

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)
San Mateo-Foster City School District
1170 Chess Drive
Foster City, CA 94404

County Clerk
County of San Mateo
555 County Center, 1st Floor,
Redwood City, CA 94063

Project Title: Highlands Elementary School Multi-Purpose Building & Field Replacement

Project Applicant: San Mateo-Foster City School District (Facilities Department)

Project Location – Specific: Highlands Elementary School, 2320 Newport Street, San Mateo, CA 94402

Project Location – City: San Mateo

Project Location – County: San Mateo

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of the Project:

The San Mateo-Foster City School District plans to construct a 7,668 square foot multi-purpose building located along the northern edge of the Highlands Elementary School campus located in an unincorporated area of San Mateo County. The proposed 24-foot high multi-purpose building would replace an existing play structure and a portion of the existing school playfield and would include surrounding landscaping improvements. In conjunction with construction of the new multi-purpose building, the school district plans to replace the entire 0.83 acre (or approximately 36,170 square feet) natural grass playfield with synthetic turf. The beneficiaries of the project will be the students, faculty, and staff of Highlands Elementary School.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: San Mateo-Foster City School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: San Mateo-Foster City School District

Exempt Status: (check one)

Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Minor Additions to Schools (Article 19, Section 15314)

Reasons why project is exempt:

Project does not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or ten classrooms. See attachment document for additional information and analysis.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Mark L. Sherrill, Construction
Project Manager

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (650) 312-7884

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: Shark Patten Date: 07/12/22 Title: Consultant to the School District

Signed by Lead Agency

Date received for filing at OPR: _____

Signed by Applicant

Highlands Elementary School Multi-Purpose Building and Field Replacement Project Description and Evidence for Categorical Exemption

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project includes construction of a multi-purpose building and replacement of a natural grass field with synthetic turf at Highlands Elementary School, which is one of fifteen elementary schools in the San Mateo-Foster City School District (school district). The school is located at 2320 Newport Street in an unincorporated area of San Mateo County. The improvements are summarized below.

Multi-Purpose Building

The proposed project includes constructing a 7,668 square foot Multi-Purpose Building, located within portions of an existing paved playground area and a grass field at the elementary school. The new 24-foot high, Multi-Purpose Building will include a 4,210 square foot multi-purpose room and stage area, two restrooms, kitchen, serving area, riser closet, custodial room, electrical and mechanical room, and storage closet. This new Multi-Purpose Building would displace some existing play equipment, which would be relocated to another area of the campus, and would include surrounding landscaping improvements.

Field Replacement

In conjunction with construction of the new multi-purpose building, the school district plans to replace the entire 0.83 acre (or approximately 36,170 square feet) natural grass playfield with synthetic turf. Other than the removal and replacement of the grass playfield, no other vegetation will be removed.

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 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 Multi-Purpose Building is 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 San Mateo County General Plan Scenic Corridors Map and the Caltrans Scenic Highway System Map website, the project site does not fall within an officially designated State of California scenic highway or a County or State Scenic Corridor. 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 County of San Mateo General Plan and the State Office of Historic Preservation, the school site does not contain any known historical resources. 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.

