

SECTION 5: TRANSPORTATION AND BASIC INFRASTRUCTURE

TRANSPORTATION

Downtown Evanston is well served by its extensive transportation system, which includes streets, two commuter rail lines, several bus routes, and three large city parking garages. Its grid network of streets allows for high levels of connectivity within the area, providing capacity for pedestrians, automobiles, and bicyclists.

STREETS

Downtown Evanston has a grid network of streets that generally run east-west and north-south. In the western part of downtown, the grid is interrupted by the Metra and CTA rail viaducts that transect the area.

Most of the existing streets are two-way. Several of downtown's main streets function as one-way systems. Church and Davis Streets comprise a one-way system that moves traffic east-west through the area. Sherman and Orrington Avenues function as a north-south one-way system.

While the one-way system efficiently moves traffic through downtown, drivers do sometimes have difficulty moving from block to block to get to a desired destination or parking location. Changing this one-way system to a two-way system to facilitate the movement of shoppers and visitors within the area will be studied further by city staff to determine if such a change is feasible.

Most streets within downtown are in fair to good condition. In most locations, street widths provide ample room for lanes of traffic, on-street parking, and bus stops.

In 2004, the city created a comprehensive Downtown Traffic Model that addressed each intersection and street segment based on the amount of development that was present at the time. The model indicated that intersections and streets were operating at an efficient level of service with capacity for new development.

City staff recently updated the baseline traffic model to include new and proposed development through 2007. Downtown intersections continued to operate efficiently, except Emerson Street at Ridge Road. Improvements to Emerson are currently underway, including establishing it as a roadway with four through travel lanes without on-street parking. City staff will update the model further in 2008, to include the potential ten year development of the opportunity sites noted in the illustrative plan. This work will be done as part of the city's city-wide transportation plan initiative in 2008.

RAIL

Downtown Evanston is served by two major rail lines that connect the city to region, including providing direct access to Chicago. This is a key strength of downtown Evanston. Two commuter rail stations serve downtown, and much of the downtown district lies within a comfortable quarter-mile walk of these facilities. Metra's Union Pacific District North Line provides commuter rail service to Chicago's Loop (and points north, terminating in Kenosha, Wisconsin). The Chicago Transit Authority's Purple Line station has seven stations in Evanston including the Davis station downtown and weekday express service to the Loop.

BUS

Downtown is currently served by both CTA and PACE bus routes with weekday, weekend, and some late night service. Routes generally connect downtown with major regional malls and activity generators. The routes are:

- **CTA Route 93 – California/Dodge:** Provides weekday and Saturday service between downtown Evanston and the Kimball terminal of the CTA Brown Line in Chicago.
- **CTA Route 201 – Central/Ridge:** Provides weekday, weekend, and late-night service between Chicago’s Howard Station, downtown Evanston, and Old Orchard Mall.
- **CTA Route 205 – Chicago/Golf:** Provides weekday service between the Howard Street CTA Red Line terminal, downtown Evanston, Old Orchard Shopping Mall, and the Cook County Courthouse.
- **CTA Route 206 – Evanston Circulator:** Provides weekday service between Howard Station, downtown Evanston, and Central Street/Gross Point Road.
- **PACE Route 208 – Golf Road:** Provides weekday and weekend service between downtown’s Metra Davis Street station and Woodfield Mall in Schaumburg.
- **PACE Route 213 – Green Bay Road:** Provides weekday and Saturday service between downtown’s Metra Davis Street station and Northbrook Court Mall in Northbrook.
- **PACE Route 250 – Dempster Street:** Provides weekday and Saturday service between downtown Evanston and the Des Plaines Metra Station.

Overall bus service appears to be good and is serving the downtown well. Bus shelters and signage are needed in some locations along the streetscape.

BICYCLE

Currently, there are no bicycle lanes or bicycle route markings in downtown. Although limited in supply, bike racks are provided in several locations, including at the Metra and CTA stations.

The city is in near completion of a Bicycle System Improvement Plan. Striped bicycle lanes are proposed for several downtown streets, including parts of Church, Davis, and Lake Streets. Marked bicycle routes are proposed for Emerson Street, Clark Street, Elgin Road, Maple Avenue, Chicago Avenue, Hinman Avenue, and portions of Church, Davis, and Lake Streets.

