

Boarding schools such as **Thatcher School in Ojai** face unique challenges when it comes to expanding or upgrading campus housing. With increasing enrollment, limited on-site construction windows, and a tight labor market, traditional construction methods often fall short. Modular building solutions offer an increasingly popular alternative to address these hurdles.

In this <https://www.re-thinkingthefuture.com/architectural-styles/manufactured-homes-for-employee-housing-what-modular-construction-actually-delivers/> article, we'll explore the key modular options suitable for boarding schools like Thatcher School, focusing on themes critical to educational campuses:



- Workforce housing as a recruiting constraint
- Definitions and distinctions between manufactured vs modular construction
- Permitting workflows and inspections for modular projects
- Schedule compression benefits through parallel factory and site work

We'll also spotlight innovative companies making headway in this sector, including **Irontown Modular**, **The Other Side Village**, and **My Cozy Outdoors**.



Workforce Housing Challenges at Boarding Schools Like Thatcher School Ojai

Many boarding schools in California and beyond grapple with workforce housing shortages that directly impact their ability to recruit and retain faculty and staff. Thatcher School itself, located in the scenic Ojai Valley, is an example of a campus where housing constraints can limit growth or the quality of campus life.

Staff housing that's too distant, overcrowded, or costly leads to higher turnover and difficulty attracting top talent—especially for roles requiring overnight presence or campus-based responsibilities. What makes on-campus housing projects particularly challenging here includes:

- Community resistance to large-scale construction
- Zoning regulations that limit density or structures
- Funding cycles that require phased or cost-effective approaches
- Seasonal weather impacting traditional construction scheduling

These conditions create a strong case for innovative modular solutions that can be repeatable, efficient, and code-compliant for multifamily campus housing.

Manufactured vs. Modular: Understanding the Definitions and Codes

A common source of confusion among school administrators and project teams lies in the distinction between *manufactured* and *modular* construction—a critical difference influencing building codes, inspections, and financing.

Manufactured Housing

Manufactured housing, often called mobile or trailer homes, is built entirely in a factory to HUD standards (HUD Code) and transported to the site as a complete home. These units are typically considered personal property rather than real estate and often face limitations when sited permanently in institutional settings.

Modular Construction

Modular buildings are constructed in controlled factory environments but comply with the same local or state building codes as traditional buildings (e.g., International Building Code, IBC). They arrive on site in sections or modules and are assembled on a permanent foundation.

For campus projects like those at Thatcher School Ojai, modular is the preferred route because:

- The buildings are taxed and financed as real property
- They undergo local plan review and permitting processes compliant with school codes
- They seamlessly integrate with site utilities and existing infrastructure
- They meet educational facility standards, including fire, accessibility, and seismic requirements

Company Spotlight:

- **Irontown Modular** designs modular campus housing and emphasizes compliance with educational building codes, providing robust solutions tailored for institutions like boarding schools.

Permitting Workflow and Inspections for Modular Campus Housing

One of the myths around modular construction is that it inherently speeds up permitting. While it can, modular projects require careful coordination upfront to avoid delays.

Understanding the Permitting Process

1. **Pre-Application Coordination:** Early meetings between the school's project managers, local building departments, and modular manufacturers help align expectations on code compliance, fire safety, accessibility, and site constraints.
2. **Plan Review:** Unlike factory-built manufactured homes, modular units require submission of detailed engineered plans—including repeatable drawing sets—to the local jurisdiction for approval under the applicable building code.
3. **Factory Inspections:** Modular factories are typically inspected by third parties or government inspectors to ensure compliance with engineered plans and quality standards. This step is critical for earning local permit sign-off.
4. **Site Inspections:** Once modules are delivered and assembled, inspectors verify foundations, connections, utilities, fire egress, and finishes as per local codes.

Throughout this process, maintaining consistent communication and leveraging experienced modular builders is instrumental.

Company Spotlight:

- **The Other Side Village** specializes in navigating the permitting labyrinth for modular workforce and campus housing, with a track record of success in California school districts.

Schedule Compression Through Parallel Factory and Site Work

A central advantage of modular projects for campus housing is the ability to compress construction schedules by overlapping factory and site activities.

In traditional stick-built methods, site work and building construction phases happen sequentially.

- Excavation and foundation work comes first

- Framing and finishing follow on-site
- Each phase is weather-dependent and labor-intensive

With modular:

- Site prep—including foundations, utilities, and access—runs concurrently with module fabrication at the factory
- Once modules arrive on-site, they're assembled rapidly, often within days
- Interior finishing and inspections occur simultaneously or closely following installation

This parallel workflow can reduce overall project duration by 30-50%, a major benefit for schools like Thatcher looking to create campus housing without disrupting academic calendars.

Company Spotlight:

- **My Cozy Outdoors** provides modular cabin solutions that optimize quick setups while incorporating comfortable, durable finishes tailored for educational workforce housing needs.

Repeatable Drawing Sets: A Key to Scaling Campus Housing Modular

Repeatability is one of modular construction's strongest advantages for boarding schools planning multiple housing units or phased expansion over time.

By developing and refining standard drawing sets—floor plans, elevations, and engineering details—campus facilities teams can:

- Reduce design fees and review times for each new building
- Streamline factory production with familiar components and assemblies
- Maintain consistent quality and aesthetic unity across campus housing
- Accelerate permitting approval through proven compliance

Utilizing firms that specialize in modular building with repeatable sets designed for campus housing ensures that Thatcher School Ojai can efficiently manage growth, budget controls, and future maintenance.

Conclusion

For boarding schools like **Thatcher School in Ojai** facing workforce housing recruitment constraints, modular construction provides a compelling path forward. By understanding the differences between manufactured and modular building codes, anticipating permitting workflows, and leveraging schedule compression through parallel factory and site work, campuses can meet housing needs effectively.

Companies like **Irontown Modular**, **The Other Side Village**, and **My Cozy Outdoors** offer proven expertise in modular campus housing, enabling schools to invest in repeatable drawing sets and scalable solutions.

As educational institutions continue to prioritize sustainable, cost-effective, and timely housing expansion, modular options will increasingly be at the forefront for boarding schools committed to excellence and campus vitality.