



## LINCOLN/LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

FROM THE LINCOLN/LANCASTER COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT, 555 S. 10TH STREET, SUITE 213, LINCOLN, NE 68508

APPLICATION NUMBER  
Special Permit #25017

FINAL ACTION?  
No

DEVELOPER/OWNER  
First United Methodist Church

PLANNING COMMISSION HEARING DATE  
June 11, 2025

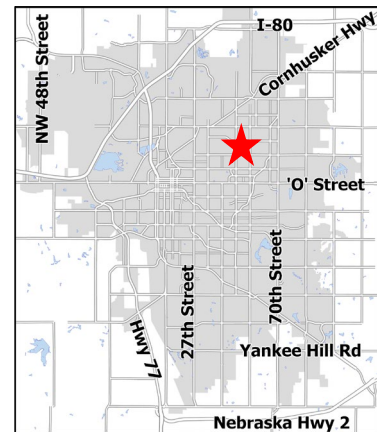
RELATED APPLICATIONS  
None

PROPERTY ADDRESS/LOCATION  
2723 N 50<sup>th</sup> Street

### RECOMMENDATION: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

#### BRIEF SUMMARY OF REQUEST

This is a request for a Special Permit to allow an Early Childhood Care Facility at 2723 N 50<sup>th</sup> Street. The site is zoned R-6 Residential and is approximately 43,271 square feet. The applicant has requested an Early Childhood Care Facility that allows up to 80 children and 17 staff with associated waivers to reduce the parking requirements and to the requirement that a childcare facility be located on an arterial or collector street.



#### JUSTIFICATION FOR RECOMMENDATION

This proposed childcare facility is appropriate for the site and is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and university campus, given the conditions for the special permit. The surrounding area is a mix of residential, commercial, and educational uses and meets goals and policies from the 2050 Comprehensive Plan.

#### APPLICATION CONTACT

Jennifer Honebrink, (402) 440-0202

#### STAFF CONTACT

Emma Martin, (402) 441-6369 or  
[emartin@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:emartin@lincoln.ne.gov)

#### COMPATIBILITY WITH THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This Special Permit for an Early Childhood Care facility is in conformance with the 2050 Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policy actions that support childhood care facilities and note them as a necessity within the community, including efforts to provide more accessibility to childcare near residential neighborhoods, schools, and parks.

#### WAIVERS

1. Waiver to LMC 27.67.040(r) to reduce the required parking from 25 parking spaces to 14 parking spaces.  
(Recommend Approval)
2. Waiver LMC 27.63.070(c) to allow the facility to not be located on an arterial or collector street.  
(Recommend Approval)

## KEY QUOTES FROM THE 2050 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

### Introduction Section: Growth Framework

Figure GF.b: 2050 - This site is shown as future Public & Semi-Public on the 2050 Future Land Use Plan.

Land Use Plan - Public & Semi-Public - Areas of public or semi-public land use and/or structures that serve the general public.

### Policies Section

P45: Early Childhood Care and Education - Evaluate methods to improve access to and quality of early childhood care and education experiences.

#### Action Steps

1. Locate child care centers within neighborhoods and near schools, parks, and outdoor learning environments when possible.
2. Examine building and zoning code requirements for child care centers and family child care homes to determine if there are any obstacles that could be removed while maintaining the safety of the building occupants.
3. Consider access to educational institutions, places of employment, and childcare services, when planning public transportation investments.
4. Expand the use of park facilities, public buildings, and cultural institutions for enriching early childhood experiences.
5. Support philanthropic and advocacy groups that provide all children with access to high quality early childhood care and education (i.e., Lincoln Littles).
6. Support efforts that build capacity of ECCE workforce to support stability of experiences for children and families (i.e., childcare providers, professionals that work with families).
7. Support the City's Lead Hazard Control and Healthy Homes programs to foster economic stability and access to healthy and safe housing.
8. Promote public-private partnerships to increase resources for low-income families to access high-quality early learning programs to promote kindergarten readiness.
9. Support Lincoln Public Schools' efforts to provide early childhood programs in all elementary schools.
10. Support an increase in access to prenatal care and targeted home visitation services for new parents, including fathers.
11. Support continued collaboration with providers of healthcare and social services, and partner with organizations to support healthy development of babies and toddlers.
12. Consider ways to leverage seniors in assisting to create intergenerational connections (i.e., NeighborLNK, grand-friends).
13. Expand community partnerships between Lincoln Public Schools, the University of Nebraska, and other social service agencies to provide additional funding and services (such as EduCare Lincoln).
14. Educate childcare providers on climate-related health issues for young children, including climate related health emergencies, heat events, air pollution events, floods, and evacuation plans.

## ANALYSIS

1. This is a request for a special permit to allow an early childhood care facility located at 2723 N 50<sup>th</sup> Street. The site is approximately 43,271 square feet and zoned R-6 Residential. The special permit will allow a maximum of 80 children and 17 staff. The childcare facility will be located within an existing place of religious assembly, First United Methodist Church.
2. The facility will use an existing childcare area within First United Methodist Church. The applicant will reconfigure the existing parking lot and add a fenced playground area to the north of the building. No other exterior alterations or expansion of the existing building are proposed.
3. The proposed hours of operation for the facility are Monday through Friday from 6:00am to 6:00pm. Vehicles can reach the site via N 50<sup>th</sup> Street or the alley to the west of the property from Saint Paul Avenue or Madison Avenue. Daycare drop-off and pick-up will not conflict with daily and weekend use of the religious facility.

4. While the site is within an R-6 Residential zoning district it is directly across the street from Nebraska Wesleyan University (NWU) to the east and south and the University Place PUD, zoned B-3 Commercial, is a half block away to the west. There are multi-family and student housing units scattered alongside the single- and two-family units due to NWU and the denser residential zoning. Huntington Elementary, a Lincoln Public School, as well as another private childcare facility, are located half a mile away from the site. This is an area that experiences higher traffic, both vehicular and pedestrian, than a typical lower density residential neighborhood.
5. As part of the application, the applicant has requested the following waivers:
- Waiver to LMC 27.67.040(r) to reduce the required parking from 25 parking spaces to 14 parking spaces due to lack of space on the site. This request is justified, as children are picked up and dropped off at various times of day, not all at once. There is on-street parking surrounding the existing church and several public parking lots within walking distance. During the University school year there will be increased competition for off street parking from NWU students and staff.
  - Waiver LMC 27.63.070(c) to allow the facility to not be located on an arterial or collector street. This request is justified as it supports the growth of available childcare facilities. Limiting early childhood care facilities with more than twenty-one children to arterial or collector streets also limits the childcare capacity of Lincoln and Lancaster County. Allowing more flexibility in locations for childcare is supported by Policy 45 from the 2050 Comprehensive Plan by improving access to childhood care. Lincoln Transportation and Utilities - Traffic has not noted that an undue increase in traffic will result from this project.
6. The Special Permit criteria pursuant to Lincoln Municipal Code 27.63.070 includes the following:
- The application shall be accompanied by the following information:**
    - The number of children and number of staff members on the largest shift.**

The organization will serve up to 80 children, with 17 employees on the largest shift.
    - A physical description of the facility and a site plan drawn to scale that includes, but is not limited to, the location and arrangement of parking spaces, the traffic circulation pattern, loading and unloading areas, fencing, play area, and entrances/exits to such facility.**

The applicant provided a site plan that shows the existing buildings and entrances along with the proposed parking layout and playground location. The facility will create a new parking lot to replace the existing lot with access to N 50<sup>th</sup> Street and the adjacent alley. Loading and unloading of children will occur on the east side of the building. The proposed play area is on the northern side of the site.
    - If the proposed facility is for twenty-one or more children and is located in a residential district, the application must also include a conversion plan which complies with the design standards for early childhood care facilities.**

The applicant submitted a site plan showing that the building being used for the early childhood care facility is an existing church. If the childcare facility were to relocate, the structure would remain as a place of religious assembly.
  - Prior to occupancy, such facilities shall comply with all applicable state and local early childhood care and building requirements.**

The facility will meet applicable early childhood care and building requirements prior to occupancy.
  - Facilities with twenty-one to thirty children shall be located on collector or arterial streets. Facilities with thirty-one or more children shall be located on an arterial street. The location of such facilities on such streets shall comply with the design standards for early childhood care facilities.**

The facility, which will serve up to 80 children, is not located on an arterial or collector street. The applicant has requested a waiver to this requirement. This request is supported as the site is adjacent to Nebraska Wesleyan University, which already receives higher traffic than a standard residential area and is a block away from N 48<sup>th</sup> Street, a minor arterial. LTU - Traffic noted that based on the trips

anticipated for this site, a traffic study is not required. The waiver also aids in achieving the 2050 Comprehensive Plan policy of expanding access to childcare facilities in the city and county.

- d. **The site plan and play area for such facilities shall comply with the design standards for early childhood care facilities.**

The site plan shows a proposed play area that is fenced in on the north side of the property. The Lincoln-Lancaster County Health Department (LLCHD) has requested the site plan that depicts the location of the playground more clearly to ensure compliance with design standards.

