ALBEMARLE COUNTY PLANNING
STAFF REPORT SUMMARY

Project Name: SP202000001 Little Explorers Discovery School (Crozet Baptist Church)	**Staff:** Andy Reitelbach, Senior Planner
Planning Commission Public Hearing: May 12, 2020	**Board of Supervisors Hearing:** To be determined
Owner(s): Crozet Baptist Church	**Applicant(s)**: Christi Gillette, Little Explorers Discovery School
Acreage: 2.25 acres	**Special Use Permit for:** Request to amend existing special use permit SP201800006 for a child day center under Section 14.2.2.7 of the Zoning Ordinance
TMP: 056A1-01-00-08200 **Location:** 5804 St. George Avenue, Crozet, VA 22932	**Zoning/by-right use**: R-2 Residential, which allows 2 dwelling units per acre
Magisterial District: White Hall	**Conditions**: Yes **EC**: No
School Districts: Western Albemarle High School, Henley Middle School, Crozet Elementary School	
Proposal: Request to amend existing special use permit SP201800006 to allow an increase in attendance at an existing child day center to a maximum of 50 students present at one time. No new buildings proposed. Child day center proposed to expand into other areas of existing church building.	**Requested # of Dwelling Units/Lots:** No dwelling units proposed.
DA (Development Area): Crozet	**Comp. Plan Designation:** Neighborhood Density Residential – residential (3-6 units/acre); supporting uses such as religious institutions, schools, and other small-scale non-residential uses
Character of Property: Existing church building, house, parking area, and back yard. Child day center operates within the church building.	**Use of Surrounding Properties:** Residential in an existing single-family detached neighborhood. Non-residential uses along St. George Ave. include another church and a funeral home.
Factors Favorable: 1. The proposed use is consistent with the Crozet Master Plan. 2. The proposed use is located within the Development Areas and is consistent with the uses identified for areas designated as Neighborhood Density Residential.	**Factors Unfavorable:** 1. The use will generate additional vehicular trips on St. George Avenue; however, a staggered drop off period and pick-up period will be used to better distribute traffic, and the use of a "park-and-walk" system for students and their parents will ensure traffic does not back up onto St. George Avenue.
Recommendation: Special Use Permit: Staff recommends approval of SP202000001, Little Explorers Discovery School (Crozet Baptist Church), with conditions.	

STAFF CONTACT: Andy Reitelbach, Senior Planner
PLANNING COMMISSION: May 12, 2020
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: TBD

PETITION

PROJECT: SP202000001 Little Explorers Discovery School (Crozet Baptist Church)
MAGISTERIAL DISTRICT: White Hall
TAX MAP/PARCEL: 056A1010008200
LOCATION: 5804 St. George Avenue, Crozet, VA 22932
PROPOSAL: Request to amend existing special use permit SP201800006 to allow an increase in attendance at an existing child day center to a maximum of 50 students present at one time. No new buildings proposed.
PETITION: Special Use Permit request for a child day center in accordance with Section 14.2.2.7 of the Zoning Ordinance on a 2.25-acre parcel. No dwelling units proposed.
ZONING: R-2 Residential, which allows 2 dwelling units per acre and institutional and public uses.
OVERLAY DISTRICT(S): Steep Slopes - Managed
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: Neighborhood Density Residential – residential (3-6 units/acre); supporting uses such as religious institutions, schools, and other small-scale non-residential uses; in the Community of Crozet Master Plan area.

CHARACTER OF SURROUNDING AREA

The 2.25-acre property of the church is on the north side of St. George Avenue in Crozet, approximately 1,000 feet west of its intersection with Crozet Avenue. (See Attachment 1 – Location Map.) Adjacent properties to the north, east, west, and southwest are single family-detached houses. A parking lot for the church is directly across the street to the south. The neighborhood contains single family-detached housing, a funeral home, another church, and another small business. The surrounding neighborhood and property are all zoned R-2 Residential, with a few scattered parcels that are zoned R-4 and R-6 residential. (See Attachment 2 – Zoning Map.) Crozet Elementary School is located approximately ½ mile away to the northeast on Crozet Avenue.

PLANNING AND ZONING HISTORY

The property is zoned R2 Residential.

