



# MEMORANDUM

Date: August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025  
To: City of Madison Heights City Council [September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Meeting]  
From: Matt Lonnerstater, AICP – City Planner  
Subject: Special Land Use Request PSP 25-04– 510 W. Girard Ave. – Private K-8 School

**PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS**  
TEMPLATE MOTIONS AND FINDINGS INCLUDED ON PAGE 8

## Introduction

The applicant, Mt. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, requests Special Land Use approval from the Planning Commission and City Council under Section 15.05 of the Madison Heights Zoning Ordinance to operate a private K-8 school at 510 W. Girard Avenue, zoned R-2, One-Family Residential; tax parcel 44-25-11-251-019. The school is proposed to operate out of a wing of the existing church building; Mt. Zion will also use the building for religious services. The property is located at the northwest corner of W. Girard Avenue and Barrington Street/Northeastern Highway. K-12 public/private schools are permitted through the Special Land Use process in the R-2 zoning district.

## Planning Commission Action and Findings.

Per the Zoning Ordinance adopted in 2024, Special Land Use requests begin at the Planning Commission for a public hearing, with a recommendation made to City Council for final action. A public hearing was held at the **August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025 Planning Commission meeting**. Several members of the public spoke regarding the application and had concerns pertaining to landscape screening, noise, and activity adjacent to residential property lines. Following the public hearing, the Planning Commission approved the following motion pertaining to the proposed Special Land Use request:

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER FOX, SECONDED BY SYLVESTER THAT, FOLLOWING THE REQUIRED PUBLIC HEARING, THE PLANNING COMMISSION HEREBY **RECOMMENDS THAT CITY COUNCIL APPROVE** SPECIAL LAND USE REQUEST NUMBER PSP 25-04 FOR A PRIVATE K-8 SCHOOL AT 510 W. GIRARD BASED UPON THE FOLLOWING FINDINGS:

1. The applicant requests Special Land Use approval for a private K-8 school at 510 W. Girard Avenue as permitted by Section 3.08 of the Zoning Ordinance.
2. The Planning Commission held a public hearing for PSP 25-04 at their August 19th, 2025 meeting.
3. With several minor conditions required as part of special land use approval, the proposed private school use is consistent with the special land use review standards and criteria set forth in Section 15.05.3. In particular:
  - a. The use is designed, located, and proposed to be operated in a way that protects the public health, safety and welfare.

- b. The use will not involve activities that will be detrimental to adjacent residential land uses.
- c. The use is designed and located so that it is compatible with the principal uses permitted in the R-2 district and is consistent with the historical use of the property for religious purposes.
- d. The special land use will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, and equipment or conditions of operation that will be detrimental to any person, property, or the general welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare or odors.
- e. The use is designed and located so that it is compatible with the Madison Heights Master Plan.
- f. Ingress/egress to the use shall be controlled to assure maximum vehicular, pedestrian and non-motorized safety, convenience and minimum traffic impact on adjacent streets.

**APPROVAL IS GRANTED WITH THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:**

1. Operation of the proposed school, including enrollment, hours of operation, etc., shall be in substantial compliance with the project narrative provided with this Special Land Use application. Modifications to the Special Land Use (e.g. hours of operation, student enrollment, grade levels offered, site circulation, etc.) shall be reviewed in accordance with Section 15.05.5 for a determination regarding the need for new Special Land Use review.
2. Install a “One Way/ Do Not Enter” sign at the southern Barrington Street driveway to ensure one way circulation.
3. Ancillary site improvements such as, but not limited to, playground equipment, sports fields, etc., shall be reviewed through the Technical Review Committee (TRC) via the Minor Site Plan process.
4. Add transitional landscaping to be installed as required along the western and northern property line.

**Voting Yea: Commissioner Bliss, Commissioner Fox, Commissioner Graettinger, and Commissioner Sylvester, Chair Champagne**

**Motion carries.**

**Project Summary**

The subject property is 1.64 acres in size and is currently improved with a 4,400 square-foot non-residential building which has historically been used as a church. Per historic aerial photography and city records, the structure was built in the early 1960s for the Madison Heights Church of Christ. Mt. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church recently purchased the building and intends to operate their church out of the building. In addition, the applicant proposes to operate a small K-8 school out of the western wing of the building. Per the project narrative, the school will initially have a small enrollment (approximately 5 students), with plans to grow up to an enrollment of approximately 25 students. No major site modifications are proposed at this time.

