

April 15, 2025

**To: SLCSB Board of Education**

**From: Dr. Elizabeth Grant, Superintendent**

**Re: Property Use – District Need for a Career and Technical Center**

In our district, we believe every student deserves a future filled with purpose and possibility. That's why we are committed to creating opportunities for students—ensuring each graduate leaves high school not only with a diploma, but with a clear, confident plan for college or career. Whether pursuing higher education, entering the workforce, learning a skilled trade, or exploring entrepreneurial paths, our students must leave equipped with the knowledge, tools, and support they need to thrive. No student should leave without a plan. We are not just preparing students for graduation; we are preparing them for lives they will find fulfilling and futures they'll be proud to own.

I am recommending to the Board that **Riley Elementary School** be used to expand career and technical education (CTE) opportunities for students by designating the school building and grounds for a larger, updated Career and Technical Center. With the Riley site, we have an opportunity to leverage an unoccupied school site to enrich and grow our CTE program.

Per the G-5 Administrative Procedure, which lays out the process for determining immediate district needs for a facility, the superintendent is responsible for recommending to the Board of Education how a building may be used to address an identified district need. That is the purpose of today's discussion. In accordance with the procedure, the board will then provide time for public comment on both the identified district need and the proposed site. After gathering public feedback, the Board will place the recommendation on an upcoming agenda for a vote.

Our interest in expanding CTE opportunities for students is based in our **Strategic Plan for Student Achievement and Board Goals**, which call for increasing access to meaningful learning experiences and providing students with facilities that support high-quality college and career pathway instruction. By designating the space and facilities at Riley Elementary for a new, expanded Career and Technical Center, we can significantly broaden our CTE offerings, increase the number of available course seats, and support more students in completing CTE pathways. This move allows us to increase opportunity for our students.

### **Our Current Landscape and Demand for Career and Technical Education**

The district CTC is currently located on the ground floor of the combined CTC/Innovations campus on the south side of the SLCC State Street Campus. The CTC has 12 classrooms and does not have any outdoor space. When it was conceived, this was a sufficient size for the

courses that are too expensive to offer at multiple sites, and it was large enough for the student demand of the 2010s.

This spring, students are registering for next year's courses. To date, they have requested over **3,400 enrollment seats** for Tech Center courses. Our current programming allows us room to provide just 1,600 enrollment seats. Counselors report that they are creating waiting lists for students as the courses fill up and we are unable to meet demand.

Recently, the board moved to change the student fee schedule and eliminate curricular fees. This may fuel further demand for classes in which students have wanted to enroll but may have found cost prohibitive. We can increase access for students to explore their interests and build expectations for the future, but we are limited in meeting demand. For example, there is so much interest in advanced welding classes that we will need to implement an application process for next year.

The current location also lacks options for learning spaces outside. Our drone and robotics programs would benefit from access to outdoor space because these technologies often require room for safe, hands-on experimentation and real-world application. Drones need open areas for takeoff, flight, and landing—especially when students are learning to program and pilot them accurately. Similarly, robotics projects involving mobility, navigation, or sensor testing benefit from outdoor terrain that mimics real-life environments, giving students the opportunity to solve practical challenges and refine their designs in dynamic, real-world conditions.

### **Welcome to “Tech Lake City”**

Many students shy away from pursuing STEM fields because they perceive them as too difficult or intimidating, often believing they aren't “math people” or that success in science and technology requires innate brilliance. This mindset can close doors before students even explore their interests or discover their potential. Early access to hands-on, engaging STEM opportunities—especially through programs like robotics, coding, engineering, and health sciences—can change that narrative. When students experience success in STEM, it builds confidence, nurtures curiosity, and helps them see these fields as accessible, exciting, and achievable. Early exposure transforms STEM from something daunting into something empowering. This is another advantage of varied offerings at a competitive CTC center: it can prepare students to be confident in majors that universities struggle to fill.

Salt Lake City has one of the healthiest and fastest growing labor markets in the region. With a county unemployment rate of just 3.4%, there is local demand for skilled high school and college graduates in growing industries across area. Our interest is in increasing opportunity, not filling gaps in the workforce, but the shortage of employees in various fields offers career opportunities for our students to explore and consider without having to leave the area. The University of Utah's Research Park is being called “Bionic Valley” because it houses over 40 biotech companies. Salt Lake City, embracing its “Tech Lake City” initiative, has rapidly become a hub for technology and innovation. This growth has led to a significant increase in tech-

related employment opportunities, with the city experiencing a 22.9% growth in tech jobs between 2021 and 2022, surpassing the national average. For district students, this evolving landscape presents a unique advantage. We are poised to help students acquire technical and academic skills that align with current industry demands. Upon graduation, students are well-equipped to step directly into well-paying positions or pursue further education in their chosen fields.

