

Dear Mr. Bruce and Zoning Board of Appeal members,

I support the special use permit for 306-312 Madison Street because Mrs. Mary Lubinus's business, MASI, is very similar to Academia, the business that previously occupied the space, and MASI will meet an urgent need for more childcare options in Oak Park.

Having two young children, I am familiar with both MASI (Montessori Academy Spanish Immersion) and Academia. My two children were students at MASI in its previous location. My youngest enrolled when he was 18 months old and right after we moved from California. Mary nurtured and loved our son. Having him at MASI made our transition to the midwest much easier.

Once older, both of my children attended Academia when their elementary schools were closed for holidays. Both businesses have very similar uses for the space and MASI would be well suited for the location. Especially with the pandemic closing schools, our community's families desperately need more childcare and education options. Allowing MASI to operate in the space on Madison, would help fill this need.

Finally, Mary is exactly the type of entrepreneur that Oak Park should support. She immigrated to the United States from Colombia. In Oak Park she has established her family, built her business, and become a US citizen. She employs other women of color. She has built a strong community of diverse families whose children attended MASI and those relationships have persisted even after our children have graduated from the program. This is everything that makes her and Oak Park special.

In conclusion, I ask that you please grant MASI a special use permit for the space at 306-312 Madison Street so that our community can have more safe, nurturing environments for our children.

Regards,
Alicia Chastain
(Oak Park resident)

PS. I have attached a copy of the notice of public hearing to clarify the appeal in question.



www.citypadschicago.com

June 23, 2020

Re: 300 Madison Daycare

To whom it may concern:

Mary Lubinus has been in business in Oak Park since August 2009, with many long term customers. Business has grown through personal referral and word of mouth and there is currently a waiting list for this business owner and her services. We think this is a good use for the space and would not have any adverse effects on the neighborhood or building.

Best Regards,

Andrew Ahitow

Principal

City Pads LLC

September 7, 2020

Village of Oak Park Zoning Board of Appeals
c/o mbruce@oak-park.us
City Hall
123 Madison St.
Oak Park, IL 60302

Dear Members of the Zoning Board:

I am writing today to support approval by the Zoning Board of Review of the special use permit proposed by applicant, Ms. Mary Lubinus to operate a day care center at the property located at 306-308 Madison Street, Oak Park, IL 60302.

My family knows the quality of Ms. Lubinus' teaching, care and administration. Our daughter attended her program MASI for close to 7 years from 19 months until the start of Kindergarten. We are a two-parent working household and depended on outside day care to nurture and educate our daughter during the hours away from us. We received all of these and much more from Mary and MASI. By the end of our daughter's time at Mary's program, we had a daughter who thoroughly enjoyed her days at "school" as she called it and was socially, emotionally and academically more than ready to start Kindergarten at Mann School! And, to our delight, could speak and understand Spanish!!

We were so grateful to have been able to have the opportunity to know and learn from Mary. It would be amazing to see the new location where other children can benefit from such a well-respected and administered center. More parents and caregivers will be at peace knowing that this center is owned and run by a highly responsible, caring, educated and experienced person.

I (along with many others) are confident, that Mary Lubinus' center MASI will not only provide a necessary service to Oak Park's children and families by being a quality early child care center, but will also benefit from her collective effort to provide the atmosphere that readies children for school and success!

In conclusion, I urge for approval on this project because it is the kind of business that is simply good for Oak Park.

Thank you in advance for your time in reviewing this. Please contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Anna Lovis Soukup
annalovis@yahoo.com
alovis@equichem.com
312-203-9104

To whom it may concern,

As a mother of two MASI children – Danilo and Milena Dokic, I urge you to allow MASI to reopen soon!

I've known Mary Lubinus since May of 2018 when MASI – Montessori Academy Spanish Immersion – was recommended to us after months of searching for a daycare that would fit all of our criteria. Our son Danilo started going to MASI in June of 2018 when he was 21 months old. In early 2018 my husband Nikola Dokic and I were looking for a daycare. We started by reviewing the top rated daycares. Then we visited over 6 facilities that were much closer to our home in Des Plaines or to our jobs and therefore more convenient for our daily routines. We were looking for a caring, nurturing atmosphere for our baby boy and none of those daycares we visited felt right to us.

