's economic development goals and budget
-  Review permitting and grant processes
-  Identify Evanston's economic strengths & weaknesses
-  Identify Evanston's unique assets and potential selling points to new businesses
-  Evaluate feasibility to draw the businesses people *want* in various districts.

OUR EVALUATION

Program review example: Great Merchant Grant (GMG) Program

What can funds be used for?

Maintenance / Infrastructure

- Planters
- Bench
- Garbage Can
- Bike Rack
- Planter/Landscape Maintenance
- Sidewalk Replacement
- Banners
- Holiday Decorating (lights, street light mounted wreaths, etc.)

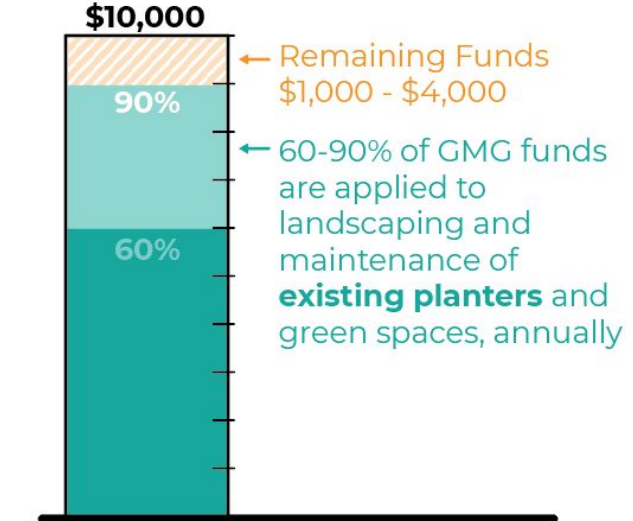
General Maintenance ☐

- Sidewalk Power Washing
- Snow Removal ☐
- Seasonal Plantings ☐
- Landscape/Planter Maintenance (i.e. watering, fertilizing, etc.)

Marketing / Promotions ☐

- Brochures / Maps
- District Event Posters
- 50/50 Ad purchases

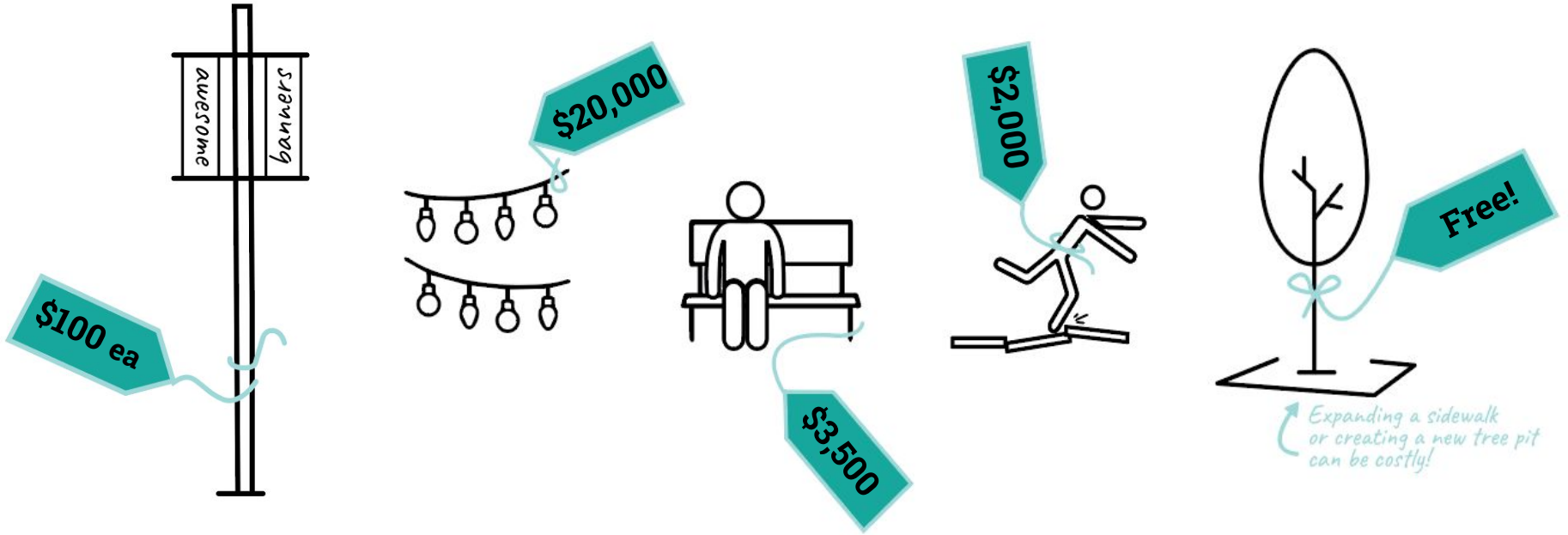
How are funds actually being used?



Funds Allocated to Non-SSA Districts

OUR EVALUATION

Costs of Common District Improvements



BUSINESS SUPPORT



TAKE ACTION!

- 1. Improve data collection tools and processes.**
- 2. Rebalance and more equitably distribute city grants and resources to better respond to business needs.**
- 3. Rethink and streamline internal processes and programs to better support evanston business owners.**
- 4. Strengthen partnerships with key institutions.**
- 5. Pursue strategic opportunities in property redevelopment.**

BUSINESS SUPPORT

TAKE ACTION!

Rethink and streamline internal processes and programs to better support evanston business owners.

Actions:



Loosen Food Truck Parking Regulations



Enact Incentives and Ordinances to fill Empty Storefronts



Re-evaluate Amusement Tax



Develop clearer Sign Design Guidance (or broader UD standards)



Create Parklet / Sidewalk Cafe Guidance & Offer incentives



Clarify the process to bring new policies into consideration

Evanston's Amusement Tax is the highest among North Shore communities





Rebalance and more equitably distribute city grants and resources to better respond to business needs. → **Actions**

- Create a grant program uniquely available to non-formula businesses and Evanston-based businesses. Offer priority to business-owners of color, women-owned businesses, veteran and LGBTQ+ owners.
- Retool the Entrepreneurship Grant Program to be a flexible general improvements tool ; give priority to businesses located within a Retail Districts or to encourage retail clustering.
- Increase budget for the interior buildout assistance aspect of the Storefront Modernization Program to be used in areas without a TIF.
- Support the Legacy Business Program
- Promote Sustain Evanston

**TENANTING
& ATTRACTION**

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HOW IT WORKS NOW



HOW IT WORKS NOW

Chain Business and Local Businesses

- Chains can typically pay more and are credit-worthy (*although local businesses often provide more benefit to the local economy*)
- “Chains” are sometimes also “local”
- Chains grow / expand based on a calculation

