

April 8, 2024

Dear Honorable Council Members,

As you are aware, at close of business on April 4, the city published a recommendation to close Playschool and continue KinderPrep for one additional year before making a decision about its future. The statements revealed in this recommendation show that the financials for the program significantly worsened between 2023 and 2024 due to a number of changes. Chief amongst them was reducing the Playschool program from 5 days a week to 3 days a week, which reduced revenue by 44%. Also included were accounting changes such as allocating unfunded pension liabilities to the program, which while a reasonable decision, should not be considered in a break-even analysis when deciding whether to continue running the program as these costs cannot be avoided by closing the program. While the city now offers a full day TK, KinderPrep continues to be highly enrolled as many families opt for a half day program.

It must be understood that closing Playschool would be a death knell for the KinderPrep program. It would allocate all overhead costs to a single program. It would also harm the enrollment pipeline - KinderPrep is always fully enrolled at the beginning of the year because students continue on from Playschool. And it would reduce the desirability of the program as it's hard for families to switch schools every year both because children and parents like to continue on with those they already have relationships with and also because searching for a school program is a time consuming and stressful process parents do not wish to repeat on an annual basis.

While offering a transitional KinderPrep year without continuing the Playschool program would allow families in Playschool to finish their time in the program, many in the community would feel insulted by such a course of action. There's a widespread feeling that everything one would do to kill a program has been done to Tiny Tots including zero marketing, moving to 3 days/week, and no tuition raises in over a decade. By pursuing a course of action that almost certainly results in the closure of KinderPrep a year from now, it's yet one more cut in a slow death of a thousand cuts. Instead, we ask that you give the program and community a real chance to address any concerns.

We would ask that you consider an alternate solution composed of the following elements:

- Restore the Playschool program to 5 days per week
- Address losses from the Lunch and Play (LAP) program
- Exclude costs from the analysis that the city will retain if program is canceled
- Increase tuition for the first time in over a decade

### **Restore the Playschool program to 5 days per week**

Revenue was reduced by 44% or **\$65,900** between 2023 and projected 2024 year-end. The explanation from staff is that the reduction in revenue was caused by decreased enrollment due to a reduction in hours of the Playschool program.

The city's programs can run no more than 12 hours per week due to licensing restrictions. The Playschool program previously ran as two offerings on M/W/F or T/Th, so that no offering exceeded 12 hours per week. Additionally, KinderPrep runs as two offerings on M/T/W/Th or F, so that no offering exceeds 12 hours per week. Running the Playschool on one of these two schedules or a similar schedule would allow the program to adhere to licensing requirements.

The other consideration is staffing. The teachers at Playschool are all returning teachers and taught when the program was offered 5 days/week, and the head teachers for KinderPrep and Playschool have said that they would prefer these programs be offered 5 days/week, thus staffing should not be an issue.

Our understanding is that the city canceled the T/Th offering because it wanted to offer a Mommy & Me class, which was not ultimately approved and did not end up running. Parents and teachers both prefer the 5 day/week option as demonstrated by the loss in revenue from eliminating it. We request that this change be reversed.

### **Address losses from the Lunch and Play (LAP) program**

This program should either be changed to run in a more sustainable fashion or eliminated.

The Lunch and Play program is offered on a punch-card basis. These punch cards can be acquired in different sizes for as low as \$11.60/hr, which is much cheaper than a babysitter, and does not cover the cost of running the program. The punch card method of offering the program, while convenient for parents, also makes attendance unpredictable and results in additional administrative burden. Further, the program is difficult to staff as it runs for two hours each day and that's difficult to hire for. While all teachers from KinderPrep and Playschool are returning teachers, the city has had to go through the hiring process multiple times this year for Lunch and Play, which has entirely new staff. While the Tiny Tots financials have never been broken down between the three programs, we conservatively estimate that roughly **\$50,000** in direct losses are caused by running this program.

