

## NEIGHBORHOOD INFORMATION MEETING

PROJECT: Young Peoples Learning Center Expansion

DATE: July 15, 2014

APPLICANTS: Dennis, Janice & Heather Griffith

PROJECT PLANNER: Rebecca Everette

### **Project Planner Presentation Summary:**

The proposal is for a second-floor expansion of the Young Peoples Learning Center for additional office space. The site is located on two separate zone districts, the Neighborhood Conservation Buffer Zone District and the Neighborhood Conservation Medium Density Zone District. Child care centers are a permitted use in both zone districts, but only the buffer zone permits office/medical use.

The project will be subject to Planning & Zoning Board Review. The applicants have already come in for a conceptual review to share preliminary ideas with the City, and they are completing the required next step in the development process tonight by having their neighborhood meeting, where questions, concerns and feedback can be shared.

### **Applicants Presentation Summary:**

The Young Peoples Learning Center was started in 1978 at 405 Matthews Street. At the time, we were taking care of up to 45 children. Eventually the Plum Street site, then the Jack & Jill Child Development Center, was purchased in the mid-1990s for our facility. We have served over 2,000 children and 1,500 families over the years.

We need to improve the Plum Street Site and offer up-to-date amenities. When we started, we were one of five centers in Fort Collins; there are now around 30. Over the years, standards have grown substantially, with additional regulations and changes in the industry. Physical changes are needed, such as upgrading our kitchen – we need 5 sinks to provide the necessary food for the children. Classrooms are also being altered so children do not have to leave the rooms for access to a restroom. We are also increasing the energy efficiency of the overall building, and will be refinishing the outside of the building. We believe this will add to our and the neighborhood's property values and bring the highest standards short of new construction.

In looking at other child care centers, they are doing even more. One of the best practices is collaboration between services, to help catch kids and families early when they need services. We have partnered with Touchstone Health partners and the Children's Hearing and Speech center where they can come in and meet with families and for screening. We would like to offer these medical/office services but there is not current capacity at our location. With the proposed addition, we will be able to offer these types of services and address current physical shortfalls at our site, such as limited meeting space for parent/teacher conferences.

**Questions, Comments & Responses:**

**Comment (Citizen):** The existing business is a nuisance at an increasing rate. As a lawyer, I will do research on this as a public nuisance. The nuisance is the volume of traffic; it is dangerous to get down Plum Street due to the volume of people backing out. My concerns are also the impacts on the neighborhood. There is a top-notch Children’s program on Lemay Avenue. If parents are concerned about the best interests and care of their children, they should take them to this high quality facility. This zone is not appropriate to meet your needs.

I am against this to the point where I intend to research suing you and your business as an existing nuisance. It is not appropriate if you think it is okay to continue increasing the traffic and adversely impacting my neighborhood. I have seen the deterioration increase over time. The size of your vans block the ability to see and the increasing traffic affects the safety of the neighborhood. I am totally against this project and I will research shutting down your business because it is a nuisance.

**Comment (Citizen):** I thought the office space will only be in the western half?

**Response (City):** The latest information we have seen is that the new expansion, the child care offices and those parts of the existing operation will be housed on the eastern side of the lot in the NCM zone, while the new general office space will be on the western half of the building in the NCB zone.

**Response (Applicants):** Our administrative offices and conference room spaces – these are to be in the zone districts with our existing use.

**Comment (Citizen):** I want it to be very clear about where the zone districts are and where each use is to be located. I am very opposed to the creep into the neighborhood of these commercial uses. I also wonder once this is all in one building, how easy it will be for the City to say the use is now allowed in the overall building, and then the next buildings further east could say – well, you gave the use in this building, why can’t I be an office use? This could lead to commercial creep into the neighborhood. I am very supportive of the lines we have and opposed to any potential for creep. It is going to be difficult to review and enforce this since it is all in one building.

**Comment (Citizen):** The City Council is too arbitrary and capricious allowing these uses and variances in one spot and allowing it to creep over; City Council is extraordinary. One example is at Whedbee and Laurel where staff and City Council allowed the subdivision of a lot even though it was illegal under the ordinance.

**Comment (Citizen):** I am in support of the project, my child goes to the toddler center, but will soon go to the Plum Street center. I live in Old Town, and I understand the unique properties of the neighborhood and variables, but I want to make sure my support is registered.

**Question (Citizen):** How many kids do you have at the facility every day?

**Response (Applicants):** We are licensed for 76, and we have about 60 on site currently.

**Question (Citizen):** And that will expand?

**Response (Applicants):** I think our licensing number will go up, but I don’t anticipate the number of children increasing.

**Question (Citizen):** How many need social services or psychotherapy?

**Response (Applicants):** I call in Touchstone Health Partners – I connect maybe 5 families a month.

**Comment (Citizen):** If they are close enough to be in the facility on Plum, they are close enough to use the facility on Lemay Ave.

**Response (Applicants):** The therapists are looking for and trying to watch the kids in a comfortable environment.

**Question (Citizen):** 5 per month, over 12 months, in every year -- does that mean you connect all your kids with these services?

