



Village of Oak Park

STAFF REPORT

TO: Zoning Board of Appeals

REVIEW DATE: March 4, 2026

FROM: Project Review Team

PREPARED BY: Bob Bernhart, Zoning Administrator

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

CALENDAR NUMBER: 08-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, Greg Sorg (Sorg Speed, Inc.), seeking a special use permit for a specialty food service facility (a coffee roastery), pursuant to Section 8.3 (Table 8-1: Use Matrix) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance at the property located at 7 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-08-127-015-0000 (“Subject Property”), in the NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District.

CALENDAR NUMBER: 09-26-Z

The Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) will conduct a public hearing on an application filed by the Applicant, Greg Sorg (Sorg Speed, Inc.), seeking a special use permit for a drive-through component of a proposed coffee roastery/shop, pursuant to Section 8.3 (Table 8-1: Use Matrix) of the Oak Park Zoning Ordinance at the property located at 7 Lake Street, Oak Park, Illinois, Property Index Number 16-08-127-015-0000 (“Subject Property”), in the NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District.

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

APPLICANT/OWNER: Greg Sorg (Sorg Speed, Inc.)
408 N Austin Boulevard
Oak Park, IL 60302

PROPERTY CONTACT: Brian Hammersley
410 S Michigan Avenue
Suite 917
Chicago, IL 60605

P R O P E R T Y I N F O R M A T I O N

EXISTING ZONING: NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District
EXISTING LAND USE: Vacant Building (former car wash and detailing shop)
PROPERTY SIZE: Approximately 5,212 square feet
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Neighborhood Commercial/Mixed Use

SURROUNDING ZONING AND LAND USES:

NORTH: Lake Street followed by NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District (Retail, Healthcare)
SOUTH: North Boulevard followed by Train Embankment, South Boulevard, and NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District (Residential)
EAST: NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District (Brewery/Restaurant)
WEST: NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District (Gymnastics Center)

A n a l y s i s

Submittals

This report is based on the following documents which were filed with the Zoning Administrator-Development Services Department. As there are two applications for the same proposed business/use, both the Specialty Food Service and the Drive-Through application packets follow the same order:

