

**Plan Commission Meeting – March 11, 2020**  
**Agenda Item 3**

**Little Italy Restaurant at Lake Forest Plaza – 508 N. Western Avenue**  
***Special Use Permit – Restaurant within 150' of a Residential Zoning District***

Staff Memo  
Vicinity Map  
Air Photos

**Materials Submitted by the Petitioner**

Application  
Statement of Intent  
Floor Plan  
Signage Description  
Rendering – Bank Lane – Trash/Delivery Areas Enhancements

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*A complete copy of this packet is available for review in the Community Development Department and on the City's website, [www.cityoflakeforest.com](http://www.cityoflakeforest.com)*



## STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

TO:	Chairman Kehr and members of the Plan Commission
DATE:	March 11, 2020
FROM:	Catherine J. Czerniak, Director of Community Development
SUBJECT:	<i>Special Use Permit for – New Restaurant at 508 N. Western Avenue</i>

### **Property Owner**

Lake Forest Plaza LLC  
13110 W. Highway 137  
Lake Bluff, IL 60044  
(James Altounian 50%,  
Audrey Altounian 50%)

### **Property Location**

508 N. Western Avenue

### **Zoning District**

B-2, Community Commercial

### **Tenant – Restaurant Owner**

Little Italy, Frank Visconti

### **Summary of Request**

This is a request for a Special Use Permit to allow Little Italy, a new full service restaurant, take out and catering business, to occupy space within the existing commercial development, Lake Forest Plaza. This multi-tenant, mixed use development is located on the west side of Western Avenue, between Illinois Road and Vine Avenue, in the B-2 Community Commercial District. The new restaurant is proposed in the combined tenant spaces previously occupied by Sauced Pizza and Bailey & Hart Interiors.

Restaurants are permitted outright in the B-2 zoning district except when located within 150 feet of property zoned for residential use. Restaurants proposed within 150 feet of a residential zoning district may only be authorized through a Special Use Permit.

As the Commission is aware, the Special Use Permit process provides for a public hearing before the Plan Commission. The Commission is required to evaluate special use requests for restaurants based on the standard Special Use Permit criteria and on the performance standards that apply specifically to restaurants. The criteria and standards are reviewed later in this staff report. As part of the special use process, the Plan Commission has the ability to recommend conditions to the City Council if the Commission determines that approval of the request, with some limitations and requirements, is appropriate. Conditions of approval as part of a Special Use Permit can impose a higher bar for restaurants located within 150 feet of residentially zoned properties than for restaurants located more centrally within the business district.

### **Background**

Lake Forest Plaza has been home to a variety of retail uses, service businesses, restaurants and office tenants over the years. This development is located toward the southern end of the City's Central Business District. Residential condominium buildings and a single family home are located to the west of this development, on the west side of Bank Lane. A single family

residential neighborhood is located south of Vine Avenue. There is a significant population of residents within walking distance of the proposed restaurant providing a strong customer base for this as well as Chief's Pub and Egg Harbor which are also located in this development.

Lake Forest Plaza, like many locations within the City's linear Central Business District, abuts a residential area. This juxtaposition can create conflicts while at the same time, providing a unique amenity to residents in the neighborhood who are able to walk to restaurants, retail stores and service businesses. Together, the residential neighborhoods and the Central Business District create a character that is uniquely Lake Forest. Establishing operating parameters that allow the adjacent uses to co-exist is facilitated through the special use process.

As with all areas where different types of uses abut each other, there are advantages and disadvantages. This property is zoned for and has a history of commercial use and the proposed restaurant is consistent with the intent of the B-2 zoning district. A take out restaurant and before that, a catering business previously occupied the space where the new restaurant will be located. The details of how the site operates and is maintained on a daily basis are keys to compatibility with the neighboring uses.

### **Overview of Little Italy**

As noted above, a new full service restaurant that offers takeout and catering is proposed to occupy space that was occupied by Sauced Pizza and Bailey & Hart Interiors. The restaurant space totals approximately 3,325 square feet and will offer seating for about 75 people. Take out and catering options will also be available. Little Italy will operate seven days a week, serving dinner, from 5:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

Parking conflicts will be minimized because the new restaurant will not conflict with the breakfast and lunch traffic generated by Egg Harbor. Lake Forest Plaza provides approximately 60 customer parking spaces on site. There are also parking spaces on Western Avenue adjacent to the on site parking lot. The primary businesses in the plaza that will be open during the same hours as Little Italy are CVS, Chiefs Pub and Mathnasium.

