

# Project Narrative

## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

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The new Camas Project-Based Learning High School will be a new high school facility that delivers a project-based learning approach to 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> education. This is a new program to the School District and therefore there are many typical parameters that are not in place to date as there would be with a new replacement school facility for an existing facility and program. This will be a facility that will be one of a very few ground-up new facilities designed around delivering project-based learning in the country. In addition, the School District and the design team have also planned on this facility to adapt to different modes of educational delivery models and therefore, the design is formed around the educational model of project-based learning, but the building is planned so to be able to adapt to more traditional learning modalities should it need to in the future.

This 89,000 square foot building is intended to provide another educational option for 600 9<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> grade students within the Camas School District. The criteria for acceptance into the school is completely student-interest based, all students who want to attend are accepted. If the number of applicants out-number the program capacity, then a lottery system will be used to determine acceptance.

Qualifying for an OSPI state construction assistance grant for un-housed students, it is necessitated by explosive growth in the community and overcrowding at the existing comprehensive Camas High School. The second high school in the district, Hayes Freedom High School, serves a smaller population with an emphasis on personalized learning and is at capacity as well. As the third high school in the district, this new PBL High School will help to alleviate crowding for the short term and provide students with another opportunity to learn in a different educational format.

The new facility is proposed to be open to new students for the start of the 2018-2019 school year. Construction is intended to begin in the Spring of 2017. The school will be located at 5780 NW Pacific Rim Blvd, Camas, what is often referred to as the Sharp Property. The District has recently purchased nearly 40 acres and a 55,000 SF two story office building from Sharp Laboratories of America, in the Prune Hill area of the community. The lab/office building has recently been converted to a project-based learning middle school, eventually designed to serve 450 students grades 6 through 8. With the addition of the new high school on the property, there are many opportunities to share resources (both educationally and operationally), create a unique culture and identity for the PBL program, accommodate the district's growing population, and streamline operating costs.

Beyond the requirement of additional space to house a growing student body, the school is needed to shift the way we think about secondary schools. We believe that we have models for

learning that currently work well for many students in our district - current CHS and HFHS. We also believe that the world we are preparing students for is changing. Students will be asked to collaborate, create, design and problem-solve more than they ever have before across disciplines. Because the world is changing we need to change too. This school gives us a chance to build on the success we have and learn more about what we can become.

The new program centers on collaborative, integrated learning teams with a STEAM focus. Each student will be assigned to a team comprised of 3 or 4 teachers that provide content support and facilitate learning focused on authentic community/industry problems. Schedules will be flexible to include traditional classroom time, blended self-directed learning time, team time, and exploration time with opportunities to explore beyond the walls of the school. Across the school, learning teams will be united based on common practices like design theory, research methods, inquiry cycles, and showcasing/demonstration of learning events. Learning Teams will develop unique identities that evolve based on student and teacher interest, but the school will all be connected by a common student-developed STEAM theme that unites them each school year. Students will make strong connections within and beyond their school with their peers, staff, and the community.

## EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

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Camas School District purchased the site for the new school from Sharp Electronics of America in the summer of 2016. The site is roughly 39.25 acres and currently consists of two tax lots (Parcel 4 ASN 986033-962 and Parcel 5 ASN 125661-000) that make up the new project-based learning campus. The site is mostly previously developed with parking facilities, utilities, and an existing building. The site has access to view to the north of Mt. Saint Helens and view of the Columbia and Willamette river valleys to the south. The view to the south also includes a distant view of downtown Portland, Oregon.

The site is located on Prune Hill and therefore is a fairly elevated site with grades sloping to the north, west, and south of the property. The site is bordered by the north and west by extremely sloped grades and forested land. These two conditions (and access to views) in particular were a major contributing factor to the site and building design. The project site is bordered by the south and west by the private "Sharp Drive" (a private two-lane road that is now our main school access point), as well the public streets of SE Payne Road, WE 40<sup>th</sup> Street, and NW 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue. The project site is bordered by residential development on the other side (south and west) of the public streets as listed previously. As the property purchased from Sharp was once a combined campus, the project site is bordered to the east by the remaining Sharp facilities, which includes Sharp offices and labs, as well as parking for employees.

## EXISTING BUILDINGS

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With the purchase of property from Sharp Electronics of America, the property came with an existing structure that was previously used as an office and lab for Sharp and constructed for

that purpose in 1991. The structure consists of 55,000 square foot building that is located at 5750 NW Pacific Rim Blvd in Camas. The existing structure is a two-story structure of curtainwall glazing, concrete panels, and metal panels with a steel and concrete superstructure. The existing building has a parapet condition and a distinctive entry canopy. The structure takes advantage of sweeping views to the north of the valley below and Mt. Saint Helens in the distance.

The existing building has a horizontal banding expression around the facades. The metal panel and concrete exterior are white and light grey. The curtain wall has a green-blue tint. The entry canopy is the only expression that breaks up the rather cube-like structure. The canopy is a silvery metal clad projection at the southwest corner of the building. This is also logically the location of the main entry. The structure is roughly 34' tall from finish floor to top of the parapet.

## STRUCTURE AND ARCHITECTURE

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The new Camas Project-Based Learning High School is intended to be a contemporary educational facility. The building has mostly east to west orientation on the site to maximize the building's ability to control daylight and solar gain.

The project has been design with the idea of transition and connection. The term ecotone has been used throughout our design thinking. Ecotone is defined as a region or transition between two biological communities. This project serves as a transition for students between the world of secondary education and the worlds of post-secondary education and/or the working world. Project-based learning is a type of educational delivery that aims to blend the worlds of education and the professional environment. In addition, this project sits on a site that is a literal transition from the developed Sharp site to the natural and formidable forested edge and associated grade change to the north.

The 89,000 square foot structure is a two-story building of primarily steel superstructure. The massing could be summarized as a rectangular mass that has had voids carved out of the solid building. The voids include the main entry, the outdoor learning environments, and the gym and flex exhibition box. The gym and flex exhibition box have then been highlights and articulated to create something special. The special "box" has then been rotated to indicate and provide a sense of entry into the school.

The exterior design concept of the project is meant to do two things as it relates to the projects immediate context of the Sharp Campus and the City of Camas. First, the design team has attempted to have the new building "fit" with the existing building on our site (now the new PBL Middle School building). Second, the massing and exterior expression of the building is meant to recall the history of Camas as paper mill town and also reflect the city's current technology rich industry. The horizontal white and gray concrete panels speak to the paper mill in color and in shape but yet the regularity of the pattern reflects a precision seen in technological industrial processes. In addition, the weathered steel "box" has folding planes that are intended

to invoke the feel of folding planes of paper, but with a material that is both meant to feel the touch of time. The weathered steel material, however, is a technologically advanced material that does not deteriorate but rather uses the chemical properties of oxidation to protect itself.

## COMMUNITY ASSET

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It is anticipated that the new school will be a wonderful asset to the community as a whole and frequently used during after-school hours for formal and informal learning opportunities, as well as various community functions. Many Camas Community Education classes could be taught at the school and on the grounds.

Spaces that lend themselves most easily to community use are the gymnasium, exhibition space and outdoor theater, central hub with learning stairs for presentations and performances, café, and Fab Lab (with district educator supervision). Each of these spaces will be designed with easy after-hours access (either exterior doors directly into the space or close by) and access to restroom facilities, while securing as much of the rest of the school building as possible.