

OUR neighborhood

Fall 2025

NEWS

Good Neighbors, Great Impact



Northwestern University's \$3 million annual commitment to the City of Evanston through its Good Neighbor Fund marks a transformative partnership focused on sustainability, equity, and community resilience. A cornerstone of the agreement is allocating at least \$500,000 annually to the city's Climate Action and Resilience Plan and \$1 million each year to the city's Affordable Housing Fund.

The investment in the city's long-term inclusivity and livability lets Evanston decide how to allocate the funds. "One of the most significant aspects of the renewed Good Neighbor Fund is that the city determines how the money is used without requiring University approval," says Dave Davis, senior executive director of Northwestern's Neighborhood and Community Relations. "This community-driven approach ensures that support goes where our residents decide it's needed most."

The funding is crucial to ensuring longtime residents can remain in the city, says Bobby Burns, councilmember for Evanston's Fifth Ward. "We want people to continue to be able to benefit from all the things Evanston has to offer. The fund allows us to accelerate the construction of new affordable units, which we know we need."

One of the first projects to receive support was the city's acquisition of land on Brown Avenue. Plans are underway to work with Community Partners for Affordable Housing to construct eight affordable

(continued on back page)



Kimberly Holmes-Ross, second from left, with Northwestern students

Community Beyond Campus

Evanston Cradle to Career (EC2C) and Northwestern have launched a new partnership that connects the University's work-study students with local nonprofits, aligning students' interests and academic skills with the city's most pressing needs. EC2C's grants cover the 25 percent employer match typically required in the federal work-study program.

"The federal government pays 75 percent, we pay 25 percent, and we thought it was just the perfect opportunity," says Kimberly Holmes-Ross, EC2C's executive director. "The students get to learn about the community and our nonprofits, and our partners get to learn about our Northwestern students."

A collective impact organization, EC2C acts as a central hub for more than 40 nonprofit partners working to promote equity and opportunity across the city. As the backbone of this network, EC2C works behind the

scenes to coordinate efforts, eliminate barriers, and promote initiatives that strengthen Evanston's civic and social fabric, Holmes-Ross says.

The work-study partnership launched in fall 2024, with 10 students placed in organizations including the Youth Job Center, Youth Opportunity United, the Evanston Public Library, and local school districts. Northwestern engineering student Andrew Uhle worked with the Trade Collective, a startup nonprofit aimed at guiding high school students into skilled trades like HVAC, automotive technology, and construction management.

"Cradle to Career introduced us to the idea," says Neil Gambow, the collective's director. "It was very easy—we were not actively seeking an intern, but with the opportunity handed to us, we knew we could use an intern to help us build out capacity."

“ Giving students an organization they can come to if they want to volunteer or learn about what’s happening in Evanston—we’d like to be that place for them.”

Beyond providing practical experience, the partnership helps students develop a deeper connection to the city they call home for most of the year. "They're residents nine months out of the year, maybe even ten," Holmes-Ross says, "and it's important to know your community and to get involved when you can."

Uhle was exposed to a side of Evanston he hadn't yet seen, Gambow says. "He had no idea what was beyond the boundaries of the campus. He's meeting a lot of people from the community, and that just rounds out his experience of what Evanston's really about."

Feedback from community partners has been overwhelmingly positive, and EC2C hopes to increase the number of interns this coming school year. "We learned it was a good thing for us," says Holmes-Ross. "We're working hard to not make it a burden for students to get out into the community."

"We're trying to expand what we do and support what Northwestern does. Giving students an organization they can come to if they want to volunteer or learn about what's happening in Evanston—we'd like to be that place for them."

Interested in HOSTING AN INTERN?
Complete the form at northwestern.edu/communityconnect.

Kellogg Helps Central Street Thrive

During construction of the new Ryan Field stadium, Northwestern is making a concerted effort to ensure nearby businesses thrive. Through a partnership with the Kellogg School of Management, the University has committed to providing marketing and advertising support to local stores and restaurants—especially those along the Central Street corridor—to help them maximize the potential economic benefits that will come with increased visitor traffic once the stadium is complete.

Members of the Central Street Business Association (CSBA) have received strategic marketing support from Kellogg MBA students. For a full academic quarter, students worked closely with business owners, conducting research to identify ways to attract more Northwestern students, faculty, and staff. Their findings revealed a common challenge.

