

## Sounds of Summer Proposal FAQ: Move to Thursdays and Lengthen the Season

**1. I've heard that Sounds of Summer is changing. What exactly is being proposed?**

Village staff has proposed the idea of moving Sounds of Summer from Thursdays and Fridays from mid-June through July (6 weeks), to Thursday nights, June through August (12 weeks).

**2. Why is this change being considered?**

In 2020, the Village introduced Arlington Alfresco to downtown Arlington Heights as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic. The outdoor dining experience proved to be extremely popular and attracts many guests to downtown, specifically on Fridays and Saturdays. The combination of crowds attending Sounds of Summer and Arlington Alfresco, within the confined space of Harmony Park and adjacent streets on Friday nights, has created ongoing challenges for staff and businesses.

The Village created Sounds of Summer in 2001 to draw visitors to local businesses. While not all businesses are the same, we have heard that some find that Friday night concerts conflict with their own activities, and some businesses have requested that the concerts be focused on nights where downtown wasn't already as busy. Businesses have also requested that the Village extend the concert season. Therefore, we are exploring the option to host concerts on Thursdays and lengthen the concert season, in efforts to help alleviate issues occurring on Fridays and to bring additional visitors to downtown on Thursdays through August.

**3. Why are these challenges important?**

As the crowds continue to grow, we don't expect challenges (see below) to decrease, and therefore we need to responsibly address these challenges now. Based upon the growing crowds at Arlington Alfresco, coupled with Sounds of Summer, we are proactively trying to prevent significant public safety issues.

**4. What kind of challenges are you dealing with?**

As event organizers, our main goal is always public safety. With the increased popularity of downtown Arlington Heights, combined with Arlington Alfresco and Sounds of Summer, specifically on Friday nights, crowd management is top priority. Public Safety staff and event staffing needs at these events has increased over the past 2 years – and while we are happy to meet those needs, it's important to assess the event and identify areas where we can take action, to help keep visitors safe. The crowds on Friday have grown to sizes that are on the verge of being too big for the space. During some Friday nights it is estimated that there are 6,000 guests in the entirety of Arlington Alfresco area, not including Harmony Park. Data (see #10) shows that this number increases to approximately 7,500 when including Harmony Park/Sounds of Summer crowds.

In addition to Public Safety Concerns, other concerns include:

- Maintaining safe access for all guests, of all ages – and all abilities
- Parking issues – Vail Street Garage filling up. This results in additional challenges for guests trying to make their dinner reservations, as well as guests illegally parking in resident spaces, leaving them without parking when they come home from work
- Securing adequate staffing levels for the back-to-back events each week

- Negative Impacts on the grass and underground irrigation system at Harmony Park with back-to-back concerts on Thursdays & Fridays each week
- Stage is left unattended overnight from Thursday to Friday, requiring overnight monitoring
- Adjacent businesses have expressed interest in hosting their own Friday night entertainment and events, which they cannot currently do because of Sounds of Summer sound
- Managing Village staffing when also trying to complete projects associated with summer, including important construction projects that must be completed on a specific timeline

**5. When was this information shared publicly?**

- Village staff introduced the Thursday night concert proposal at an open-to-the-public budget meeting in June 2023
- The concept was discussed at several Downtown Arlington Heights Business Alliance, or DAHBA, meetings consisting of business owners, over the past several months
- The concept was introduced during on a virtual Zoom call with downtown Arlington Heights residents in October 2023
- The Village’s Economic Alliance Commission, consisting of local business owners, was consulted on January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2024, and unanimously approved staff’s recommendation based upon the information provided at the meeting

**6. Why Thursdays?**

Thursdays are already part of the Sounds of Summer series lineup, so this would create the least amount of change to the successful concert series. We did consider Wednesday nights; however, this would negatively impact downtown residents with increased noise on a mid-week night.

Additionally, the Arlington Heights Park District hosts concerts at North School Park on Wednesdays and has communicated with the Village that they would like to potentially expand that program in the future.

We also considered surrounding town concert lineups, and the vast majority are on not on Thursday nights, and therefore are not a competition for Sounds of Summer guests

- Mount Prospect: Friday Nights Concerts on the Green
- Rolling Meadows: Fridays Rock concerts in the park
- Palatine: Mainstage Concerts on Friday Night
- Buffalo Grove: Tuesdays
- Elk Grove: 1 Thursday in July, the rest are Tuesdays

**7. Why are you decreasing the number of concerts?**

To clarify, we are not decreasing the number of concerts for a Sounds of Summer season. We currently book 12 concerts each season. We would continue to provide the same level of service and entertainment, by providing 12 concerts during Sounds of Summer. The proposed schedule adjustment would extend the season by 6 weeks.

**8. What have businesses said about Friday night challenges?**

While we understand that what applies to some businesses might not apply to all, we have heard from

nearby establishments that they can experience difficulties when trying to accommodate the crowd size brought in by Arlington Alfresco and Sounds of Summer on Friday nights, often reaching wait times of more than 1 hour. Guests are commonly known to enter their names at many adjacent restaurants and wait for the first one to call them. This results in booking confusion and delays for seating. Additional concerns that have been expressed include bathroom overuse from Sounds of Summer guests, and staffing.

