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To: Urban Design Committee  
From: Planning and Preservation Division  
Date: November 8, 2018  
RE: **Conceptual location, character, and extent review of construction of the new E.S.H. Greene Elementary School, 1745 Catalina Drive; UDC 2018-48**

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**I. APPLICANT**

Don Summers, Department of Public Works – Capital Projects

**II. LOCATION**

1745 Catalina Drive

**Property Owner:**

City of Richmond School Board

**III. PURPOSE**

The application is for final location, character, and extent review of the new E.S.H. Greene Elementary School, 1745 Catalina Drive.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

The project involves the construction of a new elementary school to accommodate 1,000 students. The proposed building will replace an existing school that has been expanded with two modular units that house additional classrooms and an additional cafeteria. Richmond Public Schools (RPS) selected four school design prototypes and presented them to the School board and community. The intention of the project is to reduce the design timeline in order to have the new school operational by 2020. Due to existing physical constraints, the existing school will remain open as the new school is under construction directly behind.

Staff is supportive of the overall design of the school building, which is required to meet LEED Silver. Therefore, it is Staff's position that the Urban Design Committee should recommend that the Planning Commission grant conceptual approval with the following conditions for a final review:

- Provide a site plan for the project indicating site characteristics which include: building footprints, parking areas, pedestrian routes, recreation areas, open areas, and areas of future expansion.
- Provide a set of floor plans and elevations, as detailed as possible.
- Provide a landscaping plan that includes a complete plant schedule, the precise location of all plant materials, and a landscape maintenance analysis. The plant schedule must show number, size and type of each planting proposed. If existing trees are to be removed, their size, type and location must be noted on the landscape plan.
- Provide the location of all lighting units (this should be noted on a site plan), including wall-mounted, site and parking lot lighting. Other site details, such as benches, trash containers and special paving materials, should also be located. Include specification sheets for each item.

- Samples of all proposed exterior building materials, including but not limited to brick, mortar, shingles, siding, glass, paint and stain colors. When an actual sample cannot be provided, a product information sheet that shows the item or a photo of an existing item may be substituted.

**Staff Contact:**

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**V. FINDINGS OF FACT**

**a. Site Description and Surrounding Context**

The subject property, totaling approximately 15 acres, is bound by Cranford Avenue on the south, residential on the north, Catalina Drive on the west, and Broad Rock Boulevard on the east. The property lies within the R-4 (Single-Family Residential) zoning district. It is bordered to the west by an area zoned R-3 (Single-Family Residential) and an area zoned RO-1 (Residential Office).

The property is nestled within a neighborhood and mostly surrounded by detached single-family residential properties. A buffer of trees separates the parcel from properties fronting along Broad Rock Boulevard.

**b. Scope of Review**

The proposed signage is subject to location, character, and extent review under Section 17.07 of the City Charter as identification for a “public building or structure”.

**c. Project Description**

The Building One Richmond Program currently includes a five-year, \$150 million plus program focused on the new construction of public elementary, middle and high schools in the city. The school Board of the City of Richmond has updated its 2002 Facilities Master Plan, and the update identifies ESH Greene Elementary School as a prioritized “Phase 1” project. The Owner has identified \$150 million in funding for those projects identified in the updated 2002 Facilities Master Plan as “Phase 1” projects. The design and construction of these projects is a collaborative effort between the City of Richmond, which is the owner of the schools, and the School Board, which will operate the schools once they open.

E.S.H. Greene Elementary School was named for Edwin Stonewall Hunter Greene, a former superintendent of schools for Chesterfield County and the City of Colonial Heights. The school was built in 1954. In 1970, the city of Richmond annexed the area including E.S.H. Greene School from Chesterfield County and the school then became a part of the Richmond Public School System. E.S.H. Greene School is located at 1745 Catalina Drive on the constantly growing and culturally changing south side of Richmond, Virginia. It has a main building which houses grades K-2 and 2 modular buildings with an additional cafeteria to house grades 3-5.