- **SDP1979-00052** - Approval of a site development plan to construct a 9,000 square-foot auditorium addition to the existing church. This plan was approved; however, construction did not occur, and the plan expired in 1981.
- **SDP1982-00045** - Approval of a site development plan to construct a 3,043 square foot addition to the existing church, increasing the overall size of the church to 10,601 square feet, and to expand the parking lot. This plan was submitted and approved, and replaced the 1979 plan, as that plan from 1979 had been approved, but expired on March 27, 1981, without construction commencing.
- **SUB1993-00074** - Approval of a subdivision plat to vacated property lines, showing the combining of three separate parcels into one larger parcel, which is the current parcel that the main building of Crozet Baptist Church is situated on, to the north of St. George Avenue.
- **SP1999-00064** - Approval of a special use permit to allow two houses on church property to be used for church education and group meeting space (youth group) on the first floor.
- **SP2003-00058** - Approval of a special use permit to allow office use on the first floor of the houses, in addition to church education and group meeting space.
- **SP2018-00006** – Approval of a special use permit to establish a child day center at Crozet Baptist Church with a maximum permitted enrollment of 40 students and a limit of no more than 25 students in

attendance at one time.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

The applicant has requested an amendment to the previously-approved special use permit (SP2018-00006) to allow for increased attendance at the child day center and to increase the permitted hours of operation of the child day center. (See Attachment 3 – Project Narrative.) Currently, enrollment is capped at a maximum of 40 students, with no more than 25 students permitted to be present at one time. The applicant has requested that the number of students permitted to be in attendance on site at one time be increased to no more than 50 students, along with no maximum cap on enrollment. The request for no maximum cap on enrollment would allow flexibility for the various situations and needs of the students and their parents. As a child day center, there are various groups and age ranges of students who may be attending the center at different times of the day and week. These include half-day or full-day pre-school aged children, as well as older after-school children, who may attend only after elementary school has been dismissed for the day. In addition, there are students who may attend only 2-3 days a week, while others attend five days a week. The applicant's request would permit only 50 students to be present at the child care facility at one time, while allowing the make-up of the age ranges and duration of care of the students to fluctuate throughout the day and week.

In addition, the applicant has requested that the days and hours of operation be expanded. This expansion includes operating Monday through Friday, 7:30am to 6:00pm, instead of what is currently permitted from 7:30am to 5:30pm. Occasional events related to the child day center would continue to be permitted in the evenings after 6:00pm.

The morning drop-off period would continue to be offered from 7:30am to 9:00am to allow for a staggered situation, and the afternoon pick-up period would be extended from one hour to one and a half hours, from 4:30pm to 6:00pm to allow for a similarly staggered situation. In addition, instead of using a car line for dropping off and picking up children, the applicant proposes to have parents or guardians park in the church's parking lot and walk their children to the building. (See Attachment 4 – Concept Map.)

The child day center would continue to utilize Crozet Baptist Church's existing church building, as well as their parking lot, backyard, and play equipment. No additional construction is proposed, other than potential additional recreational equipment in the future.

COMMUNITY MEETING

A community meeting for this proposal was held on Wednesday, March 11, 2020, at the Crozet Community Advisory Committee (CCAC) meeting at the Crozet Library. The applicant presented her proposal for expanding enrollment at the child day center. Several CAC members remarked on the need for additional capacity at child day centers in the Crozet community. There were no community members who raised any concerns with the proposal or spoke in opposition to it.

ANALYSIS OF THE SPECIAL USE PERMIT REQUEST

Section 33.39(B) of the Zoning Ordinance states that the Planning Commission, in making its recommendation, shall consider the same factors found in Section 33.40(B):

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

The church has been in operation at this location since 1951, without problems to the neighborhood. The Little Explorers Discovery School has been in operation at the church property since January 2019, and there have been no zoning complaints submitted about the child day center during that time.

The applicant has indicated that the number of children permitted to be playing outside at one time will continue to be limited in order to help minimize noise generated by outdoor activity. In addition, the continued use of staggered drop-off and pick-up times, along with the elimination of the car line in favor of parking, will help to reduce the traffic along St. George Avenue at any given time and ensure that a line of cars does not back up onto the street. These traffic management techniques should minimize disruption to neighboring parcels and others who travel along St. George Avenue. VDOT and the County's Transportation Planning team have reviewed this SP amendment request and have no objections to the proposed increase in attendance to 50 students present at one time.

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 property and its surroundings are zoned R2, which is a low-density single family residential district. Religious institutions, child day centers, and schools frequently locate in residential areas because they help support residents. The proposed use is primarily within an existing building, and no building changes are needed. The child day center proposes to expand into a currently unused space within the church's existing main building. Outdoors, the applicant has indicated that the children must be supervised at all times, and there are separate play areas in the back yard for the different age ranges, reducing the impact of outdoor activity on any one part of the churchyard. In addition, the traffic management techniques mentioned in the previous section will help to reduce the amount of traffic travelling along St. George Avenue and ensure congestion does not affect the neighborhood road. The increase in permitted attendance is not expected to change the character of the nearby area.

