

**CITY OF EVANSTON
CITIZEN INPUT SESSION
July 26, 2005**

Topic: A SWOT Analysis. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats.

Strengths:

- Location – lake front
- Diversity/harmony in
- Balance – housing price points, income, services
- Schools (public and private)
- Vibrant downtown
- Multiple business districts
- Numerous not-for-profit agencies that fill lots of gaps
- Excellent national reputation
- The people
- Trees
- Balance/population
- Educated and engaged citizenry
- Good public transportation system
- Diversity of houses of worship
- Desirability and appreciation of housing
- Prioritize services for our older population
- Easy access to a great wealth of cultural events
- Architecture
- University
- Good restaurants
- Workforce – highly educated
- Local newspapers – diversity
- Great farmer’s market
- High density transit – oriented development near transit
- Parks and recreation – multi-generational
- Arts program
- Fine library system
- Excellent record keeping of history of Evanston
- Evanston youth employment program
- Proximity to Chicago
- Booming development
- Significant history of supporting justice for all citizens, particularly school children

- ❑ Volunteerism
- ❑ Isolation – secluded from freeways
- ❑ Competent police and fire departments
- ❑ 2 major hospitals
- ❑ Great 4th of July parade and first night
- ❑ New sewer system

Weaknesses:

- ❑ Lack of communication with people West of Ridge (5th ward)
- ❑ Extremely complicated system of boards and commissions – make it difficult to follow developments
- ❑ Losing seniors in community due to cost of housing and living
- ❑ Lack of a harbor and subsequent benefits of
- ❑ Lack of youth empowerment
- ❑ Isolation from main arteries (poor access)
- ❑ No focus on entertainment for all ages (other than restaurants and movies) – bowling alley, live theatre, roller-skating, etc.
- ❑ Lack of activities for teens
- ❑ Lack of due diligence, re: ADA and building process
- ❑ No parking garage downtown
- ❑ Street(s) resurfacing
- ❑ Housing costs tied to evaluation of housing
- ❑ Year round multi-functional recreation building/programs not associated with the schools
- ❑ Development – lack of a good development vision/plan – housing, retail, commercial
- ❑ Too many TIFs
- ❑ Open space at schools and among/between our parks
- ❑ Not bicycle friendly – no safe place to bike, just the lake front
- ❑ Nimby regarding diversity
- ❑ Housing affordability
- ❑ Threats to closing branch libraries
- ❑ Born here – cannot find a job and housing in Evanston
- ❑ Insufficient parks compared to neighboring communities
- ❑ Decline of single family homes compared to overall housing
- ❑ Access to Evanston – transportation
- ❑ Inadequate cooperation and communication between City, school districts and not-for-profits
- ❑ Economic development for minorities
- ❑ Lack of tracking of affordable housing and funding for not-for-profit organizations
- ❑ Taxes too high
- ❑ Decreasing supply of rental housing
- ❑ Continuing tension between City and Northwestern University
- ❑ Luxury housing lacks (condos) architectural integrity
- ❑ Lack of overall local energy plan to deal with global warming, sustainability, alternate energy sources
- ❑ High density housing has created over-crowding

- ❑ Narrow streets and narrow sidewalks and not pedestrian friendly – est. with new development
- ❑ More tree trimming for street lighting to work better
- ❑ Decreasing number of middle class and upper middle class people choosing public schools as an alternative
- ❑ Revenue- not enough of it; lack of diversity of revenue
- ❑ Beach tokens – limits use of beaches for low income residents
- ❑ Lack of traffic lines on the streets
- ❑ Development without regard to environmental issues
 - Green space
 - Green code
- ❑ Relatively high crime for a suburb
- ❑ Unattractive gateway to City on Chicago Avenue
- ❑ Street lights don't light
- ❑ Extinction of smaller family, locally owned businesses
- ❑ Lack of focus on activities West of Ridge and South Evanston (activities that bring the community together)
- ❑ Lack of commercial office space
- ❑ Zoning regulations need updating
- ❑ Erosion of young middle class families
- ❑ Parking and Machiavellian rules
- ❑ Over reliance on real estate taxes to balance budget
- ❑ Lack of communication to citizens as to plan
- ❑ Lack of emphasis on recycling – especially high density
- ❑ Lack of integration of transit systems (e.g., Evanston Hospital, Northwestern University, CTA)
- ❑ Lack of accessibility to areas, re: ADA compliance
 - Parking, shopping (Maple Avenue garage – first floor)
 - Due diligence and attention during design and construction

Opportunities:

- ❑ Development and redevelop = opportunity to design for pedestrian, ADA, environmental, etc. friendly (demand good quality design to enhance quality of life rather than detract)
- ❑ Underserved populations should benefit from new housing development – low/moderate income – zoning should require this to happen
- ❑ Comprehensive urban design plan – compliment zoning ordinance
- ❑ Promote our fabulous schools – achievement and diversity
- ❑ Draw more high end retailers
- ❑ Garbage a resource – not a problem; recycling – garbage is a resource
- ❑ Preserving natural resources, recycling, etc.
- ❑ Leverage and support artistic community
- ❑ Hiring local people and promoting from within for local government and school districts
- ❑ Use no pesticides and improve our health
- ❑ Unique population allow to be leader in ecology and City Council needs to lead
- ❑ Promote better transportation and alternative modes of transportation

- ❑ Develop better working relationship with Northwestern
- ❑ Listen to and capture/integrate ideas of members of boards and commissions into actions
- ❑ U.S. Coast Guard station would benefit Evanston
- ❑ Alternative revenue sources
 - Consider employee and municipal tax
- ❑ Review processes of city government – make process clearer/streamline process
- ❑ Utilize intelligence and diversity of community
- ❑ Include people and environment in design, e.g., sidewalks – listen to ideas – put people into design
- ❑ Controlled growth policy – zoning, housing, streetscapes
- ❑ Structure of city government
 - Streamline
 - More predictable
 - Clearer

Threats:

- ❑ Population growth
- ❑ Funding a multiplicity of requirements
- ❑ Loss of the perception that Evanston is a great place to raise children – single people moving in – loss of diversity (racial)
- ❑ Taxes – loss of sales tax/internet catalog and otherwise
- ❑ Reduction of Federal and State Grants for public facilities
- ❑ Fear of change by a stodgy citizenry
- ❑ Global warming
- ❑ Increasing property taxes making it less affordable to live in
- ❑ Strategic plan that is doomed to failure if don't consider input and comments of citizens
- ❑ Over reliance on chain stores and restaurants – national in scope, don't have community's interests at heart
- ❑ Rising energy prices
- ❑ Threat to the unity of the community; negative community perceptions by outsiders, loss of sense of history/historical perspective
- ❑ Apathy
 - Not following through
- ❑ Boundary lines between community – buy/sell
- ❑ Decision makers not following existing rules, plans, etc.
 - Loss of faith in officials