

Narrative to Support Adding a Modular Building to 1410 Old Brook Road

PROJECT PROPOSAL

In 1986, Alliance Bible Church (currently known as CrossLife Community Church) built their church at 1410 Old Brook Road in a manner to house a vibrant preschool called Merridale. Because the school closed many years later, Community Christian Academy requested and was granted a special use permit to house a Pre-K through 12th grade school at that location for 85 students in 2012 (SP 201200004). We had incremental growth for multiple years, but when the pandemic shut down the public schools for in-person education, we suddenly filled up all our classes. To accommodate a growing population, we secured a special-use permit from Albemarle County to move our middle-school students to RiverStone Church in 2022 (SP 202200005) and increased our maximum student number from 85 to 150 at CrossLife Community Church (SP 202300002) in 2023.

One of the challenges that we have had as a school is securing inexpensive, stable facilities for our school. As a school that focuses primarily on the working class, we have a very small budget for facilities and rely on the generosity of landlords to allow us to use their facilities for a minimal cost. In the case of RiverStone Church, that church does not own their building. They believed that they had the option of buying the building in 2022, but the owners did not decide to sell. In the two years that our middle school has been in their building, RiverStone has had two last-minute short-term lease extensions. To grow and establish Community Christian Academy, we need to have the facilities secured where we know from year to year where we will be. A partnership with CrossLife Community Church could provide those expanded, secure facilities, so that Community Christian Academy could have a stable, long-term location for both elementary and secondary grades.

CrossLife Community Church and Community Christian Academy need additional facilities for growth, and working together on a long-term solution makes sense to both of us. Our desire is to remove the current vacant parsonage that exists on the property and replace it with a 6,500 – 7,500 square-foot modular building that will contain needed classroom space. As you can see from the attached pictures, the current parsonage is not easily seen from Rio Road for the person not looking for it, and additional screening between the building and parking lot can further block the view along Rio Road. Additionally, we intend to have an attractive wooden structure with a neutral color that would enhance, not detract from the property. I have included a picture sample that would be similar to the modular building we would have. This building would be a temporary building for several years while we investigate and later present a request to the County for a permanent addition to the current church building.

CrossLife is well-positioned to have a great deal of activity without disruption to the neighbors. Facing the church, the lot to the left contains a multi-business complex, and the manager of that complex has a child in our school. There are trees between that property and the church, and there are woods behind the church separating it from residential properties behind it. To the right of the church, there is Old Brook Road and only a few properties within eyesight of the church. The closest properties already have tall bushes, trees, or fences blocking the views into the properties. Rio Road

is in front of the church, and because the church is on the corner, parents coming to the school are not traveling through the neighborhood along Old Brook Road.

CrossLife Community Church is on a property that is zoned Neighborhood Density Residential within Neighborhood 2 of the Places 29 Master Plan. Within this designation, the primary use is for single-family residential units, but there are additional secondary uses that support neighborhoods that can be approved such as commercial, institutional, and retail sites. A school is a use that supports members living within the neighborhood. Since we have students in the neighborhood where CrossLife is located, it is clear that the school supports the needs of people living in the neighborhood.

CrossLife's property is in the Places 29 Rio Community. According to the County's Places 29 Master Plan, it is considered a benefit for a neighborhood-serving business to be located where multiple neighborhoods can easily access it and where it shares a location with other community-serving businesses. CrossLife Community Church is within walking distance of multiple neighborhoods including but not limited to Raintree, Abbingdon Crossing, and Fieldbrook. It is also located next to a business center that includes various businesses such as Split Endz Hair and Beauty Salon, Robbins Staffing Solution, Farm Credit, and Mark Cloth Orthodontics.

Because we already have a special use permit for a school and have been operating a school at CrossLife Community Church for twelve years, we are already in compliance with the applicable regulations in Section 5 of the Zoning Ordinance. We are also in compliance with various local and state requirements for a school, as well as requirements through our accreditation organization. These requirements frequently serve to ensure the health, safety, and welfare of the children in our school.

CONSISTENCY WITH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

As explained in the project proposal, Albemarle County has already approved the special use permit for a Pre-K – 12th grade school because using this church in this way is consistent with the comprehensive plan. The Places 29 Master Plan – Rio and the neighborhood residential zoning support residences and secondary uses, like institutions, that support those and nearby neighborhoods.

IMPACTS ON PUBLIC FACILITIES AND PUBLIC INFRASTRUCTURE

When the church was built in 1986, it was designed to support a preschool. It is on public water and sewer, and when we first sought a special use permit twelve years ago, the building inspector confirmed that the building was appropriate for the needs of a school. Engineers have already walked the property and confirmed that we could use existing utilities with a modular or building additions. The school has its own playground, so there will be no impact on public parks. Most parents drive their children to school, so there will be no impact on public transportation. Our numbers are not large enough to significantly impact public schools.

IMPACTS ON ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES

The fairly level layout of much of the property lends itself well to adding building space to it. Few natural features will need to be disturbed given the size of the building and the current condition of the property. Existing landscaping already reduces visibility and can be enhanced even further as needed.

Application #SP202400016, Revised 6/6/2024

Sample building:



Pictures from the sidewalk next to Rio Road and walking along the width of the property:







