

Proposed Westmount daycare has residents divided ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

A plan for a daycare in the Westmount neighbourhood has residents divided, and some want the issue to go to court.

The Westmount Childcare Development Centre is planning to open in a former Unitarian church, located at 110th Avenue and 126th Street. After the church moved, the building operated as a private residence.

The structure itself, built in the early 1960s, is distinctive for its hard lines and wood accents.

It is already zoned to operate as a childcare facility.

But three area residents have filed a leave of appeal to have Alberta's highest court weigh in on whether the daycare should open.

During the summer, residents who opposed the daycare stated their case to the city's Subdivision and Development Appeal Board, after the owners were granted a development permit for some renovations. Residents cited concerns of noise, parking, traffic and pedestrian safety as reasons for their opposition.

Their appeal was denied on Sept. 27.

Ryan McCann lives in the area and is one of the applicants on the latest appeal. He stressed that he and other residents are not against a daycare in the area, but he's concerned about the 120 children it will take in. He would like the capacity limited to 50 children.

"Almost everyone in the community thinks it will be a significant value-add, for the community, but the size of the daycare and the impact it would have weren't in line with a residential neighbourhood," McCann said.

"We've seen near misses with pedestrians on the exact same corner. Our concern is for our kids, the kids in the community and, quite frankly, for the kids that are going to the daycare."

The daycare's website states that during community consultations, residents expressed a need for additional childcare in the neighbourhood.

A dividing issue

This issue has created a divide in the neighbourhood between residents who are in favour of the current daycare plan and those against it.

"There are people as passionately in favour of the childcare centre," said Carla Stolte, president of the Westmount Community League. "We have a lot of young families moving into the neighbourhood."

She says there's a need in Westmount for another daycare as more young families are moving into the neighbourhood.

"There's a real desire to be able to walk to a childcare centre in their own neighbourhood."

The owners of the planned daycare and the group opposing it will head to court in late January.

-reprinted from CBC News

Region: Alberta ^[3]

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