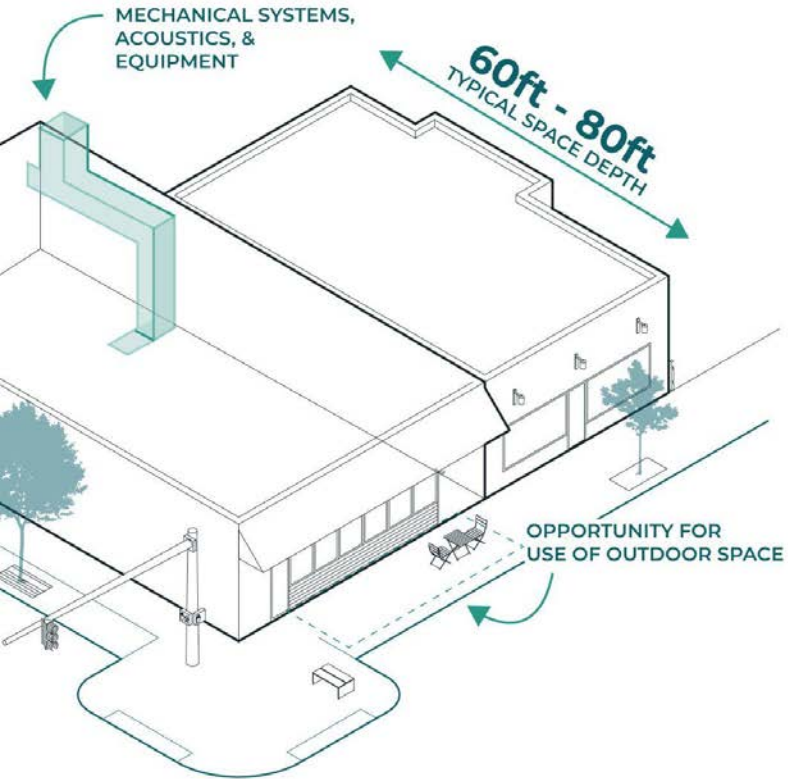


LUCKY PLATTER | MAIN-DEMPSTER MILE



SUBWAY | MAIN-DEMPSTER MILE

HOW IT WORKS NOW



THINGS THAT INFLUENCE THE LOCATION + VIABILITY OF RETAIL BUSINESS

SIZE

CONFIGURATION

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

- New Construction (*tenant credit & impact on development underwriting*)
- Availability
- Affordability
- Visibility
- Dimensions
- Utility infrastructure
- Lease structure (TIA, 3N)

RATIO OF OCCUPANCY COSTS TO SALES PROJECTIONS

10% rule-of-thumb:

1,000 sqft space at rent of \$20/sqft = \$20,000/year

Requires estimated gross sales of \$200,000/year

WHAT WE HEARD

Vacancy

"Places with personality are gone. It's all generic. A place with a local owner, ambiance, quirks, and where you want to bring out of towners is missing."

"Downtown is depressing (empty space and litter)."

"We are losing things and not getting things in return that are comparable."

Competition

"My main competitor is the internet, rather than main locales."

"I want to stay in Evanston, but all these opportunities for pedestrianized areas or for unique stores are coming and going. We need more things around town, like Chicago has booklets of things to do."

"Don't lose the people we have now."

OUR EVALUATION

- ☑ Explore demographic trends
- ☑ Identify the vacancy rate for Downtown and the City
- ☑ Individual business sales over recent years
- ☑ Interview Commercial Brokers

EVANSTON'S BUSINESSES AND RESTAURANTS

Source: CoStar Retail Analytics, 2022 CoStar Realty Info Inc.

Citywide Retail Properties:

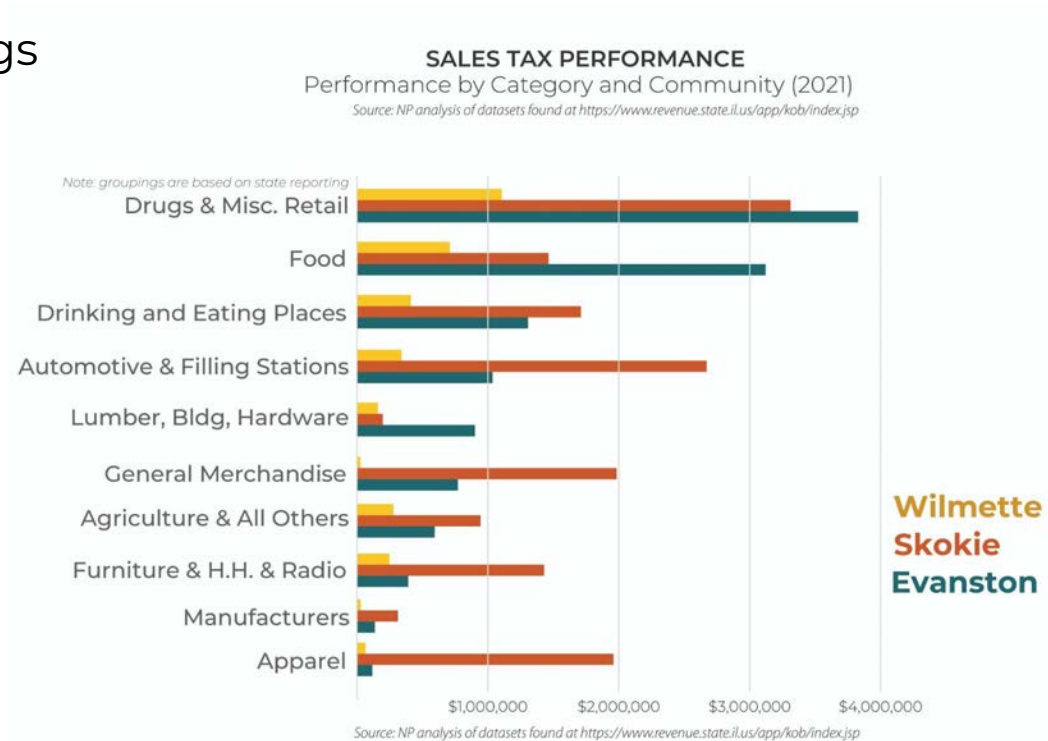
- Vacant SF: 165K *(73% of all Vacancy)*
- Vacancy Rate: ~4.6 ('21) - 4.9% ('22)

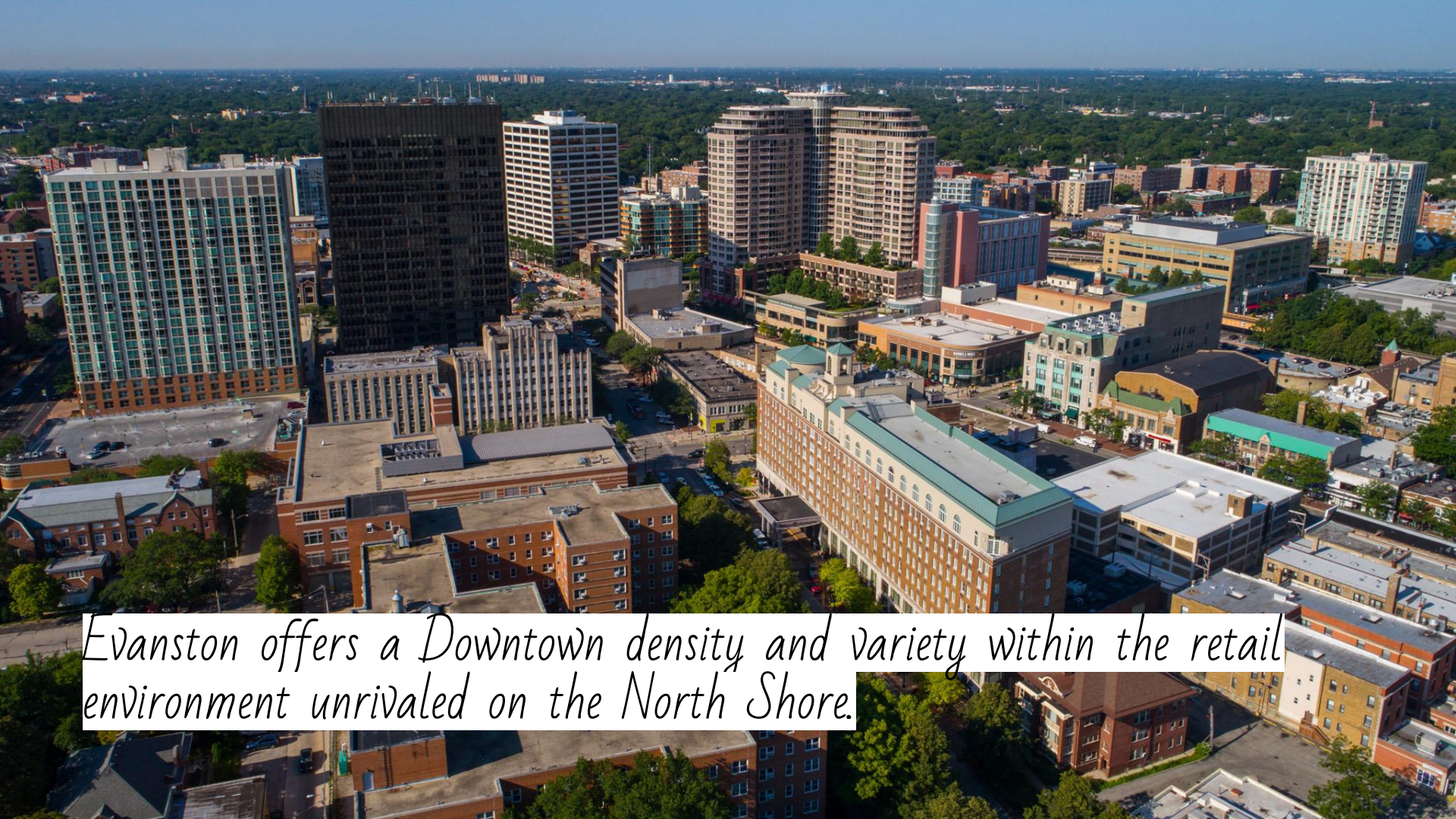
Downtown Retail Properties:

- Vacant SF: 223K
- Vacancy Rate: ~9.2 ('21) - 11.7% ('22)

OUR EVALUATION

- ✓ Sales Tax Revenue by Year
- ✓ Sales Tax Revenue by Category
- ✓ Store recent Openings/Closings
- ✓ Evaluate retail competitors
- ✓ Explore psychographics and trends for each districts





Evanston offers a Downtown density and variety within the retail environment unrivaled on the North Shore.

An aerial photograph showing a modern, curved building with a white facade and large windows on the left. In the center, a train is moving along tracks that run parallel to a road. The area is surrounded by lush green trees, and in the background, a city skyline with several skyscrapers is visible under a clear sky.

Evanston's market is bolstered by its connectivity in the region.

With not just one retail node, but several unique neighborhoods and districts!





@stumbleandrelish
stumbleandrelish.com

jewelry | greeting cards | gifts | home décor | & more!

Stumble
& Relish

We believe the things you
relish most are the treasures
you stumble upon

OPEN

HOURS
TUE-WED
THURSDAY
FRI-SAT
SUNDAY

MASK
OPTIONAL

312

MICROREPAIR
CELLPHONE TABLET PC CONSOLE

JOE'S
HAIR SALON

With not just one retail node, but several unique neighborhoods and districts!



A Big Ten University with 18,000 diverse, high-performing students.

Evanston is an urban-suburban hybrid. It offers the benefits of a city.



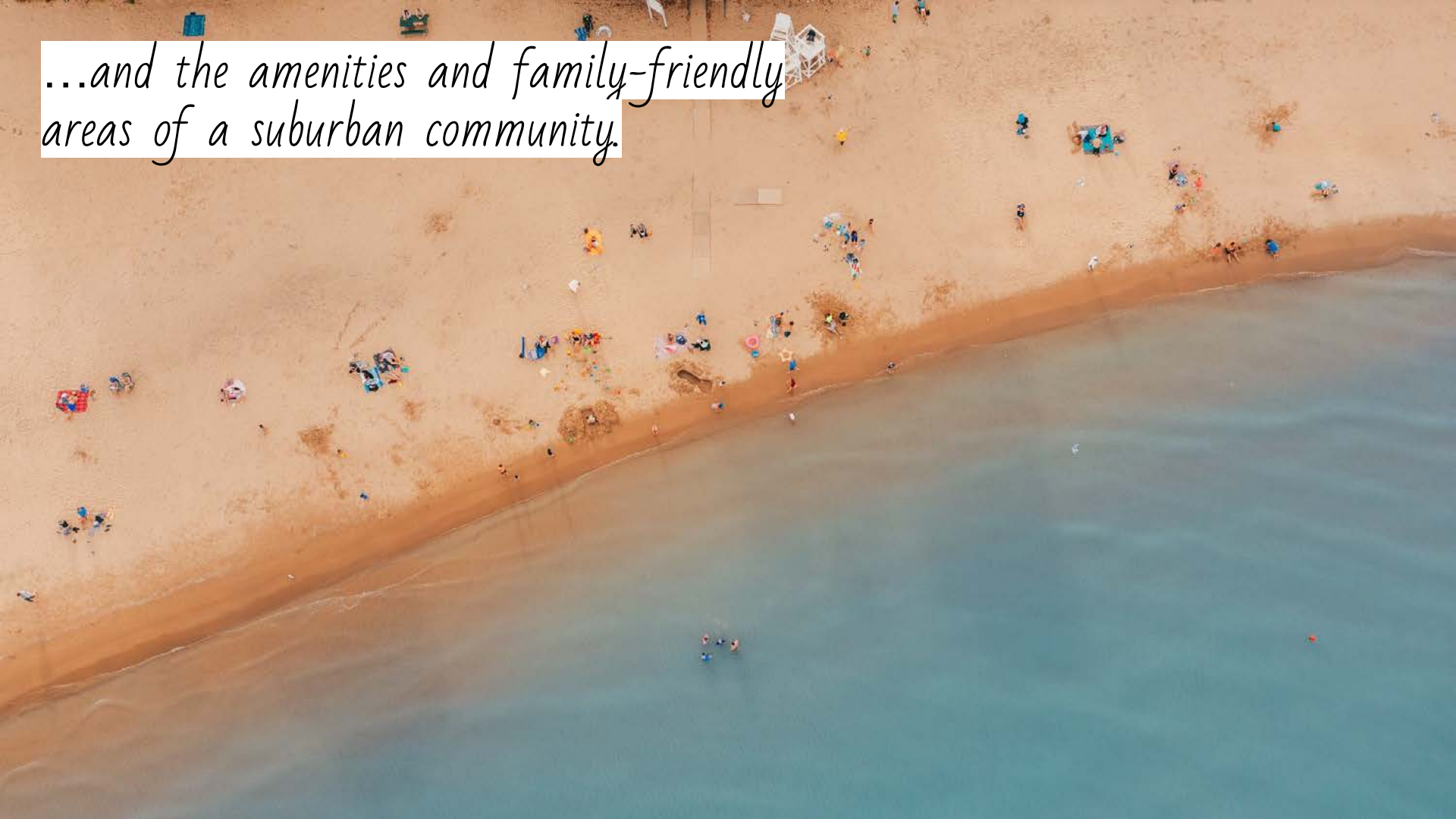
The context stands out from other areas..



It offers the benefits of a city.

HOWARD STREET: THEO Cabaret performance: "8-Track." Note, this photo was taken at previous THEO location: (Photo by Liz Lauren, Article source: WTTW article by Hedy Weiss DEc 15, 2021)

...and the amenities and family-friendly areas of a suburban community.



TENANTING & ATTRACTION

TAKE ACTION!

- 1. Market Evanston to the retail development, leasing and tenant community**
- 2. Offer a “Retail 101” training course for organizations working on behalf of businesses, property owners, retail districts and Downtown.**
- 3. Enable the City to protect rents for small, local, and legacy businesses**
- 4. Promote street-level vitality by tapping Evanston’s entrepreneurial and creative energies**

TENANTING & ATTRACTION

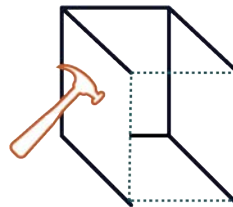
TAKE ACTION!