Little Italy will be operated by an experienced restaurateur, the new owner of Caputo's and a Lake Forest resident.

### **Staff Evaluation**

Provided below is an evaluation of the **Performance Standards** for restaurants. The Performance Standards, like the special use criteria, are part of the City Code.

#### *Performance Standard - Availability of parking*

Lake Forest Plaza differs from many other developments and commercial buildings located in the Central Business District because there are a significant number of parking spaces on site, about 60 customer parking spaces with some reduction when snow is stockpiled in the lot.

The majority of businesses in the development are daytime businesses so in the evenings, most of the spaces on the site are available for customers of the existing and proposed restaurants. Public parking for customers is also available on both sides of Western Avenue.

Importantly, given the convenient location, it is expected that some customers, from the surrounding residential areas, will walk to the restaurant.

The owners of the center are responsible for advising all tenants that the on site parking is intended for customers first and foremost, not employees. During peak customer hours, the building management must require employees of all of the businesses to park in the Central Business District employee permit parking lots on the east side of the railroad tracks and within walking distance.

No employee or customer parking is permitted on streets in the adjacent residential neighborhoods. If parking by employees or customers of the restaurants, offices or other businesses in Lake Forest Plaza does occur on residential streets, the City will take action promptly to stop that activity. This staff report includes a recommendation prohibiting employee and customer parking on residential streets.

*Performance Standard – Building Review Board Approval*

No exterior renovations to the overall building are proposed. The signage will be consistent with the approvals already in place for the overall development.

*Performance Standard – Issuance of a Liquor License*

The City Council has jurisdiction over issuing liquor licenses and determining whether businesses should or should not be permitted to serve or sell alcohol. Application for a liquor license is made to City Hall and the request for liquor licenses, in this case, will be considered by the City Council concurrent with the Plan Commission's recommendation on the Special Use Permit. The sale of alcohol is not regulated by a Special Use Permit.

Liquor licenses granted by the City Council establish hours during which liquor can be sold. Most liquor licenses allow the sale of alcohol between the hours of 11 a.m. and midnight.

*Performance Standard – Ventilation Systems*

The City Code requires the installation of high quality air filtration systems and ventilation systems for all restaurants. A new ventilation system will be installed to serve the Little Italy restaurant. Plans for the system will need to be submitted to the City for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit to allow installation. The system will be inspected and must pass City inspections prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy to allow the restaurant to open.

The Code requires the submittal of confirmation of regular maintenance and cleaning of the ventilation systems in restaurants to the City on an ongoing basis.

*Performance Standard – Amplified Sound*

No amplified sound is proposed outdoors.

*Performance Standard – Schedules for deliveries and trash pickup*

Hours for deliveries to restaurants and trash pickup for the overall Lake Forest Plaza are limited to 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. The owner of the new restaurant will be required to adhere to those hours.

Although the Performance Standards in the Code do not specifically address deliveries *from* the restaurant to customers, with the variety of delivery services available today, delivery service will likely be used by some customers at times. The conditions provided at the end of the staff report recommend that delivery drivers not be permitted to stage behind the restaurant or on Bank Lane. Bank Lane is immediately adjacent to the neighboring condominiums.

The trash from the restaurant will be housed in the area behind the restaurant, the area is accessed off of Bank Lane. Plans for improvement of this area are included in the packet. The improvements to the trash enclosure, fencing and landscaping will be required to be completed prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy for the restaurant.

*Performance Standard – Minimizing impacts on single family homes: light, noise, traffic*

The proposed restaurant will be located in an existing commercial building. The building owner shall provide appropriate signage and is responsible for enforcement of delivery hours and for the maintenance and cleanliness of the trash and delivery area. Various conditions of approval as recommended at the end of this report are proposed in an effort to minimize impacts on the adjacent residential neighborhood.

Provided below is an evaluation of the **Criteria for Special Use Permits** in the City Code.

