

# Oregon Historic Site Form

Blanchard Educational Service Center  
501 Dixon  
Portland, Multnomah County

## LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME

address: 501 N Dixon  apprx. addr

historic name: Blanchard Educational Service Center

Portland  vcnty Multnomah County

current/ other names: BESC

Optional Information

assoc addresses:  
(former addresses, intersections, etc.)

location descr:  
(remote sites)

block nbr: \_\_\_\_\_ lot nbr: \_\_\_\_\_ tax lot nbr: \_\_\_\_\_

township: \_\_\_\_\_ range: \_\_\_\_\_ section: \_\_\_\_\_ 1/4: \_\_\_\_\_

zip: \_\_\_\_\_

## PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS

resource type: Building height (# stories): 3

total # eligible resources: \_\_\_\_\_ total # ineligible resources: 1

elig. evaluation: not eligible/non-contributing

NR status: \_\_\_\_\_

primary constr date: 1978 (c.)  secondary date: \_\_\_\_\_ (c.)   
(optional--use for major addns)

NR date listed: \_\_\_\_\_ (indiv listed only; see Grouping for hist dist)

primary orig use: EDUCATION: General

orig use comments: \_\_\_\_\_

secondary orig use: \_\_\_\_\_

primary style: Brutalism

prim style comments: \_\_\_\_\_

secondary style: \_\_\_\_\_

sec style comments: \_\_\_\_\_

primary siding: Concrete: Other/Undefined

siding comments: \_\_\_\_\_

secondary siding: Steel

architect: Broome Oringdulph O'Toole Rudolf & Associates (BOORA)

plan type: Other/Undefined

builder: \_\_\_\_\_

comments/notes:

## GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS

survey project name or other grouping name: PPS Historic Building Assessment 2009 Survey & Inventory Project

farmstead/cluster name: \_\_\_\_\_ external site #: 356  
(ID# used in city/agency database)

## SHPO INFO FOR THIS PROPERTY

NR date listed: \_\_\_\_\_

ILS survey date: 6/4/2009

RLS survey date: 6/4/2009

Gen File date: \_\_\_\_\_

**106 Project(s)**



## ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

(Include expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings, and alterations)

### Description Summary

The Blanchard Educational Service Center (BESC) is located at 501 N. Dixon St. in the Eliot neighborhood of north Portland. The 10.5 acre site includes a large administrative building (1977, 356), a garage with service bays, as well as sheltered parking for Portland Public School (PPS) vehicles. The four level office building epitomizes the Brutalism style of architecture through its massive size, sculpted or rounded exterior walls, and relatively unfenestrated exterior of channeled concrete.

### Architectural Description

The BESC is situated in the Eliot neighborhood of north Portland. The 10.5 acre, roughly square parcel is bounded to the south by N. Dixon St., to the west by N. Larrabee St., to the north by N. Hancock St., and to the east by N. Wheeler St. The building and its associated concrete parking structure occupy nearly the entire south to north sloping parcel. The change in topography allows for a two level parking structure and associated driveways to skirt around the building. Development in the surrounding area consists primarily of surface parking lots and industrial buildings built between 1900 and 1990 ([www.portlandmaps.com](http://www.portlandmaps.com)).

The overall design of the building is predicated on accommodating the various functions of the Portland Public Schools administration. The building features office spaces, the School Board meeting space, large warehouse for PPS books and other property, a motor pool and auto shop, carpentry and metal shops, as well as an industrial sized kitchen area. The exterior of the building does not entirely communicate the building's various functions, as the four-level BESC building is characterized by a smoothly finished concrete exterior that exhibits channeled concrete slabs. Several of the building's corners are curved, which gives the building a sculpted appearance. The structure exhibits a flat roof with several ventilation/elevator shafts that protrude from roof surface. Nearly the entire building is surrounded by surface parking or a two level parking structure.

The principal public entry into BESC is situated on the building's south side via a covered drop off area. Office spaces extend out over the drop off area as this section of the building is supported by cylindrical concrete columns. Office spaces within the building are principally marked by a ribbon of plate glass windows, but the building is largely unfenestrated. The front entrance space consists of an atrium which permits access into most of PPS's office spaces. The open atrium, which breaks through the second level of the offices, is also located immediately beside the school board's chambers. The two areas are separated by folding doors that allow for additional seating.

The office spaces are largely unobstructed by structural columns but subdivided by function. While office spaces are largely located on the first two levels, the lower two levels contain additional office spaces as well as a large warehouse where PPS property is stored. The warehouse exhibits large concrete columns that feature shoulders that carry concrete slabs and beams for the floors above. The warehouse is immediately beside an industrial sized kitchen that once had a larger role in food preparation for school food programs. The lower levels also include a carpentry shop for conducting repairs to doors, windows, and furniture as well as a metal shop for repairing metal finishes within school buildings. The building also features an expansive boiler room.

