

To: Land Use Committee of the City of Newton

From: Lou Mercuri, Planning Horizons

Re: 288 Walnut Street

Date: March 30, 2016

On behalf of the petitioner for this land use petition, Planning Horizons is submitting this report regarding the proposed daycare facility for 60 children at 288 Walnut Street in Newtonville.

Project Overview

Tiny World Child Care Inc is proposing to locate a child care center for 60 children between the ages of 2 months and 5 years in the renovated space at 288 Walnut Street in Newtonville. The proposed 4,870 square foot space is presently vacant and is part of a larger group of office uses in the former church building at the intersection with Newtonville Avenue. Immediately abutting the site to the north is the Massachusetts Turnpike and the site is located at the edge of the Newtonville commercial area consisting of many retail and office uses. Per the site prepared plan by VTP Associates, there are 9 onsite parking spaces available and these spaces are shared by the office space occupants of the building. Four of these spaces would be assigned to the day care center. In addition, 4 leased spaces in the parking lot behind 304 Walnut Street, which is accessed from Newtonville Avenue directly across from the site, are available for the day care use and its employees.

The child care facility would operate from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Friday. The approximate age breakdown of the 60 children would be 1 infant, 18 toddlers, and 41 preschool children. Due to State Department of Early Education and Care staffing requirements for the various age groups, it is expected that 8 employees will be required at the 60-child capacity. Combining the parking space requirements for employees and the ratio for the number of children, a total of 24 parking spaces is required for this use. This total is confirmed in the zoning review memo from Jane Santosuosso dated March 28, 2016 and the letter confirms that a parking waiver of 5 spaces is needed as part of the Special Permit application.

Planning Horizons was asked to evaluate three aspects of this proposal to determine its potential impact in the area. First, the on-street parking in the area was evaluated for both availability to meet the parking demands for early morning drop-offs and late afternoon pickups. Second, it was essential to evaluate a similar capacity child care facility for expected drop off and pick up patterns and the results of this work are included in this report. Third, a Transportation Demand Management plan (TDM) was prepared and addresses the proposed measures the daycare center will employ to reduce vehicular trips and to improve communication and outreach to its employees and clients. The TDM plan is part of a separate report to the Land Use Committee.

Existing Conditions

The church building and current office space is situated on a 21,968 square foot parcel in Newtonville. At present, there are several office tenants in the building and the daycare center would become the largest tenant, occupying 4,870 square feet. The most prominent features in the area include the Massachusetts Turnpike which borders the property on its northerly edge, the vibrant Newtonville commercial area to the south and west, and the primarily residential area along Newtonville Avenue to the east. The site plan identifies 9 onsite parking spaces that are assigned to existing tenants. The closest on-street parking nearest the daycare center entrance exists along Bowers Street where 9 additional 2-hour metered spaces directly abut the site. As stated earlier, the center will have access to 4 leased spaces in the adjacent parking behind 304 Walnut Street which serves a variety of businesses in the area and is accessible from Newtonville Avenue.

On-Street Parking Methodology and Survey Results

The drop off and pick up plan for the child care center calls for primarily using the 9 metered spaces along Bowers Street in closest proximity to the main (rear) entrance to the center. These are 2-hour metered spaces which can serve any number of public purposes for businesses in the area. It is less than a 30-second walk from any of the 9 spaces to the entrance of the building.

Planning Horizons surveyed these 9 parking spaces during peak morning and evening hours to assess their usage and the current demands for parking in the area. The counts were conducted between September and December 2015 and coincided with the times of day most likely to be used for drop off and pick up of children. In all, 7 counts were conducted during the morning peak hour and 5 counts were conducted during the evening peak hour. Weather conditions were favorable and a 10-minute window was observed to capture the peak number of cars parked along Bowers Street at any one time. The results of both the morning and afternoon peak hour observations follow:

Bowers Street On-Street Parking Meter Counts – Morning Peak Hour

Date	Day	Time	Conditions	# Parked	# Vacant
9/14	Monday	8:45 AM	65° Sunny	0	9
9/15	Tuesday	8:45 AM	65° Sunny	3	6
9/16	Wednesday	8:20 AM	70° Sunny	0	9
9/17	Thursday	8:45 AM	65° Sunny	2	7
9/18	Friday	8:45 AM	75° Sunny	2	7
9/24	Thursday	8:45 AM	65° Sunny	1	8
9/25	Friday	8:30 AM	60° Cloudy	1	8
AVERAGE				1	8

Bowers Street On-Street Parking Meter Counts – Evening Peak Hour

Date	Day	Time	Conditions	# Parked	# Vacant
9/17	Thursday	4:30 PM	65° Sunny	1	8
9/18	Friday	4:30 PM	65° Sunny	0	9
9/24	Thursday	5:15 PM	70° Sunny	2	7
9/25	Friday	4:45 PM	65° Sunny	3	6
12/10	Thursday	5:00 PM	75° Clear	2	7
12/18	Friday	5:00 PM	65° Cloudy	2	7
AVERAGE				2	7

The actual surveyed data reveals several points. First, most morning drop off will occur between 7:00 AM (when the center opens) and 9:00 AM. Our surveys were conducted between 8:20 and 8:45 AM when it is more likely that spaces on Bowers Street would be used by the business/retail office uses in the area that are open at that time. The evening surveys were conducted between 4:30 and 5:15 PM when those spaces would again be more likely to be used by the surrounding businesses. Although the peak hours for child care pick up are between 4:00 and 6:00 PM, it is expected that the preponderance of pickups occur after 5:00 PM when some of the surrounding businesses have closed.

