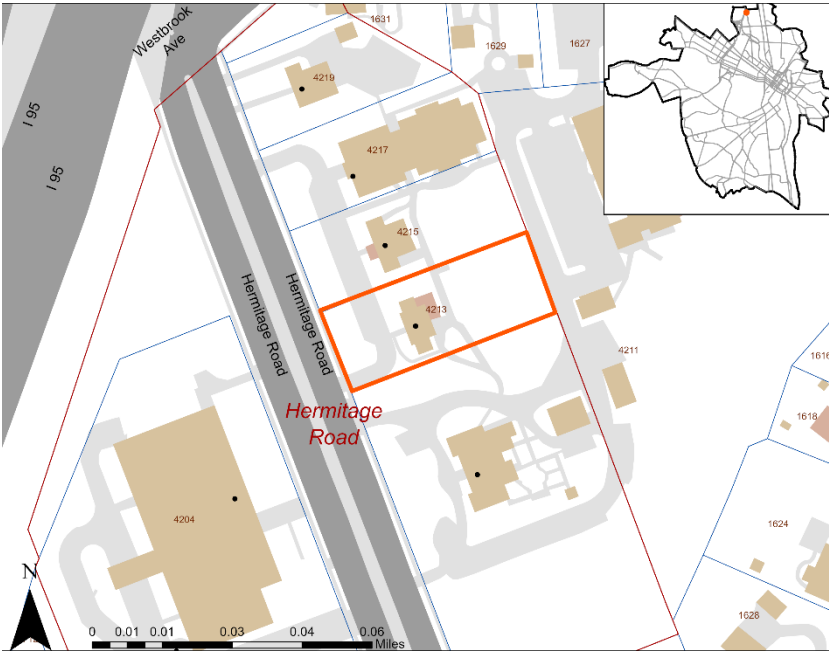




Commission of Architectural Review

13. COA-187214-2026	Conceptual Review	Meeting Date: 7/28/2026
Applicant/Petitioner	Patrick McClane	
Project Description	Construct a new 16-classroom School, in place of non-contributing building proposed for demolition	
Project Location		
Address: 4213 Hermitage Road		
Historic District: Hermitage Road		
High-Level Details:		
The application proposes the construction of a new two-story academic building. The approximately 20,000 sf building will replace an existing building proposed for demolition, and provide sixteen classrooms, science laboratories, learning support spaces, and associated educational facilities. The proposed building is organized around a central entrance pavilion that connects Hermitage Road to the campus quad, with two projecting classroom wings flanking the entrance and a subordinate wing containing support and amenity spaces. The design features yellow brick, hipped and gabled roofs, multi-lite windows, detailing intended to establish a cohesive campus character alongside existing campus buildings such as Founder's Hall and Massey Hall. The proposal also includes associated site improvements, including the reorganization of the campus quad, new pedestrian connections, landscaping, and improvements to vehicular circulation.		
Staff Recommendation	Conceptual Review	
Staff Contact	Yara Iwaz, Yara.Iwaz@RVA.gov, (804)646-6031	
Previous Reviews	N/A	

Staff Recommendations	Staff recommends the following: • The applicant study reorienting the building to present its narrower elevation toward Hermitage Road, to better reinforce the historic pattern of detached buildings while still accommodating the functional needs of the campus • If current siting is to be unchanged, design measures be taken to reduce the perceived horizontality of the combined façade, by emphasizing massing breaks and recesses to reduce the appearance of the building as a wide horizontal mass • Avoid the continuous first-floor horizontal brick band across the entire façade and instead using material transitions to further distinguish the individual masses and reduce the perceived horizontal scale of the building • Revise the cornice design to reduce the perceived horizontality of the building and better reinforce the hierarchy of the individual building volumes • The Applicant take measures to reference the scale, materials, massing, and street presence of the demolished building • The Applicant coordinate with zoning to produce a full site plan and adhere to requirements; any changes resulting from zoning review should be reflected in the final CAR review.
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Staff Analysis

