

April 12, 2022

Public Notice Portion of Project CPC CU 22-00032

Re: Conditional Use Daycare Permit for Large License for

Sharon Wren

4239 Apache Plume Drive,

Colorado Springs, CO 80920

I would like to start my response to the public comments by apologizing to my neighbors for what was a great oversight on my part in the planning phase of my childcare/preschool expansion. Due to the positive feedback I have always received from my immediate neighbors, regarding my small in-home preschool, I couldn't imagine anyone having a difficult time with our expansion. What I have realized is that the perceived disruption of personal space and peace needed to be approached with a sympathetic tone and a better explanation of my intentions. My family and I left a different neighborhood almost 6 years ago that was both chaotic and noisy. We moved to Apache Plume Drive to gain our own personal peace and quiet. We absolutely love living here and this is exactly why I should've been more sympathetic and understanding of how the news of my preschool expansion might upset people.

The word 'childcare' or 'daycare' seems to have a universal perception of chaos, noise, high clientele turnover, and a continuous stream of traffic. I personally dislike both words, having spent 24 years trying to dispel the myths surrounding what I accomplish in a day, while trying to gain both respect and credibility in my career. Now I realize that those who don't understand how I run my preschool program, (or my neighbors who didn't even know that we were already here) might have been very upset with the news of a "LARGE daycare" moving in. I would like to explain why I have applied for the larger zoning variance.

A "regular" licensed childcare home typically is licensed and zoned for 6 full time children ages 5 and under, plus two additional before/after school-aged children, who can be here full days on breaks, days off and summer vacations. So, to be clear, I am already legally licensed and zoned to have 8 children on any given day. I have had seven or 8 on many occasions over the last 6 years depending on how many of my "graduated" kids come back after they leave for kindergarten. I am allowed to have just myself, and those 8 children, two of which currently must be at least 5 yrs old and have started kindergarten. In order to change that status to my preferred status of 8 preschoolers by myself, I must relicense, and re-zone for 7 to 12 children, as that is my only other licensing option. In order to have 9 to 12 children present, I must have a full time, equally qualified assistant. This really isn't the ideal option for me, because it would cost almost the full tuition of the extra 4 children to provide a decent salary and benefits to an employee. My preference is to have 8 children by myself, and changing the requirement that two of them be "school aged children" to 8 children that are ages 5 and under.

To address the public comments, I would like to point out that there were 7 opposition letters from only 4 households, three of which live further north on my block in consecutive homes and have very similar issues and complaints yet also seem to give the implication that they didn't even know we were already in existence for the last (almost) 6 years. The fourth home is on another block, further north and cannot even see our home from her home. Three other houses near us sent in support of the zoning.

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One of the commenters mentioned that she thinks I have a dangerous ratio compared to the district preschools. A large center or licensed facility preschool have a licensing rule of 1:10 staff-to-children ratio. The district preschools usually add in a third assistant because the majority of their children are on some sort of IEP and have special services or special needs of some kind. The State Regulations for district preschools are in Rule # 7.702 from the Office of Early Childhood and it is a 1:10 ratio or 2:20 ratio for most classrooms. My large license daycare home ratio is 1:8 or 2:12. These ratios are verifiable on the Office of Early Childhood Licensing Information Site. To further address that comment, I have 24 years of experience, required yearly trainings and professional development in excess of 425 professional credit hours and an overwhelmingly exemplary record of unannounced yearly inspections. These inspection reports are also publicly accessible on both Colorado Shines and always posted on my parent board in the play area. People that choose home childcares and preschools do it because they like the smaller ratio and the home setting. This pandemic has made it perfectly clear that small childcare businesses like mine are a necessity and a desire of the community. In fact, the Governor sent several Bills to Washington which passed through the Senate and House to support us.

Several complaints mentioned the doubling of my capacity, which would be a 100% increase in amount of children. To be clear, I am not doubling my current capacity of 8 children. I am asking for an increase of 25% to 33% of my current capacity. Even if I had intended to have 12 children total, it would only add up to 4 more cars 2x a day. (5 if my required helper had a vehicle.) That is an accurate picture of the increased traffic this would bring to the neighborhood. Our neighborhood has many roads that intersect so there are multiple ways my clientele can enter and leave our neighborhood without creating any traffic bottlenecks.

