

Attachment D Applicant Letter – SR #900

SPECIAL REVIEW APPLICATION - CITY OF BILLINGS

7-2-2012

Legal Description: Zimmerman Acreage Tracts Subdivision situated in the South East ¼ of Section 32, Township 1N, Range 25E, P.M.M. Yellowstone County Montana, commonly known as 4809 Grand Ave Billings, MT 59102.

QUESTIONS:

- A. *In what ways is your proposal consistent with the goals and policies of the adopted Growth Policy?*
- B. *Why is there a need for the intended use of the property at this location?*
- C. *How will the public interest be served if this application is approved?*
- D. *Prepare a written statement addressing what is intended to be done with the property, including new construction or change in the use of the property, and why the special review is being sought.*

ANSWERS:

- A. *In what way is your proposal consistent with the goals and policies of the adopted Growth Policy?*

Land Use Element – Issue 3:

Rural townsites are not prepared to handle increased growth.

Goal *-Growth management tools available to rural townsites.*

Objectives *-Empower Communities to direct growth.*

-Use County resources and services more efficiently.

-Create a sense of community.

The type of growth that may be experienced in this community from the result of building Grace Montessori School will primarily be residential growth. Since the proposed school shall be a private school and relatively small in size, the population growth in this area will not be substantial and therefore not overwhelm the existing community. It is anticipated that the majority of the users of the school will be local residents who are already living in close proximity to the proposed school location. This will help to create a sense of community since users of the new school will no longer have to drive across town in order to drop their children off.

Land Use Element – Issue 6:

There is a desire for more mixed use neighborhoods.

Goal *-More housing and business choices within each neighborhood.*

Objective *-Improve quality of life.*

-Encourage more live-work environments.

-Reduce commuting and subsequent drain on natural resources and traffic congestion.

-Develop more self-contained neighborhoods.

The future users of Grace Montessori will primarily be families that already live in close proximity to the proposed location. This will help relieve or at least not contribute to the traffic congestion which is experienced in the urban areas of Billings. Parents will be able to escort their child/children to and from school at a greater convenience. By having this location for Grace Montessori School, better education opportunities are provided to families and therefore improving the quality of life. A more self contained neighborhood will be developed by establishing a friendly relationship between the families that choose to use the proposed Grace Montessori location.

Economic Development Element – Issue 1:

We need to continue a cohesive focus in economic development.

Goal -Coordinate economic development efforts that target business recruitment, retention, and expansion.

Objectives -improve the quality of life for residents.

-Strengthen area economy.

-Create living-wage jobs.

As the school years at Grace Montessori progress, the families that use the school will grow closer together which will significantly increase the quality of life of both the children and the parents. Since the size of the proposed school is small compared to that of Billings Public Schools, the users of Grace Montessori will get to know each other easier and this will create a more genuine rural community. If granted, Grace Montessori will also create jobs for teachers and other staff, as well as create work for construction companies.

Economic Development Element – Issue 10:

The quality of our schools is a determining factor for whether business locate in Billings

Goal -Promote excellence in education and safe and healthy school facilities.

Objectives -Highlight educational quality as a business recruitment tool.

- Attract and retain educated citizens.

-Provide future taxpayers a quality education.

The proposed Grace Montessori School is the perfect way to achieve the goal stated above. A smaller school atmosphere will provide students with all of the benefits of having a one-on-one relationship with their teachers. This will also enable the parents to communicate better with the teachers in order to determine the child's progress throughout their elementary education.

Aesthetics Element – Issue 1:

There are areas in the city and county that are unattractive and present a poor image of the community.

Goal -Visually appealing community.

Objectives -Improve the image of the community.

-Instill pride in the community.

-Improve quality of life for residents.

-Preserve the community assets such as the Rimrocks, the Yellowstone River, the downtown and the major street thoroughfares.

The architectural choice of the proposed Grace Montessori School will help to complement the existing image of the rural area. The barn style entrance and upper clearstory windows will make this building visually appealing from both the exterior and interior without compromising the rural and agricultural integrity of the area as it exists today. The proposed building will not distract from the natural scenery in the area but only add to its splendor.