Enable the City to protect rents for small, local, and legacy businesses

Options under consideration:



REGULATORY
Limiting occupation of ground floor sf to Formula Businesses in some districts



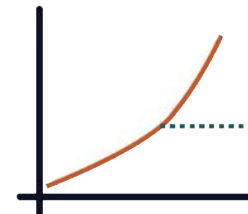
SITE CONTROL
City/SSA acquisition & White box renovation



SITE CONTROL
City/SSA assumes master lease on behalf of local business(es)



INCENTIVE OR SUBSIDY
Tenant / Landlord Subsidy To business or building owner



INCENTIVE OR SUBSIDY
Tax Stabilization for owners who lease below market rate

TENANTING & ATTRACTION

TAKE ACTION!

Promote street-level vitality by tapping Evanston's entrepreneurial and creative energies

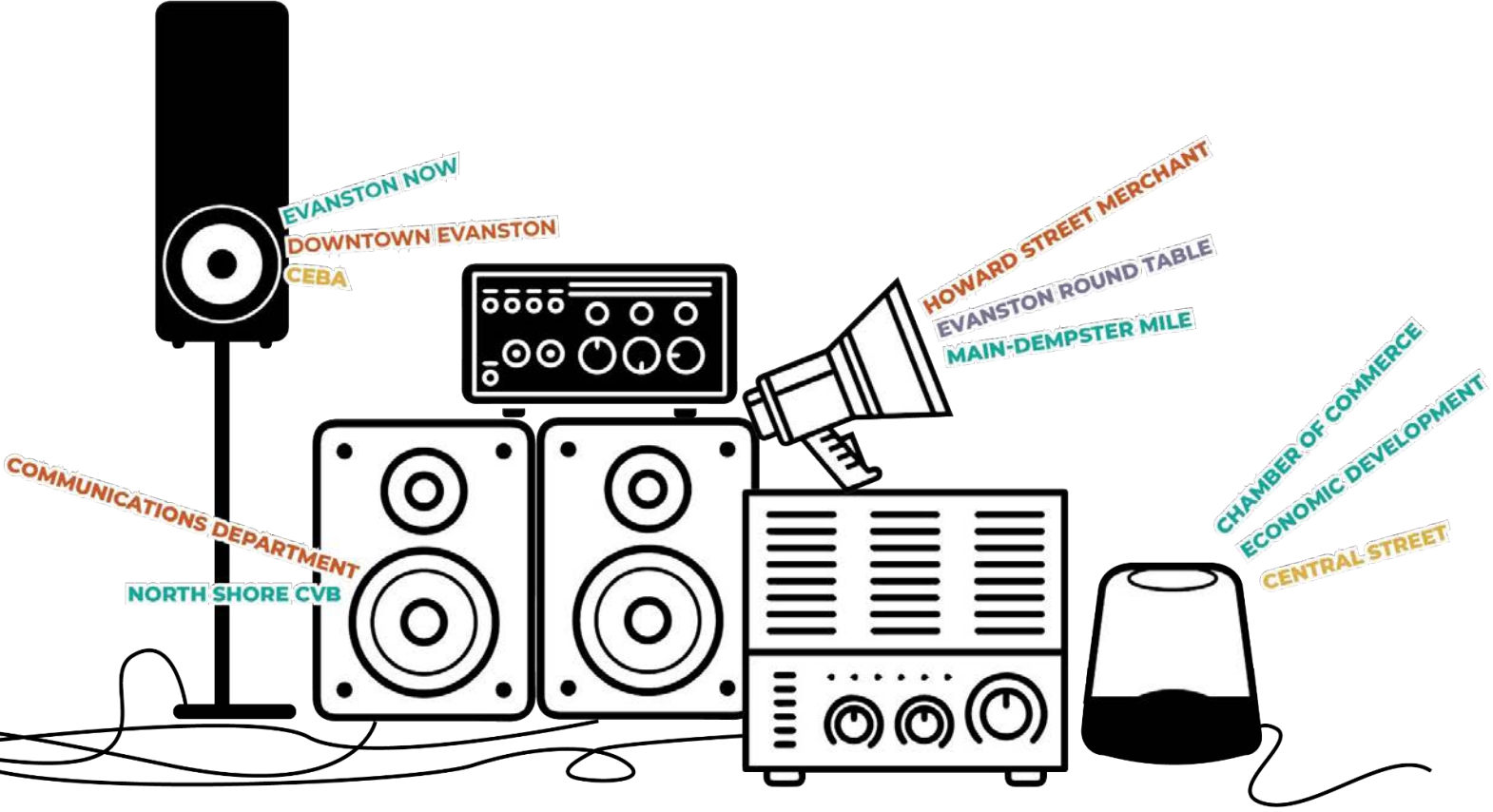


E-commerce brand Grammar recently opened up a pop-up store in New York's Lower East Side neighborhood to meet its customers in real life. (Source: TheStorefront.com)

MARKETING

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HOW IT WORKS NOW



WHAT WE HEARD

"I sometimes find it hard to know what's going on locally."

I love and participate in every "Wine Walk" event - it is a good way to introduce potential customers to my business."



TOP FIVE WAYS the community typically get news, event postings, or other information about this area: (General public responses)

#1	City communication (email, mailer, website, etc.)
#2	Word of mouth
#3	Local merchants (flyers, event boards, etc)
#4	Local News
#5	Social Media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, etc.)

TOP THREE MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES for the commercial area in which your business is located: (Business responses)

#1	Supporting businesses and economic growth
#2	Marketing your commercial area or retail district within Evanston
#3	Drawing new visitors to Evanston

OUR EVALUATION

- ☑ Evaluated major communication partners and their channels.
- ☑ Identified the greatest reach / most capable orgs.
- ☑ Designed a unified brand
- ☑ Captured the stories and character of each district.
- ☑ Explored feasibility of a one-stop shop that houses all district events, cultural programming, and things to do around the City.







OUR EVALUATION

Evanston's Business Districts | Marketing Scorecard

STRONG

NEUTRAL

WEAK

NAME	Howard Street	Main Dempster Mile	West End	Central Evanston	Hill Arts	Downtown Evanston	Noyes	Central Street
	CLEAR	CLEAR	SOMEWHAT CLEAR	UNCLEAR	UNCLEAR	CLEAR	SOMEWHAT CLEAR	CLEAR
VISUAL IDENTITY			N/A				N/A	
	COMPETING	STRONG	NON-EXISTENT	NON-DESCRIPT	NOT ALIGNED	STRONG	NON-EXISTENT	STRONG
DIGITAL	» None on Evanston Side » Website + Social on Chicago side	» Website » Social Media	» None	» Social Media	» None	» Website » Social Media	» None	» Website » Social Media
	COMPETING	STRONG	NON-EXISTENT	MODEST	NON-EXISTENT	STRONG	NON-EXISTENT	STRONG
PHYSICAL	» Different banners on different sides of street	» Banners » Signage	» None	» Banners	» Banners » Signage	» Banners	» None	» Banners
	COMPETING	STRONG	NON-EXISTENT	STRONG	STRONG	STRONG	NON-EXISTENT	STRONG

