

Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044
County Clerk
County of: San Diego
1600 Pacific Highway
San Diego, CA 92101

From: (Public Agency): Grossmont Union High School District
1100 Murray Drive El Cajon, CA 92020
(Address)

Project Title: Grossmont High School Underground Electrical Utilities Project

Project Applicant: Grossmont Union High School District

Project Location - Specific:
1100 Murray Drive, El Cajon, CA 92020

Project Location - City: El Cajon Project Location - County: San Diego County

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

Please see Attachment A.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Grossmont Union High School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Grossmont Union High School District

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));
[X] Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: 15301, 15302, and 15314
Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

Please see Attachment A.

Lead Agency
Contact Person: Lindsey Danner Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 619-644-8172

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 [X] No

Signature: Lindsey Danner Date: 11/21/22 Title: Executive Director Facilities

[X] Signed by Lead Agency [] Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR:

Grossmont High School Underground Electrical Utilities Project Notice of Exemption (NOE)

The Grossmont Union High School District (District), as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) along with coordination with San Diego Gas & Electric, proposes to convert the existing overhead electrical utilities to underground utilities at the Grossmont High School (GHS) campus (hereinafter referred to as the “proposed project”).

An Initial Study was prepared in 2017 for the Grossmont High School Modernization and Additional Project (District 2017) and another Initial Study was prepared for the Bus Maintenance Facility Project in 2020 (District 2020). These initial studies were reviewed for the preparation of this NOE, as they identify the existing conditions of the school site.

Project Location:

The proposed project is located on the GHS campus at 1100 Murray Drive, El Cajon, California. All components of the proposed project would occur within the boundaries of the school. Access to the site is available via Mildren Street and Murray Drive.

Existing Conditions:

The GHS site is located in a developed residential neighborhood. To the north of the GHS site is Washington Street followed by Harry Griffen Park, to the south Interstate Highway 8, to west is a church and residential area, and to the east is a residential area. The campus currently consists of 96 total classrooms, made up of 92 permanent and 4 portable classrooms; High School and District Administrative buildings; the District’s transportation yard, maintenance yard and warehousing facilities; parking lots; hardcourt areas; natural turf fields; and a football stadium.

Description of Project:

The proposed project would include the following:

- Removal of six overhead utility poles and their associated utilities all within the GHS campus.
- Installation of underground electrical utilities all within the GHS campus.
- Construction will follow the trenching path and will extend 20 feet on either side of the trench.
- Excavation will be 1,000 linear feet, with a width of 18 inches. The depth may range from three to six feet, depending on existing utilities on the site. This can only be determined during excavation.
- Removal of some non-native landscape vegetation may be necessary. Any previously landscaped areas that will remain landscaped will be replanting with similar non-native landscaping.

- Construction staging will occur within an existing parking lot on the southern portion of the campus along Murray Drive.
- Construction is estimated to be completed within four months.

The proposed project would serve the existing student enrollment and would not result in an increase in student or program capacity, nor would the project result in an increase of employees at the project site. In addition, there would be no off-site circulation or traffic changes and construction activities would take place on campus.

Applicability of Exempt Status:

The proposed project is subject to CEQA. However, the proposed project is Categorical Exempt. The proposed work at the GHS site is Categorical Exempt under Section 15301(b) – Existing Facilities, Section 15302(c)(d) – Replacement or Reconstruction, and Section 15314 – Minor Additions to Schools. The proposed project is considered categorically exempt for the following reasons.

Existing Facilities (Class 1)

Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination, including but not limited to (CEQA Guidelines Section 15301):

- (b) Existing facilities of both investor and publicly owned utilities used to provide electric power, natural gas, sewerage, or other public utility services.

The proposed project would include the conversion of existing overhead electric utilities with underground utilities on the school campus.

Replacement or Reconstruction (Class 2)

Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including but not limited to (CEQA Guidelines Section 15302):

- (c) Replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity.
- (d) Conversion of overhead electric utility distribution system facilities to underground including connection to existing overhead electric utility distribution lines where the surface is restored to the condition existing prior to the undergrounding.

The proposed project would include the conversion of existing overhead electric utilities with underground utilities on the school campus.

Minor Additions to Schools (Class 14)

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 (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15314).

The proposed project would include the conversion of overhead electric utility distribution to underground utilities on the school campus. The proposed upgrades are intended to serve the existing student body and bus facility, which would not induce any increase in student enrollment. In addition, the proposed project does not include the construction of any new classrooms or other facilities that would increase the student capacity of the campus by more than 25% or ten classrooms. As noted above, no increase in student enrollment or staffing would occur as a result of the proposed project.

