

# **WE ARE PARTNERS, HERE TO HELP YOU OPEN OR EXPAND YOUR OAK PARK BUSINESS**

**Village of Oak Park ([business@oak-park.us](mailto:business@oak-park.us))**  
**Oak Park Economic Development Corporation ([contact@opedc.net](mailto:contact@opedc.net))**  
**Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce ([info@oprchamber.org](mailto:info@oprchamber.org))**

The Village of Oak Park, the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation and the Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce are partners, here to assist new and existing Oak Park businesses. Information below will **HELP YOU** to:

- 1.) Develop a new or revise an existing business plan;
- 2.) Effectively navigate Village government processes;
- 3.) Locate the right site for your new or expanding business;
- 4.) Determine if an existing site's zoning supports your intended business use;
- 5.) Understand local building permit requirements;
- 6.) Effectively pass inspections and get your required Village occupancy permit;
- 7.) Get the business license you need to open; and
- 8.) Get you connected to Oak Park, including a ribbon cutting event and a complimentary 6-month OPRF Chamber of Commerce Membership.

An Oak Park Business Guide Check-List is available for your use at ([Link name to be determined. This check list is located at the end of the copy](#))

## **WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU DEVELOP A NEW OR REVISE AN EXISTING BUSINESS PLAN**

For most entrepreneurs, a well-crafted business plan is the first step in creating and operating a successful enterprise. The **Oak Park Economic Development Corporation (OPEDC)** is a non-profit corporation funded by the Village of Oak Park and is available to help you develop or refine your business plan. OPEDC can work with you to identify your target customer, your specific physical location requirements, your financial needs and your businesses' marketing strategies.

The OPEDC can also connect you to a range of resources and services to assist with your business startup or expansion, from banking contacts to business mentoring services. As an example, The Oak Park Public Library offers free business mentoring services provided by current and former business executives through SCORE Chicago ([www.scorechicago.org](http://www.scorechicago.org)), a resource partner of the Small Business Administration. OPEDC can be reached at [contact@opedc.net](mailto:contact@opedc.net) or 708.383.3838.

## **WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU NAVIGATE VILLAGE GOVERNMENT PROCESSES**

**Village of Oak Park** staff is here to help you navigate the governmental processes of opening up your new business or expanding your existing business. Business services provided by the Village of Oak Park include, but are not limited to, the following: 1.) New Business Walk-Through Site Visits can be scheduled with the Village, where Village staff joins you at your proposed business location and answers questions you may have regarding all aspects of operating out of that site; 2.) Business renovation permitting (See below); 3.) Liquor license consultations for those businesses interested in serving or selling alcohol; 4.) Business zoning confirmations (See below); and 5.) Business licensing consultations (See below). The Village of Oak Park can be reached at [business@oak-park.us](mailto:business@oak-park.us).

## **WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU LOCATE THE RIGHT SITE FOR YOUR BUSINESS**

One of the most critical decisions you will make is where to locate your new business or expand your existing business. The right location can be the difference between success and failure. The staff at the **Oak Park Economic Development Corporation (OPEDC)** can help you assess your location needs and will work with you and your prospective landlord to reach an agreement on the terms of your lease. OPEDC can be reached at [contact@opedc.net](mailto:contact@opedc.net) or 708.383.3838.

## **WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU DETERMINE IF AN EXISTING SITES ZONING SUPPORTS YOUR INTENDED BUSINESS USE**

Knowing how a site is zoned is critical to choosing the right location for your new or expanding business. Zoning requirements are local government laws that define how private property can be utilized. Zoning requirements govern the types of uses that are allowed in a specific business corridor, the parking requirements associated with said use and they specify business signage allowances and restrictions.

**Village of Oak Park** staff's zoning professionals can help you understand all applicable regulations related to your specific business location before you sign a lease, buy a property or begin to seek building permits. The Village of Oak Park zoning staff can be reached at [business@oak-park.us](mailto:business@oak-park.us).

## **WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU UNDERSTAND LOCAL BUILDING PERMIT REQUIREMENTS**

The financial realities of opening a new business can be significant. That's why it is important to fully understand any physical, building related requirements for opening a safe and successful business. A building permit is required to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move or demolish a building or structure. Erecting, installing, enlarging, altering, repairing, removing, converting or replacing any electrical, gas, mechanical, plumbing or fire safety systems also requires a permit. A free guide to submitting building permit applications is available via email to [permits@oak-park.us](mailto:permits@oak-park.us). The **Village of Oak Park** building permit application process is completed online at [www.oak-park.us/villageview](http://www.oak-park.us/villageview).

To ensure the most timely and cost-effective building permit process, the Village recommends that you consider the following: 1.) Hire a professional, state-licensed architect to prepare your remodeling/build-out plans; 2.) Make sure your professional contractor is registered with the Village and appropriately insured, plus has the type of experience needed to manage your project; and 3.) Check with your contractor to make sure all subcontractors working on your project are registered with the Village before construction work begins.

Once your building permit application and architectural drawings, if needed, are submitted by you online ([www.oak-park.us/villageview](http://www.oak-park.us/villageview)), the Village's certified plan examiner will review your drawings and provide a written report detailing any corrections that will need to be addressed. If all necessary corrections to your applications are made, the appropriate building permits can be approved. For larger projects, a representative of the Village will be available to meet with your architect and contractor to review the project before permit applications and plans are submitted. The Village of Oak Park building permit staff can be reached at [permits@oak-park.us](mailto:permits@oak-park.us).

### **WE ARE HERE TO INSPECT YOUR COMPLETED WORK SO YOU CAN EFFECTIVELY PASS INSPECTIONS AND GET YOUR REQUIRED VILLAGE OCCUPANCY PERMIT**

Depending on the project, a number of professional inspections may be required, such as for plumbing, electrical, building, mechanical equipment, fire suppression and public health. Be sure your contractor understands all inspections that will be required. Once you have passed all of your final inspections, the **Village of Oak Park** will provide a Certificate of Occupancy verifying that all requirements needed to open for business have been completed. To request an Occupancy Permit inspection, contact [business@oak-park.us](mailto:business@oak-park.us) and be sure to include your address and permit number in your email request.

### **WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU GET THE BUSINESS LICENSE YOU NEED TO OPEN**

While you can begin a business license application at any time, the license cannot be issued until all building permit work is complete and required inspections have been passed. Once you have received notice that your **Village of Oak Park** Certificate of Occupancy has been approved, email [business@oak-park.us](mailto:business@oak-park.us) to set-up one final commercial inspection, the last step to opening your new business.

The final commercial inspection is intended to ensure you have physically set up your operation in a way that is safe for you and your customers. Once you have passed this final inspection, and paid your first annual business license fee, you will receive your Village of Oak Park Business License and be able to open your doors to your customers.

## **WE ARE HERE TO PROMOTE YOU AND GET YOU CONNECTED TO OAK PARK**

Now that your new business is ready to open, we know that you will need to get connected into local Village of Oak Park life! This might include celebrating the opening of your business, meeting other business owners, marketing your business and tapping into vital information about running a business locally in Oak Park, in Cook County and the State of Illinois.

The **Oak Park and River (OPRF) Forest Chamber of Commerce** is here to help you with all of these business needs. That's why the Village of Oak Park provides all new Oak Park businesses a complimentary 6-month membership to the OPRF Chamber of Commerce. This membership will be activated with the issuance of your business license. As part of this membership opportunity, you will have full access to all of the member benefits and networking opportunities. The Chamber of Commerce will also provide a general orientation to doing business in the Village, and provide your new or expanded business with a ribbon cutting event.

Learn more about the OPRF Chamber of Commerce at [oprunchamber.org](https://oprunchamber.org), or reach out directly at [info@oprunchamber.org](mailto:info@oprunchamber.org).

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### **Useful Links**

Village of Oak Park business Guide Check-Off List ([Link to be determined](#))

Available real Estate ([Link to oakparkeconomicdevelopmentcorporation.org/commercial-listings](https://oakparkeconomicdevelopmentcorporation.org/commercial-listings))

Oak Park's VillageView Portal ([villageview.oak-park.us/CityViewPortal](https://villageview.oak-park.us/CityViewPortal))

COVID-19 Coronavirus Resources ([oak-park.us/news/covid-19-coronavirus-resources](https://oak-park.us/news/covid-19-coronavirus-resources))

Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce ([oprunchamber.org](https://oprunchamber.org))

Oak Park Economic Development Corporation ([oakparkeconomicdevelopmentcorporation.org](https://oakparkeconomicdevelopmentcorporation.org))

## ✓ Village of Oak Park Business Guide Check Off List

The Village of Oak Park, the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation and the Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce are partners, here to assist new and existing businesses. This business guide check list will help you walk through the various steps involved in opening or expanding a business in Oak Park. The primary point of contact, for each step, is listed.

**You want to develop a new or revise an existing business plan and/or locate the right site for your new or expanding business.** Contact the **Oak Park Economic Development Corporation**. The Oak Park Economic Development Corporation can be reached at [contact@opdc.net](mailto:contact@opdc.net).

### Items to be checked off include...

- ✓ Complete your business plan, ensuring that you have thought through the project budget, local competition and business financials.
- ✓ Identify a storefront, office or other location that is suitable for your business needs.
- ✓ Understand local resources and non-profit network offerings to help you fill gaps in funding, or in knowledge, as you work to bring your business to Oak Park.

**You need assistance navigating Village government processes, have questions about zoning requirements related to a site you've selected or have building permit or business licensing questions.** Contact the **Village of Oak Park**. The Village can be reached at [business@oak-park.us](mailto:business@oak-park.us).

### Items to be checked off include...

- ✓ Contact the Village and schedule a **"New Business Walk-through Site Visit"** at your new physical location to get a better understanding of zoning and permitting considerations.
- ✓ Review the zoning requirements that may be applicable to your selected location.
- ✓ Ensure that your team of architects, building contractors and subcontractors are meeting all Village building and permitting requirements.
- ✓ Submit your Building Permit Application through Oak Park's **VillageView** web portal.
- ✓ Complete inspections and reviews with Village Staff throughout the construction process in order to obtain your required Village of Oak Park Occupancy Permit.
- ✓ Apply for and receive your Village of Oak Park Business License.
- ✓ Ensure that you have explored and completed the process for additional permits or licenses that your business may need (i.e. Liquor License, Outdoor dining permit, etc.).

**You want to promote your business and get connected to Oak Park.** Contact the **Oak Park-River Forest Chamber of Commerce**. The Chamber can be reached at [info@oprchamber.org](mailto:info@oprchamber.org).

### Items to be checked off include...

- ✓ Schedule your complimentary Ribbon Cutting to celebrate your opening!
- ✓ Attend local networking events to meet other business owners and advertise your product/service to the local community.
- ✓ Take advantage of mailing lists and social media marketing to ensure you are positioned effectively with potential customers.