



ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

Project Name: SP-2025-00004 Northridge Preschool	Staff: Syd Shoaf, Senior Planner II
Planning Commission Hearing: November 18, 2025	Board of Supervisors Public Hearing: To be scheduled
Owner: Northridge Community Church of the Nazarene; David R. Marsh ETAL TRS	Applicant: Debbie Swanson, Northridge Preschool
Acreage: 9.92 acres	Special Use Permit: 18-5.1.06 for a day care/preschool.
TMP: 02100-00-00-011A0 Location: 5100 Dickerson Road	By-right use: RA Rural Areas
Magisterial District: White Hall	Conditions: Yes EC: No
Proposal: Request to amend existing special use permit (SP200600022) to increase the maximum student enrollment from 80 students to 100 students, and to increase the hours of operation from 7:30am-1:30pm to 6:00am-6:00pm.	Comp. Plan Designation: Rural Areas – preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic and scenic resources/ density (0.5 unit/ acre in development lots) in Rural Area 1 in the Comprehensive Plan.
Character of Property: The property contains an existing church, a parking lot, a preschool associated with the church, a playground, and wooded areas.	Use of Surrounding Properties: Surrounding properties include several churches and wooded/undeveloped parcels.
Positive Aspects: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The proposal is consistent with the review criteria for special use permits contained in the Zoning Ordinance. 2. The proposal provides a preschool/day care option for community members who live and work in the area. 3. No detrimental impacts to adjoining properties are anticipated. 	Concerns: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. None
Recommendation: Staff recommends approval of SP-2025-00004 with conditions.	

CHARACTER OF THE AREA

The subject property is located at 5100 Dickerson Road, which is west of State Route 29 and approximately 1.5 miles south of the Albemarle County and Green County line. It is located just north of the Places 29 Development Area. The site contains an existing church, parking area, playground, preschool, and wooded areas (Attachment 1 – Existing Conditions). The site operates a preschool with a capacity for up to 80 students in accordance with SP200600022.

The surrounding properties are all zoned Rural Areas. Several abutting properties are also used for religious assembly use. To the north, is the Grace Community Church and across Dickerson Road to the east is the Restoration Church (UMC). To the southwest and southeast are wooded undeveloped parcels that are zoned Rural Areas (Attachment 2 – Zoning Map). Beyond the adjacent properties are single-family residences.

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY

SP200000058 – Approved a special use permit for the construction of a 11,200 square foot church with 200 seats, 101 parking spaces, and outdoor recreation areas.

SDP200100022 – Approved a site plan for construction of the church, along with associated parking and improvements.

SP200300068 – Approved a special use permit for a preschool with a maximum enrollment of 80 students during the day and 60 students for afterschool programs. The hours of operation were limited to 7:30 am to 2:00 pm for the preschool and 2:30 to 6:00 pm for the afterschool programs.

SP200600022 – Approved a special use permit to continue the operation of the preschool after it expired in January 2006. Allowed a maximum enrollment of 80 students

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

The applicant is proposing to amend the special use permit (SP200600022) to increase the maximum student enrollment from 80 students to 100 students. Additionally, the applicant is proposing to extend the hours of operation from 7:30am-2:00pm to 6:00am-6:00pm.

The church is proposing no changes to the site or building (Attachment 3 – Applicant Narrative and Attachment 4 – Applicant Conceptual Plan).

COMMUNITY MEETING and COMMUNITY INPUT

Due to the minor nature of the request and the existing use of the preschool, the Director of Planning waived the community meeting. At this time, staff have not received any public comment regarding this application.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST:

Special Use Permits are evaluated under reasonable standards, based on zoning principles which include the proposal's compliance with the Comprehensive Plan. Any impacts caused by the proposal may be addressed through conditions which must be reasonably related and roughly proportional to the impacts.

Section 33.8(A) states that the Commission, in making its recommendation, shall consider the following factors:

- 1. No substantial detriment. Whether the proposed special use will be a substantial detriment to adjacent parcels.***

The proposed increase in enrollment for the Northridge Preschool would be within the existing church classrooms and no exterior revisions to the site are proposed. The existing playground would be used and is adequately setback from adjacent properties. No substantial detriment to adjacent lots is anticipated.

2. *Character of the nearby area is unchanged. Whether the character of the adjacent parcels and the nearby area will be changed by the proposed special use.*

The preschool already exists, and the hours of operation are increasing in the morning by an hour and a half, and in the afternoon by four hours. The Virginia Department of Transportation and Albemarle County Transportation Planning had no concerns with the increase in enrollment and extended hours of operation affecting traffic in the nearby area.

Staff believes that the proposed uses will not change the character of adjacent parcels or the nearby area.

3. *Harmony. Whether the proposed special use will be harmony with the purpose and intent of this chapter,*

The existing preschool is expected to continue to be in harmony with the area.

with the uses permitted by right in the district,

The proposed increased enrollment would not affect by-right uses in the district on this property or adjacent properties.

with the regulations provided in Section 5 as applicable,

This preschool will continue to be subject to the regulations in Section 5.1.06 child day centers, which include state licensure and fire marshal inspections.

and with the public health, safety, and general welfare.

The public health, safety, and general welfare of the community are protected through the special use permit process, which assures that the proposed use is appropriate in the location requested. Zoning, Engineering, Building Inspections, Transportation Planning, the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT), Albemarle County Architectural Review Board (ARB), Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Albemarle County Fire Rescue all reviewed this application and have provided no objections.

VDH indicated that the preschool will need to comply with the Office of Drinking Water (ODW) requirements and due to the increase in students, an expanded sewage disposal system may be required.

If the special use permit is approved, the use cannot commence without the appropriate site development plans, building permits, and zoning clearances. These processes will ensure that all State and County regulations, special use permit conditions, and all necessary building and fire inspections have been approved. A zoning clearance would not be issued until all VDH requirements are satisfied.

4. *Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan. Whether the proposed special use will be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.*

While the County adopted an update to the Comprehensive Plan (AC44) on October 15, 2025, the effective date of the plan is January 1, 2026. This proposal has been evaluated for consistency with the 2015 Comprehensive Plan in effect currently. The Rural Area Chapter ([Chapter 7](#)) of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan designates the subject parcel for Rural Area land uses. The intent of the Rural Area designation is to allow uses that preserve and protect agricultural, forestal, open space, and natural, historic, and scenic resources; and also allow residential uses at a density of up to 0.5 acres per dwelling unit. Under the Rural Areas Section of the Comprehensive Plan allowing a daycare/preschool within the existing church supports the following Guiding Principles:

Rural citizens supported by community meeting places, a basic level of services, and rural organizations and other cultural institutions at traditional rural scales, with opportunities to take part in community life and decisions.

Protect and enhance rural quality of life for present and future Rural Area residents.

Address the needs of existing rural residents without fostering growth and further suburbanization of the Rural Areas.

The preschool will continue to provide a needed service to the area at a scale that is appropriate for the area that does not require additional infrastructure. The proposed preschool increased enrollment addresses the needs of the rural residents by providing more opportunity for nearby residents to enroll their students in a preschool program without impacts to the Rural Area.

SUMMARY

Staff has identified the following positive aspects to this request:

1. The proposal is consistent with the review criteria for special use permits contained in the Zoning Ordinance.
2. The proposal provides a preschool/day care option for community members who live and work in the area.
3. No detrimental impacts to adjoining properties are anticipated.

No concerns were identified.

RECOMMENDATION:

Based on the findings contained in this staff report, staff recommends approval of the special use permit application SP-2025-00004 with the following conditions:

1. The maximum number of children must not exceed one-hundred (100) or the number of students as approved by the Health Department or Department of Social Services; whichever is less.
2. Hours of operation for the day care must be between 6:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday.
3. The existing woodland must remain undisturbed with one exception: the woodland may be disturbed within 10 feet of the highest water level in the storm water facility. In no case shall the site be disturbed within 35 feet of the western boundary of this parcel.

POSSIBLE PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS:

A. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend approval** of this special use permit:

I move to recommend approval of SP-2025-00004 Northridge Preschool with the conditions stated in the staff report.

B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:

I move to recommend denial of SP-2025-00004 Northridge Preschool. *Should a commissioner motion to recommend denial, he or she should state the reason(s) for recommending denial.*

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Existing Conditions Map

Attachment 2 – Zoning Map

Attachment 3 – Applicant Narrative

Attachment 4 – Applicant Conceptual Plan