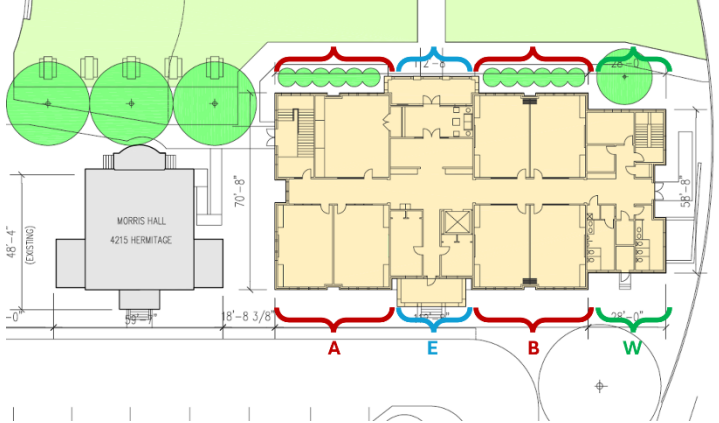
Surrounding Context

The subject property is located within the Hermitage Road Old & Historic District, a district characterized primarily by large detached late nineteenth and early twentieth century residential buildings, predominantly of Queen Anne and Italian Renaissance styles. The site is located across Hermitage Road from the BAPS Mandir site (4204 Hermitage Road). The proposed building proposed to replace a non-contributing structure.

The New Community School campus features historic residential structures such as Massey Hall, and institutional buildings of more recent construction such as Founder's Hall (2016). The proposed academic building is intended to create greater visual cohesion across the campus while addressing a programmatic need.

As the proposed building is institutional in use, staff has used the Guideline "Standards for New Construction: Commercial" in the following report.

Guideline Reference	Reference Text	Analysis
Standards for New Construction, page 46	<i>All new residential and commercial construction, whether in the form of additions or entire buildings, should be compatible with the historic features that characterize their setting and context. To protect the context of the surrounding historic district, new construction should reference the materials, features, size, scale, proportions, and massing of the existing historic building or buildings in its setting. However, compatibility does not mean duplicating the existing buildings or environment. In order to avoid creating a false sense of history, new construction should also be discernible from the old. Perhaps the best way to think about a compatible new building (or addition) is that it should be a good neighbor; one that enhances the character of the existing district and respects its historic context, rather than being an exact (and misleading) reproduction of another building.</i>	The proposed building proposes to occupy the site of a non-contributing structure and establishes a new academic building along Hermitage Road. This siting differs from the established development pattern along this portion of Hermitage Road. The proposed building is oriented with its long elevation facing Hermitage Road, resulting in an extended, continuous street façade that emphasizes the building's horizontal massing. Staff notes that the institutional building at 4217 Hermitage Road, located on the same block, addressed a similar campus program while maintaining the historic rhythm of development by orienting its narrow façade toward Hermitage Road and its longer dimension toward the interior of the campus. This orientation better reflects the detached residential pattern that characterizes the district while still accommodating a larger institutional building behind. Although staff recognizes the functional requirements of an educational facility, consideration should be given to reorienting the proposed building so that its narrower end addresses Hermitage Road, similar to the precedent established at 4217 Hermitage Road. This would help maintain the rhythm of detached buildings along the corridor, and allow the larger campus-oriented massing to be expressed toward the interior of the site. Staff recommends that the applicant study reorienting the building to present its narrower elevation toward Hermitage Road, to better reinforce the historic pattern of detached buildings while still accommodating the functional needs of the campus.
Standards for New Construction: Height, Width, Proportion & Massing, page 53	1. New commercial construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings, both residential and commercial. 2. New commercial construction should respect the vertical orientation typical of commercial buildings in Richmond's historic	<i>Façade on Hermitage Road</i> The proposed academic building is proposed to occupy the location of a non-contributing building proposed for demolition, and reinforces the existing campus organization by defining the edge of the central quad. Primary entrances address both Hermitage Road and the interior campus.