WALKING

The existing grid network of streets provides good accessibility for pedestrians. Additional pedestrian paths are provided by some alleys that are used as shortcuts within longer blocks.

The elevated train right-of-way viaducts present visual barriers that affect pedestrian connectivity. Although several viaducts have been replaced in recent years, others are dark, narrow, and unattractive. The width and orientation of some streets, particularly those that comprise the one-way systems, may discourage pedestrian crossings at certain intersections.

Downtown is compact and almost of downtown is within a quarter-mile walking distance. Streetscape conditions are generally good and encourage and enhance downtown’s active pedestrian experience. Most blocks feature ele-

ments that encourage walkability, including wide sidewalks with decorative pavers, street trees in tree grates, raised planters, and pedestrian-scale lighting. Such streetscape elements, while common in downtown's core, are less common in the eastern and western edges of downtown, where the lack of landscaping and plain concrete sidewalks are more common.

Several streets are particularly important pedestrian pathways and have more vibrant street life. These streets are often characterized by their orientation to the transit stations or major activity generators, presence of retail stores or entertainment venues, and presence of attractive streetscapes. Major pedestrian streets include:

- Church Street between Maple and Chicago Avenues.
- Davis Street between Oak and Hinman Avenues.
- Grove Street between Sherman and Hinman Avenues.
- Maple Avenue between Church and Clark Streets.
- Benson Avenue between Church and Davis Streets.
- Sherman Avenue between Grove and Clark Streets.
- Orrington Avenue between Church Street and Elgin Road.
- Chicago Avenue between Grove and Church Streets.

PARKING

Although the lack of accessible and convenient parking has been cited as an issue in downtown during previous studies, there is now a large supply of public parking through the combination of on-street parking and three large public parking decks. There are approximately 2,300 metered on-street spaces in downtown and a significant number of non-metered spaces strategically located throughout the area. The parking decks include:

- Sherman Plaza parking deck (1,282 public spaces)
- Maple Avenue and Clark Street (1,340 public spaces)
- Chicago Avenue and Church Street (593 public spaces)

Recent residential developments have been designed in accordance with zoning code and constructed to accommodate owner parking on site. The requirements apply to rental or owned properties. The City code requirements for parking at multi-family dwellings are as follows:

- Dwelling units one bedroom or less: 1.25 spaces per dwelling unit
- Dwelling units with two bedrooms: 1.5 spaces per dwelling unit
- Dwelling units with three or more bedrooms: 2.0 spaces per dwelling unit

In recent years, the residents of downtown Evanston appear to be trending towards less auto usage and ownership. This is ostensibly a result of proximity to mass transit, a reasonable amount of students, and the fact that nearly 40 percent of the residents responding were over the age of 55. A recent survey of new downtown residents in which 265 households responded indicated that nearly two thirds of the respondents owned only one or no autos. Only

43 percent drove to work, and 36 percent were one-person households. The average auto ownership per household was 1.38.

Residential Parking Demand

An onsite survey of actual parking occupancy was conducted at the six most recently constructed residential developments (all built since the year 2000). Additionally, interviews and written surveys were performed with developers and current condominium presidents or their representatives. These interviews included a focus group and numerous telephone and e-mail conversations. The properties and their actual parking demand rates (expressed in spaces per dwelling unit) are shown below. A complete tabulation of on site characteristics and results is found in the appendix.

Table 5A: Actual Parking Demand

Building	# of units	Ratio
800 Elgin	248 dwelling units	.93/du
1720 Maple	204 dwelling units	.98/du
1640 maple	105 dwelling units	.97/du
1572 Maple	28 dwelling units	1.18/du
1580 Sherman	103 dwelling units	1.06/du
807 Davis	253 dwelling units	.83/du

Additionally, there are more than 3,200 spaces in public garages open to guests of units in the downtown area. Metered parking (predominantly 2 hour) is also found adjacent to the dwellings. Recent city surveys indicate nearly 80 percent occupancy of these spaces well into the evening hours. The survey results along with other parking data and opportunities clearly indicate opportunity for adjustment to the zoning code's parking requirements.

