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To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: May 16, 2016
RE: **Final Location, Character and Extent Review of the installation of modular classrooms on the Greene Elementary School site, 1745 Catalina Drive; UDC 2016-16**

I. APPLICANTS

Lloyd Schieldge, Richmond Public Schools

II. LOCATION

Greene Elementary School, 1745 Catalina Drive

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 Greene Elementary School site.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION

This is a request to install a second modular classroom building of eight classrooms and restrooms on the Greene Elementary School site; last year the UDC and Planning Commission approved the installation of one modular dining hall and modular classroom building that are now existing on the 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 Greene, Broad Rock, and Reid Elementary Schools.

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 Greene Elementary School may involve renovation and expansion of the existing facility or a replacement building. The projected cost of the renovation and expansion option is \$11.5 million.

The Urban Design Committee had many questions about the duration of use of the modular buildings currently on site at the other elementary schools, which has been one year. RPS presented on the need for construction dollars to move forward with their comprehensive facilities plan across the district and particularly the Southside. RPS has a plan, contingent on construction funding, to build a new elementary school on the

Greene site while keeping the existing school open. If fully funded, this school would be completed and open by the FY19 school year.

The applicant was also asked to clarify the budgetary cost, which had not been provided in the application. The rental of the modular building runs about \$130,000 a year, and that initial sitework and installation costs ran between \$500,000-\$600,000. RPS staff clarified that the lifespan of the units could be up to 35 years, but that that was in no way the intent of RPS to use modular buildings on a long-term basis.

The UDC was comfortable recommending approval of the request for a two-year period in order to provide time to the Richmond Public Schools Administration to move forward with long-term plans and obtain funding; they were particularly concerned that RPS should advance planning & design for replacement schools and/or renovations before any modular buildings should receive renewals of their Certificate of Occupancy. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee voted to 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 30th, 2018.
- That if the modular classrooms are needed beyond the June 30th, 2018 expiration date, the applicant must obtain an extension from the Planning Commission.
- And the recommendation that the renewal in two years be contingent upon visible and submitted planning to address long-term overcrowding at the school.

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V. FINDINGS OF FACT

a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

Greene Elementary School is located on 15 acres bound by Broad Rock Boulevard to the east, N. Kinsley Avenue to the north, Catalina Drive to the west and Cranford Avenue to the south. The one-story school was built in 1955, with additions in 1961 and 1969, and currently contains approximately 41,000 square feet of space in the main building. There are also five modular classrooms on the site that provide additional classroom space.

The school property and adjacent properties to the southeast are zoned R-4 (Single-family detached residential), while the primary zoning to the north and west is R-3 (Single-family detached residential). These areas are improved with single-family detached dwellings. There is one parcel to the north zoned RO-1 (Residential/Office) that is a multi-family dwelling, and Broad Rock Boulevard north of Kinsley Avenue is zoned B-3 (General 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 has reviewed, and the Planning Commission approved, several previous requests for the installation of modular classroom at Greene Elementary: two modular units in 2002 approved for a duration of two years; three units in 1997

approved for a duration of one year; one unit in 1995 approved for a duration of two years; one unit in 1992 approved with an unknown duration. Three older modular units currently remain on site. Last year, the UDC reviewed and Planning Commission approved the installation of a modular classroom building and cafeteria that is now on site.

d. Project Description

This is a request to install an eight classroom modular building on the Greene Elementary School Site. The enrollment capacity for the school (without using modular units) is 390 students. The actual enrollment this year is 592 students, and the projection for 2016-17 is 599 students, increasing to 639 students in the 2021-2022 school year. The Applicant's Report indicates that the permanent resolution to the overcrowding at Greene Elementary School may involve renovation and expansion of the existing facility or a replacement building. The projected cost of the renovation and expansion option is \$11.5 million.

The proposed modular classrooms 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. No landscaping is proposed because of the temporary nature of the modular classrooms.

The new 65' by 124' modular building will be installed perpendicular to an existing 11 classroom modular, and will connect to that building and to the existing cafeteria modular by walkways and ramps. All the proposed facilities will be ADA compliant. The new building will block further access to existing paved tennis courts and basketball facilities that are used by the public outside of school hours; the applicant is pursuing potential other off-hours access.

The new modular classrooms are intended to be installed by the middle of August 2016; RPS will have to submit for renewal of modular building annual permits in May 2017 in accordance with the conditions of prior approvals.

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. Though no details are given on the extent of the improvements, Greene Elementary School is noted in the basic renovation and major additions/new construction categories (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**