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NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK
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EVANSTON NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK



OUR NEIGHBORHOOD

The United Way Neighborhood Network in Evanston, led by Evanston Cradle to Career (EC2C), is a coalition of more than 40 civic, social, and philanthropic organizations and nearly 200 community residents. EC2C was founded in 2014 to address a widening racial gap in academic achievement. EC2C began rooting out systemic causes of disparities, including redlining, which led to segregation and decades of disinvestment in Evanston's 5th Ward.

In 2019, the City of Evanston sought to redress these injustices by passing an ordinance that created the nation's first reparations fund for African American residents. Through collective efforts, Evanston became the first city to publicly invest in historically disinvested communities, setting a national precedent for addressing systemic harm. Through strategic, collaborative action undertaken by the EC2C coalition, Evanston has emerged as a leader in environmental justice, community-led grantmaking, and anti-poverty initiatives such as guaranteed income for low-income residents.

Today, EC2C advances measurable progress through critical data analysis, convening community partners around a shared vision for Evanston's youth, and leading strategic initiatives that address root causes of disparity. Evanston residents still grapple with income disparity and racial inequality. But the community is committed to overcoming these obstacles to build a future that leaves no Evanston resident behind.

LEAD AGENCY

Evanston Cradle to Career (EC2C)

COMMUNITY VISION

By the age of 23, all Evanston young adults will be on the path to leading satisfying and productive lives

BUILDING STRONGER COMMUNITIES: A DUAL APPROACH IN EVANSTON



NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORK IN ACTION

At Evanston Cradle to Career (EC2C), collaboration isn't just what we do, it's who we are. As a coalition grounded in trust, equity, and shared leadership, we focus on three key areas: Prepared for Adult Life, Social Determinants of Health in the 5th Ward, and Early Childhood Education.

Together with our partners and community, we're working to create a more just, connected, and thriving Evanston. EC2C has also helped spark the development of other coalitions aligned around a shared agenda for community progress, which is a testament to the power of collective impact in our city.



COALITION HIGHLIGHTS

- **Community Building Grants and System Change Grants:** EC2C has invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in nearly 100 community-led initiatives. These grants support residents, grassroots organizations, and collaborative efforts that strengthen connections, advance equity, and improve outcomes for children, youth, and families, helping build a thriving Evanston.
- **Evanston Early Childhood Coalition (EECC):** In 2025, EC2C launched the annual State of Early Childhood Address. The inaugural event focused on community engagement, the challenges facing the early childhood sector, and strategies for engaging a diverse group of stakeholders. In 2026, we expanded the event by featuring panelists representing perspectives from the state level through the local community, creating a conversation that connected policy, practice, and community experience.
- **Prepared for Adult Life (PAL):** EC2C continues to strengthen cross-sector collaboration through initiatives such as Savings for Success, eLEAP implementation, coordination among Out-of-School Time partners, and alignment of workforce development efforts to expand opportunities for youth and families. Community Connect, a partnership between EC2C and Northwestern University, connects students with paid, career-focused roles at local nonprofits, while supporting workforce development.
- **Environmental Justice Coalition (EJC):** EC2C's Environmental Justice Coalition is driving accountability in environmental policies, including helping initiate a city-funded investigation to redress environmental harm in low-income communities and Evanston's Healthy Buildings Ordinance, one of the first in the nation, which aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the city's largest buildings while ensuring healthy indoor air and water quality for low-income residents.
- **Advocates for Action (A4A):** Through leadership training and community engagement, A4A helps remove barriers to opportunities, shares critical resources and information, and amplifies family voices to drive positive change. A4A also guides EC2C Action Teams, helps direct United Way grant funding for collaborative initiatives, and leads the Community Building Grants program, in partnership with the Evanston Community Foundation.

JOIN US! Together, we can build neighborhoods like Evanston stronger. Direct your United Way gift to **"Neighborhood Networks"** to be a part of this critical strategy.
Learn more at **LIVEUNITEDchicago.org/neighborhood-networks**

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