



# Village of River Forest

## Business Starter Kit

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Dear Business Owner:

Welcome to the Village of River Forest! We appreciate you choosing our community to locate your business and look forward to a long-lasting relationship.

The Village of River Forest is committed to fostering a business climate that is welcoming to developers, potential business owners and current businesses. We pride ourselves on providing a flexible and predictable development environment.

We have created this Business Starter Kit to provide you with all the necessary tools and information to open or expand your business in River Forest. As we strive to cut red tape and provide an efficient vehicle for business development, I strongly encourage you to contact us at the outset of your development plans. This will allow us to work closely with you throughout the process and ensure that a primary contact is assigned to advocate for you throughout the zoning and permitting process.

Contained within this document you will find helpful information about licensing requirements, zoning, permitting, parking and sign regulations, detailed tax information, local business resources, as well as Village forms and applications that you will need to get started.

Our Village Staff is here to work for you and ensure a smooth transition into our business community. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office at 708-366-8500.

I wish you much success and look forward to patronizing your business.

Sincerely,

Catherine Adduci  
Village President

## Business License

A Business License is required to conduct business in the Village of River Forest. Business licenses are valid for one year and must be renewed by May 1st of each year.

Before a business license can be issued, the Village will verify that your business is permitted for the proposed location and the appropriate fees have been paid.

### Fees

A \$25 annual registration fee is required of all businesses, including home occupations. This fee helps cover the cost of maintaining and annually operating a business database.

In addition to the registration fee, there is an annual license fee that is calculated based on the type of business. The license fee ranges from \$25 - \$500. Please see the [PDF attached](#) to see which fee your business falls under.

## Liquor License

A liquor license is required to sell alcohol in River Forest. The Village has the following [liquor license categories](#):

<b>Class</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Annual Fee</b>
1	Restaurant- Beer, Wine & Liquor	\$2,000
2	Restaurant- Beer & Wine	\$1,000
3	Hotel- Beer, Wine & Liquor	\$4,000
4	Packaged Beer, Wine & Liquor	\$4,000
4A	Packaged Beer & Wine	\$4,000
4B	Restaurant- Packaged Beer, Wine & Liquor	\$2,000 (\$500 if issued in combination with a Class 1 or 2)
5	Temporary Special Event	\$100 per event
6	Restaurant- BYOB Beer & Wine	\$1,000

Businesses must take the following steps prior to being authorized to sell alcohol:

- Submit a non-refundable \$500 application fee
- Complete the liquor license application and background waivers
- Submit to a background investigation, including fingerprinting
- Petition the Village Board of Trustees to increase the number of liquor licenses

## Water Billing

River Forest water customers receive their water from Lake Michigan via the city of Chicago. Customers are billed on a bi-monthly basis for their water and sewer usage. Rates are adjusted semi-annually to reflect changes in the rate charged by the city of Chicago and costs associated with the Village's maintenance of the water and sewer system.

Water bills can be paid online through the Village's website. To establish a water billing account, call 708-714-3528.

## Taxes

The following taxes apply to River Forest businesses:

- Property Tax
- Sales Tax
- Places for Eating Tax
- Utility Tax

### Property Tax

The Village's portion of the property tax reflects 12.25% of the total tax bill. As a non- Home Rule community, River Forest cannot increase property taxes by more than the CPI or 5%, whichever is less on an annual basis.

### Sales Tax

Sales tax for general merchandise in River Forest is 10.00% and is comprised of four separate taxing authorities as outlined below:

<b>Taxing Authority</b>	<b>Portion of Sales Tax</b>
State of Illinois	6.25%
Cook County	1.75%
Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)	1.00%
Village of River Forest	1.00%
<b>Total</b>	<b>10.00%</b>

### Places for Eating Tax

The Places for Eating Tax is levied on the gross receipts received for prepared food sold at retail. The amount of the tax is 1% and is placed on the owners of places for eating, who can pass the tax along to consumers.

"Places for Eating" is defined as a place where prepared food is sold at retail for immediate consumption with seating provided on the premises, including any outdoor seating on the premises, whether the food is consumed on site or not.

Tax return forms are to be submitted to the River Forest Finance Department on a monthly basis.

### Utility Tax

The Utility Tax includes the following:

- Simplified Telecommunications Tax- 6%
- Natural Gas Tax- 5% of the amount billed
- Electric Use Tax- Varied based on kilowatt hours

## Permitting

Permits are required for any type of electrical, plumbing, structural, or carpentry work. A complete list of work that requires a permit is included in this packet for your review.

Any contractor performing work in the Village must be licensed by River Forest. To be licensed, contractors must pay a \$125 license fee (\$187.50 for landscaping/snow removal), provide certificates of insurance, and submit a \$25,000 surety bond.