If council decides to pursue changes, those changes could include:

- Advertise the program as a service for all residents who have ad hoc child care needs. So many parents would find it incredibly helpful to have somewhere to drop kids off to be able to go to a doctor's appointment, go to the gym, or run other errands.
- Increase the hourly rates. The current \$11.60/hr is far cheaper than any babysitter
- Create punch cards for 50 or 100 visits reducing the administration of repeated 20 card purchases
- Offer an annual option to reduce administration compared to the daily drop-in
- Eliminate the option to utilize the program for only 1 hour

### **Exclude costs from the analysis that the city will retain if program is canceled**

While cost savings is a large driver for canceling the program, we must also recognize that not all costs can be avoided by canceling the program. Some expenses such as unfunded pension liability must continue to be paid regardless of whether the program is continued. Additionally,

some expenses are incurred on a city-wide basis and allocated to each program on a proportional basis. While understandable, we should also recognize that canceling the program will not eliminate these expenses and will just cause them to be allocated to other programs. Finally, the RFP states that the city may continue to pay for expenses such as maintenance, janitorial, and utilities. It is unclear whether Children's Corner proposed to pay for such expenses. The council should ascertain whether these costs will continue. Our estimate is that **\$86,929** in expenses are unavoidable.

### **Increase tuition for the first time in over a decade**

After factoring in the changes above, tuition would need to be raised by roughly \$3,500 to a total of around \$7,500/yr. Had tuition been raised each year over the past decade, this would be equivalent to a 6.5% annual rise in tuition. Childcare costs have risen at nearly twice the rate of overall inflation making this a reasonable catch up for price rises that should have been occurring over the past decade. Assuming an enrollment of 24 students, this would bring in an additional **\$84,000**. This would be only half the cost of the roughly \$15,000/yr charged by Children's Corner.

While this number is a lower number than the one shared by staff, it considers a different set of options. The lower number was arrived at by making the above changes of restoring a 5 day program, filtering out unavoidable costs, and eliminating losses from Lunch and Play. If the council or staff disagree with some of the analysis above, tuition may need to be further increased, but in any case would be a far more affordable option for parents than Children's Corner tuition is. This is also a breakeven analysis assuming that the city spends \$0 on the program. While every member of the community and council may have a different opinion as to what the correct amount of spending on this program is, it would be entirely reasonable for the city to spend funds on this program which promotes early childhood education and affordability for residents including the city's own employees.

While the city may wonder whether enrollment can be sustained with higher tuition rates, it must be noted that Children's Corner is able to fill their program while charging far higher rates. Further, demand for preschools has recently exploded with the closure of Google's daycare centers leading to long waitlists at area schools and adding confidence that the city will be able to enroll its program. The parents and community at the school are willing to put in the work to get the word out including running advertisements for the program, putting up flyers and signage, and manning events like the upcoming Los Altos Family Fun Day this Saturday.

We have attached a petition signed by roughly 150 members of the community urging you to give the program a chance. The Tiny Tots program is a storied cornerstone of the Los Altos community in existence for well over fifty years. The staff have nearly 50 years of combined experience working for the city and the Children's Corner licensing requirements mean that they would be losing their jobs and the community would be losing teachers that we all love so much. We would request that the city first attempt working with the parents and community to continue the long successful legacy of the Tiny Tots programs before opting for a sudden closure.

Sincerely,  
Stephanie Lin  
On behalf of Save Tiny Tots  
<https://losaltos.school>



## **PETITION TO THE CITY COUNCIL OF LOS ALTOS**

WE, the undersigned, were surprised to learn that the City of Los Altos is planning to end its preschool program and open up an RFP for private entities to bid on using the preschool facilities. It is alarming that the city is planning to eliminate this long-standing program without providing parents or the community notice, transparency into the decision making process, and a chance to address any concerns.

THAT, the Tiny Tots preschool program has been in existence for 50+ years, many former students are now sending their own children to participate. The program sets children up to become engaged citizens through the unique opportunities they have to interact with other community organizations through regular field trips and activities. A quality preschool program with a low student to teacher ratio and an affordable price has countless benefits for not only students, but the community as a whole. High quality early education programs attract residents and prepare students for success in Los Altos schools.

