

# Staff Summary Report

Development Review Commission Date: **08/14/07**

Agenda Item Number: **3**

**SUBJECT:** Hold a public meeting for a Development Plan Review for CHILDSPLAY located at 900 South Mitchell Drive. This item was continued from the June 12<sup>th</sup> and July 10, 2007 public meetings.

**DOCUMENT NAME:** DRcr\_Childsplay\_081407

**PLANNED DEVELOPMENT (0406)**

**SUPPORTING DOCS:** Yes

**COMMENTS:** Request for **CHILDSPLAY (PL070079)** (Childsplay, property owner; Peter Fischer, DPA Architects, applicant) for the removal of an existing building and addition of a new +/-29 feet high, +/-7,466 s.f. building and new parking stalls on 2.87 acres, located at 900 South Mitchell Drive, in the R1-6, Single-Family Residential District, including the following:

**DPR07085** – Development Plan Review including site plan, building elevations and landscape plan.

**PREPARED BY:** Ryan Levesque, Senior Planner (480-858-2393)

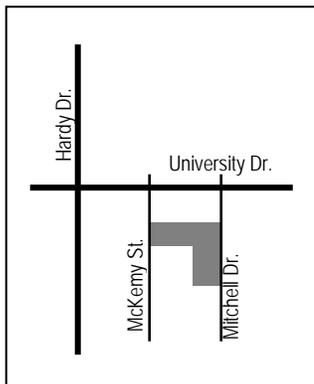
**REVIEWED BY:** Lisa Collins, Planning Director (480-350-8989) 

**LEGAL REVIEW BY:** N/A

**FISCAL NOTE:** N/A

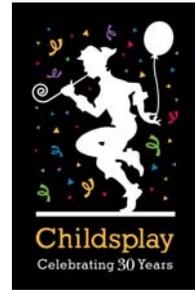
**RECOMMENDATION:** Staff – Continuation to October 9, 2007 based on the applicant’s request

**ADDITIONAL INFO:**



Net site area	2.87 acres
Total Building area	35,571 s.f. (7,466 s.f. addition)
Lot Coverage	31 % (45% maximum allowed)
Building Height	29 ft. (30 ft. maximum allowed)
Building setbacks	+44' front, +60' side, +17' rear (20, 5, 15 min.)
Landscaped area	67% (minimum N/A)
Vehicle Parking	46 spaces (114 minimum required)
Bicycle Parking	11 spaces (10 minimum required)

A neighborhood meeting was held on May 8, 2007 for this application. Neighborhood focus group meetings were held on June 20 and 27, 2007. Development Review Commission continued the request on June 12, 2007 and on July 10, 2007 to provide further modifications of the building and dialogue with the residents. **The applicant held two additional neighborhood meetings on July 30<sup>th</sup> and August 1, 2007. Notification of the meeting was sent to all property owners within the Mitchell Park East and West Neighborhoods and the site was posted. The applicant is requesting a continuance to October 9, 2007 to adequately address all comments and concerns. Notification of the continuance request has been e-mailed to neighborhood representatives in the area. Staff recommends support of the continuance.**



August 6, 2007

Ryan Levesque  
Senior Planner  
Development Services  
City of Tempe  
31 E. 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Tempe, AZ 85281

Dear Ryan:

At this time, Childsplay will be seeking a continuance for our case currently scheduled for a hearing with the Development Review Commission on August 14, 2007.

As you know, we hosted two neighborhood meetings last week to continue our dialog with Mitchell Park residents. Childsplay spent the first half of the meeting describing how the building would be utilized, correct mis-information about the company and our intended use of the facility and unveil several changes to the design. These changes included a redesigned truck loading utilizing more green screen; a driveway into the loading area that saves all existing mature trees on the East side of the building; additional parking and a drop off area for children attending our Academy.

Many neighbors in attendance expressed support for the project following the meeting. However, we also received comments that expressed concerns regarding location and size of the building. We're seeking this continuance so that we may adequately address these concerns and look as closely as possible to all of the options.

It is our hope to be able to continue our case until October 9, 2007. If you have any questions, please call me at 350-8109.

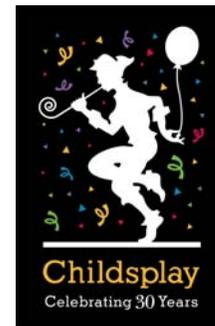
We also want to thank you and the Development Services staff for the truly professional service this project has received from the very beginning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Martin", written in a cursive style.