- e. **The parking and loading/unloading area for such facilities shall comply with the provisions of Chapter 27.67 of the Lincoln Municipal Code. In residential districts, such parking and loading/unloading area shall comply with the design standards for childhood care facilities.**

The applicant has requested a waiver to reduce the parking requirement from 25 stalls to 14 stalls (1 stall/staff on largest shift and 1 stall/10 care receivers) as the required play area limits the amount of space for parking. This request is supported as there is on-street parking surrounding the site which is used by students and visitors to the adjacent university which may be used by guardians, staff, and members of the church in addition to the parking lot.

7. This request is compatible with the existing area, which is a mix of residential, educational, and commercial uses, as well as the goals of the 2050 Comprehensive Plan which support an increase in access to and the development of childcare facilities in Lincoln and Lancaster County. The location provides greater access by providing childcare near families residences and where guardians work and lessening the pressure on existing childcare facilities.

**CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:** See attached.

**EXISTING LAND USE & ZONING:** Place of Religious Assembly      R-6 Residential

**SURROUNDING LAND USE & ZONING**

North:	Duplex, Apartments, Group Quarters	R-6 Residential
South:	Educational Institution	R-6 Residential
East:	Educational Institution	R-6 Residential
West:	Single-family, duplex	R-6 Residential

**APPROXIMATE LAND AREA:** 43,271 square feet, more or less

**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** Lots 1-6; the East 3 feet of alley adjacent to the South 1.5 feet of Lot 2; and the East 3 feet of alley adjacent to Lots 3-6, all located in Block 66, University Place Addition, Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska, generally located at 2735 N 50th Street.

Prepared by Emma Martin, Planner  
(402) 441-6369 or [emartin@lincoln.ne.gov](mailto:emartin@lincoln.ne.gov)

Date: May 29, 2025

Applicant/Contact: Jennifer Honebrink  
402-440-0202

Owner: First United Methodist Church

<https://linclanc.sharepoint.com/sites/PlanningDept-DevReview/Shared Documents/DevReview/SP/25000/SP25017 Northeast Childcare Center.edm.docx>

## CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL - SPECIAL PERMIT #25017

Per Section 27.63.070 this approval permits an Early Childhood Care Facility for up to 80 children and 17 staff with the following waivers:

1. Waiver to LMC 27.67.040(r) to reduce the required parking from 25 parking spaces to 14 parking spaces.
2. Waiver LMC 27.63.070(c) to allow the facility to not be located on an arterial or collector street.