	<i>districts. New designs that call for wide massing should look to the project's local district for precedent. When designing new commercial buildings that occupy more than one third of a block face, the design should still employ bays as an organizational device, but the new building should read as a single piece of architecture.</i>	As previously noted, the proposed building introduces a larger footprint and greater horizontal form than is typical of the residential structures that define the Hermitage Road district. Staff acknowledges that an educational program of this scale will inherently require a larger building, and that the building form and scale should reflect its institutional setting. <u>Staff recommends that, if current siting is to be unchanged, design measures be taken to reduce the perceived horizontality of the combined façade, by emphasizing massing breaks and recesses to reduce the appearance of the building as a wide horizontal mass, as discussed further below.</u>
Standards for New Construction, page 46	1. <i>New construction should use a building form compatible with that found elsewhere in the historic district. Building form refers to the specific combination of massing, size, symmetry, proportions, projections and roof shapes that lend identity to a building. Form is greatly influenced by the architectural style of a given structure.</i>	Massing To better illustrate the recommendations in this report, below is a diagram of the proposed massing:  The overall composition is organized into distinct masses centered around a primary entrance pavilion. The classroom blocks (Blocks A and B) are comparable in scale to larger residential buildings within the district, and feature individual sloped roofs with large overhangs, while the entrance pavilion E establishes a clear organizing element along the central pedestrian access. The south amenity wing (Block W) is appropriately lower in height and visually subordinate. This composition appropriately breaks down what would otherwise be a very large institutional building into smaller volumes that reference the scale and roof forms of adjacent campus buildings and nearby residences. Blocks A and B, with their hipped roofs, chimney elements, and proportions, most closely reflect the scale and form of the surrounding district, while the entrance block successfully establishes a strong visual axis between Hermitage Road and the campus quad. The amenity wing is appropriately subordinate through its reduced height and simpler form. <u>Staff finds the overall height to be appropriate within the context of the block.</u> Although the larger footprint is required for an educational facility, that the composition of the building presents interconnected volumes that follow an appropriate hierarchy. Staff finds that this organization of functions and composition

		should also be reinforced and reflected with the material strategy, by emphasizing the individual blocks: • Blocks A and B should be expressed as the primary volumes through consistent brick treatment across both stories, reinforcing their prominence within the composition. • The entrance block (E) should similarly receive a unified material treatment that highlights its vertical emphasis and civic function. • The amenity wing (W) should remain visually subordinate through a simpler, more restrained material treatment. <u>Staff recommends avoiding the continuous first-floor horizontal brick band across the entire façade and instead using material transitions to further distinguish the individual masses and reduce the perceived horizontal scale of the building.</u> This can be achieved by Blocks A & B having consistent material treatment across the two stories of their respective elevations. Additionally, the wing W can have a more subdued treatment that minimizes its presence on Hermitage road, and corresponds to its subordinate form.
Standards for New Construction: Form, page 52	<i>2. New commercial construction should maintain the existing human scale of nearby historic commercial buildings in the district.</i> <i>3. New commercial construction should incorporate human-scale elements at the pedestrian level.</i>	<i>Cornice & Horizontality</i> The proposed cornice running continuously across Blocks A, E, and B is intended as a traditional element that references the cornice profiles present on nearby historic structures, and is coherent with the hipped roof forms of the classroom blocks. Staff supports the use of a cornice as part of the design vocabulary for this building. However, in its current configuration the continuous cornice further reinforces the horizontal emphasis across the combined façade. <u>Staff recommends revising the cornice design to reduce the perceived horizontality of the building and better reinforce the hierarchy of the individual building volumes.</u> Staff recommends that the cornice be limited to Blocks A and B only, where it most naturally complements the hipped roof forms and residential scale of those blocks, and where it can serve as a terminating element that reinforces their reading as the most prominent components of the building. Removing the cornice from Block E would allow that block's vertical articulation (pilasters and projecting balcony) to read more clearly, and would further differentiate the entrance block from the flanking classroom blocks. Staff additionally recommends that the cornice on Blocks A and B be made more robust in its proportions (taller in profile).
Standards for New Construction: Materials & Colors, page 47	<i>2. Materials used in new residential construction should be visually compatible with original materials used throughout the district.</i>	<i>Perceived Scale</i> The proposed academic building occupies the site of a structure proposed for demolition. Staff recommends that the design look to that demolished building as a contextual reference, rather than drawing primarily from the adjacent