THAT, the program consists of experienced teachers with a passion for early childhood development, the school provides an environment which allows the children to learn and thrive. The staff has gone above and beyond to provide a quality experience, even through the trying times of the COVID pandemic. It is disturbing that the city is contemplating laying off highly qualified teachers during a nationwide teacher shortage. The proposed implementation timeline means there is a high risk that the program cannot be successfully offered next year as it will be challenging to contract with a private entity, hire new teachers, and enroll students in time for next school year when enrollment began months ago at other local area schools.

THAT, outsourcing to a private entity will result in a decrease in program quality, an increase in tuition, and the loss of highly experienced and dedicated teachers. The city can alter the economics of the program without introducing a middleman that will extract funds for its own benefit. The addition of such a middleman will only serve to worsen the experience for students, parents, and teachers at the school.

OUR REQUEST is that the city delay their decision and first attempt working with the parents and community to continue the long successful legacy of the Tiny Tots and Kinder Prep programs. A collaborative solutioning process should be fully attempted before a decision is made to shutter and privatize our local school without consultation of parents, students, teachers, residents, and advisory commissions.

Sincerely Yours,

Ashley Hawrylyshyn, Current parent

Ryan Nolan, Current parent

Jenny Lin

Erika Tang, Prospective parent and Los Altos resident

Jena Wise, Past parent, Los Altos resident

Rachel Massaro, Silicon Valley Community Health Researcher

Marina Post, Current Parent  
Gina Kim, Los Altos Resident  
Casey Davis, Prospective parent  
Elizabeth Stewart, current Tiny Tots parent  
Stephanie Lin, current Tiny Tots parent  
Citlali Tolia, Past parent/ Los Altos resident  
Tiffany Martin, Past Parent  
Ashley Lu, Prospective parent  
Jennifer Keller, Past Parent, Los Altos Resident  
Eduard Keller, Los Altos Resident, Past Parent  
Tony Lu, Los Altos Resident  
Feng Fang, Prospective Parent  
Kjell and Helene Karlsson, Past parent of a Tiny Tots and Kinder-Prep student  
Susanne Wisén, Past parent  
Marie Rosland, retired teacher  
Barbara Loebner, Los Altos resident  
Thea and Steve Merrill, Long-time Los Altos residents, had two children in the MVLA system  
Maggie Kwan, Prospective parent, Los Altos resident  
Jane Holt, los altos resident  
Erin Tressler, Past parent (2 kids)  
Jane Vaden, Incorporated Los Altos resident  
Jessica Behrmann, Current parent and past parent  
Patty Hurley, 37 year resident and past Tiny Tots parent  
Jayanti sharma, Current parent  
Ted Wertheimer, Los Altos Resident  
Danika Dellor, Past parent  
Chandani Tamang, Prospective parents  
Albina, Prospective parent  
Jeannette Ring, Past parent and lover of all things Tiny Tots related!  
Sarah Calleija, Past and prospective parent  
Patrick Ring, Big brother to sister who attended  
Alice Ring, Former Tiny Tot, current 7th grader at Blach  
Leigh Burns Quan, Former teacher and parent of a tiny tot graduate  
Leea Guy, Recreation coordinator who over saw tiny toys  
Sara Brannin-Mooser, Past preschool parent in Los Altos  
Claudia Meyer, Former Teacher & Director at Tiny Tots. Los Altos Resident  
Catherine Dellor , Past parent/Los Altos resident  
Christine Larsen, Former Los Altos resident and supportive friend of current students  
Jake Humble, Resident  
Marina Eisenbud, Mountain View resident and parent  
Lanjun Wang  
Andrea Carella, Los Altos resident  
Linnea Sloan, Los Altos resident  
Katherine Carpenter, Los Altos resident, parent of schoolage kids

