

Plan Commission Meeting – October 18, 2023
Agenda Item 3

Tocco – Lake Forest *Simple, Fresh, Italian*
Westwood Court – 950 N. Western

Staff Report
Vicinity Map
Air Photo

Materials Submitted by the Petitioners

Application
Statement of Intent
Site Plan – Location in Westwood Court
Conceptual Floor Plan



STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION

TO:	Chairman Dixon and members of the Plan Commission
DATE:	October 18, 2023
FROM:	Catherine J. Czerniak, Director of Community Development
SUBJECT:	<i>Special Use Permit – New Restaurant in Westwood Center, Tocco</i> <i>950 N. Western Avenue</i>

Property Owner

Westwood Center LLC
Altounian Family 100%
13110 W. Rockland Road #1
Lake Bluff, IL 60044

Property Location

950 N. Western Avenue

Zoning District

B-2, Community Commercial

Tenant – Restaurant Owner

Bruno Abate, Owner, Tocco

Summary of Request

This is a request for a Special Use Permit to allow a new restaurant to occupy space fronting on Western Avenue, in the Westwood Center commercial development. Westwood Center is a multi-tenant, mixed use development located on the southwest corner of Western Avenue and Woodland Road, in the B-2 Community Commercial District. Over the course of the past few years, the Plan Commission has considered requests for Special Use Permits for several restaurants in Westwood Center. Today, Kuro Bistro, Donati's/Jefe's Tacos, and Duffer's Pub are all located in Westwood Center and are popular with residents and visitors.

Bruno Abate is the owner of Tocco, an Italian restaurant in Winnetka. Background on Tocco and Mr. Abate is provided in the Statement of Intent. Mr. Abate is proposing to open an additional Tocco restaurant in Lake Forest, in space last occupied by another restaurant, King Maa. Tocco is proposed to extend into an adjacent tenant space to the west, the former location of Michael's barber shop. The square footage of the restaurant will be approximately 2,350 square feet. Tocco will be just to the north of Duffer's Pub and, like Duffer's Pub, will have frontage on Western Avenue and will also have the opportunity to take advantage of the interior courtyard.

Review Process

Restaurants and bars 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. The proposed restaurant is located mostly within 150 feet of a residential zoning district. Therefore, this petition is presented to the Commission for consideration of a Special Use Permit consistent with the Code requirement.

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 can 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. Conditions of approval were established for the restaurants that currently operate in Westwood Court to mitigate the impacts of light, noise, parking, and general activity on neighboring homes.

Description of the Site and Surrounding Area

Westwood Center, located at the northern end of the City’s Central Business District, has been home to a variety of retail uses, service businesses, restaurants and office tenants for decades. This commercial center is a short walk from the new residential development at Laurel and Western Avenues which includes apartments, condominiums and single family homes. The West Park residential neighborhood is immediately adjacent to Westwood Center to the west and to the north, Regent’s Row, a row house development is located further to the north on Western Avenue. Crystal Point condominiums and other multi-family developments and single family homes are located further north along Western Avenue. To the east, residential neighborhoods are located within a short walk or drive of Westwood Center. In summary, there is a significant population of residents within walking distance of this commercial development providing a strong customer base.

Westwood Center in its entirety was acquired in 2019 by a local family. In past years, under the previous owner, the development suffered from a lack of attention to maintenance and as a result, many tenants vacated the development and there were some conflicts with the adjacent residential neighbors. The current owners have completed significant upgrades to the exterior of the building and to interior spaces as well. The current owners have reactivated the center with a mix of tenants meeting the needs of the growing number of residents living in the area, providing services and amenities to the larger Lake Forest community, and attracting visitors from outside the community to patronize local businesses.

Westwood Center, like many locations within the City’s linear Central Business District, abuts single family homes. This relationship 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. The Westwood Center 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. The details of how the site operates and is maintained on a daily basis are key to compatibility with the neighboring uses. There will be conflicts from time to time, staff has encouraged the property owner to keep an open dialogue with neighboring residents and to respond to any issues that may come up in a way that balances the interests of all parties.

