

**Exhibit A - Executive Summary  
City of Evanston**

With a population of 78,000, the City of Evanston stretches four miles along Lake Michigan’s western shoreline just north of Chicago. Evanston is a highly dense, nearly built-out community, with few vacant parcels and no opportunity for large-scale annexation or land acquisition. Its 7.8 square miles include vibrant residential neighborhoods, thriving business districts, and varied recreational facilities and offerings. Interspersed throughout the community are over 290 acres of parks, including five public swimming beaches, athletic fields, and bicycling and jogging trails. Evanston is located 12 miles from downtown Chicago and provides access to a variety of jobs, excellent public transportation via Metra UP-North and the CTA Purple Line, and is highly walkable and bikeable. Evanston is home to Northwestern University, NorthShore University HealthSystem Evanston Hospital, Ascension Saint Francis Hospital, Rotary International headquarters, and two highly regarded school districts.

Despite Evanston’s significant location and amenities, housing production has been limited in part by the adoption of early land use controls and the first zoning code in Illinois in the 1920s. Evanston’s historic development patterns predate exclusionary zoning practices and these neighborhoods are inexorably linked with the City’s identity. They represent vibrant human-centered environments and a rich juxtaposition and diversity in residential densities, socio-economic strata, and housing choice that remain desirable but are not replicable under current land use controls. More restrictive zoning, including single units on large lots has resulted in housing demand that far outweighs the supply – creating significant affordability and displacement pressures and eroding the existing attainable housing stock and starter homes.

### **Generational Opportunity**

In 2024, the City started a generational opportunity to develop a new Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code and update its Inclusionary Housing Ordinance (IHO)—critical initiatives that will position Evanston to become more inclusive, more affordable, more resilient, and less economically and racially segregated. These efforts will advance the City’s goals and objectives around the creation of: sustainable, vibrant, and human-centered places—places that prioritize people, walkability, and alternative and mass transportation over cars; vibrant human experiences and attainable housing over parking—authentic, compatible, and varied architecture over commodified and isolating development patterns; and sustainable use of city-owned assets that provide publicly controlled, significant opportunity sites to develop lasting and meaningful housing, especially housing for low and moderate income (low/mod) households.

The new comprehensive plan and zoning code that embodies those goals are expected to be finalized and approved in 2025. The result will be: streamlined entitlement and permitting processes; land use regulations that encourage production of additional and diverse market-driven attainable housing; much-needed density to support our business districts, City services, public transit, and schools; and newly-created market rate development to contribute

more affordable units through our IHO. These anticipated changes to the City's zoning code are similar to those enacted by the City of Minneapolis starting in 2009. With those changes, between 2017 and 2022, the City of Minneapolis had significantly better outcomes than the rest of the state of Minnesota including: greater increase in housing production, essentially flat rents, and a decrease in homelessness.<sup>1</sup>

However, becoming more affordable and resilient and less economically and racially segregated will not be accomplished through reformed land use regulation alone. To amplify these opportunities and expedite meaningful progress toward our affordable housing goals, the City has identified key remaining barriers that must be addressed and the associated strategies and activities that will provide transformative outcomes to strengthen Evanston and build a more vibrant and resilient community.

### **Building on A New Foundation**

The City of Evanston has identified two significant barriers to affordable housing production and preservation and has proposed associated strategies to mitigate or remove them through this grant. First, limited available land coupled with the high cost of land hinders the City's ability to increase affordable housing production. To address this barrier, we propose expanding financial and staff capacity to strategically develop publicly-owned land for affordable housing development and encouraging the development of Accessory Dwelling Units for low/mod households. Second, so that the City does not lose ground as the need for affordable housing far exceeds the existing supply, the City will expand its preservation efforts by escalating its home rehabilitation program to serve more household and include energy-efficiency and resiliency, investing in shared equity models for long-term housing affordability, and increasing access to housing in higher income neighborhoods. These strategies will take advantage of the newly aligned comprehensive plan and zoning code where attainable housing is prioritized, density and housing variety are encouraged, and land use regulations and policies that reflect that.

Addressing these barriers through our proposed activities will provide opportunities for low/mod households to enjoy increased access to decent, suitable, and affordable housing. The activities directly fund the production of new, primarily affordable housing units, streamline and incentivize housing production, and expand opportunities to maintain the City's existing affordable housing stock. The City's location near jobs and public transit, history of progressive housing policies, and shared and determined vision for the future, combined with Evanston's community capital and political will, uniquely positions the City to leverage housing production and housing preservation strategies to have the most impact and to provide a significant and immediate return on this investment.

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<sup>1</sup> [Minneapolis Land Use Reforms Offer a Blueprint for Housing Affordability](#). The Pew Charitable Trusts. January 4, 2024.