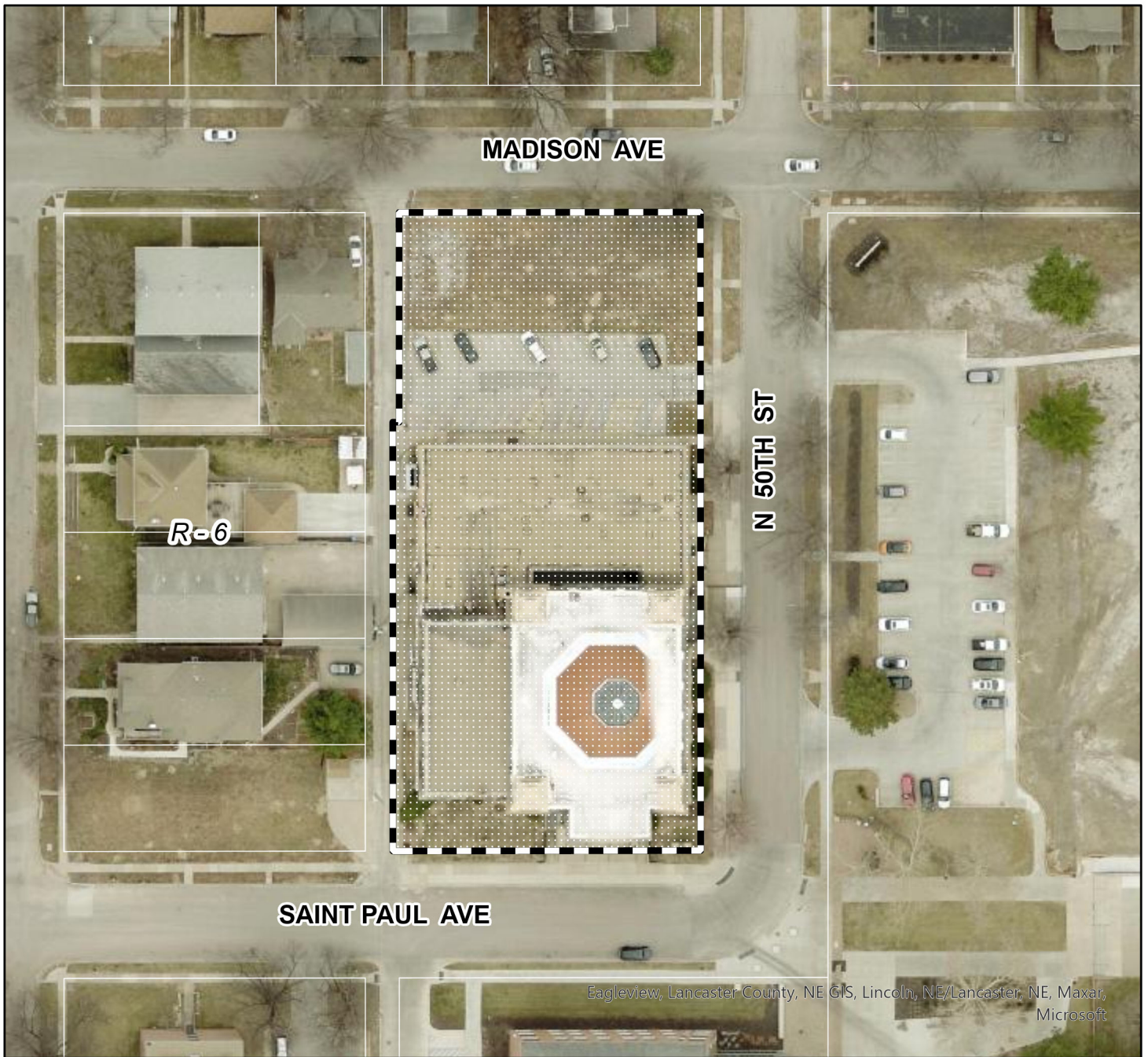
### Site Specific Conditions:

1. Before receiving building permits (if no final plat is required) or before a final plat is approved (if final plat is required) the permittee shall cause to be prepared and submitted to the Planning Department a revised and reproducible final plot plan including 2 copies with all required revisions and documents as listed below:
  - 1.1 Revise the site plan depicting the location of the playground to ensure compliance with design standards 3.90.
  - 1.2 Provide more information/detail to ensure compliance with parking lot screening standards.
  - 1.3 Provide required parking lot screening along N 50<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - 1.4 Provide the dimension of the drive aisle next to the playground.
  - 1.5 Place the sidewalk between the parking stalls and the future playground area on the south side of the parking lot.
  - 1.6 Remove parking from the alley.
  - 1.7 Revise the site plan to Follow design standards 3.45 for the parking lot layout.
  - 1.8 Provide curbing along the alley and driveway in annotated areas to create a 1-2 foot buffer between play area fence and active traffic.
  - 1.9 Provide at least a 25-foot clearance between parking stalls and the sidewalk along N 50<sup>th</sup> Street.
  - 1.10 Modify the fence to the satisfaction of LTU - Traffic to ensure no obstruction of the sight triangle at the alley.

### Standard Conditions:

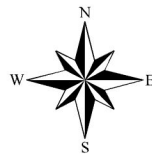
2. The following conditions are applicable to all requests:
  - 2.1 Before occupying the building or starting the operation all development and construction shall substantially comply with the approved plans.
  - 2.2 The physical location of all setbacks and yards, buildings, parking and circulation elements, and similar matters be in substantial compliance with the location of said items as shown on the approved site plan.
  - 2.3 The terms, conditions, and requirements of this resolution shall run with the land and be binding upon the Permittee, its successors and assigns.
  - 2.4 The applicant shall sign and return the letter of acceptance to the City Clerk. This step should be completed within 60 days following the approval of the special permit. The City Clerk shall file a copy of the resolution approving the special permit and the letter of acceptance with the Register of Deeds, filing fees therefor to be paid in advance by the applicant. Building permits will not be issued unless the letter of acceptance has been filed.





