STAFF REPORT

THE GODDARD SCHOOL OF SUNRISE – DAY CARE CENTER (SPECIAL EXCEPTION)

Summary

This is an application for Special Exception use approval for a proposed day care center to be located within the existing vacant commercial building formerly known as La-Z-Boy, located at 2600 Sawgrass Mills Circle, as shown on the location map. The property is zoned B-3 (General Business District) within the Western Sunrise Area and the Western Sunrise Entertainment District, and the underlying land use designation is Commercial within a Dashed Line Area (2.94 units per acre) on the City's Future Land Use Map. The use requires City Commission approval per Subsection 16-36 of the Land Development Code (LDC) for a Special Exception.

General Information

The subject property received Site Plan approval by the City of Sunrise Commission on May 23, 1995, via Resolution No. 95-119 for a retail store consisting approximately 14,993 square feet on an approximate one (1) acre parcel of land.

The property is surrounded to the south, east, west, and northwest by commercial developments zoned B-3 (General Business District), and to the immediate northeast is a multifamily development zoned PUD (Planned Unit Development). All the surrounding properties are also within the Western Sunrise Area and Western Sunrise Entertainment District.

The subject property is located within the Sawgrass Mills Development of Regional Impact (DRI). The City Commission approved the DRI Development Order on November 12, 2002, via Ordinance No. 893-X and the proposed development complies with such.

Concurrently with this Special Exception application, the applicant has submitted a Revised Site Plan application for review.

Project Description

The applicant proposes to operate a 14,993 square foot day care center, within the existing vacant building, as well as introduce a 4,892 square foot outdoor play area within the subject property. The proposed hours of operation are Monday – Friday between 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., closing on national holidays. The day care center will be licensed to serve a maximum of 220 children between the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years of age, with a staff consisting of twenty-nine (29) persons on any given day.

In order to be consistent with the City of Sunrise LDC Section 16-133, the applicant is proposing to provide an outdoor play area along the building's east side, which will include playground equipment, shade canopies and be completely enclosed by a six-foot high, non-climbable fence accompanied by protective bollards.

The property will provide a total of 53 on-site parking spaces, including eight (8) designated stacking spaces for student pick-up and drop-off operations near the main entrance. Parents/guardians will be required to park and escort their child to the building's main entrance for pick-up or drop-off. The site has sufficient parking spaces to meet Section 16-144(a)(27) of the LDC requirement for parking of day care centers. The day care will not offer transportation services.

Staff Evaluation

The applicant has addressed the criteria established in Section 16-36(d) of the LDC for the granting of a Special Exception use as follows:

IMPACT ON SURROUNDING PROPERTIES: The applicant states that the Goddard School of Sunrise (Day Care Center) at the subject location has been designed to integrate seamlessly into the neighborhood's shopping district. The day care center is committed to minimizing potential disruptions to surrounding properties by carefully addressing noise, light, safety, and development intensity. The outdoor play area is strategically positioned and will be surrounded by well-curated landscaping to reduce noise impact. Play schedules will be rotated to avoid prolonged noise levels. Exterior lighting complies with the requirements of Section 16-150 of the City's LDC and are equipped with a lighting control system to minimize light pollution while ensuring safety during evening hours. The Day Care does not use or store any dangerous materials on-site, and the site will be secured by a state-of-the-art security system, including access controls, surveillance cameras, and a secure check-in/check-out process, in addition to the on-site security guard present during operation hours. As an existing structure, the building respects the architectural character of the area by maintaining appropriate setbacks and landscaping buffers that support the local ecosystem, while its height and footprint remain consistent with nearby buildings.

TRAFFIC: The applicant states that the Goddard School of Sunrise developed a staggered drop-off and pick-up schedule designed to distribute vehicle arrivals and departures throughout the day, reducing congestion during peak hours. Dedicated drop-off and pick-up parking spaces near the main entrance of the day care center have been provided and will be monitored for efficient use. Parents will be informed during orientation not to park across the street, and specific instructions will be provided to reinforce the policy. An on-site security guard will be present to monitor compliance and ensure parents follow procedures. Additionally, any on-site events will be scheduled in a staggered

manner to minimize traffic congestion and ensure safe, efficient movement throughout the area.

The applicant further states the proposed use will generate 86 new AM peak hour vehicle trips and 82 new PM peak hour vehicle trips. The traffic study provided by the applicant indicates that the proposed use, a day care center, will not have a significant impact on the surrounding roadways. The study intersections are expected to operate at an acceptable level of service in the future with the addition of project trips.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN: The applicant states the proposed Day Care use supports and furthers the following goals, objectives, and policies of the City of Sunrise Comprehensive Plan:

Future Land Use Element

- Commercial, Goal 2: Provide for a varied and diverse mix of commercial opportunities to serve the residents of the City of Sunrise and the South Florida Region.