*REFER TO IMAGES ON FOLLOWING PAGE*

**510 W. Girard Ave. – Aerial Image – Existing Conditions (Red Line)**



**Proposed Use/Operation**

Per the project narrative, Mt. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church intends to operate the K-8 school Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. School operating hours generally will not overlap with church operations. The school is proposed to operate out of the western wing which has three (3) small classrooms and a large multi-purpose wing. Enrollment will start with approximately five (5) lower-grade students, one pastor and one elementary school teacher, but is anticipated to grow to up to twenty-five (25) students with the possibility of additional staff.

The existing parking lot has approximately fifty (50) spaces. Per the project narrative, parents can either park for student drop-off/pick-up or use the lane that passes under the overhang at the main entrance. With the exception of playground equipment (size and location to be determined), no site improvements are proposed.

## Use-Specific Standards for K-12 Public/Private Schools

The Zoning Ordinance does not contain any use-specific standards for K-12 public or private schools.

## Site Analysis

### Existing Zoning and Land Use

The table below denotes existing adjacent land uses and zoning designations.

	Existing Land Use	Existing Zoning
<b>Site</b>	One-family residential	R-2, One-Family Residential
<b>North</b>	One-family residential	R-2, One-Family Residential
<b>South (across Girard)</b>	One-family residential	R-2, One-Family Residential
<b>East (across Barrington/Northeastern)</b>	One-family residential	R-3, One-Family Residential
<b>West</b>	One-family residential	R-2, One-Family Residential

The site borders single-family residential zoning and land uses on all sides.

Per the Madison Heights Zoning Ordinance, R-2 and R-3 zoning districts are intended to, *“provide for one-family dwelling sites and residentially-related uses in keeping with the Master Plan of residential development in the City of Madison Heights.”*

K-12 public/private schools are listed as a Special Land Use in all one-family residential districts.

### Future Land Use and Master Plan

The table below denotes adjacent future land use designations as contained within the 2021 Madison Heights Master Plan.

	Future Land Use
<b>Site</b>	Single-Family Residential
<b>North (across Lincoln)</b>	Single-Family Residential
<b>South</b>	Single-Family Residential
<b>East</b>	Single-Family Residential
<b>West</b>	Single-Family Residential

The subject site and adjacent properties are all planned for Single-Family Residential.

The Planning Commission should consider the following Goals & Objectives of the 2021 Madison Heights Master Plan as part of this Special Approval request:

#### Community Character

- *Promote the city’s positive identity in the region.*
- *Promote the use of quality building design and materials to enhance the appearance and long-term maintenance of new development.*
- *Protect established neighborhoods and business districts from the potentially negative impacts of development, including noise, traffic, waste, odor, and other nuisances through effective and thoughtful site and building design.*



### **Housing**

- *Encourage maintenance of and reinvestment in existing neighborhoods.*
- *Ensure that infill and redeveloped residential properties are compatible with the surrounding areas and adjacent parcels.*
- *Support neighborhoods by improving walkability and access to goods and services.*

### **Transportation**

Girard, Barrington and Northeastern are under the jurisdiction of the City of Madison Heights and are classified as local streets, which typically do not carry through traffic and handle a low level of daily traffic.

### **Special Land Use Criteria**

Requests for Special Land Use approval are subject to processes and review standards contained in Section 15.05. A public hearing is required in front of the Planning Commission, after which the Planning Commission may make a recommendation to City Council. After receiving a recommendation from the Planning Commission, City Council has the authority to take final action on Special Land Use requests.

City Council shall consider the Special Land Use review standards contained in Section 15.05.3 and incorporate them into any motion of approval or denial:

- A. The use is so designed, located and proposed to be operated in a way that protects the public health, safety and welfare.
- B. The use is designed in a way that considers the natural environment and helps conserve natural resources and energy.
- C. The special land use will not involve uses, activities, processes, materials, and equipment or conditions of operation that will be detrimental to any person, property, or the general welfare by reason of excessive production of traffic, noise, smoke, fumes, glare or odors.
- D. The use shall be designed and located so that it is compatible with the surrounding properties, neighborhood, and vicinity. At a minimum, this shall include:
  - (1) Location of use(s) on site;
  - (2) Height of all improvements and structures;
  - (3) Adjacent conforming land uses;
  - (4) Conformance with the Master Plan and future land use map for the area as adopted by the Planning Commission;
  - (5) Compatibility with the permitted principal uses allowed in the zoning district where the Special Land Use is requested, and consistency with the intent of the zoning district.
- E. Ingress/egress to the use shall be controlled to assure maximum vehicular, pedestrian and non-motorized safety, convenience and minimum traffic impact on adjacent roads, drives and uses including, but not limited to:
  - (1) Reduction in the number of ingress/egress points through elimination, minimization, and/or consolidation of drives and/or curb cuts;
  - (2) Proximity and relation to intersections, specifically with regard to distance from drive(s) to intersection(s);