*Special Use Permit Criteria #1: The establishment, maintenance or operation of the special use will not be detrimental to or endanger the public health, safety, morals, comfort or general welfare.*

The proposed restaurant is consistent with other uses in the Central Business District and is not unlike other uses that are located in proximity to the residential neighborhoods that border the full length of the City's business. In general, the business and residential uses have been able to co-exist for many years. Issues do come up at various locations from time to time and efforts are made to resolve them by working with all parties to assure that both the residential neighborhoods and the business district thrive.

The continued operation of Lake Forest Plaza as an upgraded and fully occupied commercial development, with increased attention to operations and maintenance, will not be detrimental to or endanger public health, safety, morals, comfort or general welfare.

*Special Use Permit Criteria #2: The special use will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment of other property in the immediate vicinity for the purposes already permitted and will not substantially diminish and impair property values within the neighborhood.*

The proposed new restaurant is consistent with the commercial nature of the Lake Forest Plaza development and generally consistent with the type of uses that have existed at this location in the past. The proposed use, if operated consistent with the recommended conditions of approval, will not be injurious to the use and enjoyment or value of properties in the immediate area. Importantly, the restaurant operator is experienced and well respected in the restaurant business and is a local resident. The proposed restaurant will be an amenity to the neighboring residential area and add vitality to the City's business district.

Consistently, resident surveys have indicated an interest in bringing new restaurants into the City's business district. In addition, the most recent strategic planning exercise held by the City Council placed a high priority on encouraging new businesses to support the long term health of the City's business district, bringing increased activity into the City's core and supporting property values throughout the community.

*Special Use Permit Criteria #3: The establishment of the special use will not impede the normal and orderly development and improvement of the surrounding property for uses permitted in the district. In business districts, the special use will not negatively affect the overall character of the area or detract from the primary retail nature of the district.*

The surrounding area is already developed. The proposed restaurant will likely help to retain and attract other tenants to Lake Forest Plaza to meet the needs and interests of the growing residential population located within walking distance of this commercial development and to in turn, support the new restaurants. The proposed restaurant will add to the vitality of the Central Business District and offer an additional dining option in the City's core area. The proposed restaurant, if operated consistent with the proposed conditions of approval, will not negatively affect the overall character of the area and will support and enhance the business district.

*Special Use Permit Criteria #4: The exterior architectural appearance and functional plan of any proposed structure will not be incompatible with existing buildings, sites, the larger neighborhood or district so as to cause a substantial depreciation in the property values.*

No new buildings are proposed. No exterior renovations to the building are planned. Maintenance and general improvements are planned at the rear of the restaurant in the trash and delivery area.

*Special Use Permit Criteria #5: Adequate utilities, access roads, drainage and or necessary facilities have been or are being provided.*

Adequate utilities and other infrastructure are in place to serve the new restaurant which will be located in an existing commercial development.

*Special Use Permit Criteria #6: Adequate measures have been or will be taken to provide ingress and egress.*

This is an existing commercial site. No changes are planned to the location or configuration of the curb cuts.

*Special Use Permit Criteria #7: The special use shall conform to the applicable regulations of the district in which it is located except as such regulations may in each instance be modified by the City Council as part of the Special Use Permit.*

As recommended, the Special Use Permit for the proposed restaurant will allow operation of the restaurant in a manner consistent with the regulations of the B-2, Community Commercial Business District. No variances from the regulations of the district are requested and the recommended conditions of approval will put operating parameters in place for the new

restaurant. The conditions recommended below are generally consistent with those established for other restaurants in the Central Business District.

### **Correspondence and Public Testimony**

Notice of this petition was provided in accordance with the Code requirements. A legal ad was published in a newspaper with local circulation. Notices of the public hearing were mailed to residents in the surrounding area by the petitioner and by the City. The agenda for this meeting was posted at five public locations and on the City's website. No public comment was received as of the date of this writing.

### **Staff Recommendation**

Based on the findings presented above, recommend approval of a Special Use Permit to authorize Little Italy, a full service restaurant, to locate and operate in Lake Forest Plaza at 508 N. Western Avenue. The following conditions are recommended recognizing the location of the restaurant partially within 150 feet of properties zoned for residential use.