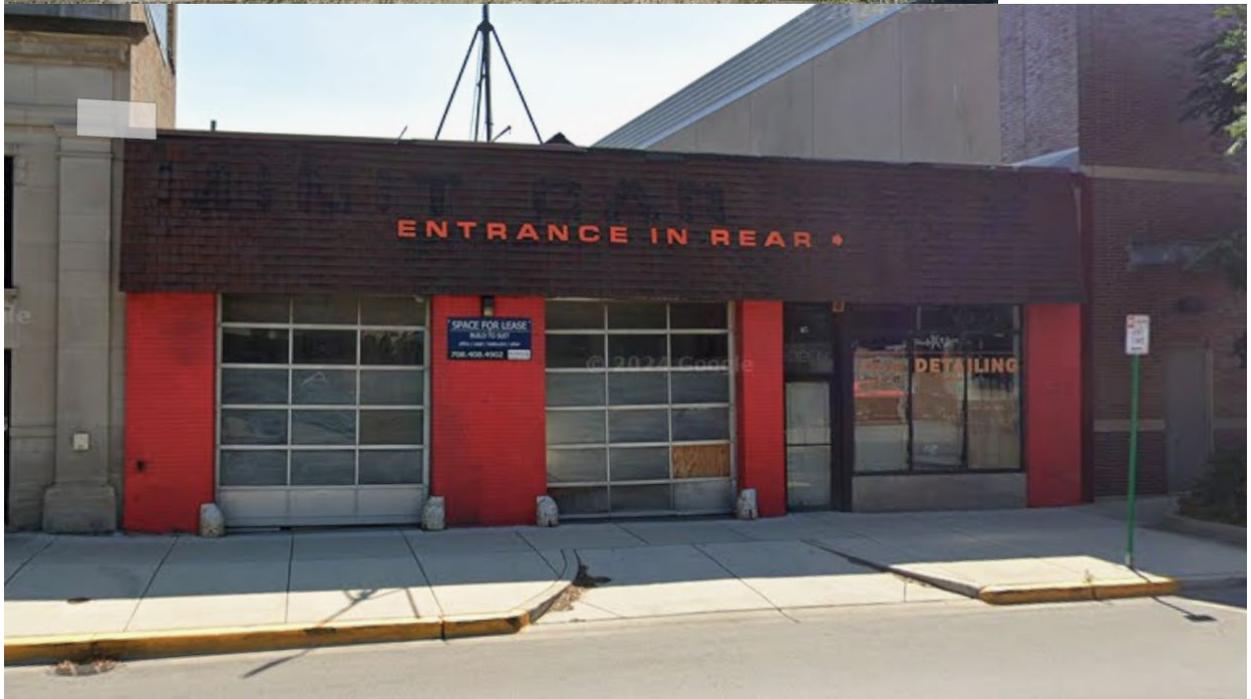
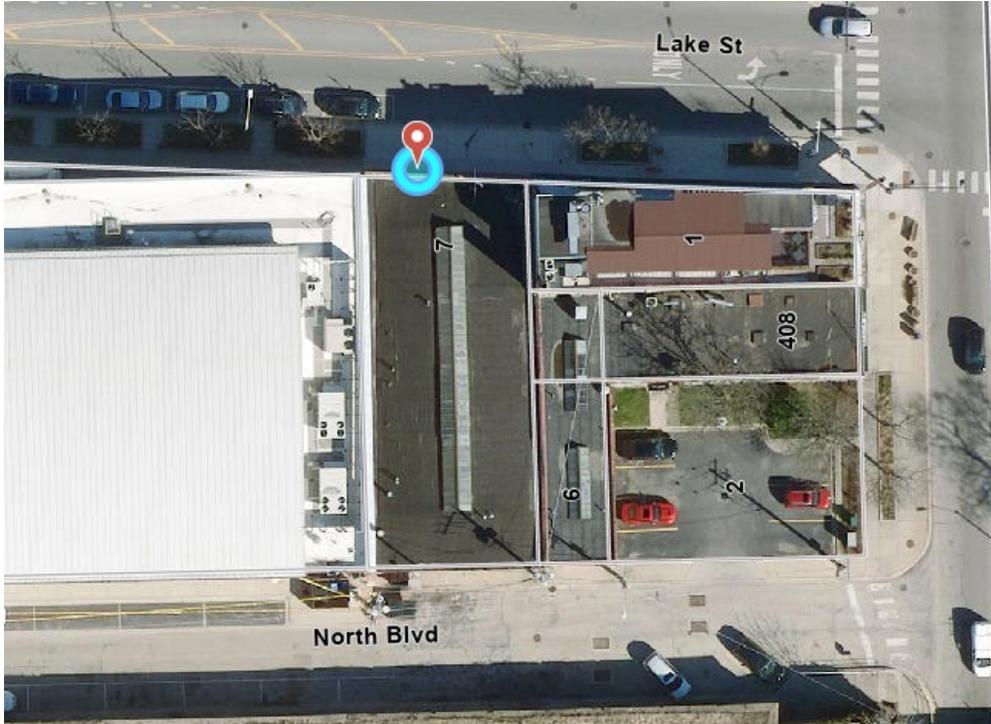
1. Cover Sheet & Purpose Statement;
2. Special Use Application;
3. Response to special use standards pursuant to Section 14.2 (E);
4. Proposed Site/Floor Plan;
5. Plat of Survey;
6. Existing Conditions Elevations; and
7. Signage Elevations.

Description

The Subject Property is a single parcel with a land area of approximately 4,975 square feet. It is located midblock, with frontage on both Lake Street to the north and North Boulevard to the south. The footprint of the building covers the entire parcel area. The building has been used as a car wash in the past but is currently vacant. The building has two existing overhead garage doors providing vehicular access from North Boulevard, and two matching overhead doors along Lake Street. However, there is currently just one curb cut for vehicles on Lake Street, as the east overhead door has a full curb in front.

