



June 17, 2026

City of LaBelle
Planning Department / City Commission

Re: Special Exception Request
LIS Job No: Preschool26- 01

To Whom it may concern,

Project: Howe Street Day Care
Address: 90 Howe Ave, LaBelle, FL 33935
County: Hendry County

Executive Summary

This application seeks a Special Exception to establish a childcare facility at 90 Howe Ave. As LaBelle continues to experience residential growth, the demand for essential family infrastructure has outpaced supply. This project directly supports the LaBelle Comprehensive Plan by providing high-quality commercial services that sustain local families and the Hendry County workforce. By approving this request, the City is proactively addressing a "childcare desert," enabling local parents to remain in the workforce and bolstering the City's economic resilience.

Narrative

Description of use

Day Care Center, an establishment designed to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children while their parents or guardians are at work or otherwise occupied.

Requirement

City of LaBelle Land Development Code Section 4-70, which requires a Day Care Center to obtain a Special Exception to approve the use in a B-2, Business General, Zoning District.

Existing use

Vacant Single Family Residential

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| • Southwest FL | 21430 Palm Beach Blvd. Alva, FL 33920 | 239-693-9244 Fax: 239-693-9827 |
| • Central FL | 2572 W. SR 426 #2064 | 321-244-0402 Fax: 321-244-9419 |

Reason/Justification

The City of LaBelle and Hendry County are currently underserved in terms of licensed childcare "slots". The proposed use is inherently compatible with the surrounding B-2. As a daytime operation, the facility maintains the character of the neighborhood by remaining inactive during evening and weekend hours. By establishing this facility in a B-2, Business General, district, we are utilizing a high-accessibility corridor to provide a service that reduces commuter strain and supports local economic development. To ensure traffic safety, the site design incorporates an internal queuing system, ensuring all drop-off and pick-up activities occur off-street without impacting the flow of traffic on Howe Ave.

Fence Relief

Requirement

City of LaBelle Land Development Code Section 4-84.3.F., which requires fences for schools recreation areas which exceed four (4) feet in height to be set back a minimum of twenty-five (25) feet from the property line. City of LaBelle Land Development Code Section 4-80.9.12.D., which requires buffers to be placed on the external side of the required fence.

Request

This request is to permit a six (6) feet fence without the required minimum of twenty-five (25) feet setback from the property line and with the buffers placed on the internal side of the fence.

Reason/Justification

While City of LaBelle Land Development Code regulates the use of fencing, Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) safety standards require secure, durable perimeter fencing for outdoor play areas.

Significant Oak Tree Relief

Requirement

City of LaBelle Land Development Code Section 4-80.16.1., requires the preservation of Significant Oak Trees without restricting the reasonable development of property.

Request

This request is to permit the removal of one (1) 12" DBH existing Significant Oak Tree at the southeast corner of the existing structure.

Reason/Justification

While the site plan was designed to maximize preservation, the removal of these specific existing Significant Oak Trees is necessitated by the required footprint for safe play zones and ADA-

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accessible parking. Furthermore, the existing root systems would significantly heave the stable, level surfaces required for **ADA-compliant ingress/egress** and safe pedestrian pathways.

Mitigation

We remain committed to LaBelle's canopy heritage. We propose a 1:1 or greater DBH (Diameter at Breast Height) replacement plan using native species, three (3) 4" DBH Oak Tree for the one (1) 12" DBH existing Significant Oak Tree to be removed. This ensures that the long-term greenery and environmental health of the site are not only maintained but enhanced.

Conclusion

The proposed daycare is a "low-impact, high-necessity" use. The requested relief is not for mere convenience but is dictated by the physical constraints of the site and the safety requirements of the children. We believe the substantial public benefit of providing safe, local childcare far outweighs the minor technical relief from the development standards.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

John P. Mahlbacher, P.E.
LIS Engineering, LLC
FL P.E 65432