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Business Service Center to provide one-stop assistance

Starting a new business in Oak Park is about to get a lot easier – at least the part that has to do with navigating the inner workings of Village Hall. A new Business Service Center soon will be up and running at 123 Madison Street to provide support tailored to the unique needs of individual businesses – both current and future.

"We've learned from experience that many potential small business operators don't always know what is involved in transforming an idea into reality, or even where to start," said Loretta Daly, who as the Village's Business Services Manager, will oversee the new Business Service Center.

"The role of the Business Service Center will be to give anyone interested in starting a new business in Oak Park – or hoping to expand an existing one – a central point of entry at Village Hall and someone there who can guide them through the processes."

Starting a new business or expanding an existing one typically involves complying with a wide range of regulations that require specific steps be followed before proper permits and licenses can be issued and the doors open to the public, according to Daly. Legal requirements can vary greatly by type of business and even its geographic location within the Village. And more than one department inside Village Hall likely has some role in the approval process.

From understanding zoning requirements and passing building inspections, to completing all of the necessary application forms, the Business Service Center will provide current and potential business operators with an individualized roadmap through the legal steps necessary to operate and grow in Oak Park.

"Village Hall processes and procedures can seem complex – especially to someone who has a dream, but has never had to deal with regulations intended to ensure public safety and balance business and residential interests," she said.

"Individuals who start with the Business Service Center will learn at the beginning what they need to do to start and operate a business in Oak Park and how best to do it. They also will have someone to call when questions come up or they just want to talk about their ideas."

Much of what the Business Service Center will do for businesses will happen behind the scenes, Daly explained. This includes providing coordinated, multi-department oversight for moving new business applicants efficiently from application to approval to opening for business, and tracking the progress of an applicant's paperwork.

The Business Service Center also will act as a liaison with all Village departments to help identify and solve potential problems that could unnecessarily delay the process. In addition, the center will work closely with local business associations and the Oak Park Development Corporation, which manages several business support programs in conjunction with the Village.

Work is underway to give the new Business Service Center a high-profile, high-visibility location in Village Hall. The Center will be located near the Building & Property Standards Department, and signs will help to make it clear just where to start the process of getting ready to do business in Oak Park.

For more information on the new Business Service Center, call 708.358.5648 or e-mail business@oak-park.us.

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