The Applicant, Greg Sorg (Sorg Speed Inc.), is proposing to utilize the parts of the existing drive-through configuration and modify the interior space to open a coffee roastery business with a drive-through. The curb cut along Lake Street would be modified so vehicles can exit onto Lake Street from the east garage door as well. The roastery would be located to the rear of the building along North Boulevard), with restrooms in front of it and a public-facing coffee shop in the interior space along Lake Street. The east drive-through lane would be primary drive-through lane, with vehicles entering from North Boulevard and exiting onto Lake Street, and the inner (west) lane would function as a bypass lane during drive-through hours, which are proposed to be from 7 am until 11 am. Outside of these hours, the bypass lane would serve as a flexible additional space for coffee shop customers. The intent is to accommodate both vehicle and pedestrian traffic on the site.

Images of Subject Property:





Compliance with the Zoning Ordinance

The Subject Property is located within the NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District. The purpose statement for this district is described in Article 5 of the Zoning Ordinance:

F. NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District

The NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District is intended for commercial uses that serve the local community. The NC District applies to clusters of commercial uses that are more pedestrian-oriented in character and located in close proximity to residential neighborhoods.

The Applicant plans to use the existing building for a coffee shop/roastery business with a drive-through component. The coffee shop/roastery business is classified as “Specialty Food Service” in the Zoning Ordinance, and this use requires special use approval in the NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District, per Table 8-1 of the Ordinance. Specialty Food Service is defined as follows in Article 2 of the Zoning Ordinance:

Specialty Food Service. *A business that specializes in the production and/or sale of specialty food products, such as a bakery, meat market, coffee roasters, catering business, or fishmonger, and may offer areas for accessory retail sales of or restaurants that serve the products processed on-site. Specialty food service also includes preparation, processing, canning or packaging of food products where all processing is completely enclosed and there are no outside impacts.*

Uses with drive-through components also require special use approval in the NC Neighborhood Commercial Zoning District. Thus, the Applicant is applying for two concurrent special use permits: one for Specialty Food Service, and one for a Drive-Through. While Specialty Food Service is not subject to any specific principal use standards in Article 8 of the Zoning Ordinance, Drive-Through establishments must meet the following requirements, in addition to receiving special use approval, and the submitted plans address compliance with these standards.

I. Drive-Through Facility

1. All drive-through facilities must provide a minimum of three stacking spaces per lane or bay, unless additional stacking spaces are required specifically by Article 10. Stacking spaces provided for drive-through uses must be:

- a. A minimum of nine feet in width, as measured from the outermost point of any service window or bay entrance, to the edge of the driveway, and 18 feet in length.*
 - b. Stacking spaces must begin behind the vehicle parked at a final point of service exiting the drive through aisle, such as a service window or car wash bay (this does not include a menu board). Spaces must be placed in a single line behind each lane or bay.*
- 2. All drive-through lanes must be located and designed to ensure that they do not adversely affect the safety and efficiency of traffic circulation on adjoining streets.*
- 3. Additional screening may be required as part of special use approval to minimize the impact of exterior site lighting, headlight glare, menu boards, and intercom sound.*
- 4. The volume on all intercom menu displays must comply with all local noise regulations.*
- 5. The operator of the drive-through facility must provide outdoor waste receptacles.*
- 6. A drive through lane must have bail-out capability for all vehicles that have entered the drive through lane. The bail-out lane must be a minimum width of 10 feet in width and run parallel to the drive through lane. If a bailout lane is also an interior access drive providing access to parking spaces, the bail out lane is limited to a one-way traffic pattern following the direction of the drive through lane.*

Special Use:

The listing of a use as a special use within a zoning district does not constitute an assurance or presumption that such special use will be approved. Rather, each special use must be evaluated on an individual basis, in relation to all applicable standards of this Ordinance. Such evaluation will determine whether approval of the special use is appropriate at the particular location and in the particular manner proposed. The recommendation of the Zoning Board of Appeals and decision of the Village Board must make findings to support each of the following conclusions:

1. The establishment, maintenance, and operation of the proposed special use will not have a substantial or unduly adverse impact on the neighborhood or endanger the public health, safety, or welfare.
2. The proposed special use is compatible with the general land use of adjacent properties and other property within the immediate vicinity.
3. The special use in the specific location proposed is consistent with the spirit and intent of this Ordinance, adopted land use policies and the Comprehensive Plan.
4. The special use meets the requirements for such classification in this Ordinance.