Looking at the data, there were never more than 3 cars parked along Bowers Street at any of the 13 surveyed intervals. Therefore, there were always at least 6 available spaces in either the morning or evening peak hour. The key issue to consider is whether 6 available spaces would be sufficient to meet the demands of a drop off and pick up of a center that will accommodate 60 children per day as planned for this location.

Comparison Study with Little Corner School House, Brookline, MA

To better assess the expected drop off and pick up conditions at 288 Walnut Street, it was decided to compare a similar-sized child care center currently operating in the area. After some investigation of child care capacities, it was determined that the Little Corner School House at 110 Harvard Street in Brookline most closely mirrored the potential conditions at 288 Walnut Street. The Little Corner School House is also a licensed child care center for children between 2 months and 5 years old, and it is licensed to serve 63 children at its Brookline location. This number is almost identical to the 60 children that would be served at 288 Walnut Street by the petitioner. Conditions along Harvard Street in Brookline are somewhat analogous as parents drop off and pick up along Harvard Street (2-hour meters) and Harvard Avenue in close proximity or a short walk to the site. There is no onsite parking lot at this location so drop off and pick up occurs from the above-mentioned streets. Similar to 288 Walnut Street, the Harvard Street area is marked by a combination of residential, office, and retail uses. Some walking traffic occurs for drop off and pick up and this was noted in our surveys.

Two surveys were conducted at the Little Corner School House on Monday, December 20, 2015. One hour-long survey was undertaken between 8:00 and 9:00 AM, and a second survey was completed between 4:30 and 5:30 PM. Conducting both morning and afternoon peak hour surveys on the same day would balance the number of drop offs and pickups. Conditions were cloudy with a temperature range of between 40 and 55 degrees. The observations included the total number of children being dropped off or picked up, the number of adult drop offs and pickups, as well as the duration of time needed for drop off and pick up.

The following charts provide the detail of the drop off and pick up activity. The charts are divided into 10-minute segments.

Little Corner School House AM Drop Off Activity, December 20, 2015

	# Children Entering Site	# Parents Entering Site
8:00-8:10 AM	2	2
8:10-8:20 AM	3	3
8:20-8:30 AM	5	5
8:30-8:40 AM	3	3
8:40-8:50 AM	4	3
8:50-9:00 AM	5	4
TOTAL	22	20

During the hour of observations, 13 of the 20 parents arriving to drop off children drove to the site and 7 walked to the facility. The length of drop off time was observed; it ranged from a minimum of 2 minutes to a maximum of 17 minutes. The average drop off time for all 20 drop offs was approximately 8 minutes.

Here is a chart that details the pickup activity also divided into 10-minute segments.

Little Corner School House PM Pick Up Activity, December 20, 2015

	# Children Entering Site	# Parents Entering Site
4:30-4:40 PM	6	4
4:40-4:50 PM	0	0
4:50-5:00 PM	7	5
5:00-5:10 PM	2	2
5:10-5:20 PM	1	1
5:20-5:30 PM	5	5
TOTAL	21	17

During the hour of observations, 15 of the 17 parents arriving to pick up children drove to the site and 2 others walked. The length of pick up time was also observed and ranged from a minimum of 2 minutes to a maximum of 13 minutes. The average pick up time for all 17 pickups was approximately 7 minutes.

Based on both the morning and afternoon peak hour study of the Little Corner School House, a number of similar expectations and conclusions can be drawn about the proposed Tiny World Child Care Center in Newton. The study reveals that for a center of approximately 60 children, no more than 5 parental drop offs or pickups occur within any 10-minute interval during peak times. The average drop off time was 8 minutes and the average pick up time was 7 minutes. Based on the current on-street availability of 7 – 8 parking spaces (out of 9) along Bowers Street at peak hours, it is expected that there will be more than an adequate amount of parking at all peak times in close proximity to the site entrance to allow for easy drop off and pick up access for parents. This conclusion is based on an assumption that 100% of parents will drive to the site, when in fact this is a neighborhood facility where 15-20% will likely walk to the site, further reducing demand for parking. In any event, the number of available parking spaces along Bowers Street exceeds the expected demand for those spaces based on both surveys described in this report.

Summary and Conclusion

The proposed Tiny World Child Care Center at 288 Walnut Street will need to rely on several operational factors to allow for a smooth operation. First, the crucial drop off and pick up needs of parents in a safe, organized way needs to be accomplished. Based on current parking supply and demand along Bowers Street where 7 – 8 spaces are typically available at peak hours and the drop off and pick up patterns of a similar size facility in Brookline, we expect that there is enough capacity to meet the demands at both morning and evening peak hours. Second, parking for the maximum of 8 employees will be accomplished with 4 on-site spaces and through a leased arrangement with 4 additional spaces at 304 Walnut Street. Third, a Transportation Demand Management plan (TDM) is being prepared under separate cover that will create conditions that will allow for a safe operation and make clients and employees aware of options that will further reduce reliance on auto usage to the site. The requested parking waiver of 5 spaces is a theoretical number and the practical reality is that a child care center of this size can reasonably operate with access to 16 spaces, and that availability is well-demonstrated in this report.