DOWNTOWN	HOWARD	CENTRAL STREET	NOYES
<p>"walkable" "friendly"</p> <p>"high concentration of restaurants and retail in small, walkable area"</p> <p><i>People want to make an evening out of the area - more events and nightlife.</i></p>	<p>"potential" "underdeveloped"</p> <p>"really missing pedestrian space without cars"</p> <p><i>People want investment in their community with more space for people.</i></p>	<p>"charming" "small-town feel"</p> <p>"diverse and unique mix of small shops, restaurants and services"</p> <p><i>People want a pet store, library, outdoor dining options, and experiential opportunities.</i></p>	<p>"chill atmosphere"</p> <p>"cozy & quiet"</p> <p>"It is quaint, small, and convenient"</p> <p><i>People want more reasons to visit Noyes - nightlife scene, events, and upscale options.</i></p>
HILL ARTS	CENTRAL EVANSTON	WEST END	MAIN DEMPSTER
<p>"neglected" "emerging"</p> <p>"industrial character"</p> <p><i>People want awareness that there are local spots worth visiting.</i></p>	<p>"residential" "easy"</p> <p><i>"I like the lights in the trees, as well as the flowers"</i></p> <p><i>People want more bars and restaurants to balance the residential feel.</i></p>	<p>"essential" "diverse"</p> <p>"convenient and affordable with plenty of free parking."</p> <p><i>People want larger sit-down restaurants, streetscape improvements, and public art.</i></p>	<p>"diverse" "neighborhood"</p> <p>"Very walkable and close to many public transit sources."</p> <p><i>People want outdoor seating and improved streetscape elements with more bars, restaurants, and bookstores.</i></p>



How do we uniquely showcase what businesses in each district are offering while capturing it in under one Evanston experience?

MARKETING

TAKE ACTION!

- 1. Create an identity and narrative for the collective of Evanston's business districts and programs.**
- 2. Consider Evanston Business District's target audiences throughout all marketing and communications materials.**
- 3. Design all of Evanston Business District marketing and communications to engage with the targeted audiences.**
- 4. Reorganize the City and Economic Development websites and newsletters to better support marketing and business development assets.**
- 5. Improve the organization and promotion of non-SSA business districts.**

MARKETING

TAKE ACTION!

Enjoy
EVANSTON

MARKETING

TAKE ACTION!



**EVENTS &
PROGRAMMING**

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HOW IT WORKS NOW



Events are organized by various organizations, primarily the SSAs

WHAT WE HEARD

"For some businesses, the summertime slump is very real."

*"Custer Street Fair is a great example – Hundreds of booths and **little to none of them were local.**"*



"Northwestern students don't go to events."

"Focus on arts and entertainment needs to be considered. It's a strength that we can leverage."

"We get no attention from anyone else... We have to be the tourism generators."

"Winter is our slow period. It's hard to get anyone out in the winter."

"I miss the ethnic arts festival and events with live music."

OUR EVALUATION

- Evaluated the permitting process because that's the thing the City can currently control.
- Collected info on how events are produced, what kind of support SSA managers and Downtown organizations get.
- Asked business community how events could help them more.
- Compared to other places & expectations articulated in the survey.

OUR EVALUATION

Program review example: Street Closures, process & fees

1. Special Event Permit Application Fee
2. Additional Permit Fees:
 - Tent Permit
 - Electrical Permit
 - Liquor License
 - Temporary Food Permit
 - Park Permit
 - Metered Parking Spaces
 - Water Trailer
 - Garbage / Recycling Cans
 - Barricades for Street Events

Each permit listed has its own regulation and requirements for submission.



EVENT PERMITTING REVIEW COMMITTEE
Submission Deadline: January 31st

OUR EVALUATION



**CHICAGO
EVENT DECK
2022**

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES
AND PARTNERSHIPS

DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

**A PARTNERSHIP
focused on your goals**

BRAND AWARENESS
Promote your brand at high profile city events that draw massive crowds

CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT
Reach consumers of all ages, ethnic and economic backgrounds throughout Chicago

DIGITAL PROMOTION
Connect to our extensive social media platforms

MARKETING
Integrate with large scale, market-wide campaigns to enhance brand awareness

EXPERT PRODUCTION
Partner with a dedicated team of event professionals committed to a successful partnership

STEWARDSHIP
Let us be advocates of your needs and provide focused management of your resources

REFERENCE: CHICAGO

Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events (DCASE)

The processing fee for a Special Event Permit Application starts at \$100 if submitted more than 60 days before the start of the event.

- \$100 (60+ days prior to the event)
- \$200 (59 - 45 days prior to the event)
- \$500 (44 - 37 days prior to the event)
- \$1,000 (36 - 29 days prior to the event)
- \$2,000 (28 - 21 days prior to the event)

REFERENCE: ANN ARBOR

Contact Office of the City Manager, Community Services Area Administrator

Special Event Permit Submission ~60 working days before event. Processing takes approximately 5 weeks, stated on application.

Also offers a rate schedule for service positions (police, security, etc) and a **Community Events Fund** to cover these costs for some applicants while funds are available.

Enhance the quality and broaden the appeal of regular or series events.



Evolve or expand the impact of existing events.



Use events to drive people to many different parts of Evanston.

Restaurant Week 2022

From March 25 to April 10, enjoy the best selections from your favorite restaurants.

Find new ways to raise the profile of local businesses.

Activate for longer periods of time, and with more regularity, and during slow periods for local businesses.



Partner with Northwestern to produce larger events and programs that appeal to students and visitors.

Draw sponsorship and partners beyond Evanston.



EVENTS & PROGRAMMING

TAKE ACTION!

- 1. Drive increased activity in retail districts with high quality and frequent events and programming.**
- 2. Activate Evanston's most unique public spaces more often.**
- 3. Create a special events coordinator for the City to create and promote city sponsored events and oversee permitting, coordination, and implementation of events.**

EVENTS & PROGRAMMING

TAKE ACTION!



ACTIVATE FOUNTAIN SQUARE!



Winter fun!

ACTIVATE FOUNTAIN SQUARE!



Summer fun!



Evanston's Fountain Square



Madison Farmers Market



Des Moines Farmers Market

PLACEMAKING



Repeating or evolving an successful activation...

HOW IT WORKS NOW



INFRASTRUCTURE



STREETS



LAW & ORDER



PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is seen as a “frivolous” investment and not a core City function, but *Placemaking is an economic necessity*

WHAT WE HEARD

“More closures for a more walkable city center to congregate, have some drinks, more outdoor seating..”

“Make the areas thriving gathering spaces.”

“I would love to see Noyes Street get more of a brand, one that incorporates the arts personality from Noyes, the college vibe from Northwestern, and the wonderful small local businesses.”

“Use imagination. The City needs to do something about the empty property like pop-up shops/events.”

“The work has been very effective (e.g., the colorful pots with plants and the multicolored stripes painted on the sidewalks.”

.”

“More public art!”



Doing a lot with a little.



Doing a lot with a little.



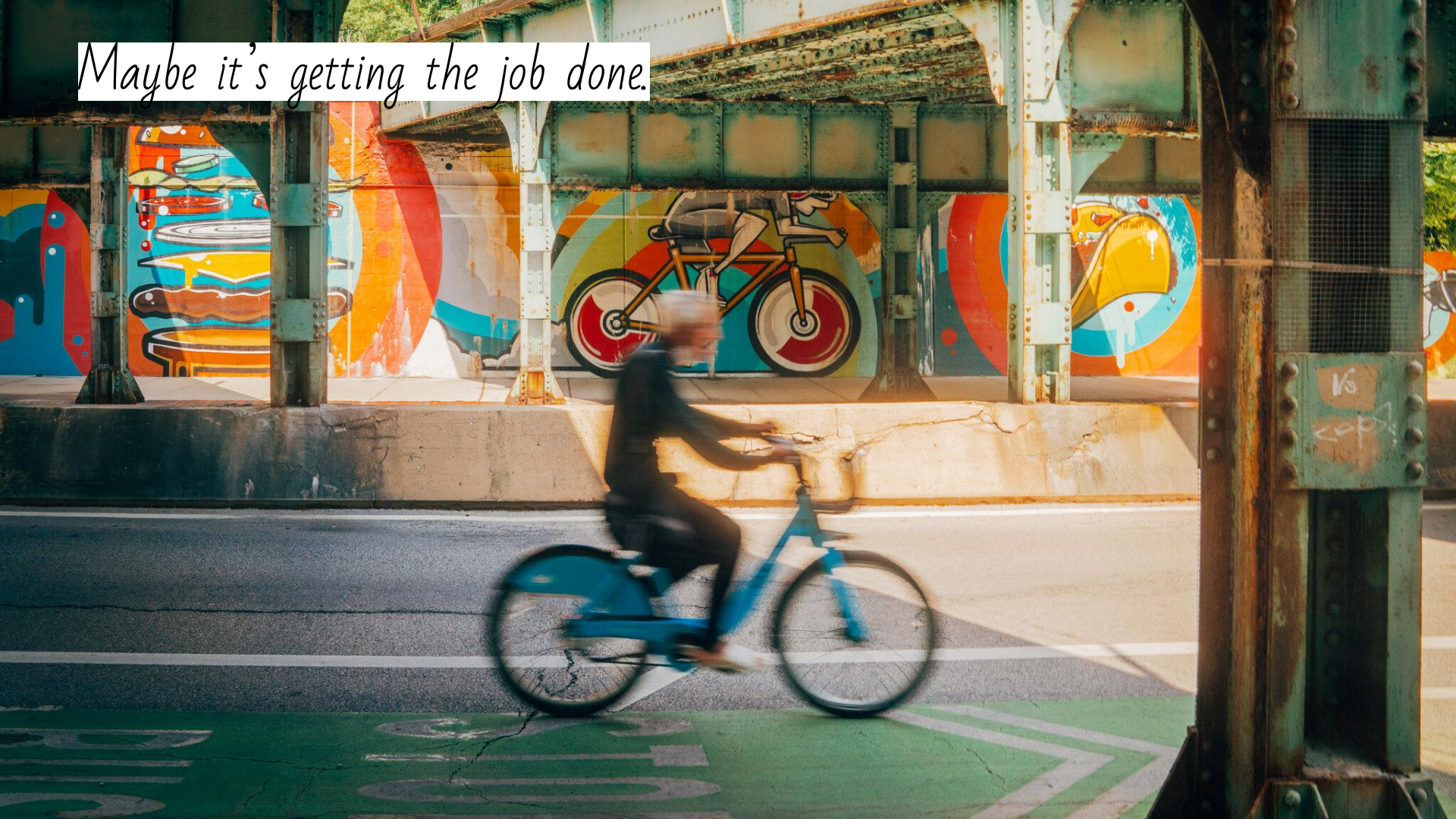
Doing a little more with a lot.



What areas don't need as much attention?



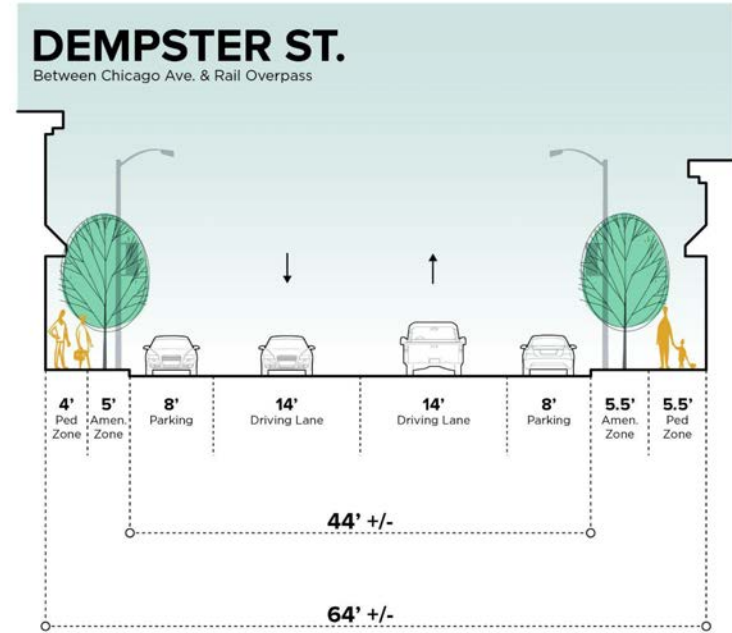
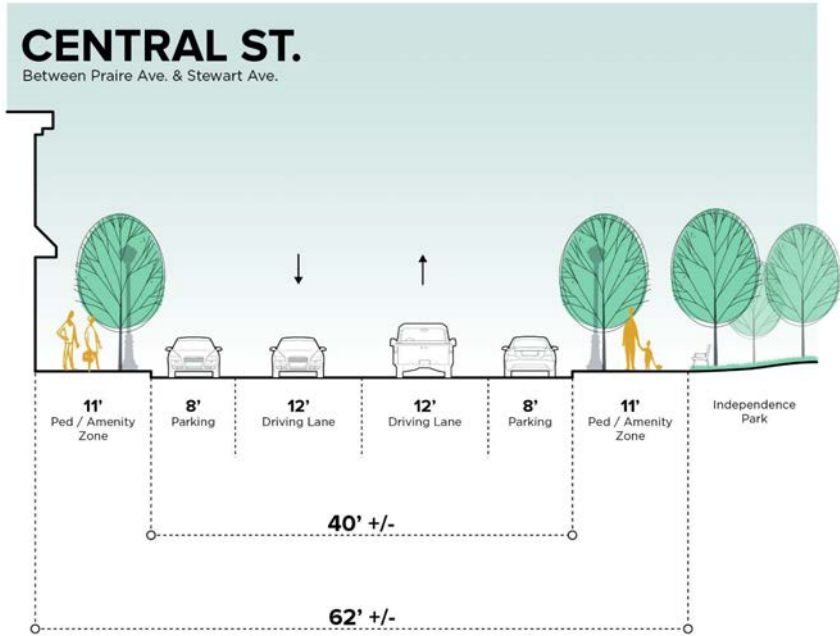
Maybe it's getting the job done.





*Or finding new opportunities
for temporary activation.*

What should we prioritize in the space that exists?



Are there ways to create more space?

PLACEMAKING

TAKE ACTION!

- 1. Invest in transformative physical public space projects to support retail districts**
- 2. Provide better design guidance and support for pedestrian-facing elements of small businesses that contribute to a great public realm by creating and codifying an Evanston style manual/design guidelines**
- 3. Redraw the District Maps to better reflect goals to achieve more equitable resource distribution and build identity.**