The parking issue was a valid point to address. I did not mention that we had our White Jeep up for sale, and it is now sold and gone. Also, one of our children just moved out a few months ago, and another one of our children is leaving for Greeley in the fall for college and will be gone (along with her car) a good chunk of the year. There is also my husband's car shown in our driveway. Yes...he is working from home right now because of the pandemic, but his new office space will open sometime in May 2022 and he will be gone most days. My son that is still at home graduates from UCCS in a few weeks and will enter the workforce and will no longer be completing his college courses from home. We are also in the process of rearranging our garage so that two cars will fit in our garage at all times. This will be completed by June 1st 2022. This will open up more parking than what is portrayed in the neighbor concerns and I apologize for leaving this out of the original plans.

One complaint I found to be very somewhat frustrating and unfounded was the matter of the preschoolers running wild through traffic in between cars and almost getting hit. Currently I have 5 clients with 7 children. Children 1&2 arrive at 7:05am in one car. Child 3 (sometimes Child 7 comes with him when her kindergarten class is out of school) arrives at 7:10 and child 4 arrives at 7:20ish. Then there are no more arrivals until Child 5 arrives at 7:55 and child 6 arrives at 8am to 8:45am. We have a sign in/sign out sheets if you need further documentation of this. As you can see, in the morning, there aren't many people here at the same time. Sometimes 7:05 to 7:20 is a little busy with the 3 cars, but after that, it's one family at a time. In the afternoon, Child 1 leaves at 2:45pm, Children 2 & 3 leave appx 340. Children 4 and 5 usually leave together at 350 and the last little guy leaves right at 4pm. Even though my opposing neighbors cannot see me because of the layout of my home, we do porch pick-ups and drop-offs and I can see what is going on in the street at all times. I would never allow dangerous situations to continue. I love these children and have them more of their "awake" hours than their parents do. Even the pictures sent to "prove" this point show the mother holding her childrens' hands as they cross the street. Two of the other kids are almost always carried

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to their cars by their fathers. I have even seen my families stop their children and correct them if they even step a toe out into the road. When I am out there, they don't do it, and if I needed to station myself outside to prevent that behavior, I certainly would. I would also like to point out that there are other small children on the block besides my preschoolers. How do we know that the supposed child in the street didn't belong to someone else? I can provide footage from my Ring Cameras if I need to show the pickups and drop offs and how they typically go. The speed limit on our street is 25 mph so there isn't any "speeding off."

Probable noise issues. I can see why people would worry about their backyard peace. I also enjoy birdwatching, gardening, reading in the sunshine, and being out on my deck/patio. My preschool is based off the District 20 school schedule and the majority of my clientele are D20 teachers. We are open 7am to 4pm 39 weeks per year. Recess is 45 min to an hour before lunch, and another 30 min after naptime in the afternoon. I have also run the summer camp for two years now and I had 8 kids in each session last summer with ZERO noise complaints. We run that 16 hrs a week for 6 weeks. My two newest neighbors even moved in and toured their houses while I was running my camp. Summers we are outside a little more, but I only work 9am to 1pm, Monday through Thursday, and we are outside appx 2 to 2.5 hrs of those days doing lots of planned crafts and activities. If neighbors are concerned by the sound of happy children playing, it's only a small portion of each day and I would happily pass out our daily schedule if they would like one in order to avoid hearing recess time. I like my peace just as much as anyone. Since someone mentioned the wind tunnel created behind our homes, I would like to point out that the majority of Colorado Springs winds run north to south and the complaints of the wind tunnel and accompanying noise came from north of me so our "outdoor voices" should mostly be traveling south, not north. I would never let a ridiculous amount of noise go on for long periods of time. My husband and my own children have also been at home through these last two years doing work and school from home. My husband is on meetings all day long and most people he meets with don't even know I run a preschool in the background. Did I mention his home office is over the outdoor play area?

I have every intention of doing my best to ensure that the impact to my neighbors is as minimal as humanly possible. If the traffic is a problem and I needed to change people's drop-off times I would do so happily to prevent any issues with my neighbors. If I need to provide a daily schedule to help people avoid our recess times, I will provide those too. I am also considered to be a person who is easy to talk to, so I would happily discuss any issues that come up that disturb the happiness and peace of my neighbors.

Thank you for the opportunity to further explain the reasoning for our request for the zoning variance.
Sincerely,
Sharon Wren