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

The purpose of Chapter 18 of the Zoning Ordinance is *to promote the public health, safety, convenience, and welfare and to accomplish the objectives of Virginia Code §§ 15.2-2200 and 15.2-2283. To these ends, this chapter is intended to:*

A. Provide for adequate light, air, convenience of access, and safety from fire, flood, impounding structure failure, crime and other dangers;
B. Reduce or prevent congestion in the public streets;
C. Facilitate creating a convenient, attractive and harmonious community;
D. Facilitate providing adequate police and fire protection, disaster evacuation, civil defense, transportation, water, sewerage, flood protection, schools, parks, forests, playgrounds, recreational facilities, airports and other public requirements;…

Staff believes that the proposed use will not affect light, air, convenience of access, or any of the other items in A. above. Congestion in the public streets is not expected, and as mentioned above, neither VDOT nor the County's Transportation Planning team has expressed concern about traffic related to the use with the proposed mitigation techniques of staggered drop-off/pick-up times and the elimination of the car line in favor of parking and walking. The proposed use is not expected to cause any conflicts or damage that would prevent items C. or D. above from happening. There are not expected to be significant impacts to community services like police or fire protection or utility provisions. Albemarle County Fire-Rescue and the Albemarle County Service Authority have reviewed this proposal and have expressed no objections.

The purpose and intent of the R2 zoning district is: *to establish a plan implementation zone that:*

- *Provides a potential transition density between higher and lower density areas established through previous development and/or zoning in community areas and the urban area; and*
- *Provides incentives for clustering of development and provision of locational, environmental and development amenities.*
- *R-2 districts may be permitted within community and urban area locations designated on the comprehensive plan.*

The proposed use does not affect the intent of the R2 zoning district.

a. with the uses permitted by right in the district,

The proposed amendment to the previously-approved special use permit will not restrict the current uses or other by-right uses available at this property or adjacent properties.

b. with the regulations provided in Section 5 as applicable,

The supplementary regulations in Section 5 require that a child day center acquire and maintain licensure from the state department of Social Services and pass inspection by the fire marshal. The applicant is subject to these requirements before being given a zoning clearance to operate.

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

Public health, safety, and general welfare are typically assessed by analyzing impacts from land disturbance, traffic, and other activities, such as noise, vibration, smells, and the like. No land disturbance is proposed. The main issue of concern is the potential traffic impacts from the increased student attendance that could affect safety. As mentioned previously, VDOT and the County's Transportation Planning team have reviewed this request and have expressed no objections to the proposal. The proposed use is not expected to have a negative impact on the health, safety, and welfare of the public.

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

The Crozet Master Plan designates this property as Neighborhood Density Residential, which allows residential uses as primary uses, as well as supporting uses such as places of worship, schools, public and institutional uses, and small-scale neighborhood serving retail and commercial uses. As a child day center located in a building that is also used as a place of worship, this use is consistent with the Crozet Master Plan and Albemarle County Comprehensive Plan, and no change in the type of use on the site is proposed.

Consistency of special use permit requests is also evaluated against master plans and, in this case, the 2010 Crozet Master Plan. The property under review is recommended for Neighborhood Density residential use.

In addition, staff also notes that the Crozet Master Plan anticipates that child day centers will be located in areas designated for Neighborhood Density Residential:

This designation represents residential areas with a desired density of 3 – 6 residential units per acre. It also represents existing residential areas within or below this range. Housing in this area is primarily single-family detached with some single-family attached/townhouses. Non-residential uses include institutional uses, such as places of worship, public and private schools, and early childhood education centers (daycare centers and preschools).

SUMMARY

Staff finds the following factors favorable to this request:

1. The proposed use is consistent with the Crozet Master Plan.
2. The proposed use is located within the Development Areas and is consistent with the uses identified for areas designated as Neighborhood Density Residential.

Staff finds the following factors unfavorable to this request:

1. The use will generate additional vehicular trips on St. George Avenue; however, a staggered drop off period and pick-up period will be used to better distribute traffic, and the use of a "park-and-walk" system for students and their parents will ensure traffic does not back up onto St. George Avenue.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Based on the findings described in this staff report and factors identified as favorable, **staff recommends approval of special use permit application SP202000001, Little Explorers Discover School (Crozet Baptist Church), with the following conditions**:

1. The child day center use shall take place within the existing Crozet Baptist Church building except for outdoor play which shall take place within a fenced yard.

2. A fence and landscaping must be maintained along the western and northern property lines while the child day center use is in operation.

