

Western High School Practice Field Project Notice of Exemption (NOE)

The Anaheim Union High School District (District), as the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), proposes to improve athletic facilities by providing an artificial turf field facility, with tiered bleacher seating, field lighting, a press box, and concession building.

Project Location

Western High School is located at 501 S. Western Avenue, Anaheim, CA 92804. The school is located on a 39-acre property comprising 11 permanent buildings and 13 portable buildings. Handel Stadium, which is used for District-wide events, is located at the northwestern portion of the campus and is not a part of this Project. The football/soccer practice field is located on the southern portion of campus, north of Orange Avenue and the existing parking lot.

Description of Project

The Proposed Project will consist of the following upgrades:

- Construction of a fenced-in artificial turf field within the existing school's athletic fields
- Construction of an observational press box/band tower
- Addition of metal shade structures with lighting, cameras, and Wi-Fi
- Installation of tiered bleachers under the metal shade structures
- Addition of four field lights
- Addition of scoreboard
- Construction of a modular concession building with restroom facilities
- Installation of an entry canopy, marquee, and fencing
- Provision of landscaping and access improvements
- High netting
- Flagpole
- Storm- and rainwater retention system
- Drinking fountains

Reasons Why Project Is Exempt:

The proposed activity is a project subject to CEQA. However, it is exempt from further environmental analysis under Class 1, *Existing Facilities* (CEQA Guidelines §15301), Class 2, *Replacement or Reconstruction* (CEQA Guidelines §15302), Class 11 *Accessory Structures* (CEQA Guidelines §15311) and Class 14 *Minor Additions to Schools* (CEQA Guidelines §15314). Class 1 categorical exemption 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. Class 2 consists of the 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 of the structure replaced. Class 11 consists of construction, or placement of minor structures accessory to existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities. 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 Proposed Project will result in the improvement of the existing practice field area at the existing high school. The improvements will not involve an increase in student capacity, and will

include repairs, maintenance, reconstruction, and minor additions to an existing school campus. The Proposed Project will not result in significant environmental impacts and is exempt from further review under the conditions in Article 19. Therefore, the application of Class 1, Class 2, Class 11, and Class 14 categorical exemptions is appropriate for the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project does not have the potential to trigger any of the exceptions identified in CEQA Guidelines §15300.2. Consequently, as documented below, the Proposed Project is exempt from further CEQA review.

- (a) **Location.** The improvements will occur entirely within the existing campus, which is located within an urbanized community. The existing conditions on and around the high school are disturbed, paved ground and are not considered environmentally sensitive. Ground disturbance would occur during construction but will be limited to the existing school property on previously disturbed surfaces. The Proposed Project will not impact environmentally sensitive areas or an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern. This exception does not apply to the Proposed Project.
- (b) **Cumulative Impact.** Once the Proposed Project has been approved by the District's Board of Education, project construction activities would begin in the first quarter of 2023 and be completed within 12 months. The majority of impacts associated with the Proposed Project will be temporary (the construction timeframe) and are limited to the immediate vicinity of Western High School. In addition, the area around the Project site is completely built-out, and no known projects have been identified in the area that would cause potential impacts. As such, no other cumulatively considerable projects have been identified that could incrementally contribute to the impacts associated with the Proposed Project. This exception does not apply to the Proposed Project.
- (c) **Significant Effect.** The activities associated with the upgrading of the existing practice field are not considered an unusual circumstance as campus updates are not unusual for school sites. All upgrades associated with the Proposed Project would be installed on or within existing facilities. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not appear visually incompatible with existing equipment and accessories on the Project site. Normal operations will be similar and consistent with current uses within the Project boundary.

The Proposed Project is located within a disturbed, urbanized environment in Anaheim. The campus vegetation is limited to ornamental landscaping, and it is anticipated that no candidate, sensitive, or special status species are anticipated to exist on or around the elementary school. The majority of work associated with the Proposed Project would occur on the existing track and practice field area and would result in minor ground disturbing activities. Thus, the Proposed Project and will not involve the removal of any native vegetation or scenic trees, nor would it impact any scenic vistas within the immediate area.

Therefore, no reasonable possibility exists that the Proposed Project would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Therefore, this exception does not apply to this Project. Please refer to the Initial Study Checklist (IS Checklist) for further details on potential impacts.

- (d) **Scenic Highways.** The Project site is approximately 2.2 miles south of California State Highway 91, a portion of which is officially designated as a State scenic highway. The section nearest to the Project site that is designated as a State scenic highway is located 10 miles east of the Project site (Caltrans 2022). Additional nearby highways include Interstate 5 and California State Highway 22, neither of which have scenic highway designations near the Project site.

No rock outcroppings, historic buildings, or trees would be impacted by the Proposed Project. Therefore, no impact to scenic highways would occur, and this exception does not apply to the Project.

- (e) **Hazardous Waste Sites.** The Proposed Project will not include any significant structural renovations that would result in the accidental release of hazardous materials to the environment. Because work would all be completed on the existing practice field area of the school, no asbestos containing materials or lead containing materials are expected to be discovered. The Proposed Project site is not on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65862.5 (SWRCB 2022; DTSC 2022); therefore, implementation of the Proposed Project would not result in an impact associated with known hazardous materials sites. This exception does not apply to the Notice of Exemption.
- (f) **Historical Resources.** Western High School is located on a 39-acre property comprising 11 permanent buildings and 13 portable buildings. Western High School was established in 1954; however, modifications and additional buildings were added to the site, including portable structures since that date. The School has had additions and/or renovations in 1957, 1973, and 1993. Renovation work has occurred over the years, with installation of portable classroom buildings occurring in 2010. Work associated with the Proposed Project would be completed on the existing field and would not involve any improvements to the existing permanent buildings, which have the potential to be designated as a historic resource. However due to extensive modifications and updates to the