



**P.O. Box 1362 • Lakeland, Florida 33802**  
**[www.lmna.org](http://www.lmna.org)**

October 14, 2019

**To: Teresa Maio, Planning Manager**  
**Nicole Travis, Director of Community & Economic Development**

**Re: ITEM 4 Conditional Use to allow for a pre-school with maximum capacity of 70 students on property located at 417 Frank Lloyd Wright Way**

Dear Ms. Maio & Mrs. Travis,

On behalf of the Lake Morton Neighborhood Association (LMNA), I am writing to express opposition to the conditional use application proposing to establish a preschool for up to 70 students and faculty at 417 Frank Lloyd Wright Way. The neighborhood has several longstanding institutional uses that are supported by its residents; however, locating a preschool in the building known as the Columbus W. Deen house would be detrimental not only to the historic character of the Deen House, but also to neighborhood residents due to the additional traffic it would create on Frank Lloyd Wright Way, Success Avenue, and the north-south alley between Success Avenue and South Boulevard. LMNA has recently updated its Neighborhood Plan, which calls for this property to be rezoned from MF-12 (multi-family residential) to RA-4 (single-family residential).

The Columbus W. Deen house is an iconic landmark for its architectural and historic significance in Lakeland. Originally built for Mr. Deen and his family in 1912 as a single-family residence, this house is the only example of Prairie Style architecture in the South Lake Morton Historic District. In fact, the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the South Lake Morton Historic District calls this house “the most architecturally significant building in the area.” Similarly, the Florida Master Site File Inventory Form for the Deen House states, “because of this home’s architectural significance and association with the district’s developer and one of Lakeland’s most influential early 20<sup>th</sup> century investors, it is the most significant historic site in the district.” The building displays a high level of architectural integrity and design, owing to architect Guy Platt Johnson’s training under Frank Lloyd Wright.

The Deen House was used as a hospital in the 1930s, and then as housing for Florida Southern College faculty and students from 1940 to 1994, prior to the establishment of the City’s zoning code and the Florida Building Code. Use of this home by the College resulted in many severe alterations, but its former owners, Lon Stanley and Keith Etheredge, painstakingly restored the house in the 1990s and early 2000s. Today, changing the use of a building from a single-family residence to a school often requires alterations to ensure the safety of its occupants. This request would remove two character-defining casement windows and brickwork from the second-story, west elevation walls to install doorways for fire escapes, which adversely affects the architectural integrity of this landmark. This treatment is inconsistent with both the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation

and the City's Residential Historic District Design Guidelines. Modifications to the interior of the building to accommodate a school would likely be just as damaging.

The proposed school will also increase traffic demand on Frank Lloyd Wright Way and Success Avenue, which already receives heavy usage from the residential, commercial, and institutional uses in the neighborhood. The additional traffic generated from picking up and dropping off 70 children, however staggered throughout the day, will hinder traffic flow for the neighborhood's residents. There is no proof that people will walk to the school instead of driving. Furthermore, using the alley for drop-off, pick-up, and parking will create conflicts with solid waste and recycling collection and is an inappropriate commercial solution for a narrow, residential alley. Additionally, paving much of the property's western yard with 10 parking spaces diminishes the historic setting of this important property.

The argument to change the use of this property because there exist waiting lists for preschools is irrelevant, as there are vacant properties available in central Lakeland that are appropriate.

In closing, while many houses are listed as contributing buildings in our historic districts, the Deen House is eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places on its own for its rare architectural quality and historic associations with Lakeland's history. That fact should inform you that this property is special and irreplaceable. Combined with the other problems inherent in this request, this property is simply the wrong place for a preschool.

On behalf of the LMNA, I respectfully ask the City of Lakeland's Planning and Zoning Board to deny this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Julie Townsend", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Julie Townsend  
LMNA Board President

Cc: LMNA Board Members;  
John White  
Ashlee French  
Alice Collins  
Lindsay Persohn  
Mark Foster

## ATTACHMENT A

Pictured below is the car line queuing in the road on Lake Parker Ave for Lakeland Montessori Schoolhouse. This line stayed in the street, with cars stopped, blocking the lane of traffic for more than 25 minutes. Notice the FedEx Truck driving in south in the northbound lane against oncoming traffic.



Pictured below is the narrow entrance of the alleyway that leads from Charles St. to Frank Lloyd Wright Way. There are private driveways on either side of the alley and accessory structures that sit at zero lot lines. It is inappropriate to send upwards of 150 cars a day down this alley.