3. The maximum number of students present at any time at the child day center shall be no more than 50 students.

4. Hours of operation for the child day center shall be no earlier than 7:30 a.m. and not later than 6:00 p.m., except that occasional child day center-related events may occur after 6:00 p.m.

5. A staggered morning drop-off period shall be employed by the owner to more evenly distribute traffic generated by the use across a one and one half hour period.

POSSIBLE PLANNING COMMISSION MOTIONS for SP202000001

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

I move to recommend approval of SP202000001, Little Explorers Discovery School (Crozet Baptist Church), with the conditions as stated in the staff report.

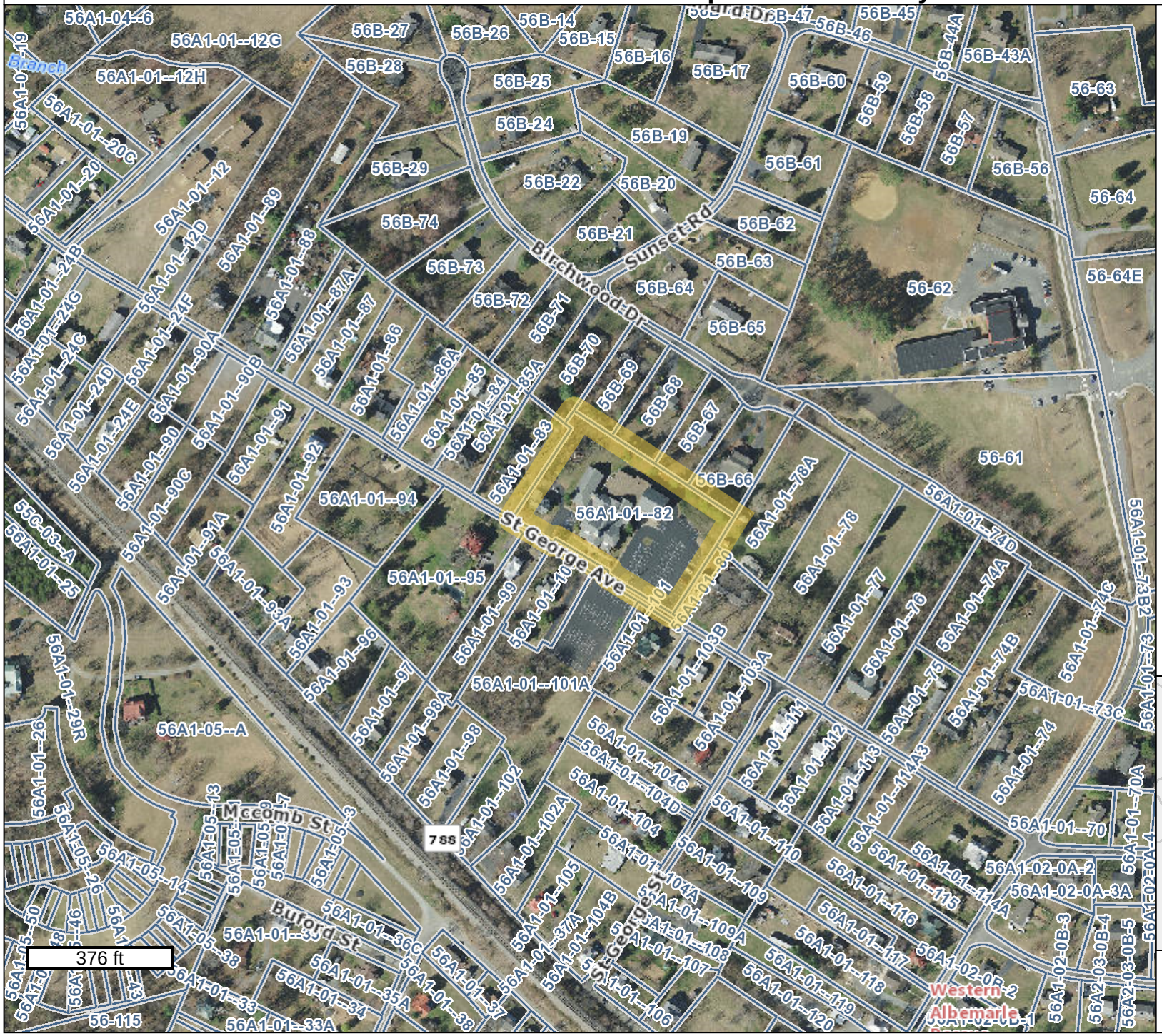
B. Should the Planning Commission **choose to recommend denial** of this special use permit:

I move to recommend denial of SP202000001, Little Explorers Discovery School (Crozet Baptist Church). (State reasons for denial.)