MDM PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS



Wayfinding and Signage

MAIN STREET

Lighting

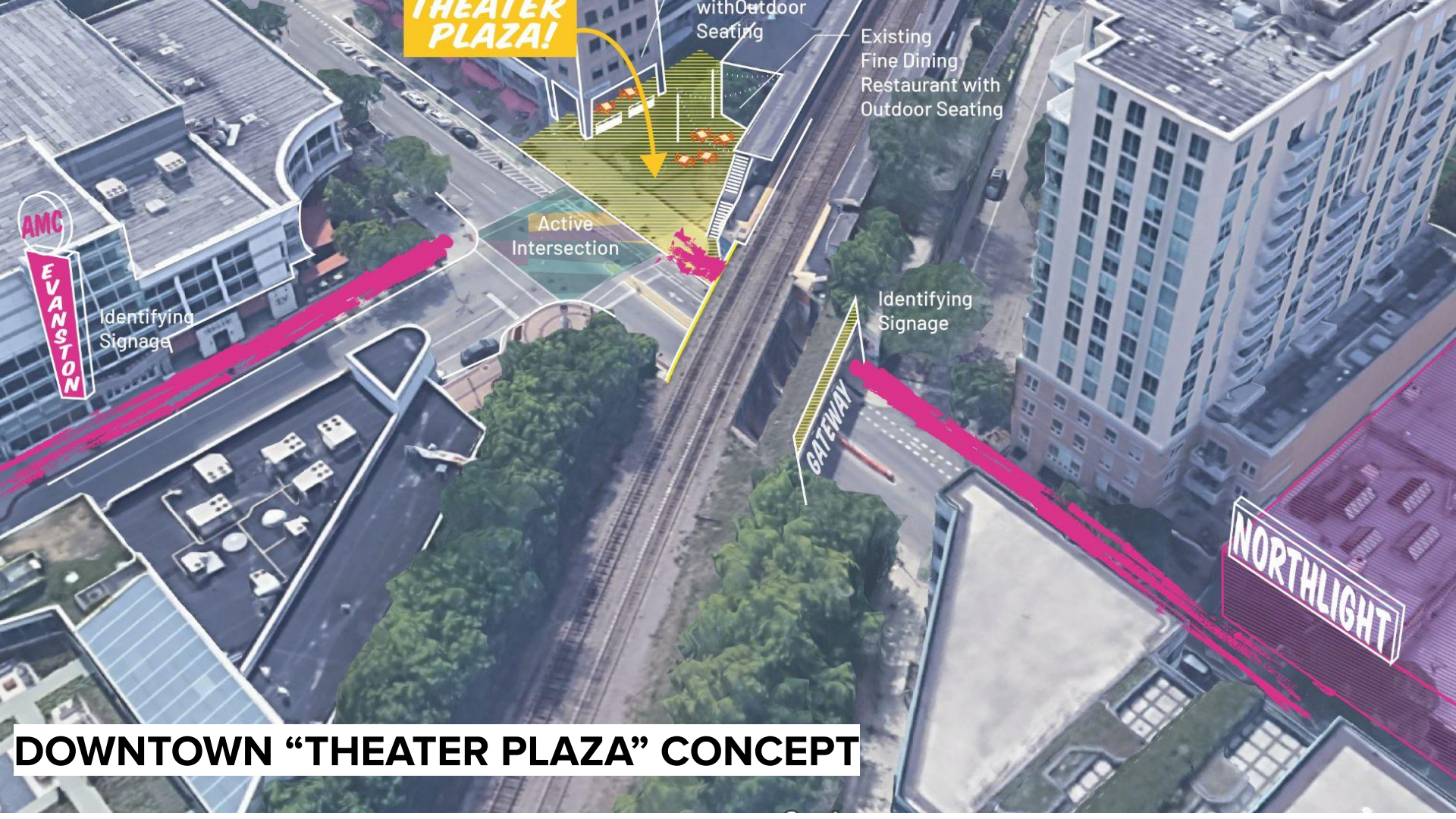
New Public Art

Improved Crosswalks

Clean up cracking paint



What new ideas could enhance leftover spaces?



THEATER PLAZA!