The Village is committed to making the permitting process as seamless as possible for the business community. Businesses seeking to locate in River Forest or improve their current facility are strongly encouraged to contact the Building Department at [building@vrf.us](mailto:building@vrf.us) prior to submitting plans.

## Sign Regulations

In 2011 a comprehensive update of the Village's sign regulations was completed. The regulations were updated to attract and retain businesses while enhancing the Village's physical appearance.

A sign permit is required to erect, enlarge, expand, alter, operate, or relocate a sign.

Businesses are strongly encouraged to have their sign contractor contact the Village's Building Department at 708-714-3552 or [building@vrf.us](mailto:building@vrf.us) prior to permit submittal.

The following signs are specifically prohibited:

Advertising/Billboard	Home Occupations	Temporary Signs
Attention-Getting Devices	Moving or Animated Signs	Vehicle or Trailer
Banners	Off-Premises	Outline Lighting
Box Signs	Portable Signs	Sign Painted Directly on Wall or Fence
Electronic Reader Boards	Projecting Signs	
Ground Sign More than 1 Feet Above Grade of Adjacent Residential District	Construction Signs in Residential Neighborhoods other than the Sign or Permit Placard Required by the Village	

Any sign on a building must have letters that are individually affixed to the structure.

## Zoning

The Village has the following zoning districts:

R1	Wide-lot single-family detached
R2	Single-family detached
R3	Residential providing for a mixture of attached single-family
R4	Multi-family residential

C1	Specialty retail stores, office and service uses
C2	Retail, office, service uses, and multi-family
C3	Specialty retail stores, office, service uses, and multi-family intended to create a central retail focus
ORIC	Office/Research/Industrial/Commercial
PRI	Public/Recreational/Industrial

Toward the end of this document, you can find a Land Use Chart which delineates the types of businesses permitted in each zoning district as well as a copy of the Village's Zoning Map.

Any new development greater than 20,000 square feet requires a Planned Development. Planned developments provide greater flexibility in design and are heard by the Development Review Board which makes a non-binding recommendation to the Village Board. The planned development process can take between 4 – 6 months to complete and requires a neighborhood meeting, multiple meetings with the Development Review Board and final approval meetings with the Village Board.

## Parking Requirements

Parking requirements vary depending on the zoning district:

	<b>C1 Commercial</b>	<b>C2 Commercial</b>	<b>C3 Central Commercial</b>
<b>Spaces Per Employee</b>	1 space for every 2 employees	1 space for every 2 employees	1 space for every 2 employees
<b>Plus the Following Requirements Depending of Type of Business:</b>			
<b>Restaurants</b>	1 space for every 100 sq. feet of public floor area	1 space for every 100 sq. feet of public floor area	1 space for every 100 sq. feet of public floor area
<b>Food Market (&gt; 3,000 sq. feet)</b>	1 space for every 300 sq. feet of public floor area	1 space for every 300 sq. feet of public floor area	1 space for every 300 sq. feet of public floor area
<b>Retail / Service*</b>	1 space for every 400 sq. feet of public floor area	1 space for every 400 sq. feet of public floor area	1 space for every 400 sq. feet of public floor area*

\*Except Service Retail establishments in the area bounded by Lathrop Avenue, Lake Street, Park Avenue and a line one-block south of and parallel to Lake Street which are not required to provide any off street parking.

Additional parking regulations apply and can be found in Title 10, Chapters [12](#), [13](#) and [14](#) of the Village Code.

## Helpful Resources / Utilities

Village Website: [www.vrf.us](http://www.vrf.us)

Village E-News Sign-Up: <https://www.vrf.us/E-News.html>

Oak Park River Forest Chamber of Commerce:

[www.oprfchamber.org](http://www.oprfchamber.org)  
708-771-5760

ComEd:

[www.comed.com](http://www.comed.com)  
877-426-6331

Nicor:

[www.nicor.com](http://www.nicor.com)  
888-642-6748

Comcast:

[www.comcast.com](http://www.comcast.com)  
800-Comcast

AT&T:

[www.att.com](http://www.att.com)  
888-333-6651

## Village Forms & Applications

The following forms and applications are attached:

- [Business License Application](#)
- [Liquor License Application](#)
- [Water Service Application](#)
- [Places for Eating Registration and/or Tax Return Form](#)
- [Work Requiring a Permit](#)
- [Building Permit](#)
- [Electrical Permit](#)
- [Plumbing Permit](#)
- [Sign Permit](#)
- [Dumpster Permit](#)
- [Contractor License Application](#)
- [Zoning Variation Application](#)
- [Zoning Map and/or Land Use Chart](#)
- [Planned Development Flow Chart](#)