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Location Map
Attachment 2 – Zoning Map
Attachment 3 – Project Narrative
Attachment 4 – Concept Map

Attachment 1 - SP2020-00001 Little Explorers Discovery School Location Map

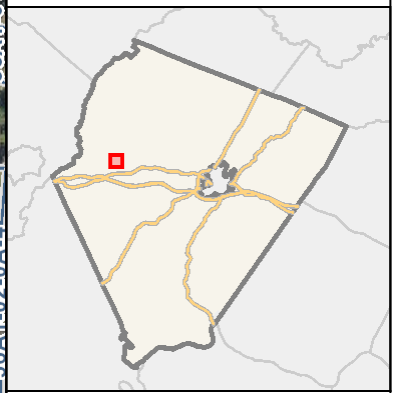


Legend

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Parcel Info

- Parcels



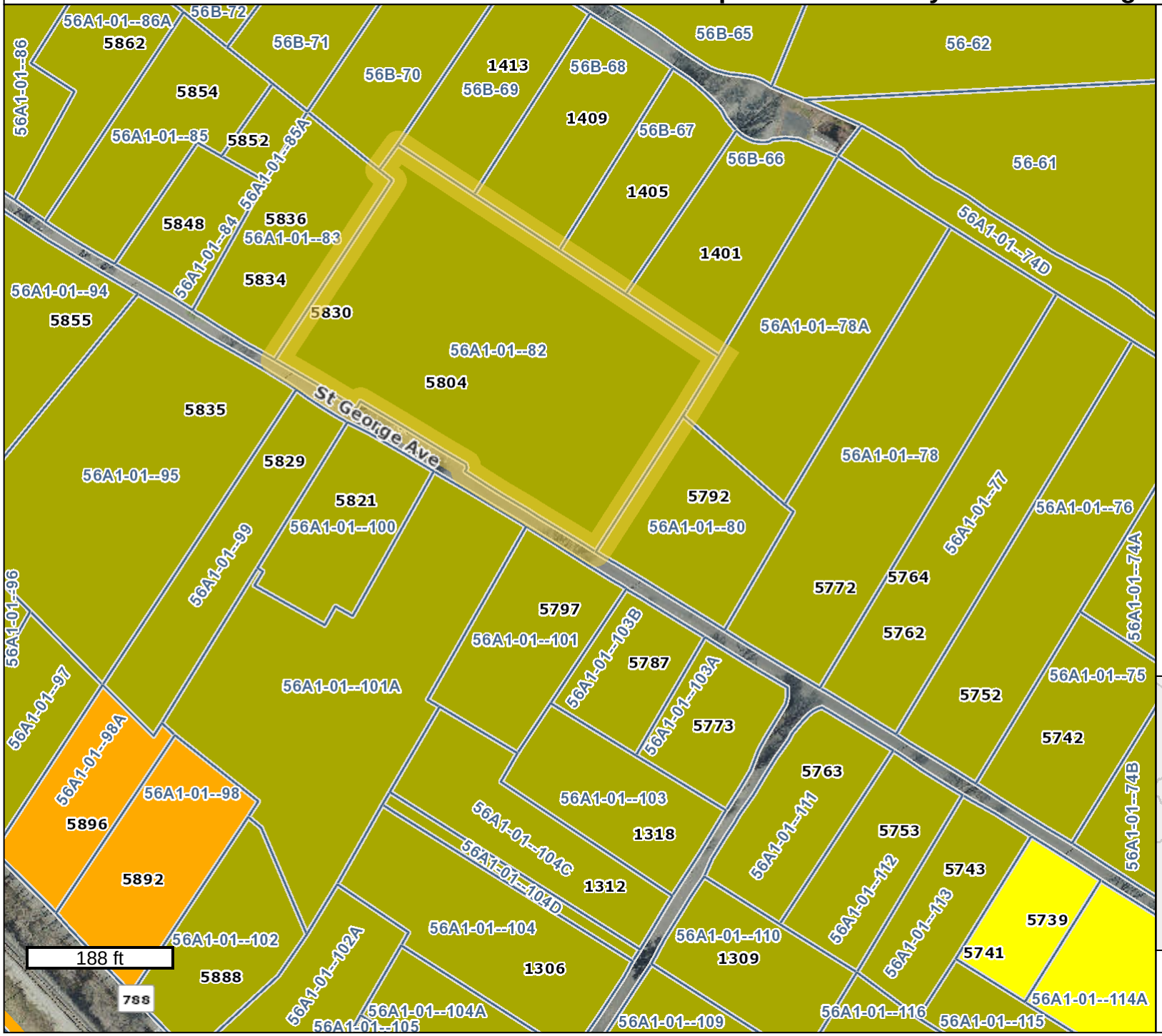
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Any determination of topography or contours, or any depiction of physical improvements, property lines or boundaries is for general information only and shall not be used for the design, modification, or construction of improvements to real property or for flood plain determination.