It is recommended that parking requirements for multi-family housing be based on a square footage basis instead of the "bedroom" variable as follows: 1 space per dwelling units up to 800 square feet; 1.25 spaces for dwelling units up to 1,500 square feet; and 1.5 spaces for dwelling units larger than 1,500 square feet.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Downtown Evanston's infrastructure system consists of electric/power service, sanitary sewers, water filtration and supply, and bridges/streets/sidewalks/rail lines. Maintaining and upgrading this system is critical to the future of the area both for its current use and new development.

Following is a summary of each infrastructure component regarding existing conditions and capacity for development. The information has been provided by City of Evanston public works and engineering staff and does not represent a detailed engineering analysis.

ELECTRIC SERVICE

ComEd is the electrical supplier for Evanston and provides service to over 3.7 million customers in Northern Illinois. The City's electrical franchise was renewed in July 2007 for a three-year period.

The ComEd distribution system serving Evanston includes multiple feeder lines with a loop circuit located in downtown. The only other loop circuits in the region are located in downtown Chicago and at O'Hare Airport.

The City of Evanston, through its Energy Commission and Technical Review Group, monitors ComEd's performance, including reliability, outage analysis, capacity loading of feeders, substation reliability, infrastructure projects and power supply. In response to growing demand as a result of new development in downtown, ComEd added a new feeder line to the distribution system, which originates in a transmission facility located on Emerson Street. This facility has the capacity to supply multiple new feeders in the future if needed to serve downtown growth.

ComEd is responsible for supplying reliable electric service to Evanston, including the construction of any new infrastructure necessary to serve growing demand. The City's Energy Commission and Technical Review Group will continue to monitor ComEd's reliability, capacity, and future infrastructure projects.

Businesses and developers are encouraged to incorporate wherever feasible, energy efficient design into building rehabilitation, new construction, and site improvements.

SANITARY SEWER

Evanston's sewer system consists of approximately 142 miles of combined sewer main and 26 miles of relief sewers. The system conveys sanitary and storm sewage to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) facility in Chicago for treatment. The City is currently implementing a Long Range Sewer Improvement Program that will reduce basement sewage backups and street flooding during periods of heavy rain.

Downtown's large capacity sewers include:

- Former Research Park area
- Emerson corridor at Sherman
- Davis and Maple intersection
- MWRD sewer (tunnel) under Orrington from the Clark to Lake Street

Areas to be evaluated for new development include local streets such as Church from Ridge to Judson and Grove from Ridge to Judson where the sewer is 12-inch diameter. This type of sewer will need to be upgraded to serve significant new construction on opportunity sites in this area. The brick sewer at Davis and Maple also needs to be evaluated and programmed for possible future improvement, especially lining. This is an older structure completed in early 1900s. These and other aspects of the downtown sewer system will be evaluated through a recommended long term engineering study. The potential need for possible expansion of relief sewers should also be evaluated.

City staff indicated that downtown sewer system has substantial overall capacity that is necessary to serve current, approved, and future development with appropriate developer responsibility for interconnection expense and other costs. Upgrading of the system over the past 25 years has been substantial.

WATER SERVICE

Water is supplied to downtown from the Evanston Water Treatment Plant located at Lake Michigan. The municipal-owned facility draws water directly from the Lake and has the capacity to supply up to 108 million gallons of water per day. The facility provides service to approximately 350,000 residents in Northern Illinois.

City staff indicated that the plant and its water distribution system have capacity to support the new development defined in the master plan for fire suppression and domestic supply. Connections to existing water mains to new development sites are at the developer's expense. The city continues to monitor and evaluate its older water main system, especially the 30-inch diameter main serving downtown.

STORMWATER

As noted earlier, the City is completing its Long Range Sewer Improvement Program which will help mitigate flooding during periods of heavy rain. Once completed, staff indicated that the combined sewers would have the capacity to better accommodate stormwater from downtown.

New developments will need to provide detention in accordance with the city's Stormwater Control Ordinance (65-0-7) at developer expense.

Most of downtown is already "hardscape", i.e. roofs, sidewalks, plazas, and streets, and a goal of the master plan is to reduce these impervious surfaces through sustainable design. The plan also defines several improvements to existing open spaces and expanded or new spaces that will add more green to downtown and help reduce stormwater run-off. Also several buildings that have been recently constructed or planned for the area have "green roofs" that will further decrease impervious surfaces.