### **Simply No Space to Expand**

There is simply no space to expand opportunities within our current Tech Center. The West and Highland high school rebuilds provide opportunities to update programs for school-based CTE classes. But for the advanced courses that require specialized equipment and carry a higher cost, the facilities at our current site prevent growth. For example, size is the major constraint for our fire cadet and welding programs; we could enroll more students given larger classrooms and outdoor learning spaces. We are also constrained from building out additional programs, such as construction.

There is also an accessibility constraint. Our state-recognized welding program, currently at Highland High school, serves Highland students well—but students from other high schools are hesitant to attend Highland beyond the entry level course. The number of students enrolled from other high schools drops significantly after the first year.

A larger space would offer increased access for SLCS students and allow students from all high schools in the district to participate, ensuring greater access to career-focused education. The Riley campus is just about equidistant from the three comprehensive high schools, and it is “mascot agnostic”—students are not crossing into “the other” high school to attend courses.

Additionally, a larger space provides more room for hands-on, real-world learning where we can simulate work environments such as mock hospital labs for health and medical pathway students; cybersecurity operations centers for IT students; and 3D printing and robotics labs for engineering students. As we grow CTE options, we will also be able to increase industry partnerships that help students gain work-based learning opportunities and connect with local businesses before graduation.

For example, a partnership with the University of Utah to build an advanced robotics lab would further student skills and training after their initial classes in the high schools. A “construction lab” where students learn business skills while building tiny homes or planning for commercial construction jobs would prepare them for management and entrepreneurial opportunities.

To support our students in preparing for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and to offer programs that will entice students and families to stay in SLCS rather than choose the offerings of districts surrounding us on the Wasatch front, we need to expand our options so we can prepare students to enter rewarding, high-demand fields through college or credentialed learning. Our current opportunities are limited by space.

Please see the table below that presents a plan for course and program placement as we rebuild comprehensive high schools and consider a new Career and Technical Center.

## Preliminary Plan

Career Cluster	Courses			
	East	Highland	West	Tech Center
Arts, A/V Tech, & Communication	Digital Media, TV Broadcasting, Video Production Photography, Commercial Art			3D & Graphic Animation Design <i>Virtual Production*</i>
Business, Marketing, & Finance	Accounting, Business Management, Marketing, Intro			<i>Investments &amp; Wealth Management*</i> Business Communication <i>Business, Marketing Capstone*</i>
Computer Science & Information Technology	Exploring Computer Science, Programming, Intro New and Emerging Technology			Cyber Security Geographical Information Systems Advanced Programming
Education & Training	Early Childhood Education, Teaching as a Profession			Aspiring Educators (CE)
Emergency Careers & Public Safety				Fire Science (CE) Law Enforcement (CE) JROTC, <i>currently at West</i>
Electronics, & Robotics	Programming, Intro			Robotics & Electronics, <i>currently at West</i> <i>Advanced Robotics Lab*</i>
Healthcare & Human Services	Intro to Health Sciences Medical Terminology Medical Anatomy & Physiology Bio Agriculture, <i>at Highland</i>			Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Emergency Medical Tech (EMT) Medical Assisting (MA) Barbering Biotechnology, <i>currently at Highland</i>
Hospitality & Tourism	Hospitality and Tourism, Intro Customer Service Foods/Culinary Arts			<i>Advanced Culinary Arts*</i> <i>Event Management &amp; Planning*</i> <i>Lodging &amp; Recreation*</i>
Manufacturing & Engineering	Manufacturing, Intro			Welding (CE), <i>currently at Highland</i> Engineering 1, 2, & <i>Capstone*</i>
Skilled Trades & Construction	Woodworking, Intro			(HVAC, Carpentry, Electrical, Plumbing) <i>Construction Lab*</i>
Transportation	Automotive, Intro			(Air, Space, & Ground) <i>Advanced Maintenance/Repair*</i> Drone Operations

*\*Expanded course offerings*

Courses placed at each **comprehensive high school** are robust introductory and exploratory options that support students' interests, provide introductions to various career fields, and increase student engagement, attendance, and participation. (This is not a comprehensive course list).

