

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. To arrange a meeting, call 708.358.5430 or email [permits@oak-park.us](mailto:permits@oak-park.us).

## Step 6: Inspecting the Work and Completing Your Project

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 final inspections, the Village will provide a Certificate of Occupancy verifying that all requirements needed to open a business have been met.

## Step 7: Get your Business License

While you can complete a Business License Application at any time, a business license cannot be issued until all permitted work is complete and inspections passed. Once you have received your Certificate of Occupancy, call 708.358.5427 or 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 may open your doors to your new customers.

## Online Options

A wide range of property related Village business services is available online via a computer, tablet or mobile telephone at [www.oak-park.us/villageview](http://www.oak-park.us/villageview). The software solution links multiple Village databases and streamlines and automates information processing. Business Services staff can help potential new business operators use the online system for a range of activities:

- Apply for permits
- Check the status of permit applications
- Schedule inspections
- Register as a contractor
- Check a contractor's license status
- Submit property complaints
- Check on planning applications
- Apply for a business license
- Apply for a multifamily rental license
- Search for property information



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[www.oak-park.us](http://www.oak-park.us)

708.358.5427  
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# Open Oak Park

A guide to opening  
a new business



The Development Customer Services Department is ready to assist you in every aspect of opening a new business in Oak Park. Through a team approach that consolidates all services related to investing in Oak Park within one administrative department, the Village of Oak Park has developed a seamless process to take you from concept to ribbon cutting. This guide provides an overview of the steps and resources available to help you succeed.

## Step 1: Contact the Business Services Division

The Business Services Division in Village Hall is the first stop in starting a new business in Oak Park. Staff offers individualized services tailored to your unique needs. Whether you are an experienced business operator or just beginning to cultivate the seed of a great idea, we help you to succeed by making sure you have the right information at the right time. Services provided by the Business Services Division include:

- Guidance on what is needed to start or expand a business in Oak Park.
- Small business consultations, including assistance with all aspects of planning for your new business.
- A central point of entry at Village Hall, to help guide you through Village processes.
- A customized roadmap through the steps necessary to operate and grow in the Village.
- Coordinated, multi-division oversight for opening a new business.
- Someone to call when questions come up or you just want to talk about your ideas.

Contact the Business Services Division at [business@oak-park.us](mailto:business@oak-park.us) or 708.358.5427.

## Step 2: Plan Ahead

Although not required, developing a business plan is recommended. A well-crafted business plan provides the appropriate tools to create and operate a successful business. To develop a robust business plan you will need to consider your target customer, location requirements, financial needs and marketing strategies.

The Business Services Division is here to help guide you through this process by tapping into a range of useful resources. A good place to start is with a basic online search — just search business plan and your industry. The Oak Park Public Library also offers free business mentoring services provided by current and former business executives and owners through SCORE Chicago, a resource partner of the Small Business Administration. Visit [www.scorechicago.org](http://www.scorechicago.org) for details.

## Step 3: Site Location & Zoning

**Site Location** – One of your most critical decisions is where to locate your new business. Based on your desired customer demographics, traffic patterns and delivery and pick up requirements, the right location can mean the difference between success and failure.

The professionals at the Oak Park Economic Development Corporation can help you assess your location needs and work with you and your prospective landlord to come to agreement on the terms of your lease — just visit [www.oakparkeconomicdevelopmentcorporation.org](http://www.oakparkeconomicdevelopmentcorporation.org) or call 708.383.3838.

**Zoning Confirmation** – Knowing how a site is zoned is essential to choosing

a location for your business. Zoning classifications are the local laws that define how private property can be used. Typically, zoning ordinances govern the types of uses that are allowed in business corridors, provide information on parking requirements and specify signage allowances and restrictions. Village zoning professionals can help you understand all applicable regulations before you begin seeking permits or licenses. Before you sign a lease or install a business sign be sure to contact the Village at 708.358.5449 or [zoning@oak-park.us](mailto:zoning@oak-park.us).

## Step 4: Understand Permit Requirements

The financial realities of opening a new business can be significant. That's why it is important to fully understand any physical requirements for opening a safe and successful environment for you, your employees and your customers.

A free preliminary needs assessment of prospective locations is offered to all businesses entering or expanding in Oak Park. During this inspection, Village staff will be on hand to provide an initial assessment of improvements that may be required.

Please note, this step is not intended to be an official review of required work. A preliminary property assessment typically focuses on the following:

- General maintenance of walkways and stairs, heating and air conditioning equipment, electrical and plumbing components, windows, doors and exterior walls
- All means of egress/exiting including aisles, stairs, exit doors, ramps, and accessibility
- Fire safety
- Public health safety for food establishments

To discuss a prospective location and to set up a preliminary assessment, just call 708.358.5427 or email [business@oak-park.us](mailto:business@oak-park.us).

## Step 5: Secure the Necessary Permits

A 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). Much of the process now can be completed online at [www.oak-park.us/villageview](http://www.oak-park.us/villageview).

To ensure the most timely and cost-effective process, the following steps are recommended:

- Hire a professional, state-licensed architect to prepare your plans
- Make sure your professional contractor is registered and insured, and has the appropriate experience to fully manage your project
- Check with your contractor to make sure all subcontractors working on your project are registered with the Village before work begins

Once your permit application — including your architectural drawings — are accepted, a Village-certified plans examiner will review your drawings and provide a written report detailing any corrections that need to be addressed. If all necessary corrections to your applications have been made, appropriate permits can be provided following a final review.