



**City of Richmond, Virginia**  
**Department of Planning and Development Review**  
**Planning and Preservation Division**  
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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: June 4, 2015  
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent Review of the installation of modular classrooms on the Broad Rock Elementary School site, 4615 Ferguson Lane; UDC #15-14**

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**I. APPLICANTS**

Lloyd Schieldge, Richmond Public Schools

**II. LOCATION**

Broad Rock Elementary School, 4615 Ferguson Lane

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond School Board

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of the installation of modular classrooms on the Broad Rock Elementary School site.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This is a request to install twelve modular classrooms and one modular dining hall on the Broad Rock Elementary School site. The Applicant's Report notes that the school is already over capacity with additional students set to arrive in the fall. Richmond Public Schools (RPS) is formulating long-term plans to address the overcrowding, but to address the immediate need the School Board has requested that the RPS Administration provide temporary modular classrooms at both Greene Elementary and Broad Rock Elementary.

The Urban Design Guidelines present very strong language against the use of modular classrooms at City schools, affirming a 1995 motion by the Planning Commission stating that "all future modular unit requests, including renewals of currently approved units, will not be considered unless they are submitted with a cost analysis which compares the cost of the modular unit(s) to the cost of constructing an addition or a new school in lieu of the modular unit(s)". The Applicant's Report indicates that the permanent resolution to the overcrowding at Broad Rock Elementary School will involve redistricting, with potential additions and renovations to the surrounding schools that would accept students currently assigned to this one. The projected cost of those additions/renovations is \$5.2 million. The total cost to lease the modular classrooms for a two-year period for this school is approximately \$763,035, which includes site work (utilities, stormwater, etc.), installation and monthly rent.

While not supportive of the use of modular classrooms, Staff finds this to be a time-sensitive situation which calls for flexibility in the application of the guidelines. The proposed modular classrooms, connected with a central hallway, providing restrooms

and adjacent to a modular dining hall, act more as a separate wing of the main building than as a stand-alone classroom like the modular units commonly used to alleviate school overcrowding. While it is not preferable to locate the classrooms in the front of the main school building, the proposed location is the safest and most convenient one from an operational standpoint, adjacent to the bus loop and across from the school's main entrance.

Staff is comfortable recommending approval of the request for a two-year period in order to provide time to the Richmond Public Schools Administration to develop long-term plans. Staff would request that the applicant return to the UDC and Planning Commission with details related to the covered walkway connecting the modular classrooms to the main building, the landscape plans and the stormwater BMP. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant final approval, with the following conditions:

- That the Certificate of Occupancy for the modular classrooms contains an expiration date of June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017.
- That if the modular classrooms are needed beyond the June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2017 expiration date, the applicant must obtain an extension from the Planning Commission.
- That the applicant return to the UDC and Planning Commission with details related to the covered walkway connecting the modular classrooms to the main building, the landscape plans and the stormwater BMP.

**Staff Contact:** Jeff Eastman, (804) 646-6348

## **V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

### **a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

Broad Rock Elementary School is located on 9.6 acres bound by Ferguson Lane to the north, Dorset Road to the east, Jervie Drive to the south and Broadingham Road to the west. The two-story school was built in 2012 and currently contains approximately 92,000 square feet of space. The new school was constructed on the fields behind the old school, and when it was completed, the old school was demolished. This has resulted in a large setback for the current school, which fronts on Ferguson Lane.

The school property and adjacent properties to the north, west and south are zoned R-4 (Single-family detached residential), while the primary zoning to the east is R-3 (Single-family detached residential). These areas are improved with single-family detached dwellings. There is an area fronting on Broad Rock Boulevard to the north of the school that is zoned B-2 (Community Business) and improved with commercial buildings.

### **b. Scope of Review**

The modular classrooms are subject to location character, and extent review as "public buildings or structures" in accordance with Section 17.07 of the City Charter.