  Applicant's Response: The proposed Day Care advances Goal 2 by broadening the mix of commercial opportunities available within the City. While the Sawgrass Mills area is primarily known for retail and entertainment uses, the addition of a high-quality childcare and early education center introduces a complementary service that directly supports local families and employees. By offering convenient, reliable childcare within a regional shopping and employment hub, the Day Care reduces travel needs for parents, encourages multipurpose trips, and enhances the overall functionality of the commercial district.

- Phased Growth, Objective 10.3: Efficient Use of Urban Services: Promote the efficient use of urban services by encouraging new development into areas where necessary regional and community facilities and services exist.

  Applicant's Response: The proposed Day Care supports Objective 10.3 by locating within an established commercial center where infrastructure, utilities, and community services already exist. The site benefits from access to regional roadways, public utilities, and nearby transit opportunities. By reoccupying a vacant commercial space, the Day Care makes efficient use of existing facilities while reducing underutilized square footage within the Sawgrass Mills area.

- Phased Growth, Policy 10.3.2: Regional or community libraries, clinics, civic centers, schools, cultural facilities and other public facilities such as passive and active parks, government buildings, and sports complexes, should be located in areas of concentrated activity, such as community or regional shopping centers or major transportation interchanges, in order to allow multipurpose trips, provide easy access by mass transit and minimize parking areas.

Applicant's Response: The proposed Day Care is consistent with FLU Policy 10.3.2 because it is located within an area of concentrated commercial activity at the Sawgrass Mills Mall. Its location allows families to combine drop-off and pick-up with shopping, dining, and other errands, encouraging multipurpose trips and reducing overall vehicle travel. The site is served by major transportation routes and nearby transit options, providing convenient access for residents and employees.

- Phased Growth, Goal 12: Eliminate areas of blight.

  Applicant's Response: The proposed Day Care supports Goal 12 by reoccupying a currently vacant commercial space at the Sawgrass Mills Mall. Revitalizing and bringing the Property back into active use eliminates the conditions associated with long-term vacancy, prevents decline in the surrounding area, and enhances the appearance of the area. This reinvestment strengthens the commercial corridor while providing a needed community service.

- Phased Growth, Objective 12.1: Redevelopment: The City of Sunrise shall continue to improve the condition of deteriorated buildings within the City.

  Applicant's Response: The proposed Day Care supports Objective 12.1 by reoccupying a currently vacant space within the Sawgrass Mills Mall. This reuse of an existing building improves its condition, ensures ongoing maintenance, and contributes to the overall upkeep of the Property, consistent with the City's goal of promoting redevelopment and preventing deterioration.

OTHER FACTORS: The applicant states that, "The Goddard School of Sunrise (Day Care Center) is committed to exceeding all health and safety regulations through rigorous cleaning protocols and maintaining proper ventilation, ensuring a healthy environment for children and staff. The curriculum is regularly updated based on the latest research in early childhood education, promoting school readiness, cognitive development, social-emotional skills, and fostering a lifelong love of learning. Beyond serving enrolled families, the Goddard School of Sunrise (Day Care Center) will serve as a valuable community resource by partnering with local organizations to support broader community initiatives." In addition, the applicant has committed to having a security guard assigned to the facility from 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM to ensure safety of children.

Staff Recommendation to the Board of Adjustment, December 2, 2025.

Staff finds this application meets all applicable LDC requirements for the granting of Special Exception use for a Day Care Center. Therefore, Staff recommends approval subject to the following conditions:

1. Approval of the proposed Revised Site Plan application (RSP-000008-2025 (95:030001).

2. The facility is restricted to no more than two hundred and twenty (220) children between the ages of 6 weeks to 5 years, and twenty-nine (29) staff in attendance on any day operation. Any increase in staff or students will require a revised Special Exception.

3. The hours of operation are restricted to Monday through Friday between the hours of 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM.

4. A security guard shall be on-site during operational hours, 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM, to ensure the safety of children and the operational drop-off procedures are enforced. Any reduction in hours or removal of the on-site security guard shall require City Commission approval.

5. No offsite parking is approved for this site or permitted and parents will be informed upon enrollment that no offsite parking is permitted.

6. School events (i.e. graduation, holiday celebrations, etc.) that allow for parent and family attendance will be limited such that the parking demands are not exceeded.

7. Prior to issuance of an engineering or building permit for the subject project, applicant to submit for approval by City staff the final left-turn lane design on Pink Flamingo Lane including the mitigation for impacted landscaping, signs, etc.

8. Construction of left-turn lane on Pink Flamingo Lane must be complete and finaled prior to any type of certificate of occupancy or business tax receipt for the day care center.

9. Transportation services for students are not permitted at the facility.

10. Prior to final Special Exception use approval through the Community Development Department, the applicant shall address the outstanding comments of the Development Review Committee.

Board of Adjustment Recommendation, December 2, 2025

At its meeting on December 2, 2025, the Board approved Staff's recommendation subject to the conditions listed above.

Final Staff Recommendation to the City Commission, January 13, 2026

Staff recommends the approval of this application subject to the conditions listed above.

Planner: Ana Parada
File No.: SE-000368-2024 (95:030001)

Location Map