A good friend of mine Dessi Keane recommended MASI because her daughter Maya went through MASI's program. Dessi praised Mary's professionalism, teaching methods and diverse community so much that we decided to check MASI out although Oak Park is not at all close to our home. However, the moment we met Mary Lubinus and her staff in her daycare, we were convinced that MASI is the best choice for our son. We felt at home and relieved that our son would be spending time and learning in a wonderful community run by Mary. Two years later and we still think that MASI is one of the best and most important decisions we could make for our children. The commute to Oak Park does add to our already packed schedules, but knowing that my kids are safe and taken care of so well at MASI is absolutely worth it. The drop-off and pick-up routines were always done impeccably with just a single parking space.

We miss this wonderful community. Our children need to build and maintain social relationships even more during these unprecedented times. I am a teacher from a mother who is also a teacher, so having a dedicated expert to take care of my children while I am away working is very high on my priority list, especially in these formative years when children form the fundamental building blocks of their future health, happiness, growth, development and learning achievement. Mary's enthusiasm, experience, knowledge, patience, true passion for early childhood education, professionalism in running the daycare and the sense of community she creates with all of the diverse MASI families is outstanding! There is absolutely no other daycare facility I would leave my kids at or recommend above MASI.

In conclusion, on behalf of my family, I fully support the efforts of Mary Lubinus to reopen MASI at the new location. I know that Mary will plan and perfect every little detail to make sure the MASI would be run safely and smoothly for our children.

Please feel free to contact me if I can further share my support for the school.

Sincerely,
Darija Dokic
darijadokic@gmail.com
773.9886209

Sent from my iPhone

On Sep 14, 2020, at 8:44 PM, Darija Dokic <darijadokic@gmail.com> wrote:

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Sincerely,
Darija Dokic
darijadokic@gmail.com
773.9886209

Please share this public comment at the hearing for Mary Lubinus's application for a special permit to operate a daycare center at 306 Madison in Oak Park.

My daughter has been in Mary's care since September 2017, and I look forward with anticipation for my son to start at MASI along with his sister once they reopen in the new space. It's strange to simply describe what MASI and Mary provide as "services," as the community Mary has created has become essential to our family.

Mary manages an extremely well-run daycare. Her staff is professional, responsible, and virtual miracle workers in the way they approach all of the challenges inherent to dealing with a group of toddlers! I always remark that the teachers at MASI strike a perfect balance with being authority figures that the children listen to and respect, while also being warm and loving sources of comfort. Countless times I've seen my daughter and her friends fall into their laps for hugs. But they are also crystal clear about rules. At home, my daughter recreates their line-up system, and when we play school, she loves to pretend to be Ms. Mary and lead circle time just like her teacher. This shows me that she has responded positively to the structure that MASI provides. She has learned so much at MASI, but most importantly to me, she has adults in her life that she loves and trusts. I know these relationships are important pieces to her well-being, and the emotional foundation for her future. I couldn't be more grateful.

When considering all of the concerns about sending my kids back to a situation where they will be in contact with more people, I don't think I would have more confidence in anyone but Mary Lubinus to prioritize our children's health. She is meticulous about safety, cleanliness and hygiene. One of my daughter's first words in Spanish was the word for hand sanitizer! If I were to use clichés, I'd say Mary "runs a tight ship" and does things "by the book." I know she wants to move MASI to a larger space where it will be easier to follow new guidelines, and I appreciate this planning. I have no doubts that in the new space, MASI will be as well-run as it always has been.

I understand that Madison being a busy street presents a concern for the drop off and pick up procedures. I don't share this concern for two reasons. First, the handful of times I attended programming at this location when it was Academia, parking, entering and leaving with a small toddler was never a problem. Second, and more importantly, parking, pick-up and drop-off at MASI's previous location was extremely well-executed. The logistics of that space was also not simple, but Mary is so organized and proactive, parents were well-informed about parking restrictions in her lot, temporary closures due to construction, garbage pickup or other maintenance. Communication with Mary is easy and that makes for seamless transitions. On rainy days, she was outside with an umbrella as we arrived. When my son was a newborn, Mary or another teacher would bring my daughter to the car so I didn't have to disturb him. They are also able to do this because the team works so well together, coordinating all of their simultaneous responsibilities. Often, if my daughter was reluctant to leave (tantrumming) because she was in the middle of something fun, or didn't want to leave her teachers, they found creative ways to deescalate her, accompanying her to my car, coaxing her safely into her car seat. Several times we pulled away with calls through the window of "Chao! Gracias! I love you!" Rather than worry this process will be harder in their new location, there just might be more foot traffic to overhear my kids' professions of love for their MASI teachers.