Public Facilities and Services Element – Issue 2:

Dilapidated and unsafe properties in City neighborhoods and County townsites.

Goal -Sanitary and safe properties.

Objectives -Provide helpful and responsive public services.

-Improve the community image.

-Increase property values.

By providing this area of Billings with Grace Montessori School, the community image will only improve. This school will demonstrate the dedication that parents in the area have to provide their children with the quality education that they deserve. By having a new school in this area, more options are provided to families who are looking to move to Billings and property values will likely increase.

Cultural and Historic Resources Element – Issue 3:

Public art is seen as an important part of the Billings landscape.

Goal -A visually appealing and attractive landscape.

Objectives -Enhance the natural and built environments with art.

-Support cultural appreciation and education.

As stated before, the barn style theme of the proposed Grace Montessori School will perfectly match the agricultural and rural Montana scene of this area of Billings. Agriculture is an important part of Montana's economy and history. By providing the proposed school, there will be an added appreciation for and understanding of this cultural aspect. Grace Montessori School also provides students the opportunity to practice art through art and music classes which will help gain appreciation for art.

Community Health Element – Issue 2:

Not all neighborhoods are planned with ways to access nutritious foods.

Goal -Accessible, affordable, and nutritious food for everyone.

Objectives -Reduce malnutrition, diabetes, heart disease, and other nutrition related diseases.

-Ensure equal opportunities to healthy food sources.

-Support local farm produce.

Given the rural farmland location for the proposed Grace Montessori School, an appreciation for nutritious foods should not be problematic compared to that of locating the school within the urban Billings setting surrounded by fast food restaurants. There is a kitchen planned for the proposed school in order to help educate the students about proper nutrition and healthy diet. The school also plans on having small gardens in order to help further educate the students about self reliance and health.

Community Health Element – Issue 4:

Physical activity is not seen as a viable means of getting from place to place.

Goal -Physically active, healthy citizens.

Objectives -Neighborhoods designed in a way that promotes physical activity.

-Reduce healthcare costs.

-Reduce Vehicle carbon emissions.

At the proposed Grace Montessori School, there is a plan for an activities room which will be used primarily for educating the students about the importance of daily exercise and physical activity as well as serving as the school's gymnasium. The planned playground area behind the school will be an excellent space for the students to exercise and play.

B. *Why is there a need for the intended use of the property at this location?*

There is a need for Grace Montessori School because of the growing population and expanding development of Billings. The current public schools in Billings are continuing to grow and the need for more educational opportunities is evident. Families moving to Billings and the surrounding area will be looking for the right place to provide their child with quality education that will prepare them for a successful future. Billings is in need for young educated citizens to work and help make the Billings economy prosperous. The current location of Grace Montessori Academy has seen great success in their students and there is a need for another location in order to offer new families the quality education that Grace Montessori currently provides.

C. *How will the public interest be served if this application is approved?*

The public interest will be served if this application is approved because of the overcrowding population in Billings' public schools as well as the added employment opportunity. Grace Montessori provides additional options for education and child care which will in turn serve the public interest as well.

D. *Written statement addressing what is to be intended to be done with the property, including new construction or change in the use of the property, and why the special review is being sought.*

The proposed Grace Montessori School will consist of an approximately 17,868 square foot educational building, an associated parking lot, a fenced play ground area and plenty of landscaping and green space for a total of 87,120 square feet.

The proposed Grace Montessori School will consist of 6 classrooms, each approximately 1282 square feet in size. There will be library in the middle of the building approximately 1200 square feet in size. The activities room will be located in the back of the building and will be approximately 2184 square feet in size. Next to the activities room is the planned location for the kitchen. The front entrance of the school building will consist of the staff offices and reception desk. There will be a fenced playground located behind the building consisting of playground equipment and concrete activities pads. Currently, the lot is used as a residence

consisting of an old farm house, storage sheds and a shop building. These existing structures are planned to be removed for the school's construction. This Special Review is being sought to assure that the proposed use of the property, a private school facility, will be compatible with its location and the surrounding land uses. Per Yellowstone County Unified Zoning Regulations, a Special Review is required to approve the location of a School to be placed on Agricultural - Open Space.