

Design Review Narrative (CMC 18.19)

18.19.050 – Design Principles.

A. Standard Principles.

1. *Landscaping shall be done with a purpose. It shall be used as a tool to integrate the proposed development into the surrounding environment.*

Response: The new Lacamas Heights Elementary School will be located on a site rich in ecologic features, including wetlands, creeks, large swaths of mature trees and direct views to Mount Hood. Building on the idea of “campus in the country”, the new site will offer ample opportunities for seamless transition between indoor and outdoor learning and play environments.

The landscape has been developed to create a park-like setting at the edge of Camas. The site itself is adjacent to a future City trailhead and will be connected via a meandering path.

The overall character of the planting visually aligns with the surrounding context. Primarily native plants will be used, chosen for durability and low-maintenance requirements. Plantings in high traffic areas have been chosen for durability and function, as well as aesthetic value.

A school name will be integrated into a monument sign, located at the entry to the school driveway. The site entry is welcoming and is defined by native wetland and wetland buffer areas staged behind a split rail fence.

Provisions have been made for a reader board to be located within the landscaped areas at the front of the school; this will not be visible from the street.

2. *All attempts shall be made at minimizing the removal of significant natural features. Significant natural features shall be integrated into the overall site plan.*

Response: One of the project landscape goals is to minimize impact on existing site features, including the wetlands and their buffers, creeks and their buffers, the archeological zones and the tree cover. The site design protects all existing wetlands on the site and will enhance these features by cultivating additional species that will ensure a hearty native landscape. The site design also protects in place a creek to the north of the school, and stands of mature White Oak trees. Only one White Oak tree will be removed by the project. During construction, all existing White Oak trees to remain will be fully enclosed within a chain-link fence, at a minimum diameter of their dripline, and will be protected the entire duration of construction. Areas under trees will be planted with native (non-irrigated) vegetation.

3. *Buildings shall have a "finished" look. Any use of panelized materials shall be integrated into the development in a manner that achieves a seamless appearance.*

Response: The building façade is made of two materials: Brick and a through-color fiber cement plank. The brick is a timeless, low-maintenance material that expresses the Lacamas Heights community's sustainable goals where "less is more". The color palette is a range of earthy red-brown.

The 6" cement plank requires no edge finishing. It will be used in its "natural" state and will express the scale and texture of siding, used on many country side structures. The color is a warm buff/grey.

The window system is an aluminum-clad wood window. The windows are located to provide ample daylight to the learning spaces inside. This product is long-lasting and will be easy for the District to maintain. The colors are a dark grey with earthy red-brown accents at the operable windows.

4. *A proposed development shall attempt to incorporate or enhance historic/heritage elements related to the specific site or surrounding area.*

Response:

The building and site have been designed to connect to the existing conditions of the site, via the building organization, the interpretive signage at the nature play, and the reuse of existing tree stumps in the play area.

The plan organization combines north facing classrooms with south-facing extended learning spaces and south facing classrooms with north-facing extended learning spaces. This configuration reflects the desire of all teachers to allow students to enjoy direct sunlight and relate to Mt Hood on the south east and the tree-lined creek on the north. The ground floor of the central core provides direct access to the east courtyard with a large deck featuring view of Mt Hood.

The play area features natural play scape elements, such as stumps, mounds, a 'tree house,' an amphitheater, and boulders. There will be signage explaining the concepts of play that is integrated with nature and the native and agrarian history of the site.

There was an old wooden barn on the site. The original intention was to salvage this wood for use inside the building, thereby creating a story that would link the school to the site's former use. Unfortunately, now that the barn has been dismantled, it has been determined that the wood is infested with bugs and will not be usable.

B. Specific Principles (Commercial Only)

2. Commercial and Mixed Uses

a. On-site parking areas shall be placed to the interior of the development unless site development proves prohibitive. All on-site parking areas along adjacent roadways shall be screened with landscaping.

Response: The existing site conditions and use as an elementary school make the placement of the parking facilities behind the building challenging and inappropriate. All on-site parking areas are being screened with landscaping.

b. Buildings shall be used to define the streetscape unless site conditions prove prohibitive.