Muhammad Wang, Prospective Parent  
Linda Roy, Los Altos resident  
TJ, Parent  
Linnsey Nil  
Paul Carella, Los Altos resident  
Victoria Hambly, Past  
GayLynn Ribeira, Past parent  
Jacy Tse, Current parent, Los Altos Hills resident  
Hollie Halpin, Past parent  
Heather Katta, Past parent and current Los Altos resident  
James Ring, Parent of former tiny tot, Mountain View resident  
Chrishnika Paul, Past parent and Los Altos resident  
Lisa Martins Skaggs, Los Altos Resident  
Melanie Hinse, Past Tiny Tots parent  
Meeta Nashru , Parent los altos  
Shannon Campos, parent of LAHS students (past and present)  
Anusha Natarajan, Los Altos resident  
Sarah Wu, Past parent  
Andrea Barnett, Los Altos resident  
Jonathan Wu, Past Parent  
Jeff Chung, Current parent 2 LAHS students  
Sonia Soo, Current Los Altos resident and parents to LASD schools and LAHS  
Ali, Paraeducator/family member of Los Altos Resident  
Kay Chin, current & past parent  
Yvonne Hildebrand, current Los Altos resident  
Ben & Jessica Mullen, Past student and Los Altos Residents  
William Hsu, Grandfather  
Joann Barboudesplaces, Los Altos resident  
Jeanine Valadez, Los Altos resident and member of the public  
Anne Schmidt, past parent and Los Altos resident  
Ray Abrishami, Past  
Beth Kelly, Past Parent  
Leeanne Kromer, Past teacher at Tiny Tots 1985-1996  
Andrei Selikhanovich, Past parent (3 kids graduated from Tiny Tots), Los Altos resident  
Jeff, Los Altos resident  
Benjamin McCann, current parent  
Nancy Tucker, Over 40 year resident of Los Altos  
Mary Chin  
Marjan Yahya, Current parent and resident  
Kevin Lu, Prospective parent  
Jessica Thomander , Current  
Jane Holt, current and long term Los Altos resident  
Sara Kiani , Los Altos North resident and parent to young kids  
Meredith Purser , Current Tiny Tots parent

Dorothy Hsu, Grandmother  
Eileen Fairley, Prospective parent, Los Altos resident  
Lu Wang, Los Altos resident  
Jenna Arruda, Los Altos resident, Previous Tiny Tots parent, community pediatrician  
Linda Palmor, Current resident  
Ginny Leung, current parent, Los Altos resident  
Meri-Beth Bird, Past parent of 2 children that attended Tiny Tots  
Sunny Early, Parent  
John C Lukrich, Parent / Los Altos resident  
Chris Roat, Los Altos resident  
Malcolm Early, parent  
Lacey, prospective parent  
Jennifer Walker, Los Altos resident  
Beth Markus Lukrich, Los Altos resident  
Valerie Klazura, parent of TT Alums and Los Altos resident  
Mary Gallivan, Past parent  
Riley Gallivan, former Tiny Tots student  
Conor Gallivan, Past tot!  
Annie Gallivan, Alumni  
Jack Deely  
Courtney Quinlan, Former Los Altos resident  
Skylar Scull, Los Altos resident  
Rich Gallivan, past parent, Los Altos resident  
Elizabeth, Tiny Tots Parent  
Scott Snedden, Past parent of two Tiny Tots alumni  
Seamus Gallivan, Alumni of Tiny Tots  
Dana Kawaguchi, Past Tiny Tot parent  
Lily Chin, Tiny Tots Alumni  
Kirby Hansen, current Los Altos resident  
Myla Santos, Previous Tiny Tots Preschool Teacher  
Karen Hansen  
Hayden Brown, Current Los Altos resident and parent of young kids  
Ryan Brown, Los Altos resident  
Blaine Dzwonczyk, Tiny Tots Graduate Class of 2000, current high school teacher  
Ye Dong, prospective parent  
Lu Wang, Los Altos residents and prospective parents  
Rajiv Shah, Resident  
Gaurav Mehta, Prospective parent and Los Altos Resident  
Jianing Yan  
Chuanjun Shan  
Luke Dzwonczyk, alumnus  
Cui Lin, Prospective parent  
Hong Wu, Los Altos resident  
Meredith Purser, Current Kinder Prep parent