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Department of Planning and Development Review
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To: Planning Commission
From: Urban Design Committee
Date: June 17, 2019
RE: **Final location, character, and extent review of new signage for E.S.H. Greene Elementary School, 1745 Catalina Drive; UDC 2019-17**

I. APPLICANT
Robert Stone, 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 new signage for E.S.H. Greene Elementary School, 1745 Catalina Drive.

IV. SUMMARY & RECOMMENDATION
The project involves the construction of a freestanding, monument road sign for the new E.S.H Greene Elementary School.

Staff is supportive of the overall design of the new signage. Therefore, the Urban Design Committee recommends that the Planning Commission grant final approval with the following condition:

- That when the electronic sign is ultimately installed, Staff will administratively review the specifications to ensure elements of the sign such as brightness, message movement, etc. are appropriate for its proximity to the abutting residential area

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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.

The Richmond public school system is proposing to install a new monument sign in conjunction with the new construction of E.H.S Elementary School.

The new monument sign will be located next to the west entrance into the school parking lot on Catalina Drive. The monument sign will be brick and concrete standing 5 feet 8 inches tall, 10 feet 10 inches long, and 1 foot 7 inches wide. The lettering on the sign will be aluminum with a painted bronze finish. The monument sign will also include a space for a future electrical marquee display.

d. UDC Review History

The UDC has reviewed, and the Planning Commission approved the new construction of E.H.S. Greene Elementary School in January 2019 (UDC 2019-02) with the following conditions:

- The applicant consider a lighter glazing tint for the glass
- The applicant work with RPS to anticipate the needs for bike racks and incorporate them into the project
- The applicant modify the shape of the front playground edging to better fit within its hardscape boundaries.

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

Regarding placement and size, the Urban Design Guidelines have a number of recommendations pertaining to signage, including that “freestanding signs should relate to the architecture of the building”, and that the “the sign’s base may be constructed of like building materials” (pg. 23). The message on a sign must be “easy to read and direct” and also “relate to the use of the building”. A sign’s “lettering should be 4-14 inches high and should be in proportion to the area in which it will be displayed” (pg. 23).

For color, the Urban Design Guidelines state that the “sign color should relate to and compliment the materials and color scheme of the building, including accent highlights and trim colors” (pg. 24).

Illuminated signs “are not appropriate in or adjacent to residential areas” (pg. 24). If a sign is illuminated, it “should have light lettering and dark, opaque backgrounds for improved readability and minimal glare” (pg. 24). For signs that are indirectly illuminated, “the spotlights should be shielded to minimize glare” and “all lighting and electrical parts should be concealed from view” (pg. 24). The guidelines also state that “Freestanding signs should be landscaped with appropriate deciduous evergreen shrubs, ground cover planting, annuals and/or perennials” (pg. 24).

VII. ATTACHMENTS

a. Vicinity Map
b. Application
c. Plans