



MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment
FROM: Karen Thomas, Case Manager
JL Joel Lawson, Associate Director Development Review

DATE: June 18, 2025

SUBJECT: BZA Case 20318 - to permit multiple structures (temporary structures) on one lot of record at 1820 Monroe Street NE (DCPS)

I. OFFICE OF PLANNING RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning (OP) recommends **approval** of the following area variance relief:

- Multiple Primary Structures on one record lot, Subtitle C § 302.2, pursuant to Subtitle X § 1000.1 (one building max. permitted; one principal building existing; 7 modular units proposed) for a period of six years.

II. LOCATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

Address	1820 Monroe Street NE
Applicant	Department of General Services (DGS)
Legal Description	Square 4203 Lot 1
Ward, ANC	ANC 5B
Zone	R-1-B, low density residential. A public school is a permitted use in this zone.
Historic District	None
Lot Characteristics	Large rectangular lot singularly developed with a public school - Burroughs Elementary School
Adjacent Properties	There are no immediate adjoining properties as the square is developed entirely with the school building and accessory structures.
Surrounding Neighborhood Character	The neighborhood is a mix of residential single-family detached and semi-detached homes, including across Monroe Street to the south 20 th Street to the east, north of Newton Street and west of 18 th Street NE.
Proposed Development	DCPS/DGS is extending its School Modernization Project to Burroughs Elementary School which includes a need for swing space while the school is being remodeled. The swing space includes five modular structures to accommodate classrooms and a cafeteria. A concrete electrical room would be constructed as an

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia

	accessory for the trailers and a temporary multipurpose space would also be added. These fixtures would remain on site for a period of up to six years. This is the standard time projected by DCPS for the need for temporary structures during school modernization projects.
--	---

III. ZONING REQUIREMENTS and RELIEF REQUESTED

The proposed swing space would occupy 44,820 square feet of the large lot and the addition would continue to satisfy the bulk and yard requirements of the Regulations as shown in the table below.

OP inquired of the Applicant whether this proposal was presented to the Zoning Administrator prior to submission of this application. The Applicant informed that they did meet with the Zoning Administrator who determined that this relief request was the only path forward for DCPS to locate the temporary structures on the lot.

Zone-R-1B (Public Schools)	Regulation	Existing	Proposed	Relief
Height D § 4904	60 ft. max.	36.7 ft.	28 ft.	None Required
Lot Width D § 4903	120 ft.	889 ft.	889 ft.	None Required
Lot Area D § 4903	5,000 sf. min.	235,970 sf.	235,970 sf	None Required
Floor Area Ratio D § 4902	1.8 max.	0.32	0.59	None Required
Lot Occupancy D § 4910	60% max.	23 %	44 %	None Required
Parking C § 701	6 spaces		31 spaces	None Required
Buildings per lot C § 702	Max. 1 principal building on a lot	1 building	8 buildings: 7 modular structures to be added	Variance Relief Required

IV. OFFICE OF PLANNING ANALYSIS

a. Area Variance Relief from Subtitle C § to have multiple primary structures on one lot.

i. *Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation or Condition Resulting in Peculiar and Exceptional Practical Difficulties / Exceptional or Undue Hardship To the Property Owner*

a. Extraordinary or Exceptional Situation

Public service organizations serve the public interest, and the Board may weigh the needs of the school in determining the exceptional situation. In this case, the property is large enough to accommodate temporary smaller structures to house students' classrooms and related accessory structures identified by the Applicant, while the existing school building is being rebuilt. Further, in conversation with the Applicant, OP understands that the structures would remain for an extended period after the subject property's renovation is completed to

accommodate other neighborhood schools while their modernization projects are underway.

At this time, the modular structures cannot be adjoined to the school building to create one structure on the campus as the current building is under consideration for historic designation, having been constructed over 100 years ago. In addition, the proposed swing space is separated by the playground and the parking area, and joining the building would remove some of these required spaces to the detriment of the school's programming and the parking requirement. ([See Site Plan Sheet 8](#)). The DCPS system already has structures which are used for temporary classroom spaces that can be easily transported in times of critical need. A large permanent structure would not be cost effective for the school system, since it would have to be removed after the modernization project is completed.

This is an exceptional situation for DCPS in managing the city's school modernization projects, including in this case.

b. Exceptional Practical Difficulties

As referenced above, a larger temporary structure would create a practical difficulty for the Applicant as it would not be appropriate for single-sized classrooms with specific requirements for education purposes. The internal spaces may not have access to natural light or for fire safety code requirements for school purposes. The smaller containers would be easier to manage and are specific to classroom sizes and uses.

Further, connecting a single building or even the modular units to the larger building to satisfy C§ 302.2 would reduce the playground area and parking area which would present other challenges and potentially a reduction in on-site parking thereby requiring additional relief.

Therefore, the applicant has demonstrated that there is a practical difficulty created by the exceptional situation of the future designation of the historic structure and the location of the available space on the property where it would be appropriate to accommodate additional temporary classrooms. Any connection to the structure to create one building could adversely impact the structure's designation.

ii. No Substantial Detriment to the Public Good

Detriment to the public good is not anticipated with having the school operate temporarily within the trailer system. This is a common practice in school modernization projects throughout the District in several instances and are intended to minimize disruption to the neighborhood as necessary school upgrades are completed. This pattern minimizes school disruptions and allows learning to continue within functional spaces until project completion.

iii. No Substantial Impairment to the Intent, Purpose, and Integrity of the Zoning Regulations

There is no substantial impairment to the Regulations as the intent is to prevent overcrowding or overbuilding on a property. In this case the lot occupancy, light and air and density on the site would not be adversely impacted and it would maintain the

required parking and facilitate the school playground as desired by the school. Bulk and yard requirement would not be reduced or impaired by the temporary placement of the trailers on the large lot.

V. OTHER DISTRICT AGENCIES

As of the date of this report, comments from other agencies had not been filed to the record.

VI. ADVISORY NEIGHBORHOOD COMMISSION

At the writing of this report there are no comments from ANC 5B.

VII. COMMUNITY COMMENTS TO DATE

Community comments had not been added to the record at the writing of this report.

Attachment: Location Map

LOCATION & ZONING MAPS