Overview of Tocco

Tocco will offer full service dining, lunch from 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. and dinner from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. The existing interior courtyard space will be available for Tocco seating seasonally. A small, roofed area adjacent to the interior courtyard and to the Tocco space, may be enclosed to expand the footprint of the restaurant slightly. The kitchen will be updated with a new hood, will conform with all current building and life safety codes. Existing parking and trash facilities available to the overall commercial development will be used by Tocco, no new support facilities are proposed. Fifteen to twenty employees are anticipated and as with all restaurants in Westwood Court, employees will park off site in remote parking lots, not on site, not in on street parking spaces, and not on residential streets.

The issuance of a liquor license for the new restaurant will occur concurrent with the City Council’s consideration of the Plan Commission’s recommendation on this request for a Special Use Permit.

The location of the proposed restaurant, with frontage on Western Avenue, is away from the residential neighborhoods to the west and north minimizing impact from activity, noise, light and traffic. Deliveries and trash collection will occur consistent with the practices and requirements already in place for the overall development.

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

Westwood Center 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. In addition to the surface parking lot on the northern portion of the site, which has 24 spaces, there is parking underneath the building for about 60 cars.

The spaces in the surface lot and in the underground garage are shared by all the tenants in the building. Most businesses in the development, particularly the second floor office tenants, are daytime businesses so in the evenings, most of the spaces on the site are available for customers of the restaurants. Public parking for customers is also available on both sides of Western Avenue. Employee permit parking is available on the east side of the railroad tracks, no permits are required for parking in these lots in the late afternoons and evenings.

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

The City will monitor the need for designated pick up spaces along Western Avenue and, if appropriate add or remove signage as the demand for these types of spaces ebbs and flows. No in house delivery service will be offered.

The owners of Westwood Center will be responsible for advising all tenants that the on site parking, both the surface parking and underground parking, is intended for customers first and foremost, not employees. During peak customer hours, the building management must require employees of all the businesses in Westwood Center to park in the Central Business District employee parking lot on the east side of the railroad tracks. Westwood Center has a distinct

advantage over many other businesses in the Central Business District because employees will have only a short walk along Woodland Road, under the lighted viaduct, to the off site employee parking lot on McKinley Road, east of the railroad tracks.

No employee or customer parking is permitted on streets in the adjacent residential neighborhoods. Community Development staff will work with the property and business owners and the City’s Police Department to assure that parking for Westwood Center does not occur on residential streets. With the available parking on the site, on Western Avenue, and in the parking lot on the east side of the railroad tracks, parking in adjacent residential neighborhoods has not been an issue in the past. If parking by employees or customers of the restaurants, offices or other businesses in Westwood Center does occur on residential streets, the City will act 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 alterations on the streetscape are proposed as part of this petition. The signage for the business is expected to conform to previous approvals for the building. If determined to be necessary, staff will refer signage and any streetscape alterations to the Building Review Board.

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. As noted above, an application for a liquor license will be considered by the City Council concurrent with the Special Use Permit. The issuance of a liquor license is not under the purview of the Plan Commission.

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 although some licenses permit the sale of alcohol earlier in the morning.

Performance Standard – Ventilation Systems

The City Code requires the installation of high quality air filtration systems and ventilation systems for all restaurants. Plans for the new hood will require review and approval by the City’s Life Safety Plan Reviewer. City inspections will occur prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

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

Outdoor speakers are permitted consistent with the recent Code amendments that occurred at the recommendation of the Plan Commission. Small speakers with controlled sound levels are permitted. City staff will work closely with the restaurant owners to monitor sound levels and make immediate adjustments if needed.

Performance Standard – Schedules for deliveries and trash pickup

Hours for deliveries to restaurants and trash pickup for the overall Westwood Center development are limited to 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. The owners of the new restaurant will need to

comply with those hours. Deliveries will be made from Western Avenue or the on site parking lot.