### **Conditions pertaining to the overall Westwood Center Site**

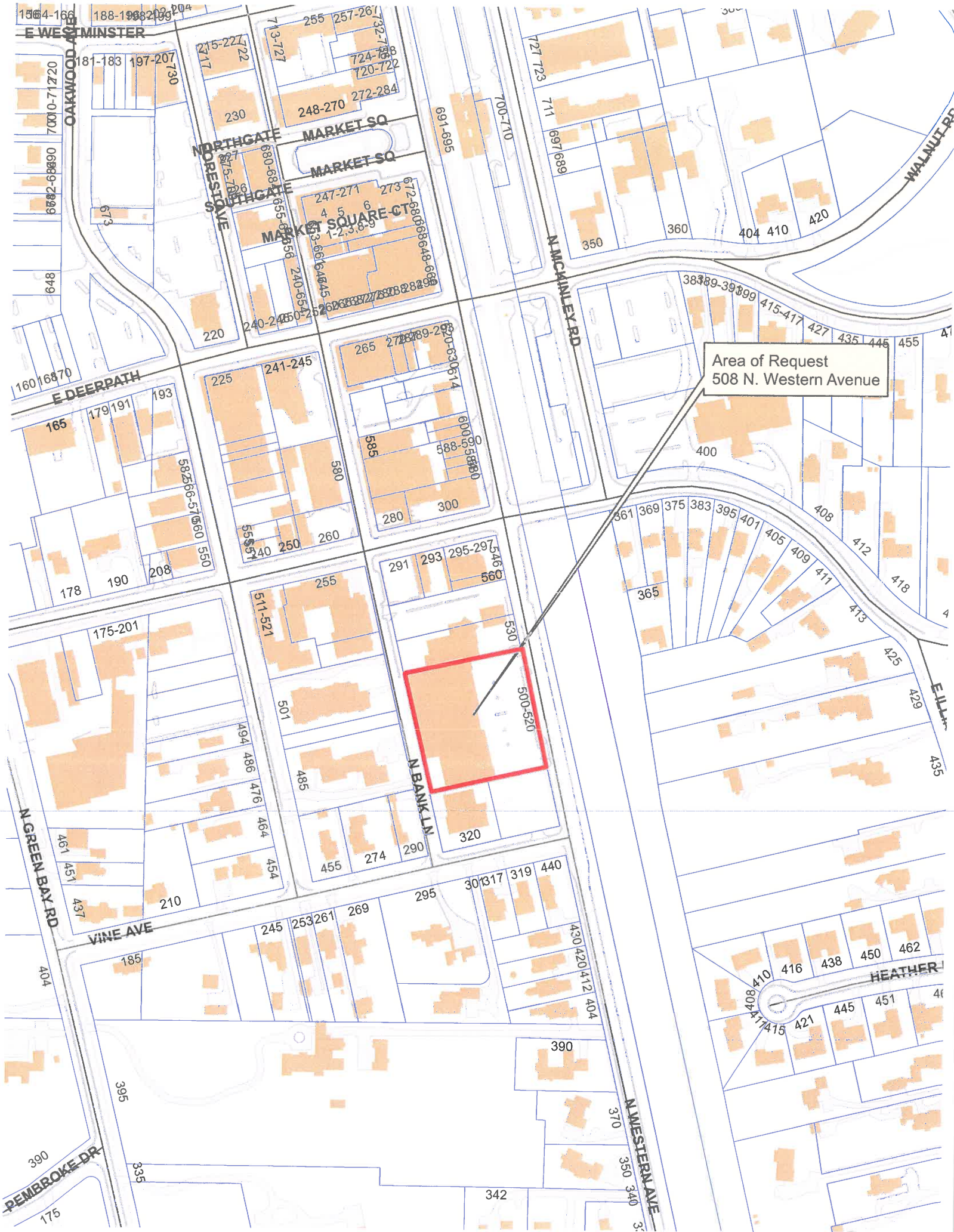
1. The improvements to the trash enclosure, fencing and landscaping at the rear of the restaurant, as reflected on the plan included in the packet, shall be substantially complete prior to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy authorizing the opening of the new restaurant.
2. Use of the trash and delivery area off of Bank Lane, to the rear of the restaurant, shall be limited as follows:
  - The area shall be used only for deliveries, trash pick-up and by emergency and security vehicles.
  - No customer parking, standing or staging of vehicles, other than for the purposes noted above, is permitted.
  - No portion of Bank Lane or the trash and delivery area shall be used as a drive thru or staging area for pick up by individuals, delivery services or by restaurant delivery personnel.
  - No gathering, loitering or smoking in the trash enclosure or deliver area is permitted.
  - A sign shall remain posted stating that deliveries and trash pickup is permitted only between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m., on weekdays.
3. The property owner is responsible for establishing parking policies that give priority to customer parking, rather than employee parking, on the site. The property owner is responsible for monitoring parking activities and working with the tenants on an ongoing basis to assure compliance with the policies. The policies shall address the following:
  - a. Employees shall park off site in the Central Business District employee parking lot are on Western Avenue.
  - b. No employee or customer parking shall be permitted on any residential street.