Steve Martin  
Managing Director

For additional information for media purposes, contact:  
Melissa Mattingly Parsons or Laura Schairer  
[mparsons@childsplayaz.org](mailto:mparsons@childsplayaz.org) [laura@audiencemagnets.com](mailto:laura@audiencemagnets.com)  
480-858-2127 480-797-3111



## **CHILDSPLAY NEWS RELEASE**

*For immediate release 8/7/07*

### **Childsplay Requests Additional Time to Study Options for Mitchell School Renovation**

Tempe, AZ -- Childsplay, Arizona's professional theatre company for young audiences and families, hosted two neighborhood meetings in Tempe last week to share with neighbors its plans for converting the former Mitchell Elementary School into a permanent home for the company's administrative, rehearsal, education and production services. The meetings were also used to get input from neighbors regarding concerns they had about the project's design.

Childsplay unveiled several revisions that they had the project's architects make in response to earlier concerns expressed by neighbors regarding the new Sybil B. Harrington Campus for Imagination and Wonder on the block between Mitchell and McKemy and 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets.

Several neighbors attending the meetings expressed support and appreciation for the changes that were announced. These included adding brick to the façade of the scene shop, committing to saving all existing mature trees on the property, adding a drop-off zone for students and making adjustments to the loading dock.

These changes will add significantly to the project's cost, according to Managing Director Steve Martin, but he said the Childsplay Board of Trustees has made a commitment to continue its fund raising efforts to accommodate the changes. To date, Childsplay's recent capital campaign has raised nearly \$5 million for the Mitchell School renovations and operations and to establish a capital reserve fund for the company.

Some of the neighbors attending last week's meetings continued to express concerns about the location of the theatre troupe's scene shop on the site. Concerns ranged from the size of the shop to the location of it on the campus.

The project was scheduled to be reviewed by the Development Review Commission on August 14, with the possibility that the commissioners would vote on whether or not to approve the project on that date. However, Martin has announced that Childsplay will be asking the Commission to postpone consideration of the project until a future meeting in order to give Childsplay additional time to see if there are any options that could address the concerns some neighbors still have about the scene shop.

-MORE-

***Childsplay Requests Additional Time Press Release***

“We want to thank the neighbors for attending the meetings and sharing their passion and hopes for their neighborhood. Childsplay is sensitive to their concerns,” said Board President Joanie Flatt. “While we believe the vast majority of the neighbors would support the project with the changes we have already made, we’d like to take a little more time to see if there is any way we can address the concerns some of the neighbors continue to have. We don’t know if it’s possible but we’re going to try. We truly want to be a good neighbor.”

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Childsplay, Inc. is a nonprofit theatre company of professional, adult artists who perform for and teach young audiences and their families. The mission of Childsplay is “to create theatre so strikingly original in form, content or both, that it instills in young people an enduring awe, love and respect for the medium, thus preserving imagination and wonder, the hallmarks of childhood which are keys to the future.” For information on Childsplay performances, classes or educational presentations please call 480-350-8101 or visit our website at [www.childsplayaz.org](http://www.childsplayaz.org).

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## Levesque, Ryan

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**From:** John F. Purchase [jpurchase@cox.net]  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 05, 2007 1:20 PM  
**To:** Levesque, Ryan  
**Cc:** Steve Martin; David Saar; Mark Lymer; Trevor Barger; Hallman, Hugh  
**Subject:** Letter of Support for Childsplay

John and Eliane Purchase  
1220 S. McKemy St  
Tempe, AZ 85281.

Dear Mr. Levesque:

We plan on attending the next DRC meeting on August 14 when the Childs Play application will be discussed again, but we would appreciate you including this letter as an input to the DRC deliberations.

We have lived in this neighborhood for the past 14 years and have attended a number of meetings with Childsplay over the past few years, including the recent ones on July 30 and August 1, as well as the DRC meeting on June 12. We also previously sent you a letter of comment and requested changes to the proposed Scene Shop design as input to the last DRC meeting on July 10.

**Following the two recent meetings with Childsplay we have modified our previous position on their application and now fully endorse their design proposals for the Mitchell School as presented to us on July 30 and August 1.**

Childsplay showed they had taken account of concerns previously expressed by the residents of the neighborhood and had made significant modifications to their design proposal, with appreciable cost impacts to them, to better mute the expressed criticisms. **They also presented and explained the basis for the size of the Scene Shop and it became evident that neither the height nor the floor area can be reduced if Childsplay is to achieve their objective of constructing sets there for the new Tempe Arts Center stage.** DPA Architects showed how the size of the building will be effectively masked by the existing and additional surrounding mature trees and how the added brick veneer will match the brick of the existing buildings. **They also demonstrated the suggestion that the Scene Shop be moved to the NW corner (which we had previously supported) is completely impractical.**

Apart from the size of the building another objection had been the traffic of large trucks delivering materials and collecting completed sets. Childsplay showed this traffic would generally be limited to two days per month during the production season and would use 24 foot box trucks. A neighborhood participant pointed out that if Mitchell School was still a school there could be up to twenty school buses twice a day and several hundred cars twice a day; she based this on a count she recently made at a local school. **The traffic due to Childsplay is clearly insignificant in comparison.**

Reference was continuously made by some opponents to the Scene Shop being an

“industrial business” which had no place in a residential neighborhood. The fact sheet provided by Childsplay at the meetings listed the equipment they use (various table saws, drills, air tools); we have virtually the same list of wood and metal working equipment in our home workshop as do many area residents in their garages. Childsplay explained and showed with illustrative slides that their operation is basically the hand construction of sets using wood, fabric, metal, latex paint, glue, etc, and is limited to the hours of 9:00 am to 6:00 pm on weekdays. **It is by no stretch of the imagination an “industrial” operation and is not dissimilar to what we regularly do in our own home workshop or other neighbors do in their garages in the evenings and weekends.**

We deplore the tactics used by the nay-sayers. They take up most of the question time in meetings using long-winded comments and repetitive arguments; this prevents other people, such as ourselves, from having their say. They will not listen to any counter arguments and their tactics intimidate the rest of the neighborhood into silence and non-attendance at the meetings. They minimize the degradation of the area around the currently derelict Mitchell School due to drug users and homeless people, or the consequent increase in neighborhood break-ins and other crime. **They do not seem to appreciate the positive effects of having Childsplay in the Mitchell Park West neighborhood. But, although very vocal they represent only a minority in a neighborhood of 275 households.**

**Therefore, my wife and I strongly urge the DRC and the Town Council to recognize:**

- **that Childsplay have made significant, costly and acceptable changes to their original plans to accommodate the previous concerns of the neighborhood;**
- **that Childsplay will be a valuable and attractive addition to the neighborhood and will not reduce adjacent property values;**

**and to approve without further delay the Childsplay design plans as reflected in the July 30 and August 1 meetings with the neighborhood and in the DRC Staff Report DRCr Childsplay 071007.**

Sincerely,

John and Eliane Purchase

## Levesque, Ryan

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**From:** MARK Architecture [mlymer@juno.com]  
**Sent:** Sunday, August 05, 2007 5:41 PM  
**To:** jpurchase@cox.net  
**Cc:** Levesque, Ryan; smartin@childsplayaz.org; dsaar@childsplayaz.org; mlymer@juno.com; trevor@espirituloci.com; Hallman, Hugh  
**Subject:** Re: Letter of Support for Childsplay

John and Eliane Purchase-

thanks for your letter to DRC and others. The nature of any neighborhood activity is by default not completely inclusive. It's impossible to organize 275 houses, many that are rentals, to participate. My opinion counts for only one vote, just as yours. And we dont even have to agree! That said, those that take their personal time to participate in MPWNA are those that help guide the process most.

Childsplay had in attendance at both last weeks meetings, Kathy Clark, President of Scudder Park NA. It was her task to 'facilitate' the meetings, i guess she volunteered. i thought she did a pretty good job. Myself, i only spoke when my number was called or after i was recognized by Kathy after holding my hand up. i presume you had a number too, everyone was asked to take one. i think that Childsplay's monopolizing the allotted/proposed 1 1/2 hr had something to do with getting more voices heard too.

There were those that didnt follow 'the rules'. At times adults can act like children, especially when discussing an emotional subject. I get emotional too. But i dont think lumping everyone into a group under a single label is fair to them or you. And sometimes you just gotta let people blow a little without repercussion; i believe you did at one point. But i think 'verbal vomit' was over the top, meaning that 'everyone else that spoke (vomited) had no valid opinions or ideas'.

It's a myth that anything resembling an 18th century village can exist in a typical suburb today. And MPWNA is a typical suburban development. But i am thankful there are people such as yourself that take the time to participate in neighborhood issues. There are alot of things to do. The department of Mitchell School is only one, and probably not even the most important. The MPWNA Board is preparing a mailer with several pages of information for the neighborhood. Unfortunately some issues come along that are perhaps unnecessarily complicated and take up a lot more time than even i think they should; so other tasks get put aside till there is a resolution.

We are all very busy with our lives, family and friends, house maintenance and of course our jobs. i try to keep that in mind as i'm constantly recruiting for help with activities that may have significant positive effects on our shared environment. More accurately, i try to recruit for small tasks; little things i/we can do that help people understand the zoning laws, party nuisance ordinance, roof rats issues, crime, web site, etc. MPWNA includes our commercial neighbors too. I appreciate you delivering to your neighbors doorsteps a flyer supporting of neighborhood involvement.

see you around!

-Mark

Mithcell Park West NA Board President