### **c. UDC Review History**

The UDC reviewed, and the Planning Commission approved, the plans for the new Broad Rock Elementary School in 2010. The school was opened in 2012.

**d. Project Description**

This is a request to install twelve modular classrooms and one modular dining hall on the Broad Rock Elementary School site. The enrollment capacity for the school (without using modular units) is 650 students. The actual enrollment this year is 825 students, and the projection for 2015-16 is 894 students, increasing to 995 students in the 2019-2020 school year. Richmond Public Schools (RPS) is formulating long-term plans to address the overcrowding, but to address the immediate need the School Board has requested that the RPS Administration provide temporary modular classrooms at both Greene Elementary and Broad Rock Elementary. The Applicant's Report indicates that the permanent resolution to the overcrowding at Broad Rock Elementary School will involve redistricting, with potential additions and renovations to the surrounding schools that would accept students currently assigned to this one. The projected cost of those additions/renovations is \$5.2 million. The total cost to lease the modular classrooms for a two-year period for this school is approximately \$763,035, which includes site work (utilities, stormwater, etc.), installation and monthly rent.

The proposed modular classrooms will be connected to each other and will also have an 8' wide central hallway and shared restroom facilities. Connecting the classrooms and other facilities results in a structure that is 177'8" in length by 65' in width with just over 14,000 square feet of added space. The modular dining hall facility will be 60' in length by 46'8" in width with approximately 2,800 square feet of added space. The new facilities, which will be used for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, are proposed to be installed to the north of the main school building, in a grassy field that is set aside as future athletic fields. The new classrooms, sidewalk and ramp will all be ADA compliant. The applicant is considering options for a covered walkway that would connect the modular classrooms to the main school building, but no details are available at this time.

The proposed modular classrooms and dining hall feature hardi-panel exterior siding, steel clad exterior doors with view block, energy efficient exterior windows, a white EPDM roof to reduce heat gain, high efficiency heat pumps, gutters and downspouts. Wall mounted lights will also be installed on the exterior. When placed on-site, the lower portion of the modular classrooms and dining hall will be skirted in hardi-panel down to the grade to account for changes in topography and to prevent students from getting underneath. Landscaping will be provided, but will be minimal due to the temporary nature of the modular classrooms. Unfortunately, due to the compressed schedule, landscaping plans have not been fully developed yet. Due to the size of the modular classrooms, a BMP will be required for rainwater runoff. That BMP will be located to the east of the modular classrooms in the grassy field.

The new modular classrooms and dining hall are intended to be installed by the middle of August to allow teachers to set up their new classrooms and to allow for set-up of the dining facility.

**e. Master Plan**

The subject property is located within the Broad Rock Planning District, as defined by the citywide Master Plan. The Plan recommends Public and Open Space uses for this property, a designation that includes publicly owned and operated parks, recreation areas, open spaces, schools, libraries and other

government and public service functions (page 135). The Plan notes that “Existing and projected deficiencies must be addressed in order to bring about needed improvements to City School facilities” (page 76). These deficiencies include elementary schools with modular classrooms, among others.

The Plan contains a list of recommended improvements for City school facilities broken into categories including basic renovation, major renovations, major additions and new construction, and demolitions and closures. Broad Rock Elementary School is noted in the demolition and on-site facility replacement category (page 78).

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Urban Design Guidelines state that the “Committee is strongly opposed to the use of temporary modular classroom units by Richmond Public Schools to meet ongoing educational needs”. The Guidelines further note that “The UDC supports the City Planning Commission's policy, adopted July 17, 1995, which states that all future modular unit requests, including renewals of currently approved units, will not be considered unless they are submitted with a cost analysis which compares the cost of the modular unit(s) to the cost of constructing an addition or a new school in lieu of the modular unit(s)” (page 16).

**VI. ATTACHMENTS**

- a. Vicinity Map**
- b. Application**
- c. Plans**