



**CITY OF SANTA MARIA
PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

SEPTEMBER 18, 2024

5.b

CRR WINGS INFANT CHILDCARE CENTER CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT

Property Location: 2861 Airpark Drive

Review of a Conditional Use Permit (U2024-0008) for Children’s Resource & Referral of Santa Barbara County to establish an infant childcare center within 1,100-square-feet of an existing two-story, 25,600-square-foot office building on a 1.89-acre site in a PD/M-1 (Planned Development/ Light Manufacturing) district.

Environmental: This project qualifies for a Class 1 (Existing Facilities) Categorical Exemption pursuant to Section 15301 of the California Environmental Quality Act State Guidelines.

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the Planning Commission, by motion, approve Conditional Use Permit U2024-0008.

BACKGROUND

The 1.89-acre project site is located at 2861 Airpark Drive, in the southwest portion of the City. The site is in the PD/M-1 (Planned Development/ Light Manufacturing) zone and is adjacent to office space, vacant land and the Santa Maria Airport (Attachment A – Vicinity Map). To the north of the site is a two-story office building and to the east and west of the site there are vacant lots, all within the PD/M-1 zone. The south side of the site is Santa Maria Public Airport District property with a narrow strip abutting the project site zoned OS (Open Space) and PD/AS-II (Planned Development/ Airport Service -II) zone beyond.

The parcel consists of an existing two-story, 25,600-square-foot office building. The applicant, Children’s Resource & Referral of Santa Barbara County currently occupies the first and second floor as their Santa Maria office space. The site includes 98 parking spaces and exceeds landscaping requirements.

In 2017 the Planning Commission approved a Planned Development Permit for the construction of two 25,600-square-foot two-story office buildings on the project site and on the neighboring parcel to the west. The second building on the neighboring parcel has not been built.

DISCUSSION

The applicant, Jacquilyn Banta, representing Children's Resource & Referral of Santa Barbara County is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to establish a new childcare center. The proposed facility will occupy 1,100-square feet of the first floor of the building and will include a fenced-in outdoor playground of 2,183-square feet. The proposed tenant improvements to the existing building will create a separate tenant space for the childcare center and include a new folding bifold panel glass door on the southeast facing building elevation that leads directly into the outdoor playground. The fenced outdoor playground will replace the existing half-court basketball space on the southeast corner of the building. The six-foot wood perimeter fence will enclose the entire playground and provide a facility entrance/exit on the northeast and southeast sides of the fence. The northeast door on the fence will be used as the primary door for the infant childcare center. The site's landscape area requirements will continue to be met with the proposed removal of a small landscape area to accommodate the access of the new folding door.

The childcare center will accommodate up to a maximum of 20 infants and toddlers ranging from 0-24 months in age, cared for by eight direct care staff/teachers. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:30 pm.

A Conditional Use Permit is required for day care centers within an M-1 (Light Manufacturing) district, when the center is 'associated with, and integrated into, a facility that is a permitted or conditional use' per Section 12-15.05 of the Santa Maria Municipal Code (SMMC). This project would address the county's childcare shortage by providing a new licensed childcare facility in the city.

Outdoor Playground

The outdoor playground is proposed in the southeast corner of the lot in between the building and the parking lot. The playground will replace the existing half-court basketball space and include soft ground cover, raised garden beds, a bike loop, stage and outdoor seating.

Parking and Circulation

For a childcare center, the SMMC (Section 12-32.03(d)(14)) requires one parking space for each staff member, and one for every five children. The applicant is proposing 20 children and eight staff members for a total of 28 parking spaces needed. The project site has 98 parking spaces two of which are ADA accessible, which exceeds the maximum number of parking spaces required in the SMMC. Existing and proposed neighboring buildings are all on their individual parcels and each parcel satisfies their parking count, no reciprocal parking agreement is required.

For child safety and to avoid traffic impacts, the operator of the infant childcare center shall establish written policies regarding management of child pick-up and drop-off, including using staggered pre-assigned pick-up/drop-off times for their clients (Permit Condition #4). All employees will be instructed in these policies and clients will be provided with written policies for pick-up and drop-off. Additionally, the day care center is conditioned to establish a parking monitor to direct safe circulation of vehicles and pedestrians during peak hours.

When arriving at the center, parents/guardians will be directed to park their vehicles in the ten stalls closest to the southeast side of the building. Because of the age group of the children, parents/guardians must always enter the facility to check-in their children and this parking location allows for easy access to the main entrance of the day care center.

SBCAG Safety Compatibility Criteria

According to the SBCAG Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP) the existing building and proposed facility is in Zone 2 of the Airport Safety Zones. Day care facilities with 14 or more children are conditionally compatible with Zone 2. To be conditionally compatible the project site must meet the maximum intensity requirements which limits the occupancy of the building and site to 80 people per acre. Therefore, the total of the occupancy for the building and site is capped at 152 people. Currently, the Children's Resource and Referral of Santa Barbara County has 46 staff members working in this building. The proposed infant center would bring the total occupancy number to 74. Based on these factors, the proposed project meets the safety compatibility criteria.

Building and Fire Code Requirements

The reuse of the office building as an infant childcare center will necessitate code-required safety improvements. The most notable being the requirement of 1-hour fire rated walls and ceilings to accommodate the change in occupancy (Permit Condition #19). In addition, there may be required alterations to the automatic fire sprinkler and fire alarm systems (Permit Conditions #24 and #25). The applicant has acknowledged these building and fire code requirements and will incorporate the necessary improvements into their construction plans.

Environmental

Staff has determined that the project conforms to the City's General Plan and zoning requirements, will not generate significant traffic, noise, air quality, or water quality impacts, and can be adequately served by all required utilities and public services. Therefore, this project qualifies as a Class 1 (Existing Facilities) categorical exemption based on Section 15301 of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines. No further environmental review is required.

Attachments

- A – Vicinity Map
- B – Permit
- C – Plan Set