The Applicant has responded to the approval standards within each application packet.

Following the hearing, the Zoning Board of Appeals shall transmit to the Village Board a written report of its findings as to compliance with the special use approval standards listed in Section 14.2 (E) (Approval Standards) and give its recommendation to either approve, approve with conditions or deny the special use.

C o m p a t i b i l i t y w i t h S u r r o u n d i n g L a n d U s e s

The Subject Property is surrounded by the following uses: to the north across Lake Street is a healthcare center and a retail beauty supply store. To the south across North Boulevard is the train embankment, followed by South Boulevard and multifamily residential beyond it. To the west is the Gymnastics & Recreation Center, and to the east is One Lake Brewing, a brewery with a taproom/restaurant.

Most recently, the structure has been used as a car wash with detailing services, but it is currently vacant. The building footprint covers the entirety of the site. The proposed site plan and other submitted materials show that the Applicant's intent is to utilize the existing drive-through configuration and general layout of the building to capture vehicle traffic during peak hours, while also utilizing part of the interior space for a retail café use, which is permitted as a component of specialty food service businesses. The roastery itself would be located at the rear of the building. While the curb cut along Lake Street is proposed to be modified and expanded to allow vehicles to exit from the east lane, this would be the primary drive-through lane, as the other would only act as a bypass lane. The bypass lane area is adjacent to the interior coffee shop space and roastery, and during non-drive-through hours, could function as an expanded indoor space for customers.

The proposal allows for an adaptive reuse of an existing structure and would complement nearby retail, office, and recreation uses. It may also offer a daytime complement to the brewery use to the east. While vehicles would exit where pedestrians traverse Lake Street, this general configuration has existed for many years and the Applicant would install and enforce measures to mitigate conflicts, such as signage, sound-emitting devices, mirrors, and staffed entry/exit points. All traffic would enter from North Boulevard and exit onto Lake Street, and the drive-through component would only be active during the mornings; during all other operating hours, the drive-through would be closed but the roastery and walk-in coffee shop could remain active. The proposed special uses, with appropriate improvements, should be compatible with the neighborhood and nearby land uses.

G e n e r a l I n f o r m a t i o n

Project Review Team

The Project Review Team consists of representatives from various departments and divisions within the Village government. No major objections were raised regarding the proposed special uses. Discussion of the applications included the following items and topics:

- The reasoning for the bypass lane's location closer to the interior space. The Applicant noted that this is to create flexible interior space during hours that the drive-through is not operational, and they would utilize a runner system to bring products to drive-through customers, which is common in many similar establishments.
- Concern regarding vehicles crossing the pedestrian areas on Lake Street as they exit. Pedestrian protection systems should be installed for safety, including mirrors, warning signs, lights, and sound-emitting devices. The Applicant has agreed to this.
- Public Works noted that the curb cut onto Lake Street, as proposed in the plans, is similar to the wider curb cut that used to exist there prior to it being narrowed. They noted that detailed technical drawings meeting Village and ADA standards would need to be provided and the modifications could not conflict with utilities or street trees. The Applicant is aware of this.
- Staff asked whether outdoor dining would be proposed, with some having concerns about the tight sidewalk space. The Applicant has noted that there would not be outdoor dining for the proposed use.
- Fire commented about required life safety systems such as fire alarms and CO detection.

End of Report.

- c. Applicant
 - Zoning Board of Appeals members
 - Rasheda Jackson, Zoning Board of Appeals Attorney
 - Mike Bruce, Village Planner/Planning & Urban Design Manager
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