

VILLAGE OF HOMEWOOD



BOARD AGENDA MEMORANDUM

DATE OF MEETING: February 25, 2025

To: Village President and Board of Trustees

Through: Napoleon Haney, Village Manager

From: Angela Mesaros, Director of Economic and Community Development

Topic: Special Use Permit for an indoor commercial place of assembly in the B-2 Downtown Transition District for “The Livie Room” at 18035 Dixie Highway (*formerly Popology Popcorn*).

PURPOSE

The applicant, Niya Jones, has proposed to operate “The Livie Room,” an events space (classified as an indoor commercial place of assembly) at 18035 Dixie Highway. According to the applicant, the space is proposed as a “community gathering space” for corporate events, podcast hosting, small gatherings, small holiday events, repast events, and other small upscale functions. Liquor may not be served at any time at the facility without the approval and issuance of a liquor license by the Village Board of Trustees.



The tenant space at 18035 Dixie Highway has a floor area of 1,100 square feet and was formerly a retail store offering popcorn and other food items. The space will be divided into two (2) areas: a large gathering space in front, and a prep kitchen in the back. Guests will be required to bring their own food. The space has one (1) restroom located off the rear kitchen area. Other uses in the adjacent building spaces include a travel brokers office, a Taekwondo & Hapkido academy, a restaurant and entertainment venue (Mitchell & Michael’s), and a fitness facility.

The applicant stated that the event center would be available from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m., seven (7) days a week. Peak hours will be on weekends, especially weekend nights, with larger events such as wedding receptions and birthday parties. Smaller events such as repast and corporate events are expected on weekdays.

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The applicant anticipates a maximum of fifty (50) people for high-table events and sixty (60) people for events with seating. The Fire Department will determine the total capacity of the building during the Business Operation Certificate review process.

The zoning ordinance requires one space per 300 square feet for a total of four (4) spaces for the proposed use (1,100 square feet/300 = 3.67 spaces). The space has one (1) dedicated parking space behind the building that will be used for employee parking. Customer parking would be on the street or in public parking lots. Subsection 44-05-02.J of the zoning ordinance allows off-site parking spaces within 300' of the business to meet the parking requirements. Three (3) spaces are located on Dixie Highway in front of the building.

PROCESS

At the Planning and Zoning meeting on November 21, 2024, Commissioners expressed concerns that the available parking is not conducive to an events space. With limited public parking in the area, and without a parking agreement, it was unclear how the use would work. The Commissioners voted to continue the case to a future meeting to give the applicant a chance to obtain a parking agreement with a nearby business.

Following the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting, staff received the following details about the applicant's parking plans.

- The applicant submitted a signed agreement with Eldridge Dental Group (1944 Ridge Road) to use up to twenty (20) parking spaces during events (highlighted parking area in the picture below). The applicant intends to lease the parking spaces and will negotiate a lease agreement after securing Village approval. The parking spaces are in the north parking lot in the rear of the dental office, directly behind the subject property. The applicant has provided a signed copy of the contract (see attached).



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- The applicant has also submitted a letter noting that in addition to the twenty (20) spaces, the applicant will encourage carpools and parking in the Village's public parking lot on Harwood Avenue instead of street parking on Dixie Highway.

At its regular meeting on January 23, 2025, the Homewood Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed the requests for a special use permit. With six of the seven members present, the Commission voted three (3) ayes to three (3) nays. It is important to note that four affirmative votes are required for approval of the recommendation. Therefore, the Planning & Zoning Commission failed to approve the motion.

In making its recommendation, the Planning & Zoning Commission reviewed the application and submittals, comments received at the public hearing, and the standards outlined in the zoning ordinance.

The Commissioners who voted against this application stated that they could not support the special use due to the concern about parking and traffic congestion. Commission members who voted for the special use permit believed that the twenty (20) parking spaces leased from the adjacent property should be sufficient for events.