Response: The existing site conditions and rural/suburban location of our site make a more urban response to our project challenging. The desire to connect the building with the natural landscape and minimize impact to the natural environment and resources determined the site of the building and associated improvements.

c. Structures abutting, located in, or located near less intensive uses or zoned areas (such as commercial developments next to residential areas) shall be designed to mitigate size and scale differences.

Response: The massing and material options of the new Lacamas Heights Elementary School are intended to support the concept of a “school in the country.” Students and visitors will “discover” the building after a meandering journey through the site which reveals the multiple natural assets and beautiful vistas. Once visible, the building presents itself as a low roofed, one-story, south facing open porch where a curved seating bench provides guidance towards the central main entry. The porch deepens at the main entry and allows students, parents and visitors to gather in full view of the reception area. Where the building welcomes and embraces the elementary learners, the volume is at its lowest to address the scale of the users.

The transparent vestibule and waiting area allows views from the front door towards the east courtyard and patio and welcomes you to walk towards daylight. The siting of the building requires the service yard and delivery area to be fully integrated into the main building volume. This portion of the project will receive the same aesthetic attention than any other part in order not to compromise the views from any of the learning spaces.

Above the low roof one-story wing, the volume of the two-story central core rises gently, starting as a low mechanical roof screen, the lower end of the media center to gain its full height and tallest ridge of the building above the gymnasium to the north. This slow progression of height also introduces the narrow volumes of the two-story tall classrooms wings which form the northern edge of the building facing the creek. The tall classroom volumes maximize daylight access and views to the south and north and create a strong edge towards the nature play areas to the north. On the north end, the covered play forms the second large porch element which transitions the 2-story

volume of the central core down to the scale of the nature play areas. The two porches result in the main building volume merging with the outdoors where students enter. These transitional areas soften the distinction between indoor and outdoor learning spaces and allow students to experience the building and site as one continuous learning environment.

d. Developments containing a multiple of uses/activities shall integrate each use/activity in a manner that achieves a seamless appearance, or creates a cohesive development.

Response: The project is intended for a singular use as an education facility. The architectural response in scale, massing and expression is intended to convey the facility use as a public structure.

e. Mixed-use development conditions do not apply to this site.

f. Walls shall be broken up to avoid a blank look and to provide a sense of scale.

Response: The building is designed into four wings, which are located in east and west locations and angle outward to maximize access to daylight and views to the ground floor commons / cafeteria and the second floor media center. This strategy also provides a stronger identity for the learning communities in each wing, since it breaks the internal views along the classroom circulation. In the south facing one-story administration wing, the angling underlines the concept of embracing the arriving students and visitors at the front door plaza.

g. Outdoor lighting shall not be directed off-site.

Response: All exterior light fixtures have been selected to be “dark sky” compliant. Each fixture directs lights downward. In addition, these fixtures are located only at the developed areas, central to the site. All exterior lights are controlled by dimmers and can be set to shut off completely.

18.19.060 – Guidelines

The subcategories below represent the design team’s understanding of applicable guidelines:

A. The guidelines include five major categories and subcategories (Commercial only) as outlined in the Design Review Manual:

1. Landscaping and screening:

a. The landscaping/vegetation plan needs to identify the type of plants or trees to be planted within the foreground of the visual area (or street intersection). The use of vegetation native to the Pacific Northwest (or Camas) should be encouraged, with the exception of noxious weeds. Low maintenance/hardy landscaping should also be encouraged.

Response: See Landscaping and Screening narrative above and Landscape Plan.

b. Surrounding sites should be screened from parking and building lighting.

Response: Site lighting will be designed to prevent building and parking lighting from encroaching on adjacent properties. See Lighting Plan.

c. Parking spaces should be clustered in small groupings. Groupings should be separated by landscaping to create a pedestrian friendly, park like environment. Parking lot landscaping should be credited toward the total landscaping requirements.

