

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Shepard Beamon, Development Review Specialist
Radhika Mohan, AICP, Director of Development, Design, and Preservation

DATE: March 6, 2026

SUBJECT: BZA #21424 – Request for a special exception to an expand a child development home from 9 to 12 children at 1703 Bunker Hill Road NE.

I. RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following requested special exception and waiver pursuant to Subtitle U § 251 and Subtitle X § 901.2.

- Subtitle U § 251.1(b)(3) Home Occupations: Expanded Child Development Home (Daycare) – Existing: Nine children (permitted as a matter of right); Permitted: 10-12 children permitted by special exception; 12 children proposed; and
- Subtitle U § 251.3(f) No operations related to the home occupation shall be conducted outside a structure, nor shall any storage or other unsightly condition be permitted outside a structure. Requested: Modification to the requirement, pursuant to Subtitle U § 251.6(b), to allow a play area with play equipment outside of the building.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

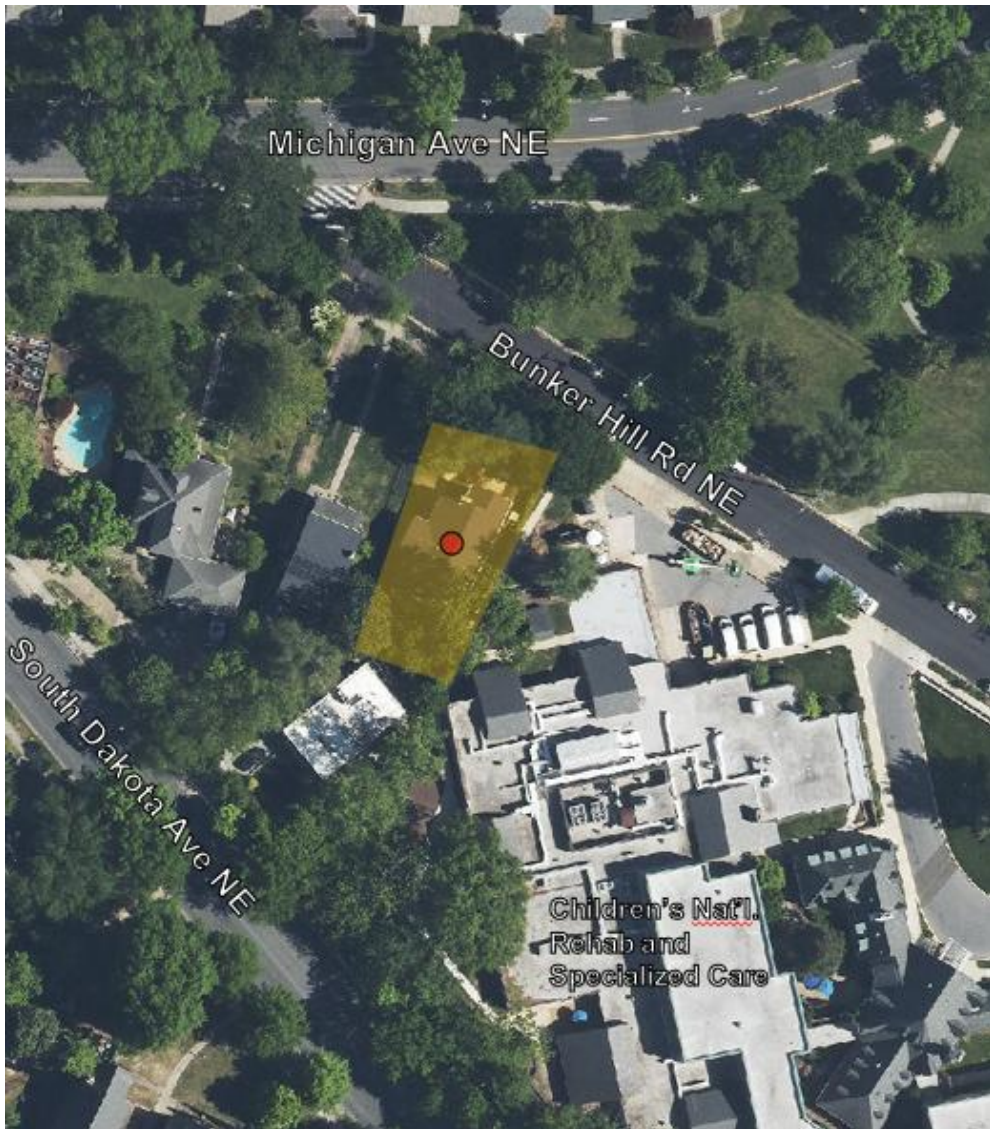
Applicant	Mestawet Dejene
Address	1703 Bunker Hill Road NE
Legal Description	Square 4163, Lot 3
Ward / ANC	Ward 5, ANC 5B
Zone	R-1-B
Lot Characteristics	Irregular shaped lot with an area of 7,107 sq. ft.
Existing Development	Single family, detached home; Entrance to the daycare would be from the front of the home on the basement level.
Adjacent Properties and Neighborhood Character	The surrounding area consists of single-family detached dwellings and the Health Services for Children Pediatric Center to the south of the property.

