

Southeast Evanston Position on Proposed Downtown Plan  
February 2009

The Southeast Evanston Association is opposed to the Downtown Plan as currently amended by the Planning & Development Committee. Our strong opposition to the amended plan is based on the following points.

- The creation of a “central core” comprised of only the Fountain Square block was opposed by both the Plan Commission and the majority of Evanston citizens who testified about development on the block over the past two years. By a majority vote, the Plan Commission recommended that the block be incorporated into the adjoining core areas with a maximum height of approximately 25-stories and a base height of 165 feet. We feel that the blatant disregard for the recommendation of the Plan Commission is in direct contradiction to good planning principles and ignores the desires of the citizens who elected the Council.
- The proposed base-height in the new "central core" of 25-stories is not appropriate. This by-right height would allow a building as tall as the Chase Bank building or Sherman Plaza to be built without anything more than city staff and Council approval. Additionally, the inclusion of a maximum height of 35-stories in the Fountain Square block in the language of the plan gives the distinct impression that the block is being "set-up" for the benefit of the development team currently asking for approval of a 38-story condominium tower.
- The Eastern transitional zone as proposed at 10 stories is too tall. The area closest to the lakefront should be treated with greater sensitivity. We feel that a maximum height of 8-stories is appropriate.
- The proposal to up-zone the 1000 block of Davis Street from the recommended Traditional (3-5 stories) is ill-conceived and detrimental to the current viability of that section of downtown. As it stands right now, that is the one section of the downtown that is functioning well. There is ample parking, no vacant businesses, and a true shopping destination in downtown Evanston. We do not understand the reason for up-zoning this area that performs such a vital function.

Because of the aforementioned points, the Southeast Evanston Association strongly urges the Council to reject the amended Plan. We further suggest that the adoption of a Downtown Plan be tabled until at least June of 2009 when the newly-seated Council can re-examine the original Plan recommended by the Plan Commission.