- (3) Reduction/elimination of pedestrian/vehicular traffic conflicts;
- (4) Adequacy of sight distances;
- (5) Location and access of off-street parking;
- (6) Location and/or potential use of service drives to access multiple parcels, reducing the number of access points necessary to serve the parcels.

F. The use is consistent with the intent and purpose of the zoning district in which it is proposed.

In granting Special Land Use approval, City Council may impose conditions that it deems necessary to fulfill the spirit and purpose of the Zoning Ordinance. The conditions may include those necessary to ensure that public services and facilities affected by a proposed land use or activity will be capable of accommodating increased service and facility loads caused by the land use or activity, to protect the natural environment and conserve natural resources and energy, to ensure compatibility with adjacent uses of land, and to promote the use of land in a socially and economically desirable manner.

### Staff Analysis and Review

In general, staff finds the proposed private school to be compatible with adjacent residential land uses based on the historical use of the site for religious purposes (including related educational facilities), the limited size of enrollment, the limited number of classrooms, and the limited proposed site work. However, staff recommends several conditions to ensure that the school remains fairly small in size and maintains its neighborhood-scale.

To ensure proper site circulation for student drop-off/pick-up under the main entrance overhang, staff recommends that a “One Way/Do Not Enter” sign be posted at the driveway off Barrington Street, as shown below. This will ensure that one-way circulation is maintained to the east due to the narrow width of the driveway.



Several members of the public spoke at the Planning Commission public hearing to discuss their concerns with screening adjacent to residential properties and potential noise impacts. As such, within their motion, the Planning Commission included a condition relating to landscaping and screening along the northern and western property lines.

Per Section 15.05, City Council may postpone action on a Special Land Use request to allow verification, compilation, or submission of additional or supplemental information or to address other concerns or issues.

#### Recommended Conditions

The Planning Commission included the following conditions of approval within their motion. As such, if City Council moves to approve the Special Land Use, staff recommends that the following conditions be incorporated into the motion:

1. Operation of the proposed school, including enrollment, hours of operation, etc., shall be in substantial compliance with the project narrative provided with this Special Land Use application. Modifications to the Special Land Use (e.g. hours of operation, student enrollment, grade levels offered, site circulation, etc.) shall be reviewed in accordance with Section 15.05.5 for a determination regarding the need for new Special Land Use review.
2. Install a “One Way/ Do Not Enter” sign at the southern Barrington Street driveway to ensure one way circulation.
3. Ancillary site improvements such as, but not limited to, playground equipment, sports fields, etc., shall be reviewed through the Technical Review Committee (TRC) via the Minor Site Plan process.
4. Add transitional landscaping to be installed as required along the western and northern property line.

#### **Next Step**

After discussion, City Council may take action on the requested Special Land Use in the form of a motion. Any motion shall include concise findings based upon the Special Land Use review standards and criteria, Section 15.03.3. Per Section 15.05, City Council may postpone action on the Special Land Use request to a date certain to allow verification, compilation, or submission of additional or supplemental information or to address other concerns or issues.

**A template motion of approval is provided on the following page.**

#### Attachments

- **Special Land Use Application - PSP #25-04**
- **Project Narrative – PSP# 24-04**
- **Associated Maps**
- **Section 3.08 – R-2, One-Family Residential**
- **Section 15.05 – Special Land Use Review**

### Template Motion, Findings and Conditions

Staff offers the following motion as a suggested template and guide for City Council’s consideration. City Council may provide additional detailed findings, as needed, to substantiate any motion for approval or denial.

#### APPROVAL

MOTION BY \_\_\_\_\_, SECONDED BY \_\_\_\_\_, **THAT CITY COUNCIL HEREBY APPROVES** SPECIAL LAND USE REQUEST PSP 25-04 FOR A PRIVATE K-8 SCHOOL AT 510 W. GIRARD BASED UPON THE FOLLOWING FINDINGS:

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