**Response (Applicants):** Not all families stay, some I reconnect multiple times. I try to get everyone screened with speech pathologist – probably 80% get screened. There are some that need additional screening.

**Comment (Citizen):** I count 9 offices -- that seem like a medical office.

**Response (Applicants):** There are 4 behavior/family specialist offices, 2 speech/language offices, and 1 occupational therapist/physical therapist office.

**Comment (Citizen):** It kinds of looks like a medical office building that will be rented to medical providers that they will run their own patients through. I understand the economics of the business, but that is an office building that you are adding with medical people, that will increase the traffic load because people will be in there every hour.

**Response (Applicants):** I don't anticipate that being rented in the manner you're speaking. That is not my goal.

**Comment (Citizen):** This gets back to our concern about traffic. I come home from my work that way, as soon as you turn on Plum you have people backing out, and I have nearly been rear ended many times. With more people coming and going for offices, that exponentially increases the traffic and safety issue.

**Question (Citizen):** With the offices being in the Buffer Zone, are they applying for a variance?

**Response (City):** Offices are subject to review by the Planning & Zoning Board – it is a permitted use in the NCB zoning district.

**Question (Citizen):** How would you ever police it, they could move into the other part of the building without anyone knowing.

**Response (Applicants):** To help enforce it, there could be a note on the site plan, or language in the development agreement. It could also be a zoning violation if reported.

**Comment (Citizen):** Parking the last few years has gotten a lot worse as CSU increases their number of students. I don't know how you could get one more person parked on your street.

**Comment (Citizen):** This is a big issue for those who live on Matthews Street.

**Response (Applicants):** We don't want parking to become a bigger problem for our clients either. With regards to even if the center wasn't there, you would have the street full of students regardless, because we know how prevalent it is. That part of the problem isn't going to change I don't think. The real expectation on our side is that between the hours of 10 and 4, there is not much use in front of the center, and those would be the hours the doctors and therapists would schedule someone– and they don't want to schedule someone and have them unable to find parking either. We don't want extra problems during these peak times before 10 and after 4. During the middle of the day, there isn't much of a problem.

**Question (Citizen):** What is the parking posted as now?

**Response (Applicants):** It is posted as a loading zone.

**Question (Citizen):** The whole street?

**Response (Applicants):** Several of the spots in front of the existing center.

**Comment (Applicants):** This isn't a situation where a student is parked there all day, it may be open when not being used by parents not picking up and dropping off. This isn't theoretical; this is our experience from being here over the years. The studies I have seen that talk about the value of seeing

children in real-life situations to observe, that is a significant value. This is state-of-the-art for child care and enhances the value for the kids, and I don't want to say that all children or children at our center need these services. For those that do, it would be an enhanced level of care.

**Comment (Applicants):** We have already had conversations with the Bees Knees Salon about potential parking for our staff, and I have also heard your concerns about the vans and their obstructions about blocking the view – I'd like to help find a way to park these elsewhere to clear up the view issue.

It used to be parallel parking in front of Matthews. We would love to give this more thought for when parents are backing out. If its drop off times and our vans in the way that are the issues, I would love to help solve find a way to solve this. We do have many parents who are supportive of our being in the neighborhood. There are not many centers on this side of town. We have looked into a new building and where would it make sense for our families. They want us to be in the neighborhood and look forward to that. We checked out areas for a new building but that did not seem like the best option, not at the level I would like to be for connecting families to these services. We don't want to be a nuisance to the neighborhood, but there isn't enough care in north Fort Collins.

**Comment (Citizen):** As a former parent of a child at the center, I appreciated you being in the neighborhood. My husband worked a few blocks away; it was very important to us to be a couple blocks away from the center and our child while we were at work.

**Question (Citizen):** Would you also make use of 7 professional offices for medical care? You personally?

**Response (Citizen):** My child and our family don't need those services personally, but if we did, I would take advantage of the services. It's hard for me to put myself in someone's shoes such as a single mother who needs that convenience – I can't anticipate that, but I do appreciate their dedication and the love for the business they have. They want to bring goodness to the community.

**Comment (Citizen):** I would like to add that my child doesn't need psychotherapy care right now, but could fall into that category. We have a friend who has their child in speech pathology, but the convenience is a factor in where we wanted to go to daycare, not having to drive to south of Harmony, and getting to a doctor's office. It makes life more convenient. If you offer speech pathology, and my child needs that service that is a tremendous asset to a day care that we choose to go to.

**Comment (Citizen):** There's a disconnect between what you say you need and what you're doing. This looks like a medical office building. It looks like 7 offices where they aren't coming in to just meet the kids then go away.

**Response (Applicants):** I don't want them to go away, we want those services there on a longer-term basis, for things such as the observation.

**Response (Citizen):** You don't have enough kids to support all those professionals, so they will have to have others come in to support their practices.

**Response (Applicants):** This is different than a professional having an office and scheduling someone to come in every 11 minutes for an appointment.

**Comment (Citizen):** What I'm hearing is illogical. If you're looking for a place or business, to see the van, I can see that it's helpful to advertise where the business is.

**Response (Applicants):** I am with you on the van; I think I can find a place to move the vans. I was trying to express I didn't realize it was a concern of the community.

**Comment (Citizen):** For me, I still have concerns about the volume of people coming and going. As you say, we're in a neighborhood with pets and kids out and about, and that coming and going increases the safety risk and hazards. I hear what you're saying and the parking, but the increased flow is also a concern.

**Response (Applicants):** There are also a lot of students using these spaces that are coming and going for classes.

**Response (Citizen):** Yes, but from what I see in front of my house, I see the coming and going and the students aren't coming and going every hour. They are parking for half the day, or even the full day.

**Response (Applicants):** In our experience, we're seeing a significant amount of come-and-go as we leave with the van and come back, a space that wasn't open is now open or vice versa. We're still talking about a low traffic time, that 10 to 4 period – to me that doesn't seem like every 10 minutes someone is coming and going and that there will be a significant problem at a significant time.

**Response (Citizen):** You don't seem to comprehend that if you have professionals seeing patients, they are seeing those patients on a 50 minute basis or 1hr basis that is an increase to have a patient or client seeing a medical professional. Can you explain to me how you don't see the increased flow of traffic, I'd be happy to understand your analysis, but to me you're being completely illogical.

**Response (Applicants):** I agree there would be people coming and going, but it is during the time of the day where there isn't much traffic to begin with. I'm not saying there wouldn't be more people, just that it wouldn't be that big of a problem if they come during these non-significant times of the day.

**Response (Citizen):** But you admit that is an increased volume of traffic?

**Response (Applicants):** During a time of the day where it is not often used, yes.

**Response (Citizen):** That is a matter of your perspective.

**Response (Applicants):** I also feel this would be occurring by students anyway if we were to go away.

**Response (Citizen):** Your analysis is that our traffic would be replaced by student traffic, so that is acceptable?

**Comment (City):** I'm hearing strong concerns that there would be additional traffic coming throughout the day due to the expansion. There are loading zone spots that are not open to students right now, but maybe would be if the center were not there; but overall an increase in traffic as a result of the medical professionals being there.

**Question (Citizen):** Is there a parking requirement for a medical office building?

**Response (City):** For medical office buildings, the Land Use Code does not require a minimum amount of parking, but Child Care centers do require a minimum amount parking. This facility would need to be brought up to current code standards as part of a development. This would mean increasing the number of spaces they currently offer. Their plan is for a shared parking agreement with a nearby facility.

**Question (Citizen):** Would the employees of the medical offices be treated as employees of the child care center for the purposes of calculating their minimum parking requirements?

**Response (City):** No, they would be different, classified as a medical office professional.

**Comment (Citizen):** You're adding more and more demand for parking. You think it's bad now, just wait until they add 5,000 additional students at CSU in the next few years.

**Comment (Citizen):** The city does not require enough off-street parking for any purpose in the city in my opinion.

**Response (Applicant):** It would not offend me if those office workers also got to use the parking agreement I have paid for.

**Question (Citizen):** Which businesses are you working with for the shared parking?

**Response (Applicant):** The Bees Knees, the hair salon on Locust. If you come out that parking lot, you're half a block away. Their parking spaces out front of the east side of the building. If instead you walk out to the alleyway, you are half a block away from our facility.

**Question (Citizen):** It's mid-block? You can rent out enough parking spaces?

**Response (Applicants):** I can rent out more than enough to meet the city requirements.

**Response (City):** The code requires 2 parking spaces for every 3 employees or it is based off square footage, whichever is higher.

**Comment/Question (Citizen):** Someone said something that in addition to the health care provider, there is also the support staff to support them?

**Response (Applicants):** None of these offices are set up for support staff to exist; there is no reception desk for instance. The offices are very small – 10' x 10' offices.

**Comment (Citizen):** To summarize, the day care is already increasing the volume of traffic and parking in the neighborhood. The medical professionals exacerbate the adverse impact the business is already having on the neighborhood in an exponential fashion.

**Comment (Applicants):** With regards to already increasing impacts – that building has been a child care center since you've lived there. When you talk about already increasing, I don't understand that.

**Response (Citizen):** As we have described, the traffic as a result of the day care center, as you drive onto Plum, people have almost been rear-ended; I personally have almost been backed into by one of your customers on many occasions, that is already an existing problem. To add additional traffic to what is already a difficult situation increases the volume of hazard to the neighborhood, to other motorists who travel on Plum. Every time someone arrives or departs, it's a hazardous time for anyone, whether a motorist proceeding on Plum or a pedestrian or a bicyclist. The number of customers that the business services has increased, you are not at capacity, so it has been an increasing issue for me in the years I have lived in the neighborhood. The problem has been compounded by the blockage of site by the size of the vans. I hope my position is very clear.

**Comment (City):** At any time in this process, you can submit additional comments and feedback to me -- please send your thoughts at any point. In the neighborhood meeting letter notice that went out to you, there is also information to contact Sarah Burnett, the City's Development Review Liaison who is also a good resource for information and feedback. There will be other opportunities for involvement and meetings throughout the development review process as well. We're always open to receiving comment throughout the process and working with the applicants and neighbors to address concerns.