April 30, 2020

Map elements may scale larger than GIS data measured in the map or as provided on the data download page due to the projection used. Map Projection: WGS84 Web Mercator (Auxiliary Sphere) (EPSG 3857)

Attachment 2 - SP2020-00001 Little Explorers Discovery School Zoning Map



Legend

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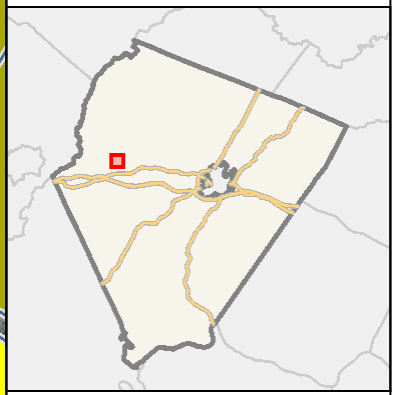
Parcel Info

- Parcels

Zoning Info

Zoning Classifications

- Rural Areas
- Village Residential
- R1 Residential
- R2 Residential
- R4 Residential
- R6 Residential
- R10 Residential
- R15 Residential
- Planned Unit Development
- Planned Residential Development
- Neighborhood Model District
- Monticello Historic District
- C1 Commercial
- Commercial Office
- Highway Commercial
- Planned Development Shopping Ctr.
- Planned Development Mixed Comm.
- Downtown Crozet District
- Light Industry
- Heavy Industry
- Planned Development Industrial Par
- Town of Scottsville



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Special Use Permit Application Information

Crozet Baptist Church
TMP 056A1-01-00-08200
Applicant Name: Christi Gillette
Application Number: SP2020-00001
Address of Property: 5804 St. George Ave., Crozet, VA 22932
Zoning: R-2, Residential
Overlay District: Steep Slopes- Managed

Project Proposal:

Little Explorers Discovery School opened in January of 2019 in the children's wing of Crozet Baptist Church. Since then, the preschool program has filled to its capacity of 25 students for all four days of enrollment (Tuesday through Friday). As of January 2020, the current waitlist includes 27 children, with desired preschool schedules ranging from 2 mornings per week to full week enrollment. The waitlist continues to grow, and at our capacity, we unfortunately continue to turn away families.

The community of Crozet is continuing to grow at a rapid pace, leaving an increasing number of local families in search of a preschool or after-school program. Crozet Baptist Church has an additional area of their building (unused during weekdays) that could be utilized by Little Explorers Discovery School. The space is large enough to house up to 20 additional preschoolers and up to 30 school-age children.

The current children's wing has a building capacity that can hold up to 49 children based on the Virginia Department of Social Services building capacity measurements. Based on this information and with the potential addition of the extra space in the church, Little Explorers Discovery School would technically be able to house 69 children at one time. **However, Little Explorers Discovery School is seeking an amendment for its Special Use Permit to allow a capacity of 50 children present at one time.**

We anticipate that with our staggered outdoor time and the new drop-off procedure that there will be a minimal change to local residences and the traffic flow on St. George Ave. More information is provided to expand on this below.

Our mission of the school is that children are a part of a unique experience where learning is student-driven and a love and appreciation of our world is fostered through a response to student curiosity and readiness. It is evident that the need continues to exist within our community, and with the success that we have found in our first year since opening, we are inspired and hopeful to expand the population that we serve.

Additional Information:

Proposed number of employees: 10

Proposed number of spots for each group of children:

- Preschool half-day: 25
- Preschool full-day: 25
- After-school (preschool): 10-15
- After-school (school age): 20-30

Proposed number of children outside at one time, including both pre-school age children and the older children: About 25 children will be outside at one time. Both ages will be outside during after school hours at the same time.

Rough estimate of the number of children who walk or bike to the Little Explorers Discovery School: 3

Consistency with the Comprehensive Plan

The Crozet Master Plan recommends this area for neighborhood density residential uses. Non-residential uses within this designation include institutional uses, such as places of worship, public and private schools, and early childhood education centers (daycare centers and preschools).

- Since the church is located in a development area, the additional usage of the building for the school will continue to support the county's economical development plan by promoting new employment activities in the development area.
- It will also support objective 6 of the comprehensive plan for development areas by increasing local business development opportunities, including support for entrepreneurial and startup businesses.
- Additionally, our after-school program supports Objective 7, as we will continue to support and foster skills for children in grades K-6 by providing support for tutoring and enrichment opportunities, in addition to programs in the areas of STEM, Family and Consumer Sciences, nature exploration, literacy, and history.