		campus buildings at 4211 and 4217 Hermitage Road. While design coherence across the campus is important, the more prominent requirement for a building on this site is to the Hermitage Road streetscape and to the structure that previously occupied the lot. <u>Staff recommends that the applicant take measures to reference the scale, materials, massing, and street presence of the demolished building.</u>
Standards for New Construction, page 53	<i>1. New commercial construction should respect the typical height of surrounding buildings, both residential and commercial.</i>	<i>Zoning; Height; Massing</i> Zoning review requires a site plan to show the proposed new building, setbacks and lot coverage, as well as the overall height that should not exceed 35 ft. <u>Staff recommends that applicant coordinate with zoning to produce a full site plan and adhere to requirements; any changes resulting from zoning review should be reflected in the final CAR review.</u>

It is the assessment of staff that, with the conditions above, the application is consistent with the Standards for Rehabilitation and New Construction outlined in Section 30-930.7 (b) and (c) of the City Code, as well as with the Richmond Old and Historic Districts Handbook and Design Review Guidelines, specifically the pages cited above, adopted by the Commission for review of Certificates of Appropriateness under the same section of the code.

Figures

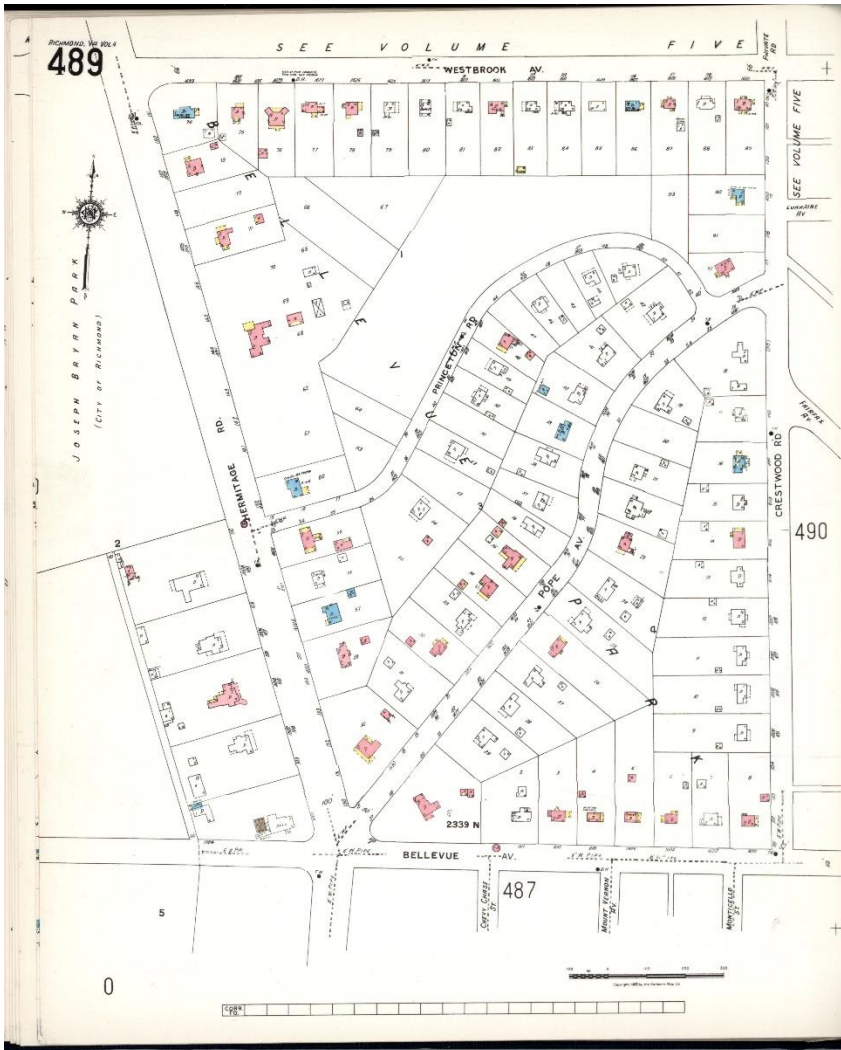


Figure 1: Sanborn Map, republished 1952