

# COLUMBIA GORGE Early Learning Center & Climate Resiliency Hub

## AT A GLANCE

### Early Learning Center

- » 200+ children served
- » 35+ jobs created
- » Subsidized tuition for up to 30 families
- » English & Spanish proficiency
- » Professional training for providers
- » Energy-efficient and state of the art renovation

### Climate Resiliency Hub

- » Solar power w/off-grid operating capability
- » Designated emergency response hub
- » Dedicated public transit stop
- » EV charging stations
- » Safe walking paths
- » Commercial kitchen, space for community nutrition classes
- » Information and training for career development
- » Environmental education & community garden

## TIMELINE

### Fundraising

- » January 2023–June 2025

### Groundbreaking

- » June 2025

### Occupancy

- » June 2026

Dana L. Pedersen  
SUPERINTENDENT



COLUMBIA GORGE EDUCATION  
SERVICE DISTRICT  
dpedersen@cgsd.k12.or.us



## COMMUNITY NEEDS

Oregon's childcare system is in crisis with acute shortages across the state and over 72% of Oregon counties identified as childcare deserts. A recent OSU study found that 60% of Oregonians with young children spend 20% of their monthly income on childcare, and 54% of Oregon employers say childcare access is a challenge in hiring and retention.

In Wasco County, where 20% of residents live below the poverty line and median household income is 74% of the state average, the situation is untenable. In a 2021 study, 89% of respondents indicated that finding dependable and affordable childcare limited their access to employment or education.

This proposal will serve the area's diverse community of wage earners – low, moderate, and high across sectors. Many low-income families live in substandard housing with no provisions for power outages, shelter-in-place, or catastrophic heat and cold events which are increasingly frequent in the area.

Chenoweth Middle School, an under-utilized building in the project area, has been identified as the ideal location for the Columbia Gorge Early Learning Center.

## THE OPPORTUNITY

- » Create a much-needed oasis in the region's childcare desert to serve 200+ children
- » Redevelop existing infrastructure into a multifaceted regional resilience center
- » Grow a healthy learning and community environment for children and families
- » Establish a renewable energy-powered community refuge for emergencies
- » Develop a learning laboratory for career training in renewable energy, green construction, additive manufacturing, and precision agriculture
- » Offer access to community garden space and opportunities to learn about healthy food and nutrition



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## FUNDING

- » \$2.1M ARPA
- » \$6M State of Oregon
- » \$2.2M Renewable Energy & Resilience Grant
- » \$1.5M Congressionally Directed Spending
- » \$1.2M Other sources

## SUPPORT NEEDED

- » Congressional support for EPA Community Change proposal: \$14M

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

- » Adventist Health
- » The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce
- » City of The Dalles
- » Columbia Gorge Community College
- » Columbia Gorge Education Service District
- » Mid-Columbia Center for Living
- » Mid-Columbia Economic Development District
- » North Wasco County School District 21
- » One Community Health
- » Port of The Dalles
- » Wasco County

## CONTACT

**Pat Sublette**  
PROJECT LIAISON



COLUMBIA GORGE EDUCATION  
SERVICE DISTRICT

[psublette@cgesd.k12.or.us](mailto:psublette@cgesd.k12.or.us)



## LOCAL SUPPORT

The seeds of this project were planted via community involvement as part of The Dalles Vision 2040 Initiative, which included bilingual community surveys, town hall meetings and polls, with community input synthesized into five focus areas:

- » Enhancing education
- » Creating economic vitality
- » Providing recreation space
- » Strengthening community life
- » Improving governance and infrastructure



The need for a Columbia Gorge Early Learning Center has been confirmed by The Dalles Area Chamber of Commerce, City of The Dalles, Port of The Dalles, Columbia Gorge Community College, Mid-Columbia Economic Development District, Columbia Gorge Education Service

District, Wasco County, Adventist Health Columbia Gorge, Mid-Columbia Center for Living, One Community Health and many others.

Most of those named above contributed financially to the project's feasibility analysis; all of these as well as large private employers such as Insitu and Google are prospective supporting partners.



**THE DALLES AREA**  
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
*"This Chamber Means Business"*



**COLUMBIA GORGE**  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE