

CSCA Background

Colorado Spring Charter Academy (CSCA) was founded in 2005 and began as a K-5 charter school in a leased facility owned by Benet Hill Monastery, at the current school location on Palmer Park Bluff, 2577 North Chelton Road. The 54,608 sf main school building, constructed in 1965, was originally operated as a Catholic Girls School. The 500-seat auditorium was renovated in 1971. CSCA was able to purchase this main building, gym building, tennis courts and playground in 2007 for \$4.75 million dollars.

This 1965 main school building is now referred to as the CSCA Elementary School (ES). Other than ageing building HVAC and electrical systems, and existing non-compliant code conditions, this school building is an exemplary school with clear circulation, north-south facing classrooms with ample daylight, a full food service kitchen and a 500-seat auditorium. A building of Historic Interest, the CSCA Elementary School is a fine example of Mid-Century Modern architecture and is constructed of premium materials: exterior masonry and precast concrete, concrete waffle-slab floors and roof, interior masonry corridors, terrazzo floors, stainless-steel handrails. Photo 15

CSCA renovated three classrooms in 2008 and constructed an Elevator Addition (800sf) to the east end of the school in 1992. The total area of the CSCA Elementary School, with the basement and Elevator Addition is 65,468sf. The roof was replaced in 2020.

In 2010, CSCA purchased an additional 12 acres of the Benet Hill Monastery site, which included a 14,000sf chapel/priory building, and three residences for \$1.25 million dollars. The residences are used by CSCA for faculty housing. The renovation of the chapel/priory to a Middle School (MS) allowed CSCA to expand to a K-8 school in 2010. The K-8 configuration of CSCA serves those parents eager for their children to remain in this community school after the elementary grades. In the years that followed, CSCA would learn that uncontrolled storm water would repeatedly flood the MS despite the installation of man-made berms and sandbags. Repeated inundation of storm water into the MS has resulted in an unsustainable deterioration of the building's structural system and building finishes.

As a Title 1 school, CSCA recognizes that the school day provides a safe, warm, nurturing space, with meals for all students, and a constructive routine with high expectations for learning and accountability. The CSCA Facility staff take great pride in the repair and maintenance of all CSCA buildings.

Building systems replacement (HVAC and electrical) and security improvements are required in all schools that operate over multiple decades. The CSCA Elementary School has served students for 60 years. With the correction of current Priority 1 Life Safety and Security deficiencies, this school will meet the operational and CDE Public School Capital Construction Guidelines for students for the next 200 years.

The most significant CSCA renovation was the 2010 renovation of the Benet Hill Priory/Dormitory into the current CSCA Middle School (MS). The renovation provides

classrooms for 7th and 8th grades and administration spaces. The 6th grade is currently accommodated in the Elementary School.

The CSCA existing Middle School was constructed in an area currently designated as a landslide risk. If any school structure was proposed at this location, it would be denied by Planning and Zoning. The existing MS has become structurally impacted by extreme storm water draining from the adjacent steep, rocky Palmer Park bluff. The existing MS must be demolished to install the required storm drainage mitigation solution.

Emergency Electrical Repair: on March 3rd 2025, the main electrical panel failed at the CSCA Elementary School. School was closed due to no power and the main electrical panel caught fire upon the start-up attempt. Emergency replacement of the main electrical panel was completed March 4-6th 2025. The main electrical gear replacement was planned for summer of 2025 in the BEST grant. The emergency replacement of the main electrical panel allows the remainder of the electrical system replacement to occur summer 2026, concurrent with the HVAC replacement.

CSCA BEST Project Description

Colorado Springs Charter Academy, founded in 2005, is a Title I school, serving high need students with a Core Knowledge and Core Values curriculum, authorized by CSI.

CSCA has identified four deficiencies in this BEST Grant application.

Deficiency #1 - Failing HVAC System at Elementary School (ES), 60 years old.

Deficiency #2- Failing Electrical Systems at ES, 60 years old and urgent life-safety risk.

Deficiency #3 - Uncontrolled Storm Water Erodes Site, Threatens Landslide, and Damages Middle School.

Deficiency #4 - No Secure Vestibule and Failing Security Equipment at the ES.

Solution #1 - Replace Failing HVAC Systems at ES. Solution requires installation of fire suppression.

Solution #2 - Replace Failing Electrical Systems at the ES. Solution requires upgrade of the current fire alarm system to voice enunciation.

Solution #3 - Storm Water Mitigation Plan and Replacement Middle School (MS). A storm water mitigation plan was engineered and submitted to the City of Colorado Springs and preliminarily approved as it complies with all City drainage requirements. The drainage solution requires the demolition of the existing failing MS. The MS experiences ongoing significant structural distress and extreme differential movement, due to drainage issues and underlying soil conditions that include highly expansive claystone and fill. According to the Geotechnical report, the site area occupied by the MS is susceptible to landslides and regulatory approval for

construction would be denied. A replacement MS, meeting CDE Public School Facility Construction Guidelines 1 CCR 303(1) is included in Solution #3.

Solution #4 - Install a Secure Vestibule and Upgrade Failing Security Equipment at the ES.

The CSCA Solution is the result of focused investigation of complex issues, 3rd Party Engineering Assessments, review with AHJs and reliable budget pricing over an 11-month period, funded by CSCA for \$135,648. A \$24,600 CSI Assistance Fund grant awarded in July 2024, enabled in-depth civil engineering evaluation of drainage infrastructure, the Solution, and submittal to the city.

The urgency of the CSCA Deficiencies is extremely high. CSCA cannot delay correction these significant risks to life safety and security. The risk of life-threatening injury from water intrusion within the electrical system is shared by all the BEST engineers and construction professionals. CSCA planned to expedite the electrical main service gear permit for summer of 2025 construction.

On March 3rd 2025, the main electrical panel failed and caught fire upon the start-up attempt. Odin Electric procured an emergency replacement panel (typical lead time 40-50 weeks). School was re-opened on 7 March. The remaining electrical system replacement and elimination of water intrusion is scheduled for summer 2026.