On the east and north sides of the building is the PPS motor pool and garage. The entire fleet of PPS vehicles are stored and repaired in this area. A shed roof shelter for cars rings the building on the east and north ends of the motor pool.

## HISTORY

(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period [preferably to the present])

### Significance Statement

In order to solve the difficulties associated with a decentralized approach to the administration of Portland's public schools, PPS began planning in the 1970s a new building that would house all of PPS's administrative functions. Prior to the construction of BESC, the various functions of the school district were housed in different parts of the city which made operations less efficient. Hiring the architectural firm of Broome Oringdolph O'Toole Rudolf & Associates (BOORA), PPS called for a building that simultaneously housed administrative offices, the district warehouse, carpentry and metal shops, as well as the district motor pool and auto shop.

Selecting a centrally located site in the Eliot neighborhood of north Portland, PPS chose a property that was close to Interstate-5, Martin Luther King Blvd, and other major arterials that could facilitate transportation to and from the building. Constructed in 1977, the new building stood in stark contrast to previous buildings erected for the district's administrative functions. Beginning in the 1920s, the district occupied the Collegiate Gothic style administrative offices formerly located at 631 NE Clackamas (PPS Glossary of School and Property Names 1981). The district also owned warehouses, such as the Guilds Lake Storeroom, located at 532 NE Davis as well as the former Properties and Maintenance Shops located at 1314 NE Grand Ave. All of these properties were sold in 1981 following the construction of the BESC (PPS Glossary of School and Property Names rev. 1981).

The new building's sprawling size was emblematic of the Brutalism style, which refers to the French term for "raw concrete". This style is a modernist approach to architectural design that focused upon the "heavy, monumental, stark concrete forms and raw surfaces" of a building that was "suggestive of massive sculptures" (Harris 1998: 40). Readily visible from major roadways, the new building was a bold pronouncement of the PPS's intention of modernizing its operations and facilities. Erected during a period of plunging school attendance, the building sought to reduce operational costs by centralizing functions previously performed at various sites throughout the district as well as within the district's schools themselves. The building is still occupied by PPS.

While BESC does not meet the 50 year standard for National Register eligibility and is not considered exceptionally significant under National

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Register Criterion Consideration G, the following eligibility determination is provided for future district planning purposes. While the BESC building features good historical integrity, it is not clear that it is reflective of a broad pattern or trend in the history of Portland's public schools. Several other administrative buildings have been occupied by PPS prior to the construction of this building. The building is therefore not eligible under National Register Criterion A. In addition, the building's Brutalist style is still commonly found in Portland and lacks architectural distinction in that it does not appear to be a good example of the type, period, or method of construction. It is therefore not eligible for the National Register under Criterion C.

## RESEARCH INFORMATION

(Check all of the basic sources consulted and cite specific important sources)

- |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Title Records           | <input type="checkbox"/> Census Records              | <input type="checkbox"/> Property Tax Records  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Histories      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sanborn Maps | <input type="checkbox"/> Biographical Sources        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SHPO Files | <input type="checkbox"/> Interviews                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Obituaries              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Newspapers       | <input type="checkbox"/> State Archives        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic Photographs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> City Directories        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building Permits | <input type="checkbox"/> State Library         |  |

Local Library: Multnomah County Library University Library: Portland State University

Historical Society: Oregon Historical Society Other Repository: Portland Public Schools Archives

Bibliography: Bibliography

Harris, Cyril Manton. American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1998.

Portland Public Schools. School Chronology Binder. Nd.

\_\_\_\_\_. Glossary of School and Property Names 1981.

Ritz, Richard. E. Architects of Oregon. A Biographical Dictionary of Architects Deceased – 19th and 20th Centuries. Portland: Lair Hill Publishing, 2003.



East and west elevations (356A)



Rear entrance located on north side of building (356A).



Motor pool entrance from N. Dixon Street (356A).



Rounded edge to building located near main entrance (356A).



North elevation of building (356A).



Corridor on “L1” level leading to facilities department (356A).



Interior of warehouse section of building (356A).



Metalworking shop area (356A).



Main entrance lobby with board chambers (right) (356A).



Kitchen area (356A).

