

# Notice of Exemption

To:  Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, 1400 Tenth Street, Room 212  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

From: (Public Agency) Carmel Unified School District  
4380 Carmel Valley Road  
Carmel, CA 93923

(Address)

County Clerk  
County of Monterey  
168 West Alisal Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901

**Project Title:** Carmel River Elementary School Modular Buildings

**Project Applicant:** Carmel Unified School District

**Project Location – Specific:**

Carmel River Elementary School, 2770 15th Avenue in Carmel (APN: 009-511-001), corner of Monte Verde Street and 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue in unincorporated Monterey County.

**Project Location – City:** Unincorporated County

**Project Location – County:** Monterey

**Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of the Project:**

The project includes installation of two (2), 960-square-foot modular buildings on existing blacktop at Carmel River Elementary School. The school is located at 2770 15th Avenue in Carmel (APN: 009-511-001) in unincorporated Monterey County. The 4.56-acre project site is zoned “Public/Quasi-Public, Design Control (PQP-D)/Coastal Zone (CZ)” by the County with a general plan designation of “Public/Quasi Public.” Each of the two modular buildings would measure 24 feet by 40 feet and would have a maximum height of 12 feet, 6 inches. One building (building H) would be used for office space for faculty and staff and the other (building J) would house counseling and small instruction space. The beneficiaries of the project would be students, faculty, and staff of Carmel River Elementary School.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Carmel Unified School District

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Carmel Unified School District (c/o, Dan Paul, Director of Facilities & Transportation)

**Exempt Status:** (check one)

- Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Section 15314. Minor Additions to Schools, Class 14.
- Statutory Exemptions. State code number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Reasons why project is exempt:**

See attached findings document for categorical exemption evidence and findings.

**Lead Agency**

**Contact Person:** Dan Paul, Director of Facilities & Transportation

**Area Code/Telephone/Extension:** 831-624-6311, ext. 2060

**If filed by applicant:**

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project?  Yes  No

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 4-28-22

Title: Chief Business Official

Signed by Lead Agency

Date received for filing at OPR: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by Applicant

Revised 2011



# Carmel River Elementary School Modular Buildings Project Description and Evidence for Categorical Exemption

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project includes installation of two (2), 960-square-foot modular buildings on existing blacktop at Carmel River Elementary School, which is one of three elementary schools in the Carmel Unified School District (school district). The school is located at 2770 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Carmel (APN: 009-511-001) in unincorporated Monterey County. The 4.56-acre project site is zoned "Public/Quasi-Public, Design Control (PQP-D)/Coastal Zone (CZ)" by the County with a general plan designation of "Public/Quasi Public." Each of the two modular buildings would measure 24 feet by 40 feet and would have a maximum height of 12 feet, 6 inches. The two modular buildings would be located 20 feet east of the existing multi-purpose building (building P) at the approximate center of campus at the edge of the playground area that makes up much of the southern area of campus. One building (proposed building H) would be used for office space for faculty and staff and the other (proposed building J) would house counseling and small instruction space.

## CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION AND EVIDENCE

The proposed project qualifies for a categorical exemption under Article 19, Section 15314 of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

**15314. Minor Additions to Schools:** Class 14 consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25% or ten classrooms, whichever is less. The addition of portable classrooms is included in this exemption.

## Evidence and Findings

The project would not create any new standard classrooms that would provide for an increase in student capacity. Therefore, the proposed project would not increase original student capacity. For these reasons, the proposed project is categorically exempt as the two modular buildings are characterized as a minor addition to an existing school within existing school grounds where the additional does not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or ten classrooms.

## Exceptions to Categorical Exemptions

Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines lists exceptions that would prohibit a project from qualifying for a Categorical Exemption, even if the project satisfies the requirements for one or more of the exemption classes. The school district's CEQA consultant, EMC Planning Group, conducted an independent review and evaluation of the proposed project, conducted independent research, and reviewed project plans prepared by the school district's architect. Based on its review, EMC Planning Group concluded that none of the exceptions listed in CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2 (a-f) apply to the proposed project (discussed below). Therefore, a Categorical Exemption is appropriate pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15314.

- a) **Location.** Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

*Discussion.* The project qualifies for a Class 14 exemption and therefore, the location exception does not apply to the project.

- b) **Cumulative Impact.** All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

*Discussion.* The school district is not planning successive projects of the same type in the same place. Therefore, there is no cumulative impact that would be significant.

- c) **Significant Effect.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

*Discussion.* Neither the school district nor the school district's consultants are aware of any unusual circumstances associated with the project such that the project would result in a reasonable possibility of resulting in a significant effect on the environment.

- d) **Scenic Highways.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.

**Discussion.** According to the Caltrans Scenic Highway System Map website and the Monterey County General Plan (Figure 14 – Scenic Highway Corridors & Visual Sensitivity, Greater Monterey Peninsula), the nearest officially designated State of California scenic highway to the project site is State Route 1, which is approximately 0.85 miles east of the project site. No portions of State Route 1 are visible from or in the vicinity of Carmel River School. The Carmel River State Beach, which borders the school site and is approximately 675 feet southeast of the proposed modular building site, is identified in the Monterey County General Plan (Figure 14) as a “Sensitive” visual resource area. Areas further south towards the Carmel Highlands and Point Lobos State Natural Reserve are identified as “Highly Sensitive.” However, no public views are available on or towards these areas from the modular building site and the approximately 12-foot high modular buildings themselves would not obstruct any other surrounding public viewpoints of these visually sensitive resource areas. Therefore, no scenic highways, or scenic resources, would be affected as a result of the project.

- e) **Hazardous Waste Sites.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

**Discussion.** The proposed project is not located on a site that is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code. The site is not located on the California Environmental Protection Agency’s Cortese List (Health and Safety Code Section 25187.5). The State Water Resources Control Board’s GeoTracker (Health and Safety Code Section 25295 and Water Code Sections 13273 and 13301) does not indicate any hazardous sites within the project site. The project site is also not listed on the California Environmental Protection Agency’s list of solid waste sites identified by the Water Board with waste constituents above hazardous waste levels outside the waste management unit (Health and Safety Code Section 116395).

- f) **Historical Resources.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

**Discussion.** According to the Monterey County Register of Historic Resources (updated June 2020), Carmel River Elementary School is not listed as a historical resource and is not located within or near County-designated historic districts. The nearest historical resource to the school site is the Carmel Mission, which is located approximately 0.25 miles to the east. Additionally, the project does not include any changes to existing buildings. Therefore, the proposed project would not cause a change in the significance of a historical resource.

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