

**DESIGN EVANSTON DEVELOPMENT PREFERENCE SURVEY
FOUNTAIN SQUARE ART FAIR – JUNE 25TH & 26TH**

Design Evanston conducted a development preference survey at this year's Fountain Square Art Fair to elicit views concerning recent development in Evanston, future development directions and the issue of what group, if any, should be making design decisions in Evanston as new buildings are proposed and built.

Over the course of the two day art fair, 145 people filled out survey questionnaires. The vast majority of responses came from Evanston residents (132 or 91% of the total). Both recent residents (1 year or less) and long time residents (40 to 50+ years) responded. The median length of residence was 16 years; the average length of residence was 17.5 years.

Design Decisions

For several years, Design Evanston has been encouraging the City to adopt design guidelines and establish an appearance review commission. We asked who should approve the appearance of buildings in Evanston and provided several alternatives. The results are summarized below.

Who should approve building appearance?	# of Resident Responses	# of Nonresident Responses	Total
Panel of Design Professionals	100	11	111
Plan Commission	56	6	62
City Council	17	3	20
Other (residents, me)	13	0	13
City Staff	9	2	11
No One	4	1	5

Many people thought that several groups should have design review responsibilities. A panel of design professionals and the Plan Commission was a frequent combination. Perhaps of most significance is that few people thought that design decisions should be left entirely to property owners and developers.

Recent Development

Two open ended sets of questions asked what recent buildings people liked and why, and what buildings they didn't like and why. As will come of little surprise to anyone who has been involved in a discussion of Evanston architecture, there are strong opinions about the Optima buildings, with nearly equal numbers of people liking and disliking Optima Towers and Optima Views.

Dozens of buildings from all parts of Evanston were identified that people liked ranging from new construction (Levy Center, Central Street Fire Station, District 65 Administration Building, Evanston Hospital) to adaptive reuse (Chandlers Building, Peacock Lofts, Orrington Hotel). Buildings receiving 10 or more "votes" are summarized below. Of particular importance are the 20 people who responded "none or very few" when asked to identify examples of well designed buildings that they liked. Perhaps, this response helps to explain why so many people think that local design professionals should be involved in future development decisions.

Most Liked Buildings	# of Residents	# of Nonresidents	Total
Optima Towers	30	2	32
Optima Views/Borders	20	0	20
None or Very Few	19	1	20
Library	19	0	19
Optima Horizons	16	1	17
Century Theater Complex	10	0	10

There are common themes as to why people liked the buildings they identified. These include:

- Good design; quality materials; creative use of materials
- Buildings relate to the street; fit neighborhood; good scale; pedestrian friendly
- Building base ties in with the surroundings; parking is concealed
- Ground floor retail and service with color schemes and glass facades that open to the street; mixed use development where the action is, keeping the downtown alive
- Bold design; daring architecture; visually stimulating; exciting, dynamic, bold
- Traditional architecture, with modern amenities; classic design blends in
- Scale is not overwhelming; proportion, integration into streetscape; use of appropriate setbacks, landscaping
- Maintains traditional feel, respects surrounding architecture; creative, considerate of context; fits well into built environment
- Interesting design and planning details coupled with appropriate density; reflects the planning put into the design
- Creative blend of old and new so that nothing looks out of place

The buildings that people disliked were almost as diverse with the following buildings receiving at least 10 "votes."

Least Liked Buildings	# of Residents	# of Nonresidents	Total
Optima Towers	28	4	32
Dubin Townhouses	27	1	28
Optima Horizons	22	2	24
900 Chicago Avenue	18	1	19
New High Rise Condos	16	1	17
Optima Views/Borders	15	2	17
Rozak-Chicago Avenue	14	0	14

Again the reasons for these choices fell into several broad themes.

- Excessive density; too big; too congested; too high, too overwhelming
- Inadequate setbacks; too close to the street; loss of light; negative impact on pedestrians
- Lack of landscaping, green space
- Unattractive, unwelcoming, generic buildings; brutal piles of cinderblocks; ugly, nondescript; no attention to detail
- Lack of respect for existing structures; no respect for context or site
- Lack of architectural features to create visual interest; featureless, bland; boring; no detail, nothing interesting to look at; no visual relief
- Out of character for Evanston's otherwise welcoming cityscape; too contemporary; doesn't fit in with the rest of the city; doesn't meld with Evanston neighborhoods
- Architecture lacks creativity; lack of aesthetic imagination
- Looks cheap; cheap construction

Future Development

Most people felt that new development should be encouraged, particularly in the downtown. Other locations identified for new development included the Church/Dodge and Dempster/Dodge areas and Central Street. Continued development was seen as a way to revitalize areas that have been neglected, expand the tax base, maintain an interesting and diverse community, and make Evanston a destination city. However, a number of respondents indicated that they thought that Evanston was being over developed as far as condominium buildings was concerned, and that people were being priced out of Evanston as a result.

Some thought there should be more high-rise buildings. Others thought there were already too many tall buildings in Evanston. Market-supported development was a common theme. Specific suggestions for development that should be encouraged included:

- Local retail
- Mixed income/affordable residential
- Sustainable, environmentally appropriate
- Public spaces, places for people to interact
- Scaled to neighborhoods; reflecting human scale
- Tax producing

Conclusion

It is clear from our limited survey that Evanston residents care passionately about the quality and character of Evanston's built environment and the direction of future growth and development. Not only were people willing to take the time to complete our survey, but several individuals took surveys with them and mailed their responses back so that they could be considered. The thoughtful responses demonstrate that good design is important to Evanston residents and is among the factors that should be considered as development decisions are made.