Proposal	Expand the enrollment of nine children in a child development home to 12 children, aged newborn to five years old, with an outdoor play area and equipment. Hours: Monday-Friday 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM
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III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS AND RELIEF REQUESTED

The applicant operates a childcare home (Play Safe Playhouse Child Care Home) with nine children, the maximum permitted as a matter of right. Pursuant to Subtitle U § 251.1(b)(3), an expanded child development home for 10 to 12 children is permitted by special exception. The applicant proposes to have 12 children in the home. The Applicant submits that the area dedicated to the expanded child development home would have an area of 468 square feet. The applicant was issued a Home Occupation Permit (HOP) on July 26, 2024, for nine children (max. of 6 infants under 2 years) and four staff with two resident children.

Site Location



IV. OP ANALYSIS

Subtitle U Section 251 USE PERMISSIONS – HOME OCCUPATION USES (R)

251.1(b)(3) *Expanded child development home for ten (10) to twelve (12) individuals fifteen (15) years of age less may be permitted as a special exception by the Board of Zoning Adjustment under Subtitle X and subject to the provisions of Subtitle U § 251.6; provided a minimum of thirty-five square feet (35 sq. ft.) of floor area per individual is provided including the basement but excluding any accessory structure;*

The applicant proposes to have a maximum of 12 children in the expanded child development home. The dedicated expanded child development home space is 468 square feet in the basement of the home, which results in 39 square feet per child and therefore meets the requirement.

251.3 *A home occupation shall comply with the following conditions and requirements:*

(a) *A home occupation shall be clearly secondary to the use of a dwelling unit for residential purposes;*

The proposed expanded child development home would be a secondary use of the dwelling. The expanded child development home would be limited to the basement level of the house and would have its own, separate entrance from the front of the building.

(b) *Except for lodging, and as provided in Subtitle U §§ 251.1(b) and 251.1(f), no more than the larger of two hundred fifty square feet (250 sq. ft.) or twenty-five percent (25%) of the floor area of the dwelling, excluding basement or any accessory structure, shall be utilized for the home occupation;*

The house has a total floor area of approximately 3,128 square feet of which 468 square feet would be for the expanded child development home, which is 15% of the total floor area and therefore meets the requirement.

(c) *All materials or finished products shall be stored within the floor area utilized for the home occupation or in a basement or accessory structure;*

Not applicable.

(d) *Except as provided in Subtitle U § 251.1(b), in no case shall more than two (2) persons who are not residents of the subject dwelling unit be permitted as employees of the home occupation except for the home office of a physician or dentist;*

The applicant states that there would be two non-resident employees in addition to two live-in employees, for a total of four adults. This would be in conformance with § 251.1(b).

(e) *No interior structural alteration shall be permitted if it would make it difficult to return the premises to a use that is exclusively residential;*

The applicant does not propose any interior structural alterations to the building or the area for the expanded child development home.

- (f) *No operations related to the home occupation shall be conducted outside a structure, nor shall any storage or other unsightly condition be permitted outside a structure;*

The applicant has requested a waiver from this requirement as permitted by Subtitle U § 251.6(b) to allow a play area with play equipment in the rear of the property. The proposed play area is enclosed with fencing.

- (g) *No equipment or process shall be utilized that creates visual or audible electrical interference in television or radio receivers outside the subject home, or that causes fluctuations in line voltage outside the subject home;*

The expanded child development home should not have equipment that would create any electrical interference.

- (h) *The use shall produce no noxious odors, vibrations, glare, or fumes that are detectable to normal sensory perception outside the subject home;*

The expanded child development home should not create odors, vibrations, glare or other external impacts. The applicant states that trash would be stored in secured bins outdoors, not in the rear play area.

- (i) *The use shall not produce a level of noise that exceeds the level normally associated with the category of dwelling or the immediate neighborhood;*

The children would be kept inside for most of the time spent at the child development home. The applicant states children would use the outdoor play area for approximately 60-90 minutes per day, depending on weather conditions and age group, which may generate some noise when used but should not be excessive with the increase in children.

- (j) *No more than two (2) vehicles may be used in the practice of the home occupation;*

No vehicles would be assigned for the uses in the practice of the home occupation.

- (k) *Except for child development homes and expanded child development homes, vehicular trips to the premises by visitors, customers, and delivery persons shall not exceed eight (8) trips daily on a regular and continuing basis;*

Not applicable.

- (l) *Except for child development homes and expanded child development homes, the practitioner shall have no more than eight (8) clients or customers on the premises in any one (1) hour period;*

Not applicable.

- (m) *If more than one (1) home occupation is practiced in a dwelling unit, the cumulative impact of all such home occupations shall not exceed any of the standards set forth in this chapter; and*

The applicant states that the expanded child development home would be the only home occupation on the property.

- (n) *The dwelling unit owner and the practitioner shall maintain the residential character and appearance of the dwelling unit and lot.*

The applicant does not propose any changes to the exterior of the home.

251.6 *A home occupation that is neither permitted nor prohibited in this chapter may be permitted as a special exception by the Board of Zoning Adjustment under Subtitle X, subject to the following conditions:*

Pursuant to Subsection § 251.1(b)(3), an expanded child development home for between 10 and 12 children is permitted by special exception, subject to this section.

- (a) *The proposed use and related conditions shall be consistent with the purposes of this chapter and shall generally comply with the requirements of Subtitle U §§ 251.1 through 251.4, subject to specific findings and conditions of the Board of Zoning Adjustment in each case;*

As demonstrated above the proposal complies with the applicable portions of Subtitle U §§ 251.1 through 251.4. The proposed expanded child development home would maintain the established residential character of the property and the neighborhood. The entrance would have a separate residential door and the play area to the rear of the property would not be visible from any street. The applicant has stated that there would be no sign on the property, and therefore § 251.4 is not applicable.

- (b) *An applicant for a home occupation that is permitted by Subtitle U § 251.1 may request the Board of Zoning Adjustment to modify no more than two (2) of the conditions enumerated in Subtitle U §§ 251.3 and 251.4;*

The applicant has requested a modification to the requirement of § 251.3(f) to allow the outdoor play area in the rear yard.

- (c) *In no case shall more than two (2) persons who are not residents of the subject home be permitted as employees of the home occupation, and those persons shall not be co-practitioners of the profession;*

The applicant has stated that there would be two non-resident employees of the expanded child development home.

- (d) *Any request to modify more than two (2) of the requirements found in Subtitle U §§ 251.3 and 251.4 shall be deemed a request for a variance; and*

Not applicable as the applicant is only requesting one modification.

- (e) *In considering any request for approval under this section, the Board of Zoning Adjustment shall determine that the request is consistent with the general purposes and intent of this chapter and may impose conditions relating to operating conditions of the home occupation, parking, screening, or other requirements as it deems necessary to protect adjacent and nearby properties consistent with the general purpose and intent of this chapter.*

OP recommends no conditions. The use would remain consistent with the residential nature of the property and the neighborhood. Child care is an essential community asset and this use should not produce noise, light, odors or other impacts on adjacent properties.

Subtitle X Section 901 SPECIAL EXCEPTION REVIEW

901.2 *The Board of Zoning Adjustment is authorized under § 8 of the Zoning Act, D.C. Official Code § 6-641.07(g)(2), to grant special exceptions, as provided in this title, where, in the judgment of the Board of Zoning Adjustment, the special exceptions:*

- (a) *Will be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps;*

Approval of the requested special exception for the expanded child development home would be in harmony with the general purpose and intent of the R-1-B zone which permits home occupations and are deemed to be compatible with the low-density residential use.

- (b) *Will not tend to affect adversely, the use of neighboring property in accordance with the Zoning Regulations and Zoning Maps; and*

As demonstrated above, the proposed child development home for up to 12 children would meet the relevant requirements of Subtitle U § 251. The addition of three children should not significantly increase traffic or adversely affect neighboring properties due to noise, or other operational actions. The applicant states that the driveway can accommodate three vehicles for pick-up and drop-off.

- (c) *Subject in specific cases to the special conditions specified in this title.*

No special conditions are specified in this title for the requested relief.

V. COMMENTS OF OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

At [Exhibit 19](#) is a letter from the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) recommending approval of the special exception.

VI. ANC COMMENTS

At [Exhibit 20](#) is a letter of support from ANC 5B.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS

As of this writing the record contains no comments from members of the community.