

# City of Evanston Receives Grant from National Endowment for the Arts - Evanston RoundTable

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## **City of Evanston Receives Grant from National Endowment for the Arts** *Evanston Performing Arts & Community Center Project is among 51 grants nationwide selected to support creative placemaking* **Submitted by the City of Evanston**

The City of Evanston is happy to announce that it will receive an [Our Town](#) grant from the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) (NEA), one of only 51 grants awarded nationwide, the only in Illinois. The City of Evanston will receive a \$50,000 grant to develop a concise plan of action to help realize the vision of a performing arts center in the heart of Evanston while providing space for the community at large.

Our Town is the NEA's latest investment in creative place-making, through which partners from both public and private sectors come together to strategically shape the social, physical, and economic character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities.

Evanston has long been home to cultural arts organizations that have put down roots in our community and grown. These groups train artists, and are a vital part of our economy. Locally and nationally renowned arts groups like the [Piven Theater](#), [Next Theater](#), [Light Opera Works](#) and the [Actors Gymnasium](#) have expanded from small storefront theater organizations and have outgrown their performance and organization space. This has forced some of our larger arts groups to relocate out of Evanston to Chicago and neighboring suburbs.

This is a rising concern in Evanston as the city and its community partners recognize the cultural and economic contribution that these organizations provide to our city. In an effort to stem further potential losses of arts organizations from Evanston, a study was commissioned to explore the possibility of transforming the Varsity Theater, a former movie palace in downtown Evanston, now only partially used, into a performing arts center.

The grant will be used to develop a concise plan of action to help realize the vision of a performing arts center in the heart of Evanston.

“This grant validates the creative community whose vision of a performance arts complex in the heart of Evanston is a step closer to reality,” said [Representative Jan Schakowsky](#). “The arts are essential to the community and it is important that the contributions from community art organizations are retained and nurtured. As an Evanston resident and its Congresswoman, I congratulate the City of Evanston for its efforts to receive this grant and embracing this important opportunity.”

“The Evanston Performing Arts and Community Center will build on earlier developments to continue the transformation of downtown Evanston into a vibrant, 24-7 urban environment. The arts community is an essential component to the overall livability of any community,” added Evanston [Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl](#). “By building capacity for our existing arts organizations, developing a community center to be used by the residents of Evanston we are able to provide another amenity and vital asset to the community’s access to arts. The new spaces will be flexible, enabling multiple organizations, large and small, new and old, to thrive in the heart of Evanston.”

“[Downtown Evanston](#) is excited to work with the City of Evanston and the arts community in this next phase of bringing arts to Downtown Evanston,” added Carolyn Dellutri, Executive Director of Downtown Evanston (formerly Evmark).

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Landesman said, “Communities across our country are using smart design and leveraging the arts to enhance quality of life and promote their distinctive identities. In this time of great economic upheaval, *Our Town* provides communities an opportunity to reignite their economies.”

**The National Endowment for the Arts** was established by Congress in 1965 as an independent agency of the federal government. To date, the NEA has awarded more than \$4 billion to support artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. The NEA extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.