

Preservation Commission Recommendations & Comments: Envision Evanston 2045 DRAFT Comprehensive Plan



January 15, 2025



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About us and our work

- Historic preservation is *intersectional*. It involves not just architecture and history but also land use, economics, cultural landscapes, social justice, placemaking, and more.
- Historic preservation practice is committed to *change as a healthy indicator*. The goal is not to stop change but to ensure that it respects and strategically builds upon our past toward a more vibrant future.
- Evanston's Preservation Commission starts with the assumption that most applicants can and should make meaningful, useful, and valuable changes to their properties – and then helps them figure out *how* to do that.
- Over the past 5 years, the Preservation Commission has made major structural changes to our process to be more applicant-oriented. *We have not denied a single application* outright in that time.
- We do more than just review building projects; we also engage in a wide variety of long-range planning activities with goals such as equity, climate resilience, social justice, affordability, etc. In this we are guided by our strategic plan, *Preserve 2040*, which was adopted in December 2022.

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EE45 Comments Overview

- The Preservation Ordinance gives us a mandate to promote the City's cultural, educational, economic, and general welfare. As such, we are obligated to consider the entire EE45 output, *not just the historic preservation chapter* in the comprehensive plan.
- We held a special meeting to discuss EE45's draft comprehensive plan and zoning code on *December 12, 2024*. This presentation is only about the draft comprehensive plan.
- We acknowledge the plan has some strengths but found the following areas of *consensus* on how to expand and enrich it:
 - 2 new chapters that are typical for comprehensive plans but missing from ours
 - 4 recommended revisions to land use strategies
 - 6 recommended revisions to the preservation chapter
 - 2 recommended revisions to the housing chapter
 - 3 recommended revisions to the environment chapter
 - 1 recommended revision each for the parks and open space, transportation, and placemaking chapters

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Recommendations: Add Missing Chapters

1. Develop an implementation chapter. (p. 2)

- Should prioritize the plan's actions, include a timeline and matrix, explore potential partnerships and funding sources, etc.
- Without an implementation chapter, the comprehensive plan risks being reactive and ultimately ineffective.
- Implementation Chapter from *Preserve 2040* can serve as a model.

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Implementation

Survey and Documentation

Goal #1: Identify and Preserve Resources Significant to Evanston's Identity, Heritage, and Vibrancy.

Policy 1.1: Support initiatives that continue to identify and document Evanston's heritage resources.

Initiative	Ongoing	1-3	3-5	5-10	10+	Responsible Party	Priority
HPC: Historic Preservation Commission; COE: City of Evanston; CON: Consultant; POR: Partner Organizations; VOL: Volunteers							
1.1: Re-Survey the Ridge Historic District						CON; COE	Medium
1.2: Re-Survey the Northeast Historic District						CON; COE	Medium
1.3: Prioritize new areas in Evanston for surveys.						CON; COE	High
1.4: Conduct a city-wide survey of Evanston's downtown and neighborhood business district resources.						COE; HPC	High
1.5: Conduct a cultural landscape survey of Evanston.						CON; COE; HPC	Low
1.6: Conduct a citywide survey of Evanston's post-war resources.						COE; HPC	Medium
1.7: Document and include the built resources that embody historic						HPC; POR	Pressing

First page of the Implementation Chapter, Preserve 2040 (City of Evanston Preservation Commission: 2022), 37.

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Recommendations: Add Missing Chapters

2. Develop a community systems chapter. (p. 2)

- Should consider public and private partner organizations and facilities, including D65 and D202, and create strategic plans for collaboration and facilities management.
- These resources are tangible links to Evanston's current and past identities, and their futures are significant issues to address.

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Recommendations: Land use

3. Develop an urban design and community character section or chapter and modify the plan's land use strategy. (p. 2-3)

- Many of the draft comprehensive plan's initial foundational goals are not elaborated in any corresponding chapter. Specifically:
 - Identify, analyze, and celebrate the historic development patterns of various neighborhoods, business districts, the downtown, and other unique cultural landscapes across the City.
 - Define human-centered design and thoughtful urban design. Use historic design vocabularies and existing vibrant built environments as points of inspiration.
 - Communicate preferred treatment approaches and indicate how these approaches vary based on the diversity of Evanston's built environment.
 - Build capacity and facilitate implementation of the section's recommendations by creating an Urban Design Commission.

