

To the Planning Board

Dear Planning Board

Small Size Big Mind is an Alameda licensed childcare organization owned and operated by Malyka Chop and Laurence Cauchie-Chop, a husband-and-wife team who have been Alameda residents for 26 years. We are asking for approval to provide a preschool and after school care facility at 3100 Central Avenue to meet the childcare needs of families in the local neighborhood.

Our Story

For the last 17 years we have served Alameda families by providing unique and engaging schools that offer high quality care and education for young children. As our schools have grown both of our daughters have joined the team after graduation from university to continue our family the legacy in education.

Our schools provide a balanced, relevant, and inspiring curriculum that prepares children for success in elementary school and beyond by developing self-awareness, confidence, social emotional skills, and a strong academic foundation.

We are also well known for serving the entire family with resources, information, and social events, and parenting education to create a community of support as children and their parents learn and grow.

For this reason, we attract a wide range of families with an open and welcoming community.

We have three campuses in Alameda, all have waitlists of 12-24 months minimum depending upon the age range and location.

Despite expanding our offerings throughout Alameda with locations in the East end, Central, and West End, it is not possible for us to meet the local demand for our services. This is in large part because of our unique offering, as we create truly magical learning environments for children.

Control + Click Link Below For Photos [Go to this Sway](#)

It is also because parents have been begging us to offer options for after school care so they can continue to get the level of service they desire when their children graduate and move on to elementary school. The families in our area are struggling to find after care solutions that meet their family's needs in their neighborhood because they cannot find alternatives that work for them that are available.

Because we have three campuses across Alameda, we see a trend that is consistent. The people that are moving into Alameda are doing so to raise young children in our beautiful city with wonderful parks, public schools, safe neighborhoods, and keen sense of community. When these families move to Alameda usually both parents are working to be able to keep pace with the cost of living and this further increases the overall demand for preschool and afterschool.

The greater need for more childcare options:

“More than 115,000 Alameda County children lack access to formal childcare and early education. Only thirty-one percent (31%) of Alameda County children with working parents have a licensed childcare and early education space available to them.”

<https://www.alamedacountysocialservices.org/about-us/Government-and-Community-Relations/programs-and-initiatives/child-care>

Why 3100 Central Avenue?

Our existing location that is closest to 3100 Central Avenue is .8 of a mile away. It is at 3300 Bridgeview Isle and has a wait list of 24 +months. We have started enrolling children for the school year starting 8/1/2027. The demand for this location is local with most people living within a 1.5-mile radius. Located within the Edison and Otis school districts. This area is bordered by Broadway Ave to the West, Fernside by the North and East, and Otis to the South.

3100 Central Ave is in the direct center of this area providing 100% of residents a walkable commute of 20 minutes or less and bike commutes of 6 minutes of less. Those families on our waiting list prefer to attend school within this neighborhood due to the walkable and bikeable location.

For this reason, 3100 Central Avenue is a perfect location for the families who live in the local area and by approving our use of preschool and aftercare you will help solve a desperate need for childcare in our community.

Why Aftercare?

Parents with children who graduate from our preschool are on a daily basis asking us to create after school childcare options available after elementary school ends for the day, when school is closed, and over the summer because our families cannot find alternatives that meet their needs and they are asking us to offer it at the same level of quality, wrap around support and community that we provide.

Why morning Preschool?

In the last 3 years work flexibility has significantly increased for parents. A growing number work remotely or have flexible hours. This has led to an increase in the demand for ½ day or morning preschool from the hours of 7AM to 12 PM. In most cases it is not financially sustainable for a preschool to only offer a ½ day option at an affordable price. So currently some parents pay higher tuition for more hours than they need. However, by combining morning preschool with afternoon care we can offer more affordable options to both the morning preschool and afternoon care while creating a sustainable model for the school add our staff who can generate full day of income while offering ½ day options at a better price.

Creating and Wonderland for Children

3100 Central Avenue will be transformed into a wonderland for children. The unique features of the building will allow us to develop five themed-based learning rooms for small groups and one large open space for group activities. We will bring the space to life using our unique design skill set to create a welcoming, engaging, educational, and fun place for young children and their families. We expect the school to have a maximum daily capacity of fifty children.

Traffic and Parking

Many features of our school reduce the impact of traffic and parking.