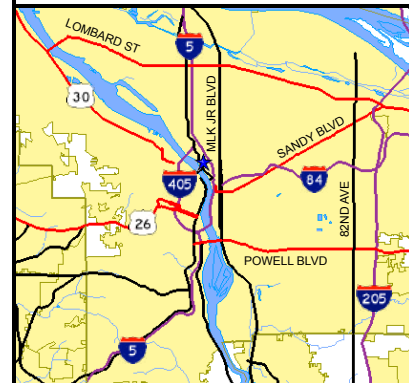
# Blanchard Educational Service Center (BESC)

501 N Dixon St, Portland OR, 97227




[View Site in Google Maps](#)

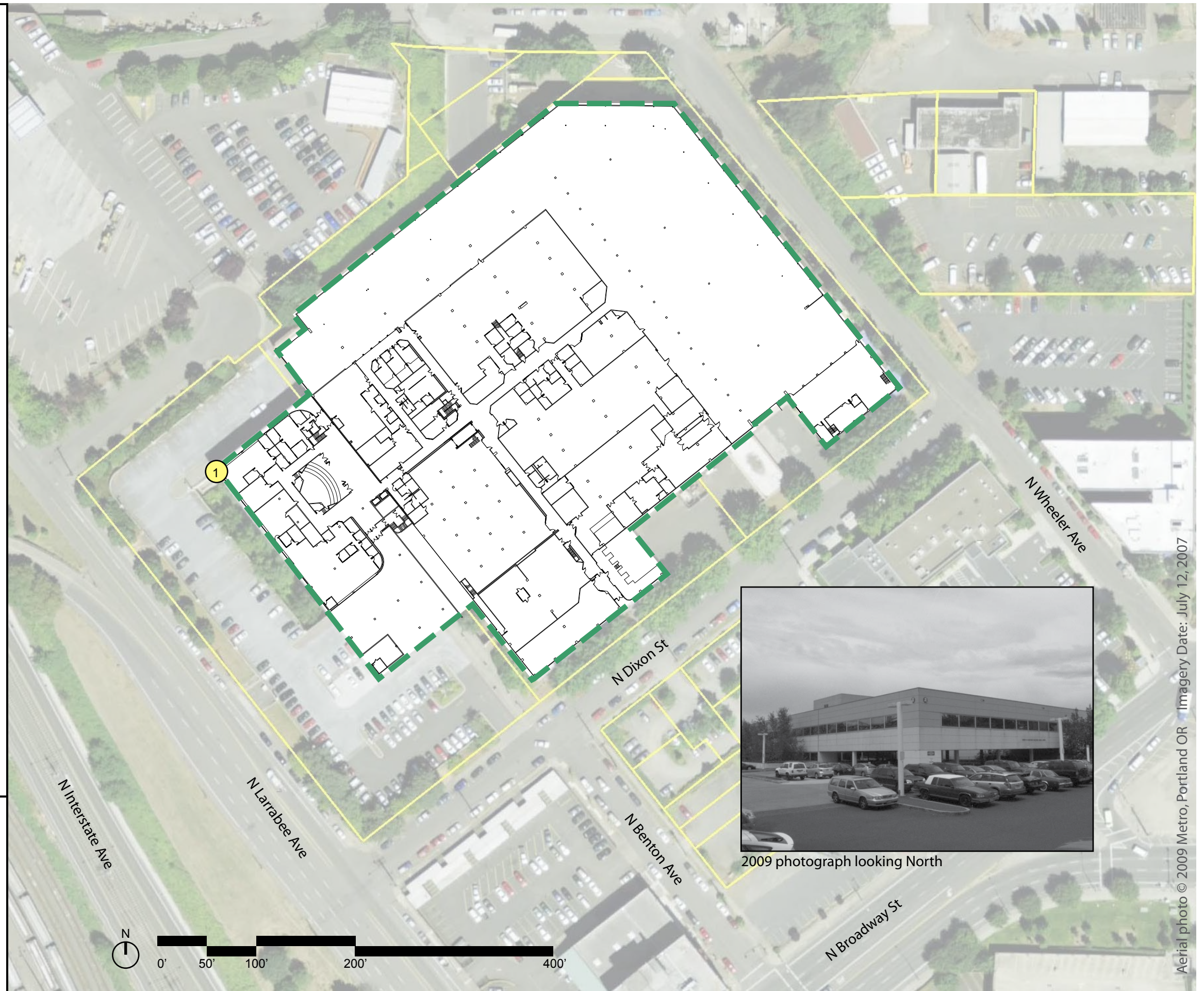
## Building Periods

1. Original Building (356A), 1978



### Historical Significance and Building Integrity

-  Contributing High Significance
-  Contributing Moderate Signif.
-  Non-Contributing



2009 photograph looking North