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Recommendation: Preservation

4. Include a policy statement to support new organizational structures and approaches that increase the capacity to implement the values, policies, and initiatives within the Preservation Commission's long-range plan, *Preserve 2040*. (p. 3)

- *Preserve 2040* was made by Evanston for Evanston. It is a complex and complete narrative for the actions needed to evolve, advance, and expand the preservation program over the next two decades.

5. Expand the use of Neighborhood Conservation Districts (NCDs) in addition to affordability as a more broadly applicable neighborhood planning and stabilization tool. (p. 3-4)

- The expanded use of NCDs has the potential to be a transformative land use tool and a viable alternative to traditional historic districts in areas that contain a cohesive land pattern and identifiable physical characteristics.

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Recommendation: Preservation

6. Collaborate with tribal representatives to identify and designate a reinterment site for the inadvertent discovery of Native American and Indigenous ancestral remains. (p. 4)

- The reinterment of ancestral remains near the sites where they were disturbed is an act of reverence and recognition that is essential for fostering healing, preserving cultural heritage, and promoting environmental stewardship.

7. Support implementation of demolition delay procedures. (p. 4)

- Delays are an effective mitigation tool that allows for the assessment of a structure's historical, cultural, or architectural significance.

8. Revise the historic resources map to reflect current conditions. (p. 4)

- The plan's historic resources map is missing resources that reflect Evanston's wholistic, 21st century preservation mindset.

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Recommendation: Preservation

9. Support advisory review for certain types of projects adjacent to landmarks outside of historic districts and within the National Register districts that lack local protection. (p. 4)

- Individual landmarks are particularly vulnerable to changes in their integrity of setting through adjacent new construction that may be out of scale and incompatible with surrounding character and design vocabularies.

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Recommendations: Housing

10. Include additional metrics, data, and analysis to support and guide decision-making. (p. 4)

- In addition to data-oriented changes already recommended by City planning staff, this chapter should also catalog the diversity of Evanston's existing housing stock and housing typologies.

11. Modify the proposal to allow four-units in all residential zones to reduce the potential for inadvertently increasing displacement pressures and destabilizing neighborhoods. (p. 4-5)

- We believe Action H2.1 may insert a significant profit motive for the redevelopment and demolition of smaller-scale, more vernacular, and currently attainable housing types. This action is counter to the comprehensive plan's goals for adaptive use, sustainability, preservation, and the centers and corridors land use strategy.
- We support the development of double houses as an alternative approach since they are already an existing building type in low-density residential neighborhoods.

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Recommendations: Parks & Open Space

12. Directly address the treatment of parks and open spaces within historic districts. (p. 5)

- Many parks and open spaces, including the majority of the City's lakefront, are located within a historic district.
- The historic associations and cultural significance of these resources should be the foundation for informing future planning, use, and design decisions.

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Recommendations: Environment

13. Directly address the historic and cultural significance of trees and landscapes. (p. 5)

- Many individual trees are part of the historic and cultural landscape of the community. Preservation of setting, which includes significant landscape features and heritage trees, is essential to retaining Evanston's sense of place and community character.

14. Include a statement that supports volunteer landscape stewards. (p. 5)

- Expanding capacity, partnerships, recognition, and resources afforded to volunteer landscape individuals and stewardship organizations intersects with climate resilience, historic preservation, job training, and economic development.

15. Support implementation of a deconstruction ordinance. (p. 5)

- The importance of embodied energy and carbon and the benefits of deconstruction should be more explicitly addressed and meaningfully advanced through the implementation of a deconstruction ordinance.

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Recommendations: Transportation

16. Directly address the historic significance of the City's Metra and CTA train stations to the growth and development of the city. (p. 5)

- The historic associations and architectural significance of the City's train stations should be prioritized and balanced with re-development goals that increase their accessibility and function. Both the Metra and L are important aspects of Evanston's soundscape and identity within the region.

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Recommendations: Placemaking

17. Clarify support for the connections between historic preservation and the community's identity and placemaking opportunities. (p. 5)

- A subsection under 'policies and actions' in this chapter should explicitly identify historic buildings, cultural landscapes, and other historic sites as prime loci for placemaking, storytelling, and interpretation.

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Respectfully submitted by the 2024 Preservation Commission

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