Section 44-07-11 of the Homewood Zoning Ordinance outlines the standards for a special use review. The following standards are of note in this application. No one standard is controlling:

- 1) Is the special use deemed necessary for the public convenience at that location? Similar business uses (indoor commercial places of assembly events spaces) are located within a ½ mile radius of the proposed business, including Infinite Event Suite (1820 Ridge) and Honeycomb Hideout (18205 Dixie Highway). Staff has received a large number of requests for similar uses, suggesting increased public demand.
- 2) Is the special use at the subject property so designed, located, and proposed to be operated, that the public health, safety, and welfare will be protected? Parking opportunities are limited within a short distance of the proposed business. Larger public parking areas that may support the proposed events, such as the Village Hall Parking Lot on Chestnut Road and the "Metra" Parking Lot on Harwood Avenue, are more than 500' from the business. Most public parking also requires crossing multiple streets, which may create safety hazards for users when accessing the site.
- 3) Is the special use a suitable use of the property and, without the special use, could the property be substantially diminished in value? The property is located in the B-2 Downtown Transition zoning district, which permits a range of commercial and assembly uses. The property is unlikely to be diminished in value if the special use is not approved due to alternative permitted uses that could occupy the space.

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- 4) Will the special use be consistent with the uses and community character of the neighborhood surrounding the subject property? *Hours of events may extend until 1:00 a.m., which would be later than most other businesses in the downtown.*
- 5) Will the special use be injurious to the use or enjoyment of other property in the neighborhood for the purposes permitted in the zoning district? *The use would increase parking demand in the immediate vicinity and may impact the enjoyment of surrounding properties and existing businesses.*
- 6) Does the proposed special use at the subject property provide adequate measures of ingress and egress in a manner that minimizes traffic congestion in the public streets? *Events of up to 50 people as proposed by the application, would increase congestion. This impact could be mitigated if available parking was dispersed across the downtown area. The site has vehicular access off Ridge Road for loading and (one) employee parking. No customer parking is available on-site.*
- 7) Is the subject property adequately served by utilities, drainage, road access, public safety, and other necessary facilities to support the special use? *The site has the necessary utilities and facilities to support the use.*

OUTCOME

The Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed the application, heard testimony by the applicant, and considered the applicant's response to the Standards for a Special Use. The following Findings of Fact were incorporated into the record:

1. The subject property is located at 18035 Dixie Highway on a 0.24-acre parcel, near the northeast corner of Dixie Highway and Ridge Road;
2. The subject property is owned by Omar Hassad of Tinley Park, Illinois;
3. The applicant has proposed an events space, classified as an indoor commercial place of assembly in the zoning ordinance;
4. The proposed business would be within a 1,100-square-foot gross floor area tenant space in a multi-tenant building;
5. The subject property is located within the B-2 Downtown Transition zoning district;
6. Indoor commercial places of assembly are a special use in the B-2 district;
7. The subject property has one (1) dedicated on-site parking space and additional public parking spaces on Dixie Highway, shared with adjacent businesses;
8. The applicant has a signed agreement with Eldridge Dental Group (1944 Ridge Road) to use up to twenty (20) parking spaces during events;
9. The site meets applicable development standards in Section 44-05 of the Village Zoning Ordinance; and
10. The proposed event business will operate within the existing commercial building that is adequately served by utilities.

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FINANCIAL IMPACT

- **Funding Source:** N/A
- **Budgeted Amount:** N/A
- **Cost:** N/A

LEGAL REVIEW

Completed

RECOMMENDED BOARD ACTION

The Village Board makes the final decision on all special uses. In consideration of the attached ordinance granting a special use permit for an indoor commercial place of assembly, “The Livie Room” (events space) on application by Niya Jones at 18035 Dixie Highway, in the B-2 Downtown Transition zoning district, the Village Board should consider the following options:

1. Approve the special use with the conditions that the Fire Department determines the maximum occupancy (not to exceed 50 people) and that the applicant secure a parking lease with the property at 1944 Ridge Road to use up to 20 parking spaces during events;
2. Refer the matter back to the Planning and Zoning Commission for further consideration;
or
3. Deny the application.

ATTACHMENT(S)

- Ordinance
- Minutes of Planning & Zoning Commission – November 21, 2024 and January 23, 2025