Impacts on public facilities and public infrastructure:

The existing building is on public water/sewer and served by public streets and appears to have no impact on this infrastructure. There should be no impacts on fire and police services from this proposed use.

Project's Impacts on Environmental Features

The plan for changes to the outdoor area of the church is minimal. No trees or existing environmental features will be removed or torn down. Since opening, a wooden fence around the property line has been erected. Playground features will continue to be added over time, making the space more engaging for children and more aesthetically pleasing.

Proposed Ways to Address Impacts from the Project

Noise- The preschool children utilize the half of the playground that sits closest to the church, creating over 50 feet between the playground and the adjoining neighbor's yard. This is the space utilized for the majority of the outdoor time during the day. Classes will have designated outdoor times so that everyone is not outdoors at the same time.

The remaining space next to the adjoining neighbor's yard is utilized by children 5 years and older. Most of the children this age only attend Little Explorers Discovery School for our after-school program, and those children are

only present between the hours of 2:45pm-5:30pm. This new change will not add more than 5-10 available spots to our after-school program, as most of the new enrollment spots will be utilized by preschool children, creating minimal increase to the capacity of the children utilizing the adjoining space to the neighbor's yard.

Traffic- To date, a car line has been utilized in the morning for preschool drop-off. It has worked well to create a quick and steady flow of our 25 preschool children in the morning drop-off. However, with the additional enrollment, the car line will not be used anymore, so as not to back up traffic onto St. George Ave. The current car line fills the length of the parking lot for a few minutes at drop-off time. To avoid a backup and create more of a staggered entrance and exit of traffic from the parking lot with our increased enrollment, parents and caregivers will park and walk their children into the building. Early drop-off will take place at 7:30am. Elementary schools begin their day at 8:00am, and their doors open at 7:40am. Our early drop-off time could overlap slightly with traffic from the elementary school, but so far, our enrollment for early drop-off has been non-existent. We expect that in time we will have a small enrollment during this time, which we do not expect to exceed 10 children.

Our doors will open for our regular start time for preschool children at 8:15am, and parents will be asked to drop-off their children by 9:00am. After 9:00am, parents will be asked to notify the school of a late drop-off. They will be asked to enter the parking lot through a specified lane of traffic and exit through another specified lane (see map). We anticipate that drop-off will be spread throughout this 45-minute window, based on the fact that we currently have a number of families that bring their children after our 8:30am drop-off time. This increased drop-off window will significantly stagger the morning traffic headed to and from Little Explorers.

Little Explorers will continue to have staggered drop-off and pick-up periods throughout the day. Half day students will have a pick-up window from 12:15-12:45pm. Full day children (about 15 children) will leave at 2:45pm. The school-age children will continue to arrive by bus from Brownsville Elementary School and Crozet Elementary School, causing no change in traffic during this time. Children in the after-school program typically depart anywhere from 4:30pm-5:30pm, so the traffic is very staggered during later afternoon/evening hours. With the later closing time of 6:00pm, the traffic will be even more staggered.

Outside of our normal business hours, we hope to offer a "parent's night out" about once per month to the community. This is something that we have not yet offered at Little Explorers, but has already been permitted within our current Special Use Permit. This would take place on a Friday or Saturday evening from about 5:00-8:00pm.

Little Explorers currently holds events and celebrations with our LEDS families once every few months. These events have included holiday celebrations and end of year celebrations. We will continue to offer these events with our increased enrollment. The events typically take place on a weekday evening from about 6:00-7:30pm.

