

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding the Special Use Permit Application

What is a special use permit?

The Village's Zoning Ordinance contains a land use chart which identifies which uses are permitted (P) or prohibited (N) in certain zoning districts, and which uses require a special use permit (S) or a Planned Development permit (PD). There are certain types of uses which because of their specific characteristics, or the services which they provide, cannot be permitted in a particular district without consideration of the impact of such use upon the neighboring properties, and of the public need for such particular use at a particular location. In those cases, an approved special use permit is required before the use can be initiated.

What process must an applicant follow to apply for a special use permit?

Title 10, Chapter 18 of the River Forest Zoning Ordinance identifies the steps of the application process for a special use permit. The purpose of the special use permit application and review process is to engage with the community to evaluate the merits of the special use and consider its impact on surrounding property owners.

Applicants may submit a special use permit application, which is heard by the Zoning Board of Appeals and decided by the Village Board of Trustees. The applicant must submit a complete application satisfying the requirements outlined in Section 10-18-5 of the Zoning Ordinance. Village staff review the application and schedule a public hearing before the ZBA. Surrounding property owners are notified by mail of the public hearing. During the public hearing the applicant must provide testimony regarding the proposed special use, Village staff and consultants provide comments on the application, and members of the public are invited to provide evidence regarding the impact the proposed special use will have on the surrounding properties. At the conclusion of the hearing the ZBA must deliberate and determine whether it will recommend to the Village Board of Trustees that the special use permit be granted, with or without conditions, or denied, and must adopt findings of fact that are sent to the Village Board. Surrounding property owners must be notified by mail of the ZBA's recommendation and the date the Village Board will take final action on the matter. The Village Board must consider the ZBA's recommendation and make its final decision to approve or deny the special use permit, with or without conditions, or the Village Board may send the matter back to the ZBA for further consideration. All meetings of the ZBA and Village Board are open to the public with agendas available online at www.vrf.us/meetings.

How can I view the Village's Zoning Ordinance?

The Zoning Ordinance is available on the Village's website (www.vrf.us) via a link at the bottom of the home page. Visitors will be taken to a web page where they can use the table of contents on the left side of the screen to navigate to Title 10 – Zoning, Chapter 18 – Special Use.



What is the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)?

The ZBA is an advisory body that reviews major zoning variations, amendments to the Zoning Ordinance and map, applications for special use permits, and appeals of the Zoning Administrator's decision. The ZBA holds public meetings, typically on the second Thursday of the month, at the River Forest Village Hall. The ZBA is

comprised of seven River Forest residents who are appointed by the Village President with the consent of the Village Board.

How can residents participate in the special use permit application process?

View the application: Special use permit applications are posted on the Village's website no less than 15 days prior to the initial public hearing date at www.vrf.us/DevelopmentGuide. All ZBA and Village Board meeting agendas are posted on the Village's website no less than 48 hours prior to the meeting date at www.vrf.us/meetings.

Attend the public hearing and/or Village Board meeting: All special use permits require that a public hearing be held before the ZBA. Property owners within 500' of the site of the proposed special use will be sent written notice no less than 15 days prior to the public hearing with the date, time, location of the hearing, address of the subject property, and information about how residents can submit comments regarding the application. Public hearings may conclude within one evening or may occur over multiple meetings. Future dates for continued public hearings will be announced at the meeting and posted on the Village's website at www.vrf.us/meetings. Once the ZBA has concluded the public hearing, made its recommendation to the Village Board of Trustees and adopted findings of fact, the Village Board of Trustees will consider the recommendation at a Village Board Meeting. Property owners within 500' will be sent notice of the ZBA's recommendation and the date, time, and location of the Village Board Meeting where final action will be taken no less than 10 days prior to the meeting date.

Submit your comments and questions for consideration: Residents who wish to comment on a special use permit application should do so during the public hearing process in order for their comments to be considered by the ZBA and Village Board as part of their decision making process. Residents should address whether the application satisfies the standards in Section 10-18-3 of the Zoning Ordinance, which can be found within the Village Code or at www.vrf.us/DevelopmentGuide. Residents who cannot attend a public meeting are welcome to send their comments to Assistant Village Administrator Lisa Scheiner prior to the meeting at lscheiner@vrf.us, or by mail to 400 Park Avenue, River Forest, IL 60305.

What happens after the public hearing?

Once the public hearing has been concluded the ZBA will consider and adopt findings of fact that memorialize the recommendation, often at a subsequent meeting. Minutes of the public hearing and the findings of fact are then forwarded to the Village Board.

What happens after the Village Board takes final action on a special use permit?

If a special use permit is granted, the applicant may apply for all other applicable permits and licenses and must demonstrate compliance with any conditions imposed by the Village Board of Trustees. From the date of approval, the applicant has nine months from the date the special use permit is granted to submit all necessary building permit applications, 15 months to commence work and 33 months to complete all work or the special use permit will become invalid. A special use permit is void if the use for which the approval was granted ceases for a period of one year. If a special use permit is denied by the Village Board of Trustees, then an application which is substantially in the same form and/or content as the original application may not be submitted for a period of two years.

For more information visit the Village's website at www.vrf.us