Owner / Applicant Information

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Project Information

Charity Cares at Sheffield Avenue
1141 North Sheffield Avenue

Indianapolis 46222

County MARION

Project Type New [ ] Addition [ ] Alteration [ ] Existing [Y] Change of Occupancy [ ]

Project Status [U] F=Filed U or Null=Unfiled

IDHS Issued Correction order? [No] Has Violation been Issued? [No]

Violation Issued by: NA

Local Building Official

Phone: 3173277526 Email: planreview.Class1@indy.gov

Local Fire Official

Phone: 3173277526 Email: david.carpenter@indy.gov

Variance Details

Code Name: Other Code (Not in the list provided)

IBC 2014 Section 903.2.6

Conditions:

The applicant respectfully requests a variance from IBC 2014 Section 903.2.6 (Automatic Sprinkler System - Group 1-4) due to a change of occupancy under 675 IAC 12-4-11. This variance seeks limited, phased occupancy while actively progressing towards installation of the required sprinkler system.

The proposed building use is a Group 1-4 Registered Childcare Ministry serving children ages 10 months through 10 years.

This request does not seek to avoid compliance. The applicant has established a structured, time-bound path to full compliance supported by a qualified sprinkler contractor. Installation is anticipated within 90-150 days, subject to permitting and construction timelines - but fully installed before the end of the year.

Initial occupancy will be limited for the specific purposes of obtaining FSSA licensing, IDHS and IDF approval, national accreditation, and new family enrollment - all action steps that will bring in the necessary revenue to complete the sprinkler installation.

Building utilization during this period will be reduced and controlled throughout the allotted transition period. Program operations utilizing the building's full capacity will not occur until the required sprinkler system is completed.

DEMONSTRATION THAT PUBLIC HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELFARE ARE PROTECTED:

1=Non-compliance with the rule will not be adverse to the public health, safety or w

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2= Applicant will undertake alternative actions in lieu of compliance with the rule to ensure that granting of the variance will not be adverse to public health, safety, or welfare. Explain why alternative actions would be adequate (be specific).

Facts:

The applicant will implement phased, controlled occupancy and enhanced life safety measures to ensure that granting this variance will not be adverse to the public during sprinkler installation.

Highlights of alternative action for life safety during sprinkler installation include:
1. Clearly defined and continuously accessible egress routes with multiple (11) remote exits
2. Minimized travel distances ranging from approximately 30' (infants and toddlers) and 150' (3yr-10yrs)
3. Children under 30m are located on the level of exit discharge
4. Fire alarm system installed in accordance with NFPA 72, with monitoring systems supporting rapid notification and response
5. Emergency lighting, illuminated exit signage, and fire extinguishers are maintained per NFPA 10
6. Staff trained in emergency procedures, with drills demonstrating full evacuation in under 2 minutes
7. Passive fire protection, including rated construction and protected corridors
8. Commercial kitchen equipped with hood suppression and monitored fire protection system
9. Maintained site safety conditions, clear access for emergency responders, and a 0.6-mile distance from the IFD Station #1
10. Ongoing emergency preparedness training and weekly evacuation drills simulating various conditions
11. Structured internal fire safety reviews and hourly fire watches with documented walkthroughs and immediate hazard response protocols

These measures are further detailed in the attached documentation and building plans. The linked video provides a visual of the building's layout, escape routes, and staff preparedness: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1VCP9kpv2EFHxn-PzQHUPZRc-8ejYBtlu/view?usp=sharing.

The applicant is actively advancing sprinkler system installation and is prepared to operate within any conditions deemed reasonable by the Committee to ensure life safety in the interim.

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DEMONSTRATION OF UNDUE HARDSHIP OR HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURE:

Y	Imposition of the rule would result in an undue hardship (unusual difficulty) because of physical limitations of the construction site or its utility services.
Y	Imposition of the rule would result in an undue hardship (unusual difficulty) because of major operational problems in the use of the building or structure.
Y	Imposition of the rule would result in an undue hardship (unusual difficulty) because of excessive costs of additional or altered construction elements.
	Imposition of the rule would prevent the preservation of an architecturally or a historically significant part of the building or structure

Facts:

Immediate application of IBC Section 903.2.6 would result in undue hardship due to physical, operational, and financial constraints.

The building's concrete and masonry construction adds complexity to retrofit installation, significantly increases costs, and imposes a construction duration. Installation requires design, permitting, and construction time lest that cannot be completed prior to the proposed initial limited occupancy.

The organization has experienced major financial strain due to statewide childcare funding changes, resulting in a 53% decrease in enrollment and revenue, and cannot absorb the full cost of immediate installation before limited operations that will increase new enrollments and revenue.

