

# Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board

## Arlington County, Virginia

HALRB Case 16-18 (HP1600051)



A request by Arlington County Public Schools, the owner of 5800 North Washington Boulevard in the Swanson Middle School Historic District, to site two relocatable classrooms in the parking lot and that the HALRB direct the Zoning Administrator to grant a setback modification. The classrooms would be located 7' from the property line.

For DRC (*circle those present*): **Robert Dudka, Charles Craig, Charles Matta, Andrew Wenchel, Tova Solo, Joan Lawrence, John Peck**

For Arlington County (*circle those present*): **Cynthia Liccese-Torres, Rebecca Ballo, John Liebertz**

---

Case # 16-18 Agenda Item # 7

Application Complete

Application Incomplete

Applicant(s): APS

For Applicant(s): Steven Bernheisel

(See attached application for applicant, address, name of property and property description, drawings, photographs, and proposed scope of work.)

Design Recommendations:

1. No comments.

**Findings:**

Return to next DRC meeting

Send to HALRB

**If sent to HALRB, recommended action is:**

Place on consent agenda

Place on discussion agenda:

Recommend approval of CoA, with DRC design recommendations and/or additional information provided

Recommend deferral of ruling on CoA (explanation):

Recommend denial of CoA (explanation):

No recommendation.



**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS STAFF REPORT**

**TO:** HALRB  
**FROM:** John Liebertz, Historic Preservation Planner  
**DATE:** August 9, 2016  
**SUBJECT:** Swanson School Historic District, 5800 Washington Boulevard, CoA 16-18

**Background Information**

Claude A. Swanson Junior High School, built in 1939, is listed as a contributing resource to the Westover National Register Historic District. In 2008, Arlington County designated the building as a local historic district. The school is described in the Arlington County Local Historic District Designation Report as follows:

The original building, constructed in 1939, consisted of a 2½-story main block with prominent two-story perpendicular wings flanking each side. The ends of the flanking wings mirror the front fenestration, each containing two pairs of identical windows on both floors. The original building contained 12 classrooms, a library, an auditorium, a small cafeteria, an office, and a gymnasium. Over time, four additions have been made to the original plan. The first addition was completed by January 1942 and consisted of eight new classrooms at the rear of the original building. In 1954-1955, a 1-story, flat-roof addition containing office and classroom space was built off the west (right) elevation. The third addition, completed in 1968, extends off the south (rear) elevation and contains the gymnasium and cafeteria. The entire building underwent a renovation in 1994. Lastly, the newest addition to the building was built in 2004. Two stories in height, this most contemporary space extends off the western portion of the north (front) elevation, and contains classrooms, an art studio, and meeting space. The addition was designed to complement the original building in massing, materials, and fenestration.

The Swanson School Local Historic District Designation Report and the *Swanson School Local Historic District Design Guidelines* both state that the priority for preservation will be maintaining the historic and architectural integrity and character of the original portion of the building, as well as the open character of the front lawn. The formal classic-styled front lawn slopes upward from the adjacent streets and residences to serve as a grand landscape statement of arrival.

**Proposal**

Arlington Public Schools (APS) proposes to place two relocatable classroom buildings on the asphalt parking lot in the southeast corner of the site. The relocatable classrooms would be located 7' from the

property line along Patrick Henry Drive. The applicant requests that the HALRB direct the Zoning Administrator to grant a setback modification from 25' to 7'.

### **DRC Review**

The DRC heard this application in August 2016. The DRC directed staff to note that the approval of the relocatable classrooms will expire in 2019. The committee recommended that this application be placed on the consent agenda for the August 17, 2016, HALRB hearing.

### **Discussion and Recommendation**

The *Swanson School Design Guidelines* preclude APS from applying for a CoA for relocatable classrooms. The guidelines, however, do not prohibit the property owner from requesting that the HALRB review such an application. APS has three potential locations to place the temporary classroom buildings: the front lawn, the recreation field, or the asphalt parking lot. Placing the temporary classrooms on the front lawn would severely impact an essential component of the historically significant landscape for the next three years. Siting the classrooms on the ball field would diminish recreational uses of the field.

According to the Arlington County Zoning Ordinance (ACZO), the HALRB may find that the proposed setback for buildings is consistent with the historic district design guidelines even though such setback is inconsistent with the requirements of the underlying zoning district. When the Review Board makes this finding, the Zoning Administrator shall grant a modification to the underlying setbacks. To protect the front lawn of Swanson School (an essential element of the historic district as noted in the design guidelines), staff finds that the request meets the intent of the *Swanson School Historic District Guidelines* and recommends that the HALRB direct the Zoning Administrator to grant a setback modification. The relocatable buildings will be located 7' from the property line and the CoA would expire in 2019.