

I am writing in response to the application of TAT3 Chicago, Inc. for a zoning ordinance text amendment and special use permit to operate a body modification establishment at 6549 North Avenue in Oak Park.

Please note that I only became aware of TAT3 Chicago's application two weeks ago, giving me little time to talk to North Avenue District businesses and residents or to respond to the application itself. Nor have I seen TAT3's business plan, which is referenced in its application.

ZONING ORDINANCE TEXT AMENDMENT

Body modification establishments should remain a nonpermitted use in the North Avenue District. It is the only district where this is the case because it is uniquely vulnerable as a border street, as a heavily trafficked four-lane state highway, and because it attracts negative uses. Gruen & Gruen noted this in a 1995 North Avenue study, defining such uses as keeping middle class customers away and discouraging businesses that serve them from opening or remaining open.¹ Even uses that aren't problems elsewhere, like banquet halls, have had a negative impact in our district, including heavy alcohol consumption and loud music outside the event spaces.

The District now has four pawnshops. No other Oak Park district has any. (Until usury laws changed, we also had four payday loan stores.) There are three vape shops, more than any other Oak Park commercial district. All sell intoxicating hemp, as does a nearby beauty supply store. There are three walk-in massage parlors. (Prostitution was previously practiced at two of these.) We also have two day labor agencies and one body modification establishment, Ageless Arts Tattoo and Body Piercing, at 6743 North Avenue. That's just two blocks west of TAT3's proposed location.

Body modification establishments are negative uses, at least in our district. That's why the three storefronts next to Ageless Arts are so often vacant for long periods, with 6739 W North vacant right now. Ageless Arts customers and employees had rowdy late-night parties in the nearby bank parking lot until the bank put a stop to it. Once it obtains a special use permit, there is nothing to stop a body modification establishment from providing horns, forked tongues, fangs, and other bizarre alterations to customers. (See last page for examples.) This would certainly have a negative District impact. We are not Rush Street.

Revitalization of the North Avenue District is a fragile matter. In its 2018 plan for the District, the Urban Land Institute observed: "Traffic races in both directions while too many buildings sit vacant. The presence of multiple pawn shops and payday loan stores within this relatively short

¹ I can't provide a link to the study because there is none on the Village website.

governing body art establishments. <https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/environmental-health-protection/body-art-establishments.html>³

Here are a few rebuttals to the application's specific assertions.

- Plans for open houses and body art exhibitions are cited as positives for the district. But these will simply publicize the negative use and could be especially detrimental if bizarre body modifications are exhibited in photographs or paintings. Body art is simply not the same thing as art exhibited in galleries, such as those in the Oak Park Main Library or the Oak Park Art League.
- The applicant asserts real, acute hardship if its application is not approved because "it must relocate their business and loss of opportunity to... conduct business in a desirable location in the Village of Oak Park."⁴
Unless TAT3 is already operating at 6549 W North (illegally), why would it need to relocate? What prevents it from opening at another, less sensitive Oak Park location?
- The application claims TAT3 will diversify Oak Park's economy, strengthen the tax base, and help mix businesses as called for in the comprehensive plan.⁵
But the District already has a body modification establishment and there are several others in the Village. As a negative use, TAT3 will weaken rather than strengthen the tax base.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this response.

Judith Alexander
Founder, The North Avenue District, inc.
Oak Park, IL

³ Applicant mentions only compliance with building codes and municipal codes in its response to Approval Standards for Text Amendments, a).

⁴ Response to Approval Standards for Text Amendments, b).

⁵ response to Approval Standards for Text Amendments, c)

Body Modification Business Proposed Location: 6549 W. North Ave.

From Craig Volpe <craigvolpe1@outlook.com>

Date Thu 1/15/2026 2:01 PM

To Bruce, Michael <mbruce@oak-park.us>

Cc Judith Alexander <jalexander@n-ave.com>

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Bruce,

I was planning on attending tonight but got called out of town on an emergency burst water pipe.

I'm very concerned that the village is contemplating allowing a body modification/tattoo parlor onto North Avenue. I was told by many people at the village and the board of trustees that improving North Ave was a priority. It was a relief to know that no more pawn shops, payday loans and tattoo shops would be allowed. I also attended the meetings where the very expensive study for North Ave was discussed. In it they detailed a greater need for investment in residential which would be followed by neighbor friendly businesses and the need for the village and city to beautify.

I invested 3.5 million dollars into 6555 North Ave apartments and am proud to say I have a very diverse tenant base many with small children and including myself as a tenant. My partner invested 18 million dollars across the street at 6700 North Ave apartments with the same diverse community many with children. In the empty lot at 6600 North Ave he plans another apartment building at a cost of 24 million dollars. A neighbor at 6600 on Oak Park side invested 3 million in a residential building that includes children. At my empty lot 2 door's down from this proposed body modification establishment we hope to build 15 unit apartments at a cost of 5 million dollars. I am proud of what we have done to improve North Ave and the neighborhood. I live here. My hope is to see it continue to grow and prosper. If the village allows it to go backwards I will have to rethink investing anymore money into North Ave. My hope is that Oak Park keeps its word and does its part in beautification and maintaining the corridor. I appreciate your time and hope you will pass this onto the committee.

P.S. - In my much younger day's I attended art shows of body modification. These were held in Chicago in nite club's in the warehouse district. At these shows they had people hanging from meet hooks, putting objects through the flesh and many other disturbing things. I saw that this establishment wants to do gallery and exhibit type things. I truly believe this is not appropriate for our neighborhood. This will bring many late night crowds that will bring drinking and hanging out on the sidewalks and alley.

Thank you,

Craig Volpe
312-213-4499

Body Modification Business at 6549 North Ave

From Elizabeth Wilson Yu <ewilsonyu@att.net>

Date Thu 1/15/2026 5:27 PM

To Bruce, Michael <mbruce@oak-park.us>

Cc Judith Alexander <jalexander@n-ave.com>

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization.

Hello Mike,

GrandMaster Yu and I are hoping to get to the Council Chambers this evening to oppose adding a 2nd (or 3rd!) business specializing in body modification to our dynamic area of North Avenue.

For the past 30+years, Master S.H. Yu Martial Arts has promoted good citizenship, nobility of spirit, health, safety and wellness in community through our traditional martial arts training philosophy. We have taught generations of Oak Park and surrounding communities children, youth, and adults, and continue to offer every opportunity to our youth to develop their inner worth and gifts, empowering and inspiring and expecting success from our students.

As the district already has one such establishment, we hardly believe that a 2nd will promote and influence strength of body, mind or spirit in our vulnerable youth, who are already exposed to enough outside influences beyond our control.

We URGE you to reconsider licensing this business for the protection of the families we serve and the philosophy of building self confidence and self worth, inherent in our curriculum.

Thank you for your attention.

Our Best,

Supreme GrandMaster S.H. Yu and
Elizabeth Wilson Yu
Owners/Master Teachers
Master S.H. Yu Martial Arts
6701 W. North Ave., Oak Park
708-383-3456

https://us-east-2.protection.sophos.com?d=master-sh-yu.com&u=d3d3Lk1hc3Rlci1TSC1ZdS5jb20=&i=NWY5YjBiOWFmMzQ0NDYwZTA5MjUxODg2&t=ZTQxZjBzcHB3K0pMeXVRUkV5aU1SR2g0V1UwcHk0c1JLNmJkc0JXN2Zwc0=&h=6c0b5e2bb5e542a2ab017035b18a4c8d&s=AVNPUEhUT0NFTkNSWVBUSVY0hYwQ-PgfKdH6vr9WKTxsC_H4X9yfd1A3VJyP3Vr3qA