### **Conditions Specific to Scouts Restaurant**

4. Signage, if not consistent with the previously approved signage, shall be subject to review and approval by the Building Review Board.
5. Documentation of maintenance and inspection of the ventilation system must be submitted to the City on a regular basis after installation and after the opening of the restaurant.

6. During peak hours, the restaurant owners are responsible for assuring regular monitoring of the parking lots and neighboring residential streets to verify that parking is occurring consistent with the established policies and to take corrective action if necessary.
7. The property owners and restaurant owners are responsible for informing and directing employees and customers to appropriate parking areas. As necessary, the owners shall inform City staff of recurring parking or circulation issues on the site and corrective action shall be taken.





Area of Request  
508 N. Western Avenue



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508 N. Western Avenue





Area of Request  
508 N. Western Avenue







Application for Plan Commission Review  
Special Use Permit - Central Business District - New Use

**PROPERTY ADDRESS** 508 Western Ave **ZONING DISTRICT** Central Business

**EXISTING USE** Retail Space / Take Out

**PROPOSED USE** Little Italy Restaurant

**EXPANSION OF EXISTING USE** YES ☐ NO ☒

**VARIANCE REQUIRED** YES ☐ NO ☒

**APPLICANT**

Name Frank Visconti

Address 13801 W Laurel Dr

Lake Forest

Phone 847-816-6468

Relationship to Property Tenant  
(Owner/Tenant/Attorney)

**PROPERTY OWNER** (if different from applicant)

Name Lake Forest Plaza LLC

Address 13110 Rockland Rd, Lake Bluff

Phone 847-234-8600

**BENEFICIAL INTERESTS**

Corporation \_\_\_\_\_ (see exhibit A)  
Partnership \_\_\_\_\_ (see exhibit B)  
Trust, land or other \_\_\_\_\_ (see exhibit C)

I have read the complete application packet and understand the Special Use Permit process and criteria. I understand that this matter will be scheduled for a public hearing when a determination has been made that my application is complete.

**SIGNATURES**

Jennifer Altounian  
Owner  
John Altounian  
Owner

2.28.2020

Date

2.2.20

Date

Applicant

Date  
8/04

# EXHIBIT "A"

## CORPORATE OWNERSHIP

Please list the names and addresses of all officers and directors of the Corporation and all shareholders who own individually or beneficially 5% or more of the outstanding stock of the corporation. In addition, this application must be accompanied by a resolution of the Corporation authorizing the execution and submittal of this application.

NAME James Altounian  
ADDRESS 727 E. McKinley #100  
Lake Forest, IL 60045  
OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE 50 %

NAME Audrey S. Altounian  
ADDRESS 727 E. McKinley #100  
Lake Forest, IL 60045  
OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE 50 %

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
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APPLICANT'S REPRESENTATIVES

ARCHITECT Peter Witmer ATTORNEY n/a  
FIRM Witmer & Assoc. FIRM \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS 1000 N. Western Ave ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
Lake Forest, IL 60045 \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE 847-234-5240 PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

ENGINEER n/a  
FIRM \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

BUILDER Altounian Construction  
FIRM 13110 W. Rockland Rd  
ADDRESS Lake Bluff, IL  
60044  
PHONE 847-234-8600

SURVEYOR n/a  
FIRM \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

LANDSCAPE ARCH. Mariani  
FIRM Landscape  
ADDRESS 300 Rockland Rd.  
Lake Bluff, IL 60044  
PHONE 847-234-2172

ARBORIST n/a  
FIRM \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

OTHER \_\_\_\_\_  
FIRM \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

**Statement of Intent**  
**Little Italy Restaurant**  
**Lake Forest Plaza -500 N. Western Ave**

Frank Visconti, a lifelong resident of Lake Forest is proposing a new restaurant at 508 N. Western Avenue at The Lake Forest Plaza located at 500 N. Western Avenue. The restaurant would be in the spaces previously occupied by Sauced Pizza, take out restaurant and Bailey & Hart Home Interiors.

Frank Visconti's mission is to provide Lake Forest residents with a restaurant for dining serving homemade Italian food. The restaurant would be open for Dinner dining only 5:00 pm -10:00 pm. Monday – Sunday. Seating in the restaurant will be for 75 people with an open kitchen and wood burning pizza oven. Little Italy would be available for dining in, take out and catering. Little Italy will be applying for a liquor license and will not have any loudspeakers or amplification outside the building.

Customer parking would be in the front customer lot that has approximately 60 spaces. Since Little Italy will only be open for dinner hours – the only other retail/restaurant open at that time is Chiefs Pub and CVS allowing for adequate available parking. Employee parking would be in the City permit lot south train station area or on Western Avenue permit East side.

Deliveries will be located on the west side of the building on Bank Lane. All deliveries will take place **after** 7 am. Parking in the rear area will be limited to 1 owner spot for Little Italy, 1 owner spot for J&K Cleaners and 2 owner spots for Chiefs Pub. All will be designated by signage any other cars will be towed.

On Bank Lane/rear of the building the garbage and rear parking area will be redone with new fencing facing the street and for all garbage enclosures - including enclosures behind Chiefs Pub, Egg Harbor and CVS. New landscaping in front of the parking and delivery area located behind Chiefs Pub, (along bank Lane) the blacktop will also be re-surfaced in the parking area.

**VISCONTI LITTLE ITALY RESTAURANTE LLC  
FRANK VISCONTI  
508 N. WESTERN AVE.  
LAKE FOREST, IL 60045  
630-624-1258**

January 22, 2020

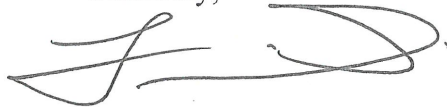
City of Lake Forest  
Planning Commission  
220 E. Deerpath  
Lake Forest, IL 60045

Re: Visconti's Little Italy Restaurante

To Whom It May Concern:

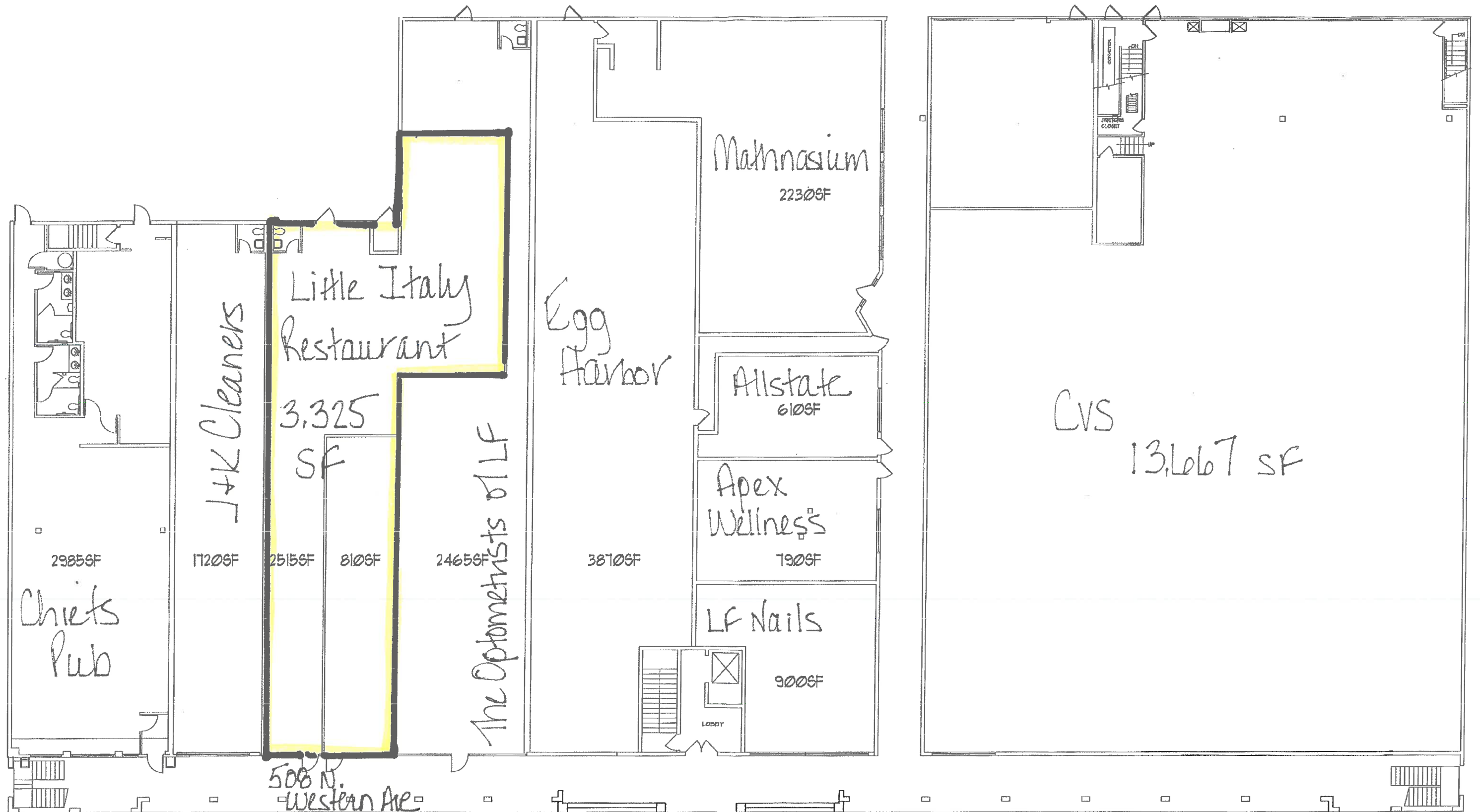
My name is Frank Visconti. I have been a lifelong resident of Lake Forest. My family is very well known in Highwood for owning the restaurant Two Guys from Italy, and also Little Italy in Highwood back in the 70s 80s 90s. Currently, I own Visconti Foods also located in lake forest which sells imported foods to stores around the country. My products include pastas, olive oils, balsamic vinegars, etc. As of December 15, I am the new owner of Caputo's cheese market in downtown Lake Forest. I am also involved with the food for the Fourth of July fireworks, and the VIP tent with Rick Amos. Our new mission is to open up a Little Italy restaurant in Lake Forest. In keeping with that tradition, we will serve nothing but fresh and homemade Italian Food. The restaurant will have a wood-burning pizza oven with an open kitchen and seating for about 75 people. I am a very proud to be a Lake Forest resident, and I am very excited at the prospect of the new restaurant -- one of my dreams growing up was to own a restaurant in downtown Lake Forest! I would like to thank the City of Lake Forest and the Planning Commission for the opportunity to grow with the City of Lake Forest.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'F. Visconti', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Frank Visconti





Please see attached drawing from Mariani Landscaping. This work will take place in April as weather permits.

Signage will be same as existing signage at Lake Forest Plaza. Little Italy restaurant will be added to the existing monument sign and when applicable a sign permit will be requested for the gold lettering above the doorway of Little Italy, attached to the brick wall same as the other existing gold lettering signs.



SKETCH VIEW OF FENCE & PLANTINGS

NEW FENCE & GATES  
ON REFUSE ENCLOSURE

SMALL  
ROUNDED &  
UPRIGHT -  
ORNAMENTAL TREE  
(SINGLE TRUNK)

DECIDUOUS  
MEDIUM HT.  
SHRUBS

NEW  
WOOD  
FENCE -  
SCREEN

LOW GROUNDCOVER  
FACER PLANTING  
& BASE OF SHRUBS



01-10-20