During the construction of the new ESH Greene Elementary School, the existing elementary school and modular buildings must remain operational. This constraint gives us only one area of the property to build the new school, behind the existing building. The new ESH Greene Elementary School will be an approximately 115,000-square-foot facility with a capacity for approximately 1,000 students. The building will be construction type IIB and fully sprinklered. It will have CMY bearing

walls with brick veneer and a standing seam metal roof. Sustainability is a key component to this project. The project will achieve a minimum LEED Silver Certification. The site plan will allow for complete separation of car and bus traffic. It will provide parking for staff and visitors as well as a drop-off lane for parents that choose to drive their children to school. There will be playground areas behind the school that will be fenced for safety purposes. There will also be playground and athletic field areas at the front of the site that will be used by the school during the day and by the community after school hours. Construction is scheduled to begin in the early Spring of 2019. Occupation of the new ESH Greene Elementary School is planned for the Fall of 2020 with the demolition of the existing school planned for Fall of 2020 and potentially into the Spring of 2021. ESH Greene Elementary School is bordered by residential properties. The surrounding streets are Catalina Drive, Cranford Avenue, Kinsley Avenue, and Broad Rock Boulevard. It is located east of the intersection of Hull Street Road and Warwick Road, and northeast of the Broad Rock Sports Complex.

**d. UDC Review History**

The UDC has reviewed, and the Planning Commission approved, several previous requests for the installation of modular classrooms at Greene Elementary: one modular unit in 2016 (UDC 2016-16) that is still in existence today, two modular units in 2015 (UDC 2015-15) that are still in existence today, two modular units in 2002 (UDC 2002-37) approved for a duration of two years; three units in 1997 (UDC 1997-43) approved for a duration of one year; one unit in 1995 (UDC 1995-22) approved for a duration of two years; one unit in 1992 (UDC 1992-72) approved with an unknown duration.

**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, open spaces, schools, and other government and public service facilities (page 135, 213). The Public Facilities section of the Plan notes that “Richmond Public Schools has an ongoing policy of maximizing the use of facilities for both school and non-school related activities” (page 75). One of the “policies and strategies” intended to address specific school facilities deficiencies is “to enhance learning environments for all students, and to promote the use of all existing and planned facilities by the community-at-large by sharing facilities wherever practical and economically advantageous among public schools and other community institutions, organizations, programs and City agencies” (page 77). The “policies and strategies” section solidifies this desire by stating support for “designing buildings to allow for maximum flexibility in the use of the space, and multiple-use facilities that accommodate both students and residents of the surrounding neighborhoods” (page 77).

**f. Urban Design Guidelines**

The Urban Design Guidelines have a number of recommendations pertaining to new building construction, including that “the height of a new building should be compatible with neighboring buildings” and that “a building’s roof form should relate to neighboring buildings” (page 16). The Guidelines go on to say that “new building materials should be compatible with and complement adjacent buildings” and also that they “should be aesthetically and structurally durable, of high quality, and require little maintenance” (page 17). The Guidelines note that “the

number, size, style and type of windows should be appropriate for the architecture of the building” and that “the rhythm, patterns, and ratio of walls to windows should be proportional and be compatible with adjacent buildings” (page 18).

As to site layout, the Guidelines advocate for parking areas being “relegated to remote areas of the site so that the orientation of buildings can be given a direct connection to the public right-of-way” (page 4). “Circulation within the site”, the Guidelines note, “should be geared toward pedestrian movements, not vehicular” (page 14). The Guidelines also encourage landscaped islands in the parking areas with well-maintained shade trees to soften large paved parking areas and break large expanses of asphalt (page 4). The Guidelines also call for screening the parking areas from the public right-of-way and neighboring properties. They note that “appropriate screening may include landscaping, walls, fences or berms” (page 5).

The Guidelines call for site landscaping to soften new construction and building architecture, and notes that “landscape plans should include diverse plant species, including evergreen, flowering and shade tree species combined with shrubs, ground covers and annual and perennial plantings” (page 10). The Guidelines further state that “shade trees for pedestrian comfort should be the predominant plant material in an urban setting” (page 10). The Guidelines also advocate for Low Impact Development, the goal of which is to mimic a site's predevelopment hydrology by using design techniques that infiltrate, filter, store, evaporate, and detain runoff close to its source (page 11).

## **VII. ATTACHMENTS**

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