with Outdoor Seating

Existing Fine Dining Restaurant with Outdoor Seating

Active Intersection

Identifying Signage

AMC
EVANSTON

Identifying Signage

GATEWAY

NORTHLIGHT

DOWNTOWN "THEATER PLAZA" CONCEPT

Improved
Lighting

Wayfinding
Signage

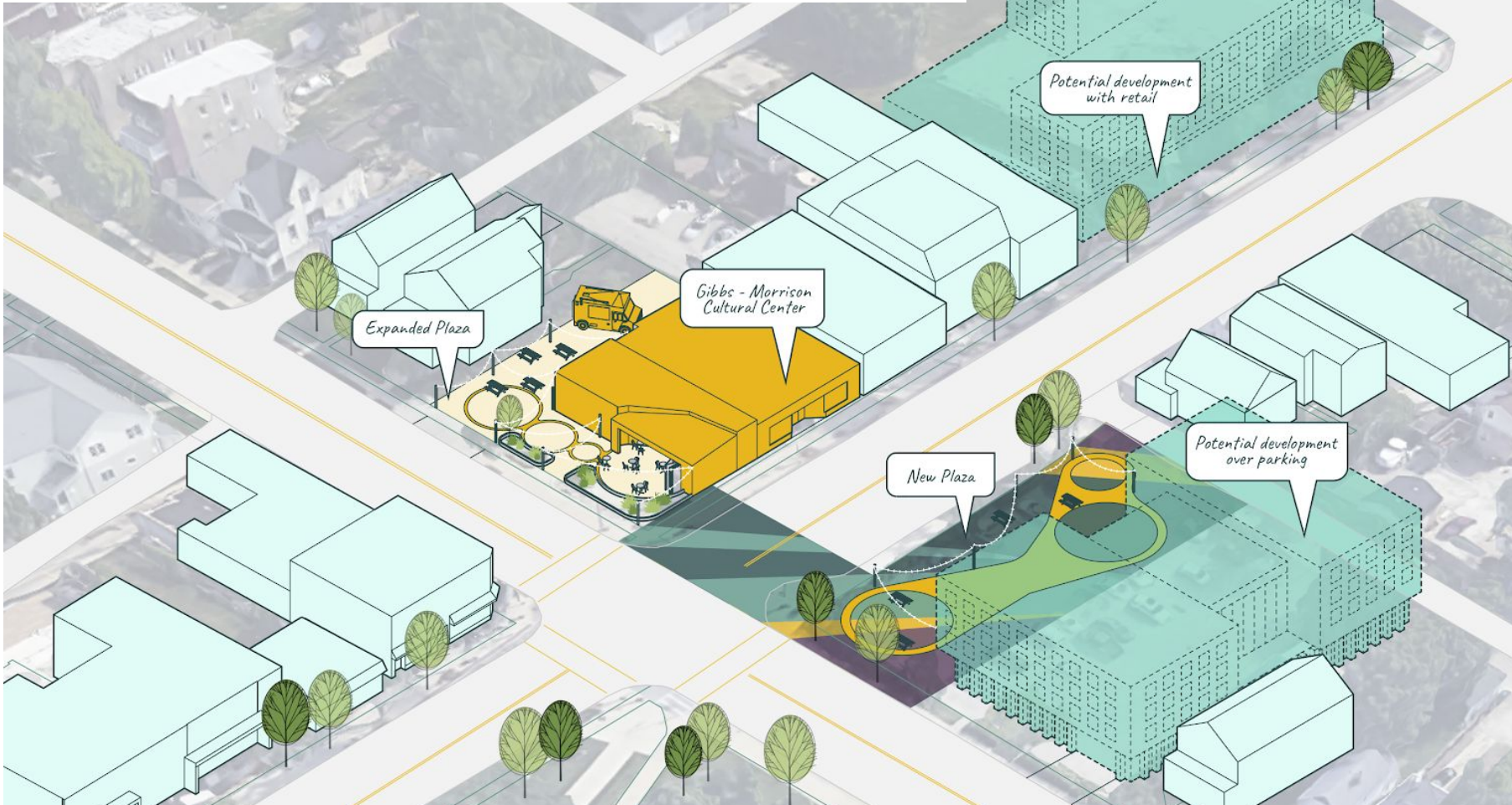
Outdoor
Seating

THEATER
PLAZAI

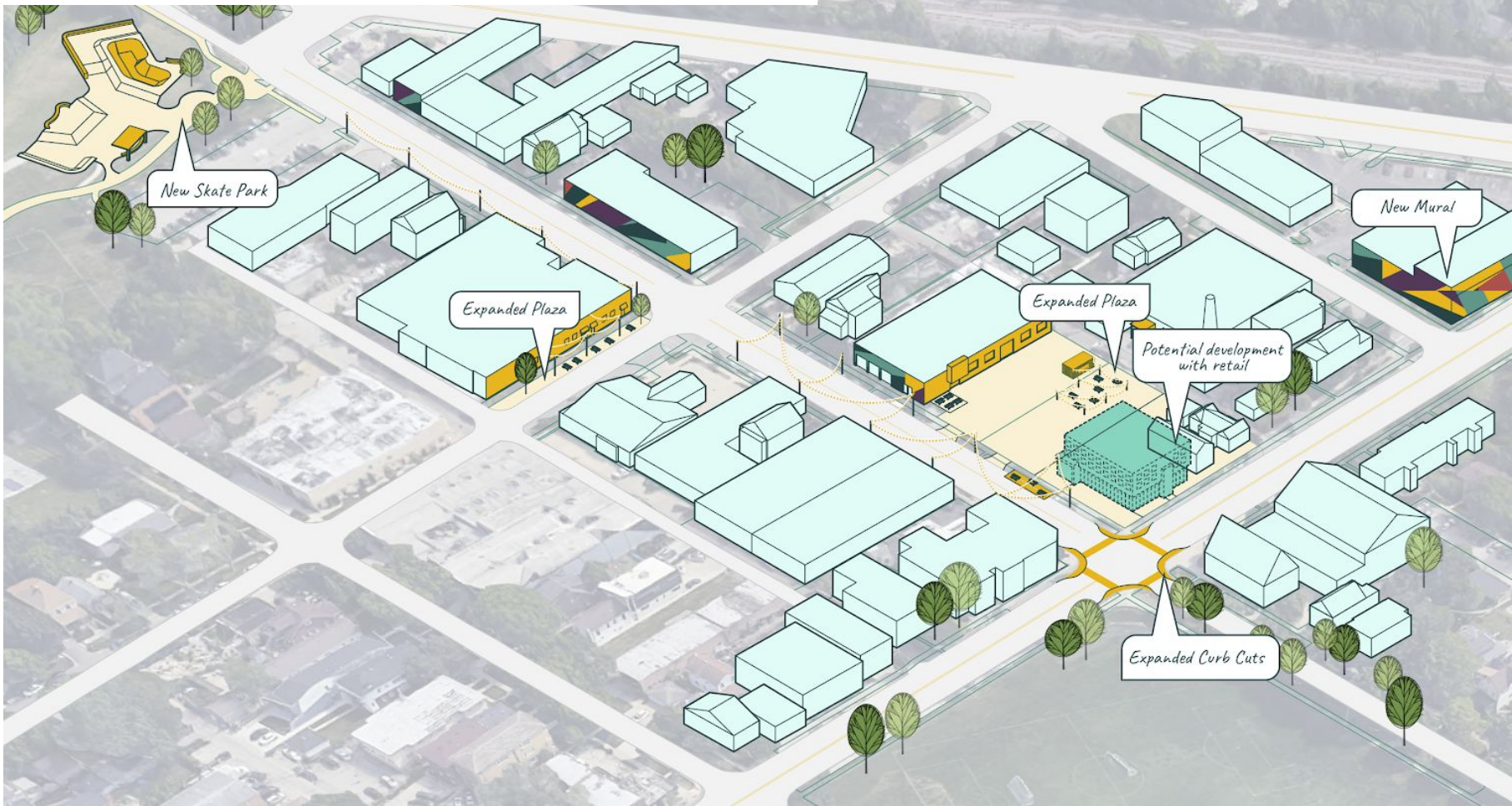
DOWNTOWN "THEATER PLAZA" CONCEPT



CHURCH & DODGE PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS



HILL ARTS PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS





Independence Park

**STRUCTURED
PARKING**

Food Truck
Stall

PICNIC EDGE

ground floor
Retail Corner
Pop-up Box

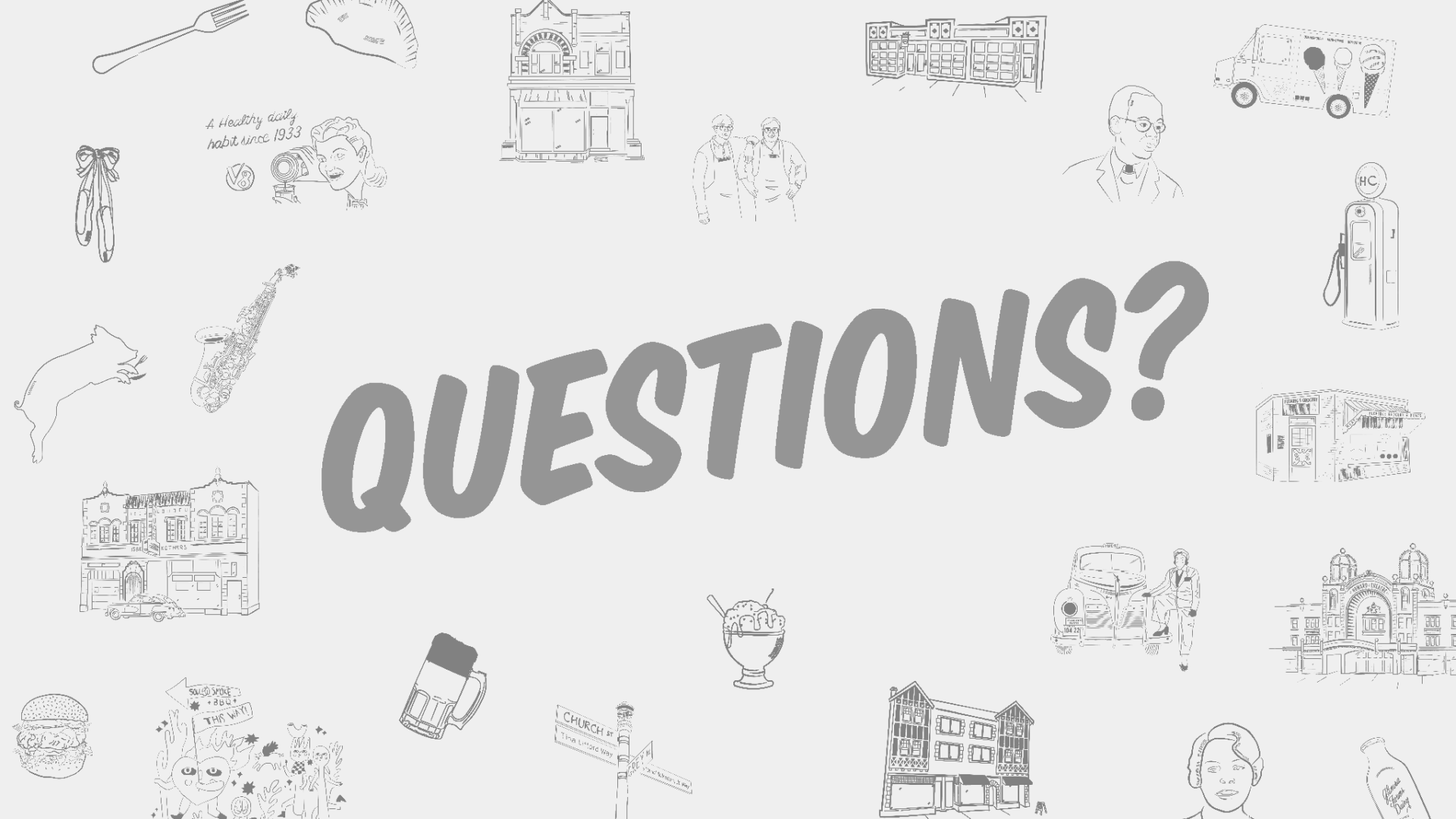
More visible parking
entrance/exit

Improved
Crossing

CENTRAL STREET



QUESTIONS?





[Ready to share on ED site!](#)

THANKS!