- Our school prioritizes sibling enrollment preference, this means that most students are siblings and if they come to school in a car they will do so with two or more students in one vehicle. This fact reduces the total number of potential students dropping off or picking up to only thirty-five.
- We also have 20% of other families who bike or walk to school separate from the siblings who come by car, reducing the impact of potential vehicles to twenty-five students.
- Additionally, we have an average daily absentee rate of 8% which brings the maximum expected impact of vehicles to low as twenty-one vehicles coming to school to drop off and pick up.
- Mid-day drop off for after care will be done entirely by foot traffic as teachers will walk students from their elementary school to 3100 Central.
- Our staff will monitor drop-off, pick-up periods, and provide curbside assistance, so parents do not need to leave their vehicle when dropping-off or picking up, this reduces drop-off and pick-up times to avoid parking issues or congestion.

Drop off and Pick up Details.

Our drop off window is from 7 am to 9:30 AM. When breaking down this 2.5-hour period into 15-minute increments we expect the maximum number of students being dropped off over a 15-minute window to be eight children with all forms of transportation. And a maximum of only five vehicles per 15-minute period when considering the impact of siblings, bikes and walking, and absenteeism. The average drops off per family is 1 minute with curbside assistance and 5 minutes without so it is not common that all five vehicles will be parked at the same time as the ebb and flow of drop off and pick up is constant.

The midday pick-up window will be from 10 AM to 1 PM, which is a longer duration than drop off and will further reduce the impact of parking or congestion as the pickup period will be distributed over a longer period.

Mid-day drop off afterschool care will be 100% walking drop off as staff will pick children up from local schools and walk them to our location.

Evening picks up will be from 3 PM to 6PM this extended duration will further spread out drop off and pickup making it even less impactful to parking or congestion than the morning drops off.

All drop off and pick up will happen at the Fountain Street entrances and staff will monitor and direct parents to park along Fountain Street adjacent to our property and avoid blocking driveways or causing other congestion. Furthermore, teachers will provide curbside assistance so that parents can drop and go without leaving their cars to further reduce the duration of parking.

Our school also has a standing tradition of having weekly bike to school days by classroom and monthly bike to school days for the entire school to further encourage, exercise, community building, and environmental awareness. On these bike days the number of children coming to school with vehicles is reduced to well below 50 % of normal.

Staff and Parking

At least 70% of our staff live in Alameda. We prioritize hiring local Alameda residents whenever possible and provide well-paying jobs, benefits, public transportation support, and we participate in the Alameda TMA public transportation program that provides free public transportation to our employees as well as offering discounted housing options and childcare as well. Additionally, teachers bike and walk to work which reduces their impact on parking or congestion. At our other locations which are all larger, we do not have a negative impact on the neighborhood due to staff parking which is minimal. We are also adding onsite bike parking at 3100 Central to further encourage and support the staff who ride bikes to work.

Outdoor Space

We are proposing the addition of a 4-foot fence along the sides of the property to offer outdoor space for learning and play. This fence will **not** extend past the front of the building towards Central Avenue, this is a gesture to reduce visual impact on the neighborhood even though this is well beyond the required 16-foot front set back. This outdoor space is a requirement of a licensed school. We will use this space with up to eighteen children at a time on thirty-minute rotations from 10 AM to 12 PM and from 2-5 PM.

This is only a 6-child increase from the previous preschool and will be in a larger area due to our expanded outdoor space.

Neighboring Property Driveways

Due to the corner location of this property, we only have two adjacent neighbors. One is a residential home. The other is another school playground. We will be respectful of both neighbors with regards to noise, parking, and be a good neighbor in general as we have a history of doing so at all our locations. Particular attention will be given to protecting the smooth egress of all neighbor's driveways and maintaining adequate visual clearance when installing fencing and landscaping to not impede our neighbor's driveways in any way.

Low Impact Outdoor Time

Scheduled outdoor time is a mix of structured and unstructured time and consequently children use the space at lower noise levels when in structured activities.

Older children attending the afternoon aftercare will also participate in daily walking field trips to local parks, and neighborhood walks as part of our outdoor activities, nature walks, bird watching program, sports programs, which further reduces potential noise concerns and reduce the number of children outside in the outdoor play area at one time.

Final Notes

We are not proposing any exterior changes to the building.

We have listened to and considered the concerns put forth by neighbors and have developed solutions that address parking, congestion, noise, and respect the architectural character of the neighborhood. Please approval our preschool and afterschool program so we can meet a great unmet need in our local community which is consistent with the stated goals of the City of Alameda.

Thank you,

Sincerely Malyka and Laurence