2024 aerial

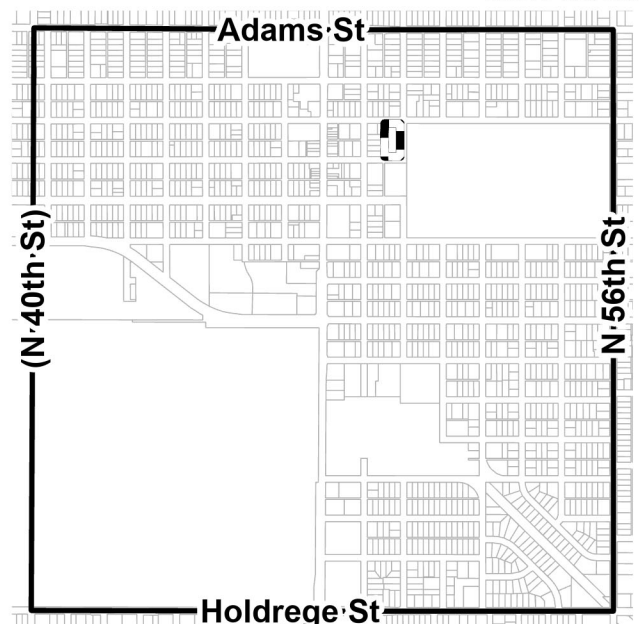
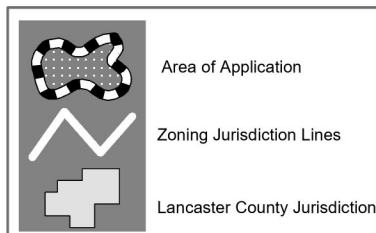
## Special Permit #: SP25017 N 50th St & Saint Paul Ave



### Zoning:

R-1 to R-8	Residential District
AG	Agricultural District
AGR	Agricultural Residential District
O-1	Office District
O-2	Suburban Office District
O-3	Office Park District
R-T	Residential Transition District
B-1	Local Business District
B-2	Planned Neighborhood Business District
B-3	Commercial District
B-4	Lincoln Center Business District
B-5	Planned Regional Business District
H-1	Interstate Commercial District
H-2	Highway Business District
H-3	Highway Commercial District
H-4	General Commercial District
I-1	Industrial District
I-2	Industrial Park District
I-3	Employment Center District
P	Public Use District

One Square Mile:  
Sec.17 T10N R07E





APMA

May 14, 2025

City of Lincoln  
Planning Department  
555 S 10th St, Suite 213  
Lincoln, NE 68508

RE: First United Methodist Church  
Special Use Permit for lease to the Northeast Childcare Center

To Whom it May Concern:

First United Methodist Church, Lincoln located at 2723 N 50th St, Lincoln, would like to enter into a long-term lease agreement with the Northeast Childcare Center. To do so, both parties understand that that this requires a special use permit. Enclosed is a copy of our special use permit form for your consideration.

As a part of that special use permit, we would like to reduce the parking requirements for this project to 14. Since the church's main use is on Sunday mornings, and weekday evenings, the proposed daycare use should be considered a non-concurrent use. Further, the drop-off and pick-up times for the daycare staff are spread over several hours. We have attached a copy of a daily schedule illustrating the typical number of cars at drop off and pick up for the daycare, and the number of church members coming and going on a busier day.

Further, we would like to waive the requirement for the daycare to be on an arterial street. The church is located adjacent to Nebraska Wesleyan University. The daycare use should not add substantial traffic to the neighborhood.

Finally, we understand that renovations to the existing building will be necessary. These include:

- Extending the type 13 fire sprinkler system throughout the building on all floor levels.
- Upgrading the fire alarm system throughout the building on all floor levels, and providing voice evac, as well as carbon monoxide detection.
- Adding an exterior playground.
- Enclosing the northeast and northwest stairs at all levels.
- Adding hand sinks and egress doors to rooms with children under 2 ½ years of age.

Once engineering is completed, plans will be submitted for permits.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Honebrink  
Partner



# Northeast Family Center

## Occupancy calculations

		Licensed capacity					
Rm #	Room	Children	Staff				
W001	Kitchen						
W001A	Pantry						
E116	Classroom / 12 mo - 18 mo	8	2		4:1 ratio		
E117	Nursery / 6 wk-12 mo	8	2		4:1 ratio		
E211	Office 2		1				
E212	Office 3		3				
E213	Classroom - 2 Yr	12	2				
E214	Classroom - 3 Yr	12	2				
E215	Classroom 18 mo - 2 Yr	10	2				
E216	Classroom - 4 Yr	12	2				
W201	Classroom - School Age	20	1		12 during the school year		
W202	Break Rm						
W203	Storage						
	Totals	82	17				
	Total present on site	99					

Note that this is the proposed licensed capacity. Northeast Family Center currently has around 70 children. While they expect to grow at this location, that growth is expected to be less than these numbers.

Currently only 9 staff utilize the parking lot; some carpool and others are dropped off.

The Center has one van that will be parked on site.