Although the Performance Standards in the Code do not specifically address deliveries *from* the restaurant to customers. The option for pickup will be offered by the new restaurant. Depending on the demand for pick up service, spaces on site or on Western Avenue may be signed for pickups.

The trash from the restaurant will be housed in one of the existing alcoves provided for dumpsters on the south or west sides of the building. Per City Code, trash and grease must be kept in a closed container. Trash will be collected no less than three times a week, more frequently if needed.

Performance Standard – Minimizing impacts on single family homes: light, noise, traffic.
The proposed restaurant will be in an existing commercial building. Various conditions of approval as recommended at the end of this report are proposed 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 uses that are 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 Westwood Center 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 Westwood Center and 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 respected. The proposed restaurant will be an amenity to the neighboring residential area and will 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 City's Strategic Plan places a high priority on

encouraging new businesses to bring increased activity into the City's core and support 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 attract other restaurants to Lake Forest to provide options and meet the needs and interests of residents and visitors. 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. Exterior renovations to the overall building have recently been completed after review by the Building Review Board.

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 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. The alley on the site is designated for one-way travel, allowing entry to the alley from the north and exit on to Western Avenue, into the commercial district, rather than into the residential neighborhood.

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 and the overall Westwood Center.

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 public locations and on the City’s website.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the findings presented above, recommend approval of a Special Use Permit to authorize **Tocco** to locate and operate in Westwood Center at 950 N. Western Avenue. The following conditions are recommended recognizing the location of the restaurant partially within 150 feet of properties zoned for residential use.

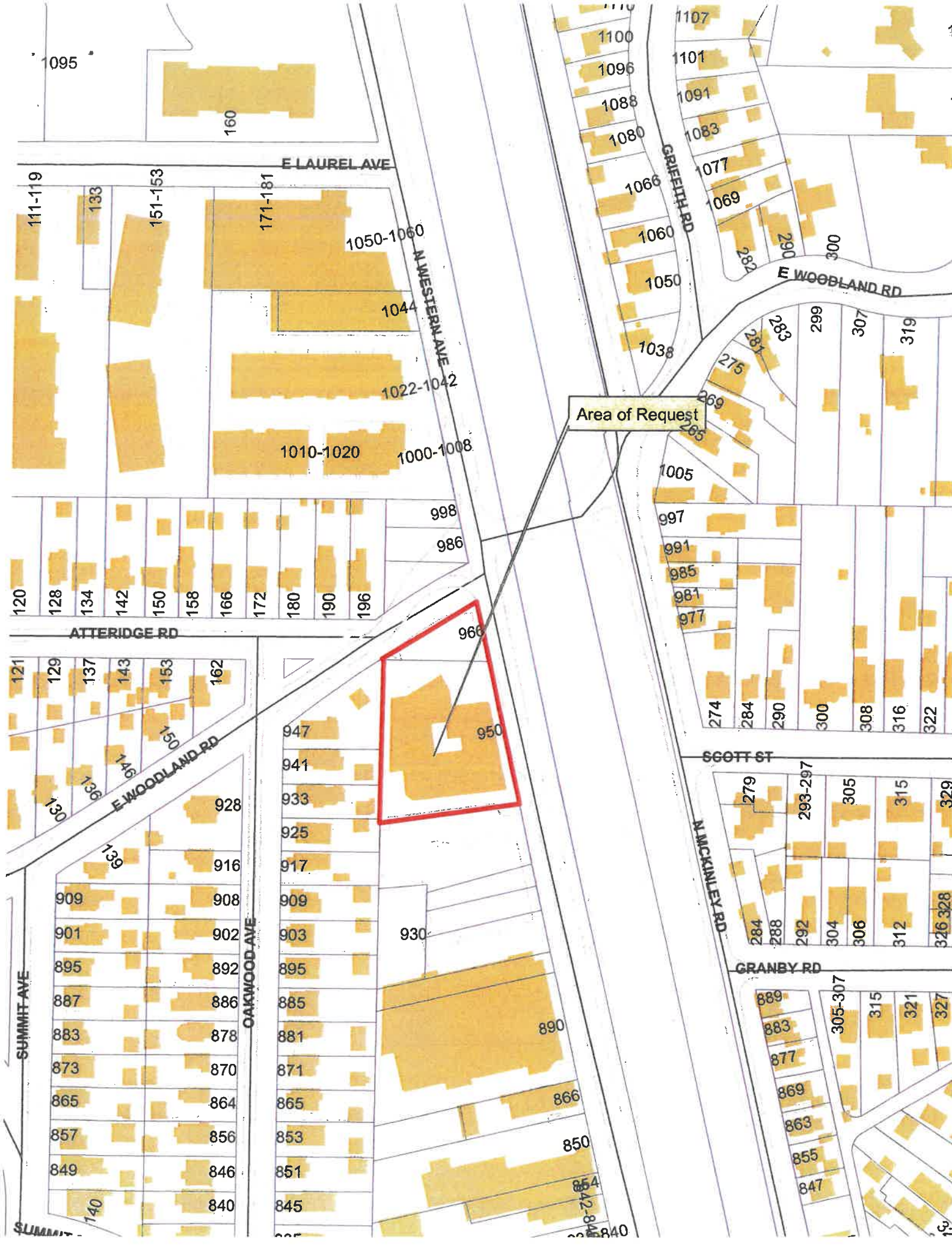
Conditions pertaining to the overall Westwood Center Site (from previous approvals)

1. Perimeter fencing, retaining walls and landscaping at the north and west boundaries of the site shall be regularly inspected and maintained by the property owner. The fence must remain sturdy and in a full upright position, with all fence panels in place and in good condition. The retaining wall must remain in a solid and sturdy condition; any loose materials must be replaced. Landscaping along Woodland Road must be maintained in good condition and replaced as necessary, subject to the determination of the City’s Certified Arborist, to provide substantial screening along the fence.
2. Vegetation along the public sidewalk on Woodland Road must be kept trimmed and may not obstruct or endanger pedestrian or bicycle traffic on the sidewalk.
3. Use of the alley on the south and west sides of the building shall be limited as follows:
 - The alley shall be used only for deliveries, trash pick-up and by emergency and security vehicles.
 - No parking, standing or staging of vehicles, other than for the purposes noted above, is permitted.
 - No portion of the alley 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 alley 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.
4. 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 all 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 on McKinley Road during peak customer times.
 - b. No employee parking shall be permitted on Western Avenue.
 - c. No parking by employees or customers shall be permitted on residential streets.

Conditions Specific to Tocco

5. Signage, if not consistent with the previously approved signage for the overall building, shall be subject to review and approval by the Building Review Board.
6. 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.

8. All outdoor seating shall be vacated no later than 30 minutes after the business closes. No gathering in the courtyard by customers or employees is permitted after hours.
9. 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.
10. 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



Area of Request

WOODLAND ROAD

WESTERN AVENUE



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

PROPERTY ADDRESS 950 N Western Avenue **ZONING DISTRICT** Central

EXISTING USE Vacant

PROPOSED USE Tocco - Authentic Italian Cuisine Restaurant

EXPANSION OF EXISTING USE YES NO

VARIANCE REQUIRED YES NO

APPLICANT

Name Bruno Abate

Address 507 Chestnut Street

Winnetka, IL 60093

Phone 847-386-6955

Relationship to Property Tenant
(Owner/Tenant/Attorney)

PROPERTY OWNER (if different from applicant)

Name Westwood Center, LLC / Altounian Properties

Address 919 Sherwood Drive

Lake Bluff, IL 60044

Phone 847-234-8600

BENEFICIAL INTERESTS

Corporation _____ (see exhibit A)
Partnership X (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

