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Ridgeview has eye on expansion

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Growing by more than 100 students a year, Ridgeview Classical School is looking for some relief in a proposed building renovation that would increase the school's size by almost 15,000 square feet.

Officials with the school, at 1800 S. Lemay Ave., recently met with the city of Fort Collins Planning and Zoning



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Board to discuss renovation options, but the school's principal, Terrence Moore, said nothing has been decided yet.

"We have not signed anything," Moore said. "We are looking at an expansion simply because we need to be prepared for a time when we will have outgrown this building."

Moore declined to discuss details of the possible renovation, adding that it has only been talked about loosely and has not been brought to the parents for consideration.

In its conceptual review with the city, school officials proposed to enlarge the school's gym and add several classrooms, city planner Bob Barkeen said. The initial plan showed an 8,600-square-foot addition to the first floor and a 6,000-square-foot addition to the second floor.

Now in its third year, the charter K-12 school has 614 students, not quite the building's maximum occupancy of 800, but closer than school officials would like.

With 30 students to a class in some cases, students and teachers are beginning to feel the squeeze, said Kim Miller, president of the Ridgeview board. But the expansion's goal isn't to seek additional teachers or students.

"We need more space, not more kids," Miller said. "As it is, they cannot move."

The problem is especially difficult for the junior high and high school grades, she said. Every classroom is in use throughout the day, leaving teachers with nowhere to work during free periods.

Eventually the school hopes to reach a maximum of 1,320 students, Miller said. But that move requires a new site or a split campus. Neither option is financially feasible in the near future, she added.

"Our ultimate dream was to have one big campus," she said. "But at this point, we're just talking about a renovation (of the building)."

The Planning and Zoning Board had no concerns with the proposal, but members asked Ridgeview officials to address the number of temporary classrooms on school grounds.

"They have a lot of modulars, and (the board) asked if they could remove them with this expansion," said Barkeen, adding that removal of the modulars was part of Ridgeview's conceptual plan.