Response: The parking lot has been designed for safe school use. Buses are diverted to a drop-off area that is lined with landscaping and features a landscaped island. The teacher and parent parking area is primarily organized into groups of 4-6 cars, with tree islands interspersed. The rows between parking areas contain stormwater plantings. The parking area is lit with dark-sky compliant fixtures that can be dimmed or shut off. The wetland restoration areas directly abut the parking area.

2. Architecture:

a. Developments surrounded by residential areas or adjacent to residentially zoned properties should be built with a residential feel (i.e. size, scale, and materials compatible with neighboring buildings)

Response: See narrative section CMC 18.19.050(B)(2)(c) above.

b. Buildings over two stories should have the third story and above offset from the first two stories, if surrounding developments are less than three stories or land uses designations on adjacent sites do not allow more than three story development.

Response: Not applicable. Our design proposal only has two stories.

c. Outdoor lighting shall be hooded or shielded so as not to directly light adjoining or neighboring properties.

Response: See narrative section CMC 18.19.050(B)(2)(g) above.

3. Massing and Setbacks:

a. Since buildings define circulation routes, they should be placed as close to streets and roads as the zoning code allows before being set back to the interior or rear of the lot, unless site constraints make it impossible or characteristics of the surrounding properties already developed make it incompatible.

Response: See narrative section CMC 18.19.050(B)(2)(a) and (B)(2)(b) above.

b. Commercial structures abutting residually zoned areas should be designed to mitigate size and scale differences

Response: See narrative section CMC 18.19.050(B)(2)(a) and (B)(2)(b) above.

c. On-site parking areas should be placed to the interior of the site whenever possible.

Response: See narrative section CMC 18.19.050(B)(2)(a) and (B)(2)(b) above.

4. Historic and Heritage Preservation:

a. The use of Historic Markers, information kiosks, project names, architectural features, or other elements of the project should promote the historic heritage of the site or surrounding area.

Response: The building and site have been designed to connect to the existing conditions of the site. The building organization capitalizes on the views of Mount Hood and is nestled adjacent to the oak forest. The play area will include interpretive signage relating the native and agrarian history of the site. The play area also features natural play scape elements, such as stumps, mounds, a 'tree house,' an amphitheater, and boulders.

5. Circulation and Connections:

a. Pathways define traffic/pedestrian movement. Buildings brought up to the road help define these movements. Trees and/or planting strips shall be used for separating vehicles and pedestrian movements, as well as provide a secure and pedestrian friendly environment.

Response: A pedestrian sidewalk connects directly from the driveway entrance to the front of the school. As explained in 18.19.060 (A)(1)(c), the traffic on the site is separated so that buses and cars use separate areas for dropping off students. The pedestrian pathway is lined on one side with wetland mitigation planting and light poles. The next section describes the pedestrian pathway that extends to the western edge of the site.

b. New streets intersecting commercial properties should be designed to create a safe environment. "Coving" techniques and "round-a-bouts" should be considered for traffic calming when appropriate.

Response: The project will provide a new half-street arterial arcing through the southwest quadrant of the site. In place of a new standard sidewalk along this new public roadway, the project proposes a multi-modal 10' wide trail meandering through the site. This will allow pedestrians and bike users to enjoy the on-site natural features separated from auto traffic. Where existing mature trees exist along the proposed roadway, those trees will be preserved as much as practicable and new street trees will be planted along the remaining frontage.

This project will create a separate parcel in the northwest corner of approximately 3 acres reserved for future public use including a potential small park and/or trailhead.

There is one proposed driveway to access the school development. A sidewalk is proposed along this driveway, which will be attached to the curb to limit impact to adjacent wetlands. This walkway connects the public trail to on-site walkways that access the school building, outdoor learning environments, and multiple playground spaces.

Parents will be able to use a dedicated pick-up/drop-off lane during peak times before and after school. Additionally, on-site parking is provided in excess of code minimums to accommodate events and peak usage times. The parking areas also utilize stormwater swales for conveyance to include visual stormwater management and increase vegetation within the parking areas. Buses, delivery, and maintenance vehicles will use the west parking lot to keep that traffic separated from parents and visitors. This west lot will be dual striped to provide for additional event parking.