[Signature] 9-25-23
Owner Date
[Signature] 9-25-23
Owner Date
[Signature] 9-25-23
X Applicant Date
8/04

[Type here]

APPLICANT'S REPRESENTATIVES

* ARCHITECT CHIARA SANTINI
FIRM SANTINI STUDIO
ADDRESS 4 E Ohio, Suite 19
Chicago, IL 60606
PHONE 312-416-8414

ATTORNEY _____
FIRM _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

ENGINEER _____
FIRM _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

BUILDER Altounian Construction
FIRM _____
ADDRESS 919 Sherwood Drive
Lake Bluff, IL 60044
PHONE 847-234-8600

SURVEYOR _____
FIRM _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

LANDSCAPE ARCH. _____
FIRM _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

ARBORIST _____
FIRM _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

OTHER _____
FIRM _____
ADDRESS _____
PHONE _____

EXHIBIT "B"

PARTNERSHIP OWNERSHIP

Please list all partners, general and/or limited, with an individual or beneficial interest of 5% or greater.

NAME <u>Jennifer Altounian Bianchi</u>	NAME _____
ADDRESS <u>919 Sherwood Drive</u>	ADDRESS _____
<u>Lake Bluff, IL 60044</u>	_____
OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE <u>25</u> %	OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE _____ %
NAME <u>Todd Altounian</u>	NAME _____
ADDRESS <u>919 Sherwood Drive</u>	ADDRESS _____
<u>Lake Bluff, IL 60044</u>	_____
OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE <u>25</u> %	OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE _____ %
NAME <u>Nicole Altounian</u>	NAME _____
ADDRESS <u>919 Sherwood Drive</u>	ADDRESS _____
<u>Lake Bluff, IL 60044</u>	_____
OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE <u>25</u> %	OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE _____ %
NAME <u>James Altounian, II</u>	NAME _____
ADDRESS <u>919 Sherwood Drive</u>	ADDRESS _____
<u>Lake Bluff, IL 60044</u>	_____
OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE <u>25</u> %	OWNERSHIP PERCENTAGE _____ %



9/27/2023

Tocco – Authentic Italian Cuisine
507 Chestnut St, Winnetka, IL 60093

Intent to Lease Property – 950 N Western Ave, Lake Forest – Tocco

Tocco intends to lease 2,356 Square Feet of property located from Westwood LLC located at 950 N Western Ave, Lake Forest. Tocco will bring a special dining experience not yet seen in Lake Forest, transporting customers through a journey of Italian culture and flavors experienced through our freshly made Italian cuisine. Tocco will not only bring the tastes of Italy to Lake Forest but also a curated design to the space at Westwood expertly planned by our Architect with Italian heritage. We will have our store front located in Suite 120 with one kitchen offering customers a special dining experience, and during warmer months will use our outdoor dining space in the center courtyard.

Background: Born in Naples, Italy and raised in Milan, Bruno Abate was inspired at an early age by his parents for his passion for food and fashion. His mother was an accomplished chef, and his father was a tailor. Bruno opened his first company in Milan selling fish and caviar to high-end restaurants. His extensive travels around the world helped him appreciate fine food and design and eventually led him to Chicago, where he combined his passions. In Chicago, Bruno brought together his vision to marry authentic Italian cuisine with modern design when he opened his first restaurant Follia in the meat packing district and currently operates Tocco in Wicker Park. Today, Bruno brings his passion for food to young men from the Cook County Jail by teaching them the skills needed to get a job in the culinary world. His Culinary Mission for Change is inspiring the next generation of great chefs. Bruno is excited to bring the same passion and experience to Lake Forest including providing a positive impact on the community.

Parking: Westwood has excellent parking options for our patrons as there are two lots available to them, one above ground and one below. In addition, there is plenty of street parking on Western Avenue. Even though we will be open for lunchtime, the majority of our business will be during dinner hours past 5pm, keeping the parking spaces free and open during daytime hours and with most local business closed during evening hours, this will put less pressure on parking at night. We intend to offer pickup options for customers and will direct them to the upper lot or street parking on Western since these will be quick visits.

Delivery Option: No delivery option will be offered.

Team Members: Our staff projections will be on average around 15 team members during the winter and around 20 team members during the summer months. Between the train station 2 blocks away and remote parking available, staff members will not park on site.



Vendors – Our main vendors include Greco food service, Heritage, Cugini Food and Breakthru. These vendors frequent Lake Forest often servicing other restaurants in town including Chiefs, Francesca's, The Lantern, Ferentino's, Donati's and more.

Hours of Operation: We intend on being open daily from 11am-2pm for lunch and 5pm-10pm for dinner. These hours are typical for the surrounding area based on research.

Walkways: All walkways will stay clear and all precautions will be taken ensuring safety for pedestrians as they walk through. Safe practices inside and outside of the restaurant will be of the utmost importance.

Ventilation: We will have a new hood and fan installed to be ventilated with all local code and vented towards the roof. We do not anticipate any odors negatively impacting the neighborhood.

Courtyard: Our dedicated courtyard space will be used during the warmer months of the year, mainly during summer. Music may be played at a low volume for ambiance and will be predominately instrumental music. Our lighting, seating and activity will not be seen from either Woodland or Western.

Signage: We will follow all sign regulations set forth by the City of Lake Forest and the property owner to conform with other businesses in the center.

We hope the board will issue a Special Use Permit to Tocco in Lake Forest. We are excited to bring not only flavor and an Italian experience to Lake Forest but to also add value to the community through our volunteer work and time. We could not ask for a more perfect partnership than with the Altounian Family and we look forward to building our relationship with the Lake Forest family as well.

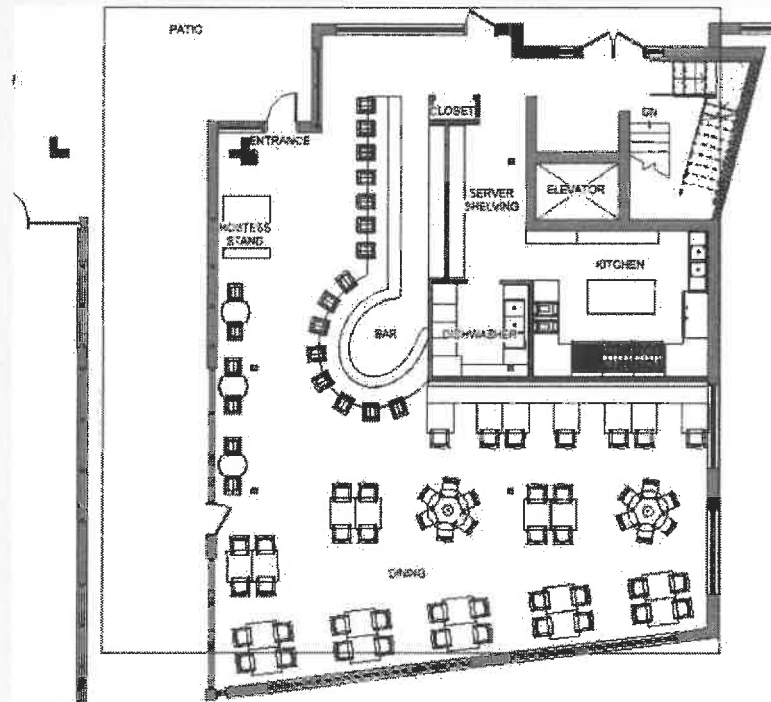
Regards,

Bruno Abate

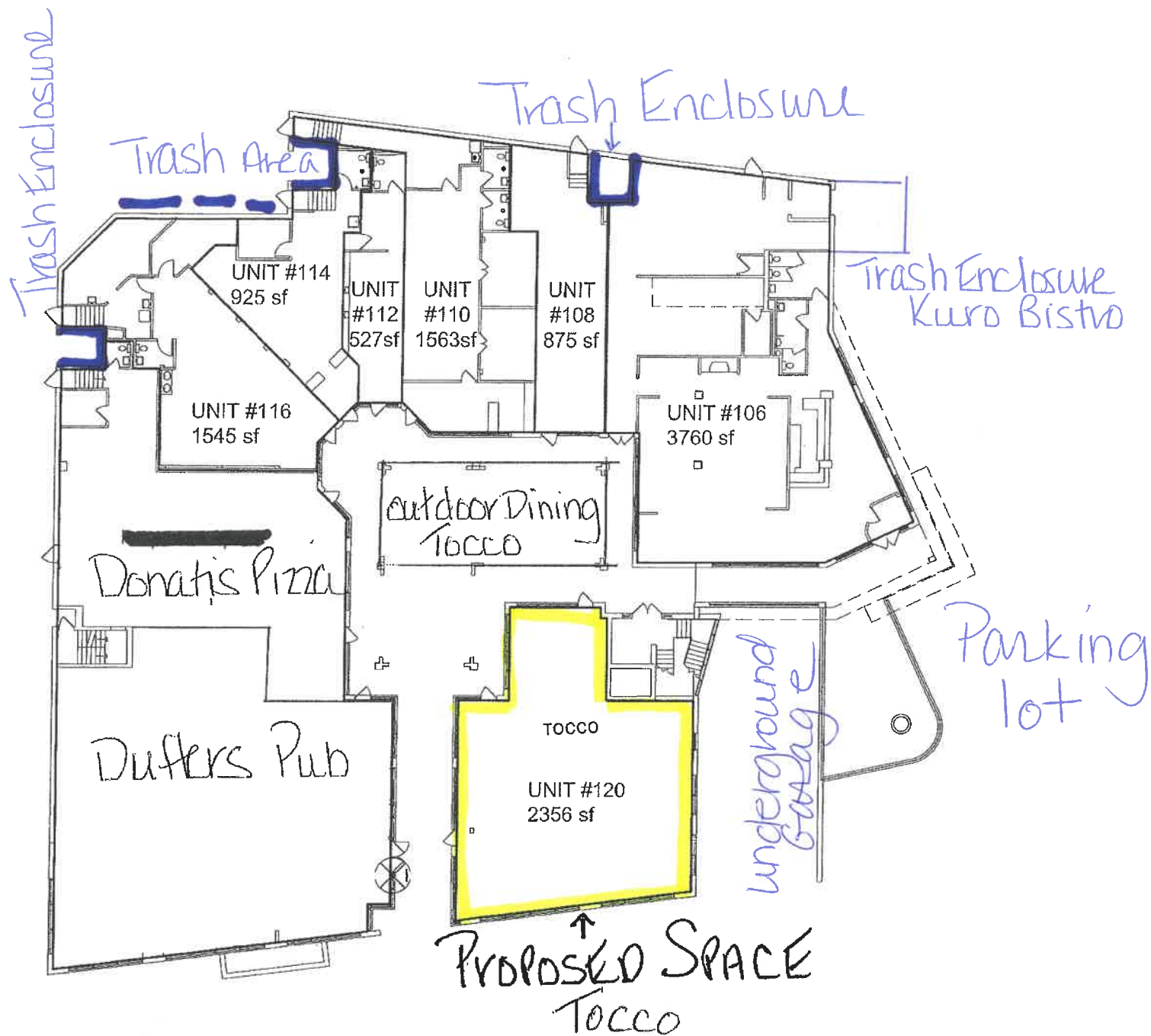
Founder and Manager - Tocco

Preliminary Proposed Floor Plan

new Tocco Westwood



Preliminary Layout



Wilmer & Associates
Architecture and Interior Design
wilmerandassoc.com

WESTWOOD CENTER
FIRST FLOOR PLAN
2019.04.29 SCALE: N.T.S.