

EPIC Sparks Campus

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For far too long, students have spent years in school only to enter adulthood unprepared for the challenges of the real world and the demands of today's workforce. At EPIC SPARKS Campus, we will build upon the proven success of EPIC Campus's career-readiness model by providing students with meaningful, hands-on experiences and direct connections to local businesses. These partnerships often lead to valuable opportunities, including employment after graduation in career paths students are passionate about. This strong foundation of collaboration with industry professionals guided our planning process and our engagement with the community.

Before beginning the design of our buildings, we first needed to understand what the community wanted to see in an expansion of EPIC Campus. To gather this input, we conducted a survey listing eight potential new career pathways and asked participants to rank them on a scale of 1–8. The results showed strong interest in culinary, law, emergency response services, and transportation technician fields. While not all eight pathways could be included in the expansion, the survey helped us identify the programs most valuable to the community. After determining which pathways to add, we developed a program that grouped similar pathways, estimated the square footage required for each, and identified essential building needs. We also conducted a site analysis to better understand the natural and environmental factors, including the sun path, noise from nearby roads, adjacency to the current EPIC Campus, opportunities to replace asphalt with green space, and the beautiful Rocky Mountain views to the west.

We incorporated architectural design choices that respond to natural and environmental factors while promoting sustainability and visual appeal. The transportation building features two-story atrium lab classrooms that support hands-on learning and improve air circulation. It maximizes Colorado's abundant sunlight through large garage doors and skylights, reducing reliance on artificial lighting, while solar panels generate additional energy. Exterior vertical fins,

inspired by airplane wings, distinguish the aviation space and function as adjustable shading devices to control incoming light.

Some special design features of the First Responder Building include large, mountain-like windows that represent both the Rocky Mountains and our logo; large garage doors that can be opened for better airflow; and two large bow windows that bring in natural light, reducing the need for artificial lighting.

The Law Building features a rooftop patio that connects the two buildings, encouraging student interaction and movement. It also includes a smaller bow window to bring in natural light and open up the classroom space. Additionally, we chose to include a mock courtroom to prepare students for the high-pressure environment of legal work, giving them a competitive edge in the field.

The Culinary Building centers on the Sylt Restaurant, which is open to the public on weekends and operated by students, providing real-world culinary and management experience. Large west-facing windows showcase Rocky Mountain views, while a separate public entrance ensures safety. Two commercial kitchens and a second-floor patio support both learning and student well-being environments.

EPIC SPARKS is designed to actively engage the community while providing students with meaningful, real-world experience that benefits both their education and the public. Each building offers services that allow students to apply their learning in practical settings. In the culinary building, students will operate the Sylt Restaurant on weekends, serving the community while developing hospitality and restaurant management skills. The emergency response building will host weekend CPR certification classes, giving students experience in public safety education. In the transportation building, the auto mechanic shop will be open to community members, allowing students to gain hands-on experience working on real vehicles.

We also plan to strengthen community involvement by inviting local trade professionals and business owners to speak with students about their companies and career paths, creating valuable networking opportunities. In addition, instructors will come directly from their respective industries, ensuring students receive authentic insight and mentorship from experienced professionals. EPIC SPARKS moves beyond traditional desk-based learning by

emphasizing hands-on participation, allowing students to spend the majority of class time actively engaged in the work of their chosen career pathway.

Sustainability is central to the SPARKS Campus. We will reduce our reliance on the electrical grid by installing solar panels on our covered parking, which will provide both shade and renewable energy. We will also use permeable pavers to allow water to infiltrate the ground, mitigating the heat island effect and reducing runoff. Our materials will be sourced locally to lower our emissions footprint.

The EPIC SPARKS Campus will be constructed using recycled materials, some of which will be reclaimed from existing Tesla dealerships and other sites. To counteract the heat island effect, we will use native Colorado plants that require less water. To minimize our water footprint even further, we will utilize smart sensors and a greywater recycling system for irrigation, eliminating the need to use clean water for landscaping.

The SPARKS campus brings new career pathways and opportunities to EPIC. It works off the successful program EPIC already has to provide an improved student experience and a higher level of hands-on learning and community involvement. We chose to name our new campus the SPARKS Campus because it marks the start of a student's journey to find their passion, and it's the spark of imagination that fuels the next wave of innovation.