The requested variance presents a phased approach that allows the applicant to stabilize operations while actively progressing towards full compliance without compromising public health, safety, or welfare.

Variance Details

Code Name: 12-4-11 Change of Occupancy or Use of Existing Buildings

2014 IBC Section 903.2.6

Conditions:

The applicant proposes to operate a Group I-4 registered childcare ministry serving approximately 200 children ages ten (10) months through ten (10) years with national accreditation and Paths to Quality Level Four status. The building is an active house of worship for a community-centered organization that has served Haughville for nearly four decades.

The proposed use constitutes a change of occupancy under 675 IAC 12-4-11. The sprinkler requirement is triggered because the facility does not meet the criteria in IBC Section 903.2.6. As a result, portions of the facility do not meet Group I-4 prescriptive requirements. The nature of noncompliance includes:
1. The south wing of the building is not equipped with an automatic sprinkler system.
2. Children over 30mos will be cared for above the level of exit discharge.
3. Children under 30mos do not have direct classroom exterior exit doors.

The property was the original site of St. Paul Baptist Church, organized in 1892. The proposed childcare ministry building was constructed in 1960 as a nursing home and is a multi-level floor plan consisting of two wings with clearly defined levels of exit discharge. The north wing, currently occupied by a charter school, is fully sprinklered and will be used by the registered childcare ministry for school-age care. The south wing, where infants through pre-kindergarten care will be provided, is not equipped with an automatic sprinkler system.

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Facts:

Life-safety alternative actions:
1. Thirteen (13) exit doors in the south wing for multiple egress paths.
2. All classrooms open to defined access corridors leading to exits with clearly labeled means of egress.
3. Children >30mos are located on the level of exit discharge. Infant rooms are within 25 feet of exits, allowing rapid evacuation.
4. Cribs are fire evacuation certified, with established evacuation procedures in place.
5. Monthly drills demonstrate full evacuation under two minutes over the past three years.
6. A monitored, addressable fire alarm system is being installed, including smoke detection, manual pull stations, and audible/visual notification by March 31, 2026.
7. The building was originally an institutional care facility with non-combustible concrete and masonry structural walls, floors, and stairways to limit fire spread. All classroom doors are UL-listed 60-minute fire-rated assemblies to decrease fire and smoke spread.
8. Wide corridors throughout allow for efficient occupant movement during evacuation processes.
9. Egress windows in all classrooms provide additional rescue openings.
10. IFD Station #1 is 0.6 miles away, supporting rapid emergency response.

The applicant is an IDHS FEMA Nonprofit Security Grant recipient, with enhanced building safety and security outcomes to include:
1. Installation of new emergency exit doors, panic hardware, and exit signage.
2. Exterior numbering of all exit doors for emergency responder identification.
3. Installation of a perimeter fence to provide a protective barrier for emergencies.

This variance has been prepared with consideration of guidance from the assigned IDHS Code Enforcement Official to align with applicable life-safety expectations in childcare programs. These measures collectively demonstrate that public health, safety, and welfare will be protected in accordance with the intent of the code.

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Facts:

Automatic sprinkler system installation would impose major financial hardship, and the 66-year-old building's concrete structural elements create barriers to installation. Additionally, project timing is critical with a targeted opening date of May 1, 2026. Delays would disrupt childcare access in a community designated as a childcare desert.

Indiana¿s childcare industry has faced significant strain due to CCDF subsidy changes. Since October 2025, over 230 programs have closed due to funding shortages. The applicant has experienced a 43% reduction in enrollment and a 57% reduction in income. In response, the applicant made the strategic decision to right-size operations by fully transitioning from a 425-child capacity location to the smaller Sheffield facility. This transition is necessary to ensure sustainability while continuing to meet community needs.

In 2023, the applicant was awarded an FSSA Child Care Expansion Grant at this facility ¿ the primary funding source for all building upgrades ¿ to increase quality childcare access for underserved populations. When the grant was awarded, the requirement for direct exterior egress was not enforced for childcare ministries. Therefore, planning proceeded in alignment with then in place regulation.

Variance approval will allow the organization to maintain safe, affordable, high-quality care for working families, provide a continuum of care for 150 currently enrolled children, expand access for an additional 50 children, sustain employment for 50 staff members, support continued operation in a historically significant building, and uphold a critical community-based ecosystem ¿ while ensuring that public health, safety, and welfare are protected and maintained.

NOTE: Childcare spaces are highlighted on the building plans with green rectangles, exits are outlined with red squares, and age groups served in each room are identified in purple text.