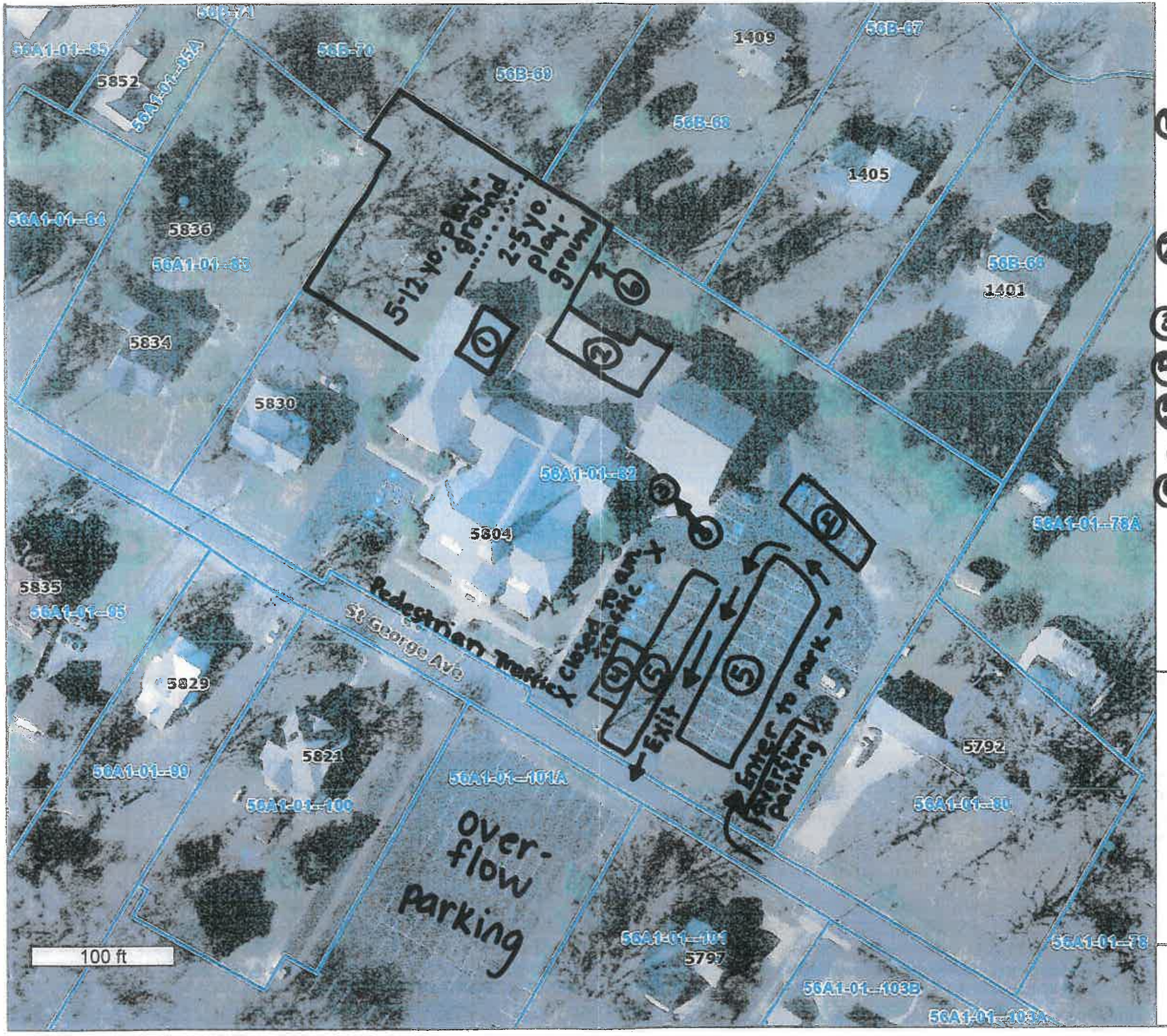
Expected Traffic Patterns- Most of the traffic currently traveling to Little Explorers comes from the Crozet Avenue direction, into the church parking lot, and exists back towards Crozet Avenue. We expend this trend to continue with the increased enrollment.

Other information that may help identify potential impacts of the development

- Maximum Number of Students present **at one time**: 50 (Enrollment will not be limited, but there will never be more than 50 children present at one time.)
- Hours of operation: Monday through Friday, 7:30am-6:00pm
    - Early drop off begins at 7:30am.
    - Regular preschool drop off begins at 8:15am.
    - Half-day preschool dismisses from 12:15-12:45pm.
    - Full-day preschool dismisses at 2:45pm.
    - Extended care and after-school program closes at 6:00pm.
- No water/sewer demands

*Maps showing the proposed project's regional context and existing natural and manmade physical conditions and a conceptual plan are attached.

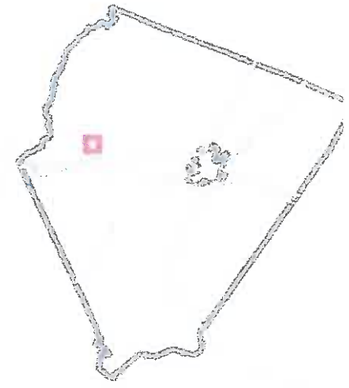
Little Explorers Discovery School
Concept Map



Legend
(Note: Some items on map may not appear in legend)

Parcel Info
- Parcels

1. Location of new, proposed room in basement
2. Current LEDS classrooms
3. LEDS Entrance
4. Staff parking
5. parking for drop-off / pick-up
6. Existing fence



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