Thank you,

Jenna Leving Jacobson

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Jenna Leving Jacobson, PhD
MOMS DEMAND ACTION, local lead
Oak Park, IL
847-804-0324

Hi Mr Bruce

I am writing in support of Mary Lubinus. My son attended her school (MASI) from September 2018 until March 2020 when the school closed related to the COVID pandemic.

Throughout that time, I knew my son was always safe and well taken care of. I was even planning on sending my younger son there as soon as he is old enough. As a Pediatrician, I take child safety very seriously. I have had to pull my son out of daycares in the past due to safety concerns. But, again, I always had the highest level of confidence in Mary and her staff when it comes to my children. In particular, I was always impressed with the procedures around pick up and drop off - there was one parking spot for the parents and we never had any issues. Mary made sure we followed the rules for pick up and drop off and would always have my son ready to go at the end of the day so pick up was smooth.

I am happy to answer any questions about our experiences with Mary. I strongly support her and her school and childcare services.

Lisa Davidoff, MD

Hello Mr. Bruce,

My name is Melissa Martinez. I am a long time Oak Park resident and I am reaching out to you because I wanted to provide public comment on Mrs. Lubinus's Montessori Academy Spanish Immersion facility and business. My daughter, Viola Vega was a student of Mrs. Lubinus for 4 years and I couldn't be happier! Mrs. Lubinus runs a FANTASTIC montessori. She is an amazing teacher that taught my daughter how to count all the way to 100 and almost read in Spanish when she was 5 years old! If it would not have been for COVID-19 interrupting school this year, I am positive my daughter would have learned how to read in Spanish with Mrs. Lubinus. My daughter is now super advanced in mathematics thanks to Mrs. Lubinus. Her instruction is impressive and all children in her school come out speaking Spanish. She also potty trained my daughter in 6 months!

Mrs. Lubinus runs her montessori efficiently. The facility always looked great, clean and the children were well taken care of while getting a fantastic education! When I dropped off my daughter at school with Mrs. Lubinus, I knew she was safe and happy. Mrs. Lubinus would call or text me immediately if my daughter fell and had a boo-boo. There were never surprises because she had such great communication with parents. She also built a great sense of community around the Montessori families with quarterly celebrations where the children got to present what they were learning in school.

Mrs. Lubinus has not once had to even advertise her montessori because everyone finds out about her school through word-of-mouth. Parents LOVE her program and they recommend it to other friends. Spots at her school get taken up quickly because everyone knows that she delivers a fantastic Montessori education.

I understand that Madison street where she intends to open up her new Montessori location is a busy street but I got to tell you that there is no one I trust more to be the utmost safe with children, than Mrs. Lubinus. Safety is paramount for her and I am sure she will set up the appropriate protocols to safely help students enter and exit the facility. At her prior facility the drop-off and pick-up protocol was safe and I trust her to do the same.

Mrs. Lubinus runs in my opinion, the best Spanish Montessori in all of Oak Park. I am so thankful to her for everything she did for my daughter. I STRONGLY recommend Mrs. Lubinus. She is an outstanding educator. She really, truly cares about the kids and safety is her number one thing. She would never open up a new facility if she did not feel it was safe. She is responsible, responsive and absolutely trustworthy. I trust her completely.

If you have any questions or would like to speak more in detail, feel free to call me at 708-846-6215.

Thanks,

Melissa R. Martinez
729 N Lombard Ave,
Oak Park, IL 60302

I support the special use permit for 306-312 Madison Street that is being requested by Mary Lubinus for her childcare business. I am a five year resident of Oak Park having relocated with my young family from San Francisco. Before moving, our children had been enrolled in a Spanish immersion daycare with kids ranging in age from infants to 5-year-olds. We looked for a similar option in Oak Park, but were disappointed in finding similar options for children younger than two. We were thrilled when we found MASI because it was another Spanish immersion environment supporting a similar age range. What we experienced was that MASI is more than just a childcare facility. The staff helped nurture my children's social, emotional, and academic growth.

There are limited options in Oak Park for working parents that want to have their younger kids (under three) in a group care environment. Especially multiple kids in the same facility. MASI is unique in filling this niche.

Our children also attended Academia for summer camps, so we have experience with that program and are familiar with the location. That space would be an ideal place for MASI to continue its mission of supporting local families looking for Spanish immersion, childcare, and education.

Lastly, Oak Park should continue to foster relationships with business owners like Mary Lubinus. She is a woman of color and a recent US citizen having immigrated from Colombia. I encourage this appeals board to support Ms. Lubinus and approve this request.

Ranga Bodla
Oak Park Resident