Businesses have also consistently expressed that their patrons have a hard time finding parking, as the demand for parking is compounded with the two simultaneous events. While these issues won't be 100% solved for Thursday nights, these issues tend to peak Friday nights, along with crowd size.

### 9. Have downtown residents been consulted?

Village staff meets multiple times per year with HOA representatives from the Downtown residential buildings who are welcome to invite their residents. When we introduced the idea to potentially move Sounds of Summer to Thursday nights and extend the season through August, the general response of how the potential move could affect residents was not met with pushback.

### 10. What's going to happen with Friday nights?

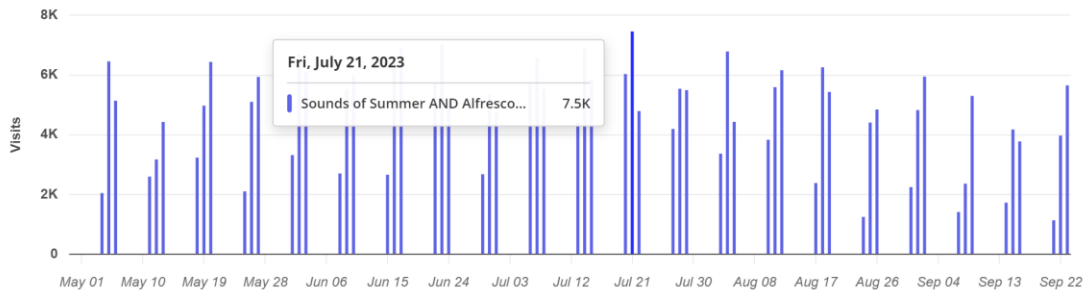
The Village has access to a company that produces data based off of cell phone information collected. The company, Placer.ai, extrapolates data and has a partnership with 500 popular apps. These apps, when downloaded, notify the user that their information may be used for data collection. We are able to use Placer.ai data to track the estimated number of individuals in a certain space, at a certain time. These numbers are only tracking cell phone users, so these numbers are a low estimate, because it only accounts individuals with cell phones. The actual number of guests is higher.

Using this data, we can see that Friday nights during Alfresco on non-Sounds of Summer nights still draws a healthy number of visitors to downtown Arlington Heights. In May, before Sounds of Summer begins, crowds in the Alfresco Area average above 4,000 visitors. After Sounds of Summer, August crowds continue to average around 4,000 guests.

- Vertical bars below represent Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights in the Alfresco Area, not including Harmony Park. Throughout Sounds of Summer, Thursday nights remain consistent, between 4,000 – 4,500
- Data shows that crowds peak on Fridays during Sounds of Summer, mid-June through July, reaching 6,000 guests, not including Harmony Park.



- For reference on crowd size, when the above Arlington Alfresco geofence is expanded to include Harmony Park, crowd size on July 21, 2023 increases from 6,000 (above) to 7,500 (below).



**11. Have you heard from businesses about this proposed change?**

Yes, we have. In addition to the businesses who have expressed their Friday night challenges with Sounds of Summer and Alfresco crowds, we have also consulted with business groups, including the DAHBA group and the Village’s Economic Alliance Commission. The DAHBA did not provide any negative pushback, and several business owners expressed support in changing to Thursdays because this would help them manage the crowds on Friday and would bring in additional customers on Thursdays through August. The Village’s Economic Alliance Commission, which consists of Arlington Heights business owners including downtown businesses and is tasked specifically with representing the business community and their interests, unanimously approved the proposal at their public meeting on Wednesday, January 10, 2024.

We fully understand that some businesses might feel differently, however we must do our best to balance all of our community members interests, including restaurants, businesses, downtown residents, Sounds of Summer guests, and Arlington Alfresco guests.

**12. What if it doesn’t work out?**

The Village has hosted Sounds of Summer since 2001. With your help, we have grown this event to the successful destination that it is today, and we are very proud of the event’s success. The last thing we want to do is hurt the event. If moving the event to Thursdays and extending the event through August is not successful, we are absolutely open to moving the schedule back to Thursdays & Fridays.

**13. Where can I learn more information?**

We highly encourage you to connect with the Village. You can connect with us on social media, and we also recommend that you sign up for the Village’s twice monthly e-newsletter. Visit [www.vah.com/connect](http://www.vah.com/connect) for ways to connect!

All updates about Sounds of Summer will be shared on social media and through our e-newsletter, and will also be shared on [www.vah.com/soundsofsummer](http://www.vah.com/soundsofsummer).

**14. When will this be considered by the Village Board?**

The Village Board will consider this proposed change at their board meeting on Tuesday, January 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 p.m. You can watch the board meeting at [www.vah.com/streaming](http://www.vah.com/streaming) and on our YouTube page at

<https://www.youtube.com/@VAHBoardMeetings>. This meeting is open to the public and encourages public participation.