Exceptions to Use of a Categorical Exemption (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2):

The following summarizes the determination that the proposed project does not have the potential to trigger any of the exceptions identified in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 prohibiting the use of a categorical exemption.

- (a) **Location.** The proposed project would occur entirely within the boundaries of an existing high school campus in an urbanized community. The site has been developed as a school since 1920. All areas of the project site are either paved or disturbed, and therefore are not environmentally sensitive. Surrounding land uses consist of residential land uses. However, the proposed project would not extend into any offsite areas. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the project.
- (b) **Cumulative Impact.** There are no known future projects on the campus or within the surrounding community that, when combined with the proposed project, would result in a cumulatively considerable effect on the environment. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the project.
- (c) **Significant Effect.** The proposed project includes the conversion of existing overhead electrical utilities to underground utilities on the school campus. The project site and surrounding neighborhoods are located within an urbanized area, and no work is proposed offsite that could result in impacts on sensitive vegetation or other environmentally sensitive areas as a result of the proposed project. As such, there is nothing unusual about the project site or surrounding area. Furthermore, there is nothing unusual about the design of the proposed project that could result in a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Therefore, there is no reasonable possibility that the proposed project would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances, and this exception does not apply to the project.
- (d) **Scenic Highways.** The proposed project would not result in the demolition of existing structures or the construction of new facilities that would directly or indirectly affect an

officially designated scenic highway or scenic resources near a scenic highway. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the project.

- (e) **Hazardous Waste Sites.** As discuss in the Initial Study, according to the California State Water Resources Control Board GeoTracker database, no hazardous materials or sites that could be accidentally released are known to occur within the project site. An underground storage tank was removed from the bus maintenance facility site on December 27, 2019, and tank closure was completed per the County of San Diego Department of Environmental Health (DEH) (Grossmont Union High School District 2020). The school campus adjacent to the GHS site is listed on the DTSC Site Mitigation and Brownfield and Reuse Program, the State Tribal Sites – Site Mitigation and Brownfields Reuse Program Database, and on Envirostor as a School Cleanup Program site. The listing is due to a former debris pile adjacent to the southern portion of the Bus Maintenance Facility parking lot onsite. In January of 2011, the Certification of Removal Action was signed, indicating DTSC determined the necessary actions had been completed at the site. Any hazardous materials encountered on the project site would be handled in accordance with all local, state, and federal regulations. In addition, the high school campus adjacent to the GHS site is listed on the leaking underground storage tank (LUST) Information System database. There are four LUST Cleanup Sites listed that are associated with the high school campus, all of which are closed (Grossmont Union High School District 2020). In addition, previous studies found 1-3-butadiene within the soil of a portion of the site. However, further studies determined it was not a concern (Envirostor 2022). Though the GHS site is located near sites that are on lists compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5, these sites are not anticipated to cause a significant hazard to the public or the environment because they are closed or not significant.

An updated search of the State Water Resources Control Board GeoTracker website and the Department of Toxic Substances Control EnviroStor website was conducted on July 21, 2022 to confirm the current status of these hazardous materials sties and to identify if any new sites had been listed, and no new sites were identified (Geotracker 2022; Envirostor 2022). Therefore, since the hazardous materials sites are listed as closed or no further action, and construction would be in compliance with applicable regulations, the proposed project would not result in a significant impact related to hazardous materials. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the project.

- (f) **Historical Resources.** The proposed project includes the conversion of existing overhead electrical utilities to underground utilities on the school campus. No buildings or other structures considered a historical resource at the GHS site will be demolished as part of this project (Johnson, pers. Comm., 2022). Therefore, the proposed project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in Section 15064.5 of the State CEQA Guidelines, and this exception does not apply to the project.

References:

Grossmont Union High School District (District). 2020. *Grossmont High School Bus Maintenance Facility Project Initial Study*. September 2020. Prepared by ICF.

Grossmont Union High School District (District). 2017. *Grossmont High School Modernization and Addition Project Initial Study*. March.

EnviroStor. 2022 *Sites and Facilities*. Available at https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/profile_report?global_id=60000857. Accessed on November 17, 2022.

Geotracker. 2022, *Sites and Facilities*. Available at https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/profile_report?global_id=T0607300316. Accessed on November 17, 2022.

Johnson, Dena, Grossmont Union High School District. April 5, 2022 – telephone conversation with Kathie Washington of Ascent Environmental regarding previous historical analysis prepared for the Grossmont High School campus.