“There was a lack of awareness,” says Peter O’Malley, owner of Beer on Central. “One of the things preventing students from coming to Central Street was just not knowing it existed.”

The CSBA and Kellogg students discussed “getting the word out about how unique Central Street is,” adds O’Malley, the association’s liaison to Northwestern. “It’s a very walkable sort of business district, mostly mom-and-pop and small boutique stores.”

“The most helpful thing to Central Street was understanding how to market better,” explains Amy Colton, Kellogg’s chief marketing and communications officer. “We helped them do a market research study so they could put together plans that would be more likely to attract the University community.”

The partnership offers businesses not only a clearer picture of their potential customer base but also tangible support: Northwestern contributed \$10,000 toward upgrading

the CSBA website to enhance its ability to promote local events and offerings.

One such event, September’s Central Street Alive, aimed to draw more campus attention through live performances and street activities. It was a kickoff event “to make students more aware, whether through transportation help from Northwestern or better awareness through social media,” O’Malley says.

Colton also emphasizes the initiative’s long-term vision. “The stadium will be done in a year, but the findings are going to help businesses for years to come,” she says. “It’s about creating sustained visibility and making sure students know what’s just a short walk away.”

Ultimately, the collaboration illustrates how universities can play a positive, proactive role in supporting their surrounding communities. As O’Malley puts it, “I’m very happy that Central Street and Northwestern—whether it’s Kellogg or the University at large—are working together. It’s a win-win for both entities.”

To find out **WHAT’S HAPPENING** on Central Street, visit centralstreet-evanston.com.



Becca Heuer Photography

Good Neighbors

(continued from front page)

three-bedroom condominiums and two rental apartments for income-eligible residents.

Beyond development, the Affordable Housing Fund will support initiatives like rental assistance and programs for residents at risk of displacement due to rising property taxes. Northwestern's backing is important, Burns says, noting that constructing an affordable unit costs between \$200,000 and \$400,000. "It's an expensive endeavor, and we need the funding to do it. Northwestern is a big part of that."

Burns adds that the city has seen many residents displaced. "Evanston has a responsibility to figure out how to allow longtime residents to stay, and a big part of that is figuring out a way to lower the cost of housing," he says.

Rather than the marketplace dictating Evanston's affordability, Burns wants the city to continue to use a portion of the funds to acquire more property "so that we have more ability to determine how much affordability is appropriate for each site. We want to make sure we can continue to have a diverse community in every sense of that word."

That's important to Northwestern, too. "We're proud to play a role in preserving Evanston's diversity and vibrancy," Davis says. "Partnering with the city to expand access to housing is not just about dollars, it's about impact."

LEARN MORE about Evanston's affordable housing efforts at rb.gy/ikld13.

Faculty profile: Bryan Brayboy



Bryan McKinley Jones Brayboy is dean of the School of Education and Social Policy. He joined Northwestern in 2023, bringing decades of leadership in policy, social justice, and Indigenous education to his role. Also the Carlos Montezuma Professor of Education and Social Policy, Brayboy focuses on advancing SESP's mission to improve

learning and development at all stages of life, while also supporting faculty, students, and staff.

Brayboy's scholarly work explores the experiences of Indigenous students, staff, and faculty in higher education and how knowledge systems affect educational policies and practices. His research has influenced federal and state policy, and he has worked closely with Indigenous communities, school districts, and universities to promote educational equity.

Brayboy previously taught at Arizona State University, where he also directed the Center for Indian Education. He enjoys connecting with Northwestern's diverse community and supporting efforts that foster inclusive excellence. When not on campus, he can be found exploring local cultural events and the natural beauty of Lake Michigan and the Chicago area with his family.



CONNECT WITH US

Our monthly email newsletter includes important community updates. Email Shayla Butler at shayla.butler@northwestern.edu to sign up.

Do you have a business or non-profit in Evanston? We can help increase your visibility, facilitate connections to the Northwestern community, and find student volunteers.

For details, visit northwestern.edu/communityrelations or contact Dave Davis, senior executive director of the Office of Neighborhood and Community Relations, at dave.davis@northwestern.edu.

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