



**City of Richmond, Virginia**  
**Department of Planning and Development Review**  
**Planning and Preservation Division**  
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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 at Reid Elementary School, 1301 Whitehead Road; UDC #2016-14**

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**I. APPLICANTS**

Lloyd Schieldge, Richmond Public Schools

**II. LOCATION**

Reid Elementary School, 1301 Whitehead Road

**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 Reid Elementary School site.

**IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION**

This is a request to install a modular building with eight classrooms and restroom facilities, to replace four existing classroom trailers at the Reid 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 Reid, Greene, and Broad Rock 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, construction of a new school, and/or rezonings. The projected cost of the renovation and expansion option is \$9.23 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.

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 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.
- That if the modular classrooms are needed beyond the June 30<sup>th</sup>, 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.

**Staff Contact:** Kathleen Onufer, (804) 646-5207

## V. FINDINGS OF FACT

### a. Site Description and Surrounding Context

Reid Elementary School is located on 26.78 acres bound by Whitehead Road to the west, Worthington Road to the north, Bolton Road to the east and Daytona Drive to the south. The two-story school was built in 1958 and contains approximately 64,300 square feet of space. There are currently four portable classrooms on the site.

The school property and adjacent properties are zoned R-3 (Single-family detached residential). The adjacent area is improved with single-family detached dwellings in a lower density pattern.

### 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 Reid Elementary in 1997, 1996 and 1992. Last year the UDC reviewed, and Planning Commission approved, plans for modular classrooms and cafeteria facilities at Broad Rock and Greene Elementary Schools.

### d. Project Description

This is a request to install eight modular classrooms on the Reid Elementary School site. The enrollment capacity for the school, including the existing modular classrooms, is 676 students. The actual enrollment this year is 691 students, and the projection for 2016-17 is 704 students, increasing to 739 students in the 2021-2022 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 Reid Elementary. Last year similar requests were made and granted for modular classrooms to address overcrowding concerns at Broad Rock and Greene Elementary Schools. The Applicant's Report indicates that the permanent resolution to the overcrowding at Reid Elementary School may involve renovation and expansion of the existing facility, rezonings, or a replacement building. The projected cost of the renovation and expansion option is \$9.3 million.

The proposal is to install a single modular building, 124' in length by 65' in width, containing 8 classroom and restroom facilities. The new classrooms, which will be used for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, are proposed to be installed to the east of the main school building in a grassy area that previously held portables and next to the playground. The modular building will have a covered deck and ADA compliant ramp leading 30' to the main school building; the entire modular building will meet ADA requirements. The 4 existing portables will be removed.

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 will be skirted in hardi-panel down to the grade to account for changes in topography and to prevent students from getting underneath. Landscaping is not proposed due to the temporary nature of this project. This installation will preserve some existing plantings on site.

The new modular classrooms are intended to be installed by the middle of August to allow time for power/water/sewer hookups and for teachers to set-up their new temporary classrooms.

**e. Master Plan**

The subject property is located within the Midlothian 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, Reid Elementary School is noted in the major renovations 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**