Courses planned for an expanded **Career and Technical Center** are advanced courses that have greater equipment space needs, are higher in cost, and provide capstone experiences in early college or certificate programs that lead to careers or post-secondary education.

## Attending to Costs

Creating a new Career and Technical Center comes with obvious costs—some of them significant. If the Board chooses to designate the Riley campus as the site for a new and expanded Career and Technical Center, our approach to covering those costs would be a **phased implementation plan**. This would allow us to make progress thoughtfully and strategically, aligning our aspirations with available resources.

**The first step** in this process would be to determine the actual cost of renovating and improving the Riley site. With Board approval, we would contract with an architectural firm to assess the building and provide preliminary designs and cost estimates for the expanded center. By moving forward in phases, we can responsibly manage spending and scale development over time. The following rough timeline outlines how we envision each phase:

- **Phase I (2025-2026):** *Relocate the existing Career and Technical Center to the Riley campus as early as this summer.*  
This move would address immediate space needs. Costs would be relatively minimal and include moving equipment and programs, purchasing additional furniture if needed, and making light updates to the building.
- **Phase II (2026-2028):** *Begin limited construction to tailor spaces for specific programs.*  
For instance, the welding program would require updates to accommodate the technical and safety requirements for welding equipment.
- **Phase III (2027-2029):** *Pursue more expansive construction projects to support programs with larger space and infrastructure needs.*  
Examples include building a professional kitchen to support culinary arts students and a construction lab for students in the building trades.

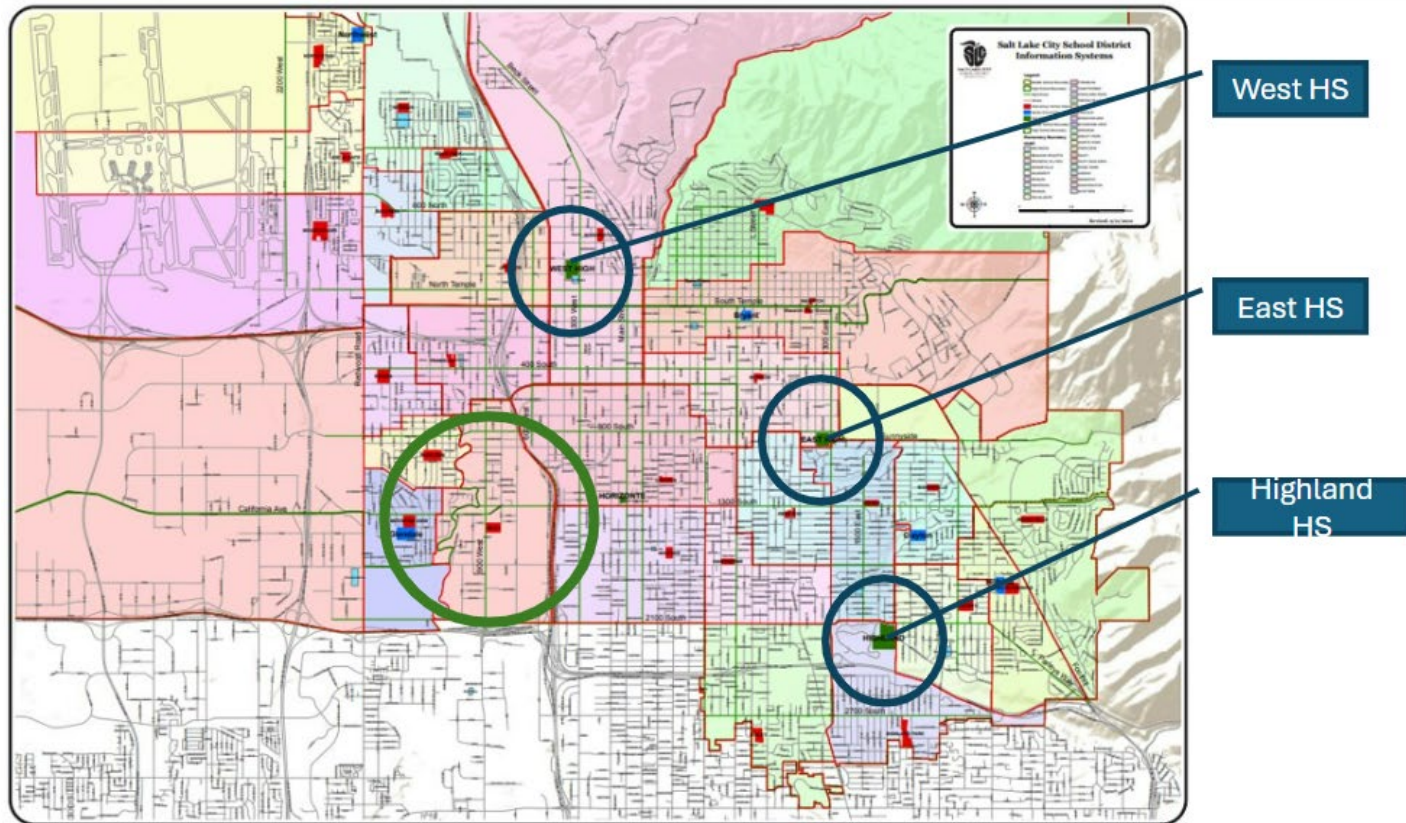
To support this vision financially, we are exploring two key funding sources beyond our existing CTE and Career and Technical Center funds:

1. **State Catalyst Campus Model Funds:** Under HB0447, the state has allocated \$65 million for districts to create or expand Career and Technical Centers. Once the State Board establishes the grant application, we will apply for the funds.
2. **Salt Lake Education Foundation Support:** The Foundation has expressed willingness to launch a fundraising campaign to generate additional resources. We believe the community will rally around this vision and that we can secure meaningful contributions to help build a high-quality center that benefits students across the district.

Through careful planning and community support, we believe this project can become a cornerstone of opportunity—expanding access, preparing students for high-demand careers, and fulfilling our mission to empower every graduate with a meaningful postsecondary plan.

## Why the Riley Site Over Other Options?

We carefully reviewed the district-owned properties for the expansion of a Career and Technical Center, and the Riley site clearly stands out as the most strategic and cost-effective option.



Several key factors contributed to this recommendation:

- **Equitable Access:** Placing the Career and Technical Center at Riley ensures a more equitable distribution of resources. Its **central location** makes it equidistant from all high schools, allowing for equal access to transportation, programming, and opportunity.
- **Strong Infrastructure:** Of the four recently closed sites, Riley is the **newest building**. It is a light-filled, modern design with the **largest parking lot, existing UTA bus access on the corner**, and infrastructure that makes upgrades like high-speed internet and technical wiring more feasible and affordable. These features make it a smart financial choice, reducing the need for costly retrofitting.
- **Space for Growth:** The site has **ample room for expansion**, including space to construct specialized facilities such as a **construction lab** and possibly a **fire tower** for public safety training. Its **outdoor areas** offer unique flexibility.

- **Proximity to Industry Partners:** Located near our business partners in the Glendale area and the Salt Lake International Airport, the Riley location strengthens prospects for industry collaboration.
- **Community Benefit:** Beyond its use for students, the Riley site can serve the broader community. We envision the potential of using the space for **adult education** and making it available after hours for **community events or workforce training**. Its westside location also positions it well to partner with organizations like the U of U's **West Valley hospital** to support health sciences and related career pathways.

### **What to Do with the Space?**

The current CTC space at SLCC, which was developed using CTE funds and district match, offers a valuable opportunity to support adult professional development and district assessment needs. We can create a centralized hub for professional learning, ensuring teachers and staff have access to high-quality, collaborative opportunities in professional spaces that demonstrate our belief that educators are professionals.

Similarly, designating a portion of the facility as a district assessment center would streamline the testing process for students and families, offering an accessible location for specialist assessments and evaluations. These uses enhance the functionality of the building and align with our broader goal of maximizing impact for both students and educators.

The costs for this use of the building would be minimal—mostly the addition of some furniture—as upgrades to sound and projection have already been completed.

### **Next Steps**

According to G-5 policy, following the recommendation to designate an unused building for a district need, the Board will provide time for public comment in a subsequent meeting and, after gathering public feedback, place the recommendation on an upcoming board agenda for a vote.

If the Board approves the recommendation, the district will plan to move the current CTC to the Riley site during the summer months. Also, the district will work with SLEF to hire an architectural firm to assess the building and provide preliminary designs and cost estimates for the expanded center according to the phased implementation plan presented above.

### **Attachments:**

- Powerpoint Presentation
- G-5 Policy (Revised Version 12.10.24)