

**STATE OF THE CITY ADDRESS**  
**FEBRUARY 16, 2007**  
**HOTEL ORRINGTON**  
**MAYOR LORRAINE H. MORTON**  
**CITY OF EVANSTON**

**It was in 1978 that the then Mayor of Evanston, Jay Lytle, proposed to Ira Golan, Director of the Chamber of Commerce at that time, that he be allowed to give his Stat of The City Address at its Annual Luncheon to be held at the Orrington Hotel. The request was granted and well received. Thus was set the precedent for the luncheon program that we have today. Jay, in 1982, proposed to the Chamber a new awards program called "The Mayors Award for the Arts". This too was enthusiastically received. Awards were to be gifts from artists who were housed at Noyes Cultural Arts Center, a generosity that continues until today. However, in 1993, the year I cam into this office, Joe Zendell, Director at Noyes, elicited awards for the arts from Ron Issacson, owner of Mindscape. When he closed his business the practice returned to that we have today. It is long over due that we express appreciation to the Chamber, now in its 86<sup>th</sup> year, for the fulfillment of its mission to promote business growth and development. The Chamber's most recent initiative that will undoubtedly have significance for the future of Evanston is the Chamber sponsorship of the "Young Professionals of Evanston". This organization of 160 members has the goal "to engage and connect young professionals and positively shape the future of Evanston". They envision an exciting future for Evanston's next generation of young talent. Thank you Jonathan, as the present director of Evanston's Chamber, for all you do and have done to solicited and sustain the growth of small businesses in Evanston that add fuel to Evanston's economic growth.**

**We must also express our appreciation for gifts from artists in Evanston who have donated their art works for these many years to the "Mayor's Award for the Arts". Their influence and artistry have done more than that printed on banners on poles in downtown Evanston and in other media stating "Arts are the heart of Evanston". Evanston artist and their promoters used their influence to advocate for a percentage of funds from city developments to be used to purchase art works to adorn new city owned structures. On**

**behalf of all citizens of Evanston, we thank you with the realization that every piece of your art work comes from your soul. For this there is no gratitude that can match your gift from God.**

**How is the city doing? Were it not for the 40 million dollars that the city is required to pay into the fire and pension funds we would be in tip top shape. If we do not aggressively eliminate this problem and return to full funding we are subject to a loss of our triple A rating. This Council and this generation are not the cause of this. Somehow years ago the city did not adequately fund the pensions. Now we are required to come up with the actuarial determined cost. Yet, we have a strong transportation network, the city's commercial sector has been revitalized by recent downtown development, the city will reap our first authorized TIF rewards in 2008 but the money will be received until 2009. I congratulate Judith Aiello for her knowledge and sound judgments in acquiring and use of the TIFS. She brought tax increment financing to the attention of the Council in 1983 and has remained on top of the conditions and possibilities since we began our downtown 2 TIF district. During recent years, our sales tax receipts have remained stable, unemployment is lower than the national average, and we have a lively attractive business district in downtown Evanston and in other areas of the city. The New York Times reported that Evanston is a hot bed of new urbanism planning ideas, the incubator that was started in the Research Park is now in two buildings and houses some 50 emerging technology companies, school test scores are rising and district 65 finances are totally in the black, the city is considering a Youth Commission, new buildings and restorations are rising in all parts of Evanston, the city manager has hired a police chief, another assistant city manager, and finance director. There is much more of which each of you here is aware.**

**A committee of citizens who desire to retain the Civic Center building has obtained over 2000 signatures in order to place a referendum on the April ballot that would provide an avenue through which Evanston citizens can indicate whether they wish to retain the building. In response to that, at the Monday night Council meeting, the City Council voted to place a similar referendum on the ballot. The difference being that referendum states a perceived cost. Every one here knows my position on this matter. My position is supported from my reading all information available about this matter. I know exactly when and why the motion was made, by whom it was motioned, the discussion or lack of that followed they original**

**motion. This decision was made by a previous Council. We have five new Council members that came on board at the two thousand four elections. They confirmed the decision of the previous Council. I respect their present position, and though I do not agree it is my hope that this respect is reciprocal. I remain very comfortable with the position I have taken.**

**Now to affordable housing, it is my hope that the Council will have an opportunity to re-examine this entire issue. The City of Evanston is not under the state gun to provide 10 percent affordable housing as our neighbors to the north. We have more than met state standards, so that is not an issue for us. Our issue is to open up all of Evanston to affordable housing to qualifying citizens, those limited in finances, those with disabilities, and those who are provided for through the various agencies. I would like to help create ways to enhance funding for affordable housing within those agencies now in existence in the city by using fully funds from any sources that become available each year. Also, if we do not find ways to place people in the 35 empty houses now in Evanston, it is likely they will deteriorate and become a blight on the city. This way we can spread available usable funds for qualifying citizens of Evanston in every ward. That is reasonable, sensible and doable Inclusionary Housing. To place the responsibility for what is termed affordable Inclusionary Housing on future developers smacks as a subtle form of discrimination since it is only they who must pay to play. I think the Council, those hired by the City who are involved in any type of housing, pertinent boards and commissions, and fund receiving agencies are qualified to architect an Evanston plan that will be a model for cities like ours.**

**We continue to be upward bound. Though citizens bear the heavy tax burden, we see results of astute city planning. We have made some errors. I consider the errors not to be in a stand alone position. It is a well known fact that many, many activities and positioning of Council deliberations and decisions are influenced by citizen participation. Decision that often override the better thinking of staff and Council. But, this Council Manager form of government allows for that. The fact that citizens voted for nine separate wards with one elected representation from among each of them, makes it so that it is almost impossible to divert from a division of thinking. We have a form of government, vested in nine aldermen from nine areas and a mayor that may change each time there is an election.**

**Each elected alderman is required to represent that ward's interest even though the action taken may have city wide applications and affect citizens in other wards. An example of this is the purchase of Ridge Avenue from the State to satisfy a desire from residents on Ridge Avenue for post topped traffic signals as opposed to state financed extended arm light poles that those citizens did not want. Fortunately for us, this 3.6 million jurisdictional transfer to the city from federal and state funds for repair of Ridge Avenue from Howard to Clark Street has allowed us to accommodate those citizen's desires. The city acquiesced for the citizens. That required the city to purchase that portion of Ridge if we were to place the pole signals the citizens wanted. Now we have bought a section of a street for which we must provide financing in the future for any repairs and upgrading. The string of lights you see across Ridge Avenue is temporary and an accommodation to the City so that we can go ahead with our plans to place the desired signals. They will eventually be removed. I applaud David Jennings for his leadership in getting us out from under that 3.6 million debt and bearing the burden for getting rid of the purchased signal we thought we would use.**

**This past week property owners opened mail from the Cook County Assessor. It came at the same time the Council is considering the budget proposed by our City Manager. The Council gave direction to the City Manager that she took very seriously and at their word. The requests, among other items, required the prioritizing of city services in order to present a balanced budget. Before the budget planning process got under full sway the City Manager proposed that the Council engage in a strategic planning process. This was done with total participation by elected officials, all department heads, other pertinent staff and citizens. Many planning sessions were held before the final document was approved. It was before budget deliberations that the Council wrote as its mission "to create the most livable city in America".**

**As you know, the Council has not finalized its budget deliberations. The next budget planning session is scheduled for next Monday night. At this point the City Manager has received support from the Chamber and Inventure for the direction she is taking as written in the draft document that was available to those who requested it. Inventure addressed the Council with words to the effect that "this budget is different as it attempts to deal with longer term funding**

**issues.....and wants to begin retooling and restructuring the way the city provides services as an answer to long term financing needs....and reduce future tax burdens”.**

**The strategic plan that I mentioned earlier was a document in progress for about nine months but provided the framework for goals and objectives to be implemented over the next five years. Thirteen goals were accepted. The seventh goal is one I would like to bring for your thinking and support. The goal reads, “continue to develop a collaborative and reciprocal relationship with Northwestern University”. Five objectives were listed. Two of them address “meetings”. I would like to frame remarks pertinent to the goal and, in addition, to those three objectives that pertain to relationships, needs and opportunities analysis, researching positive University/government relationships, identifying successful approaches to working together, and performing needs and opportunities analyses and develop common delivery of services such as dispatching (911), parking, recreation, employment opportunities, etc.”**

**No matter what people say who may view our relationship with Northwestern University in a negative way, Northwestern is the goose that laid the golden egg when it established this city. The state chapter allowed the University 2,000 acres but today it covers about 242 acres.**

**Two years ago we were standing on the brink of interpersonal disaster. I stood before you seeking a resolution to the situation that had us at odds with Northwestern. I referred to the courage of the city previously when it undertook the redevelopment of the downtown. I asked that we show that courage again to remake our town and gown relationship and go forward with the negotiating team request not to go forward with the lawsuit. We had the courage and the matter was settled. Can we not build on that relationship and realize that the whole is equal to the sum of its parts? Northwestern can assist the city and the city can assist the University. We are forever linked. There can never be a divorce.**

**Our Moody Triple A rating is predicated on information recorded under Moody’s report to the City Manger affirming the rating. Under one section the topic states: “Northwestern University provides economic anchor to affluent Chicago suburb”. The beginning of the**

**paragraph reads: "...Evanston will continue to experience long term growth in its sales and property tax base due to the considerable downtown redevelopment projects underway, the economic stability provided by the presence of Northwestern University.....The local employment base dominated by institutional concerns, namely 5,600 employees at the University,.....The combination of an affluent permanent population, and the relatively inelastic spending habits of the City's student population have made the downtown a popular location for retailers. Despite the sizeable undergraduate student population (10.4 of resident population), per capita income and median income exceed state and national norms". Of course we are proud of that written report from Moody's Investment Service. It records the importance of the University to the City's economy. Another report from Bay Area Economics, a national economics consulting firm, shows the impact of the University on city revenues. Recorded in the firm's report is the statement that through students and employees spending, monies are given to non-profit organizations. The University, through its community relations department, .....contributes to District 202 and 65. In addition to other payments, the University generates dollars in direct payment to Evanston economy. When other financial considerations are factored in, beyond the growth in the number of students and their spending in city facilities, the contributions are higher. The city provides services to Northwestern that can be calculated into dollars for fire, ambulance and police services among other things.**

**The picture is clear. We help each other. If we can continue to improve the atmosphere of mutual respect there are tremendous opportunities for Northwestern and the City. We can utilize the University's academic and cultural offerings. We can allow students and faculty to take advantage of Evanston as a clinical urban laboratory. In that respect our diverse population offers many opportunities so essential to the fabric of our society at this time. Working together the sky is the limit. Second guessing motives only serve to stymie potential as well as the enrichment of the lives of the total Evanston population. Surely we as a total community can withstand and ignore the voices that prevent us from enhancing our community. We must nurture this partnership that began over a century ago with a gift of land to a fledging community. Let us move ahead by faith in one another, trusting one another, respecting one another, and with a fellowship that allows our strategic plan goal "to develop a collaborative and reciprocal relationship with Northwestern University" to become a reality.**