



# Village of Oak Park

## **STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** Plan Commission

**REVIEW DATE:** March 5, 2026

**FROM:** Village Staff

**PREPARED BY:** Michael Bruce, Village Planner  
Planning & Urban Design Manager

### **P R O J E C T T I T L E**

**PC 26-03: Zoning Ordinance Text Amendment.** The Petitioner, Village of Oak Park, seeks a text amendment to the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance as follows: 1) amending Article 8 (“Uses”) – Table 8-1 (“Use Matrix”) of the Zoning Ordinance by adding “Cocktail Lounge” as a permitted (P) use in the HS – Harrison Street Zoning District, DT – Downtown Zoning Districts, and the NC – Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District; 2) amending Article 2 (“Definitions & Rules of Measurement”), Section 2.3 (“Definitions”) of the Zoning Ordinance by adding a definition for “Cocktail Lounge” as follow: “An establishment that serves alcoholic beverages for on premise consumption and serves appetizers, snacks, or pre-packaged food items for consumption on the premises in a manner that is incidental to the sale of alcoholic beverages. Live entertainment and music may be provided as an ancillary use to the cocktail lounge. A Cocktail Lounge shall not exceed 2,000 square feet, excluding the square footage devoted to a kitchen. A cocktail lounge includes a speakeasy or similar lounge.”; 3) amending Article 8 (“Uses”), Section 8.3 (“Use Restrictions”), Subsection (A) (1) by adding “(l) Cocktail Lounge is allowed at grade level or on the ground floor within the first 50 feet of the street line;” and 5) amending Article 10 (“Off-Street Parking & Loading”) – Table 10-2 (“Off-Street Vehicle and Bicycle Parking Requirements”) of the Zoning Ordinance by adding “Cocktail Lounge” under “USE” and requiring “1 per 500sf GFA” for vehicle parking spaces & “1 per 1500sf GFA” for bicycle spaces.

### **A P P L I C A N T I N F O R M A T I O N**

**APPLICANT:** Village of Oak Park, 123 Madison Street, Oak Park, IL 60302

### **A N A L Y S I S**

This initiative is occurring due to prospective interest in this type of business. The Economic Vitality Office, Development Services Department and the Village Manager’s Office have been involved in supporting the prospective business use. In fact, staff have conducted visits to and had discussions about potential locations for this use. Development Services staff have organized and conducted walk-throughs of locations on North Boulevard, Harrison Street and Lake Street with the business owner. The Economic Vitality Office staff continue to provide guidance on possible locations within Oak Park.

The Oak Park Zoning Ordinance, nor our Liquor Code, allows this specific type of land use without an associated restaurant. Village codes do provide for very specific alcohol-related establishments, such as

“The Beer Shop” which is categorized as a craft brew lounge, where only craft beer is allowed for sale. This establishment allows patrons to bring in food and offers some pre-packaged items. Kingslager on Roosevelt Road, a microbrewery, provides a tasting room for patrons that offer pre-packaged items as well as allowing outside food on the premises.

There are two other establishment that resemble a “cocktail lounge” but have restaurant food available for sale on premise: Kettlestrings Grove and Mira Social, which are both located on Marion Street. These establishments are similar to a cocktail lounge, but Kettlestrings Grove is connected to Betty’s Pizza (same ownership), and Mira Social has a kitchen with a limited menu.

Staff is proposing Zoning Ordinance text amendments that would allow, by right, a cocktail lounge up to a maximum of 2,000 square feet of floor space. The maximum square footage does not include any kitchen areas. This use could be located on Harrison Street (Arts District), Chicago Avenue (Harlem and Austin Districts), Lake Street (Austin District), South Oak Park Avenue (Southtown) and the greater Downtown area (DTOP, Pleasant & Hemingway). These districts are viewed as more conducive to a smaller more intimate venue. Any cocktail lounge establishment would be required to provide, at a minimum, limited food offerings, such as hot or cold appetizers, pre-packaged foods or snacks. A proposed menu must be submitted with a liquor license application. Cocktail lounges can also support live music as an incidental use.

The proposed use would be defined in our Zoning Ordinance as follows:

“An establishment that serves alcoholic beverages for on premise consumption and serves appetizers, snacks, or pre-packaged food items for consumption on the premises in a manner that is incidental to the sale of alcoholic beverages. Live entertainment and music may be provided as an ancillary use to the cocktail lounge. A Cocktail Lounge shall not exceed 2,000 square feet, excluding the square footage devoted to a kitchen. A cocktail lounge includes a speakeasy or similar lounge.”

## **Z o n i n g   O r d i n a n c e**

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The Plan Commission and Village Board must consider the following standards when determining appropriateness of the proposed Zoning Ordinance text amendment. The approval of amendments is based on a balancing of these standards.

In addition to the Zoning Ordinance text amendment, staff would need to craft a new liquor license category using the above-mentioned details, such as square footage, food requirements and types of alcohol offered.

### Standards for Text Amendments:

- a. The extent to which the proposed amendment promotes the public health, safety, and welfare of the Village.
- b. The relative gain to the public, as compared to the hardship imposed upon the applicant.

- c. The consistency of the proposed amendment with the Comprehensive Plan and any adopted land use policies.
- d. The consistency of the proposed amendment with the intent and general regulations of this Ordinance.
- e. Whether the proposed amendment corrects an error or omission, adds clarification to existing requirements, or reflects a change in policy.
- f. The extent to which the proposed amendment creates nonconformities.
- g. The extent to which the proposed amendment is consistent with the overall structure and organization of this Ordinance.

PROPOSED TEXT AMENDMENT:

**VILLAGE OF OAK PARK ZONING ORDINANCE: COCKTAIL LOUNGE**

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**ARTICLE 8. USES**

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**8.3 USE RESTRICTIONS**

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Amending Article 8 (“Uses”), Section 8.3 (“Use Restrictions”), Subsection (A) (1) by adding the following language. “(l) Cocktail Lounge is allowed at grade level or on the ground floor within the first 50 feet of the street line.”

“l. Cocktail Lounge is allowed at grade level or on the floor within the first 50 feet of the street line.”

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Amending Article 8 (“Uses”) – Table 8-1 (“Use Matrix”) by adding “Cocktail Lounge” as a permitted (P) use in the HS – Harrison Street Zoning District, DT – Downtown Zoning Districts, and the NC – Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District.

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TABLE 8-1: USE MATRIX																		
Use	R-1	R-2	R-3 -50 & -35	R-4	R-5	R-6	R-7	DT <sup>1</sup>	HS	GC	MS <sup>1</sup>	NA	NC <sup>1</sup>	RR <sup>1</sup>	OS	I	H	Use Standard § = Section
<b>Retail</b>																		
Antique Store								P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Art Gallery								P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Auction House								S	P	P	S	P	P	P				
Brewpub								P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Cocktail Lounge								P	P				P					
Consignment Shop								P	P	P	P	P	P	P				
Craft Brew Lounge								S	S	S	P	S	S	P				
Design Studio with Retail								P	P	P	P	P	P	P			P	
Electric Vehicle Charging Station (Primary)									S	S	S	S	S	S				§8.4. W
Gas Station									S	S	S	S	S	S				§8.4.J
Greenhouse/Nursery										P		P						
Heavy Retail and Rental										S		S						
Outdoor Dining								P	P	P	P	P	P	P				§8.4.L
Retail Cannabis Establishment								S	S	S	S	S	S	S				State Statute 410 ILCS 705 §8.4. P
Restaurant								P	P	P	P	P	P	P			P	
Retail Goods Establishment								P	P	P	P	P	P	P			P	
Secondhand Goods Dealer												S		S				
Specialty Food Service								S	S		P	S	S	P				
Vehicle Dealership: Fully Enclosed								P		P	P	P		P				§8.4. S
Vehicle Dealership: Fully Enclosed-Small								P		P	P	P	P	P				§8.4. S
Vehicle Dealership: With Outdoor Storage and Display										S		S		S				§8.4. S

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## ARTICLE 2. DEFINITIONS & RULES OF MEASUREMENT

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### 2.3 DEFINITIONS

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Amending Article 2 (“Definitions & Rules of Measurement”), Section 2.3 (“Definitions”) of the Zoning Ordinance by adding a definition for “Cocktail Lounge” as follow:

“An establishment that serves alcoholic beverages for on premise consumption and serves appetizers, snacks, or pre-packaged food items for consumption on the premises in a manner that is incidental to the sale of alcoholic beverages. Live entertainment and music may be provided as an ancillary use to the cocktail lounge. A Cocktail Lounge shall not exceed 2,000 square feet, excluding the square footage devoted to a kitchen. A cocktail lounge includes a speakeasy or similar lounge.”

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## ARTICLE 10. OFF-STREET PARKING & LOADING

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### 10.4 REQUIRED OFF-STREET VEHICLE AND BYCYCLE PARKING SPACES

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Amending Article 10 (“Off-Street Parking & Loading”) – Table 10-2 (“Off-Street Vehicle and Bicycle Parking Requirements”) of the Zoning Ordinance by adding “Cocktail Lounge” under “USE” and requiring “1 per 500sf GFA” for vehicle parking spaces & “1 per 1500sf GFA” for bicycle spaces.

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TABLE 10-2: OFF-STREET VEHICLE AND BICYCLE PARKING REQUIREMENTS

USE	MINIMUM REQUIRED VEHICLE SPACES	MINIMUM REQUIRED BICYCLE SPACES	
		REQUIRED TOTAL BICYCLE SPACES	% OF REQUIRED BICYCLE SPACES FOR LONG-TERM SPACES
Animal Care Facility	1 per 500sf GFA		
Antique Store	1 per 500sf GFA	Over 10,000sf GFA: 1 per 2,500sf GFA	
Art Gallery	1 per 500sf GFA	Over 5,000sf GFA: 1 per 1,500sf GFA	
Art and Fitness Studio	1 per 500sf GFA	Over 5,000sf GFA: 1 per 1,500sf GFA	
Auction House	1 per 500sf GFA	Over 10,000sf GFA: 1 per 2,500sf GFA	
Bed and Breakfast	2 + 1 per guestroom		
Body Modification Establishment	1 per 500sf GFA		
Brew Pub	1 per 500sf GFA	Over 5,000sf GFA: 1 per 1,500sf GFA	
Broadcasting Facility	1 per 1,000sf GFA	Over 10,000sf GFA: 1 per 2,500sf GFA	
Business Service Center	1 per 500sf GFA	Over 10,000sf GFA: 1 per 2,500sf GFA	
Car Wash	Non-Automated: 2 per bay Automated: 1 per bay		
Cocktail Lounge	1 per 500sf GFA	1 per 1500sf GFA	
Community Center	1 per 500sf GFA	1 per 2,500sf GFA	
Community Residence	1 per 2 rooms	1 per 4 rooms	
Consignment Shop	1 per 500sf GFA	Over 10,000sf GFA: 1 per 2,500sf GFA	
Contractor Shop	1 per 500sf GFA		
Craft Brew Lounge	1 per 500sf GFA	Over 5,000sf GFA: 1 per 1,500sf GFA	
Cultural Facility	1 per 500sf GFA	1 per 2,500sf GFA	
Day Care Center	1 per 1,000sf GFA		
Design Studio with Retail	1 per 500sf GFA	Over 10,000sf GFA: 1 per 2,500sf GFA	
Dwelling – Above the Ground Floor	1 per du	1 per 4 du	80%
Dwelling – Multi-Family	1 per du	1 per 4 du	80%
Dwelling – Single-Family (Detached)	2 per du		
Dwelling – Townhouse	2 per du		
Dwelling – Two-Family	2 per du		
Educational Facility – Primary or Secondary	1 per classroom	1 per 5 classrooms	
Educational Facility – University	1 per 3 students at maximum enrollment	1 per 10 students at maximum enrollment	30%
Educational Facility – Vocational	1 per 500sf GFA	1 per 2,500sf GFA	
Financial Institution	1 per 500sf GFA	1 per 5,000sf GFA	
Funeral Home	1 per 200sf GFA of public space		
Gas Station	2 per pump island + 1 per 500sf GFA of structure + 5 stacking spaces per car wash bay		
Government Office	1 per 500sf GFA	1 per 2,500sf GFA	30%
Greenhouse/Nursery	1 per 500sf GFA of indoor space + 1 per 1,000sf of outdoor space		
Heavy Retail and Rental	1 per 500sf GFA of indoor space +		

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## Recommendation

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Cocktail Lounges would be destination-oriented venues that may boost local business, increase tax revenue, and support the hospitality industry. This use aligns with the Village’s economic vitality goals for increased night-time activities. These establishments can increase vibrancy of an area, making it more pedestrian-friendly and appealing, particularly in the downtown areas. Cocktail Lounges or speakeasys provide a higher quality mix of entertainment, aligning with community desires for a more upscale or specialized nightlife experience.

Considering all the above, staff believe the introduction of a traditional cocktail lounge, which can include a speakeasy-style design, would be appropriate, but only for certain areas within our community as outlined above. However, we strongly believe that there needs to be a food component as part of any operation where alcoholic beverages are consumed on premises.

Removing the square footage of the kitchen from the maximum allowed square footage of the establishment provides an incentive to include a kitchen. Requiring food services often forces a more controlled, lower-intensity environment compared to bars that serve only alcohol. The buildout of a kitchen would require health inspections, proper ventilation, and sanitation, holding the establishment to higher safety standards.

Staff are in support of the above-referenced Zoning Ordinance text amendments as proposed.

*End of Report.*

- c. Plan Commission  
Marcus Martinez, Plan Commission Attorney  
Craig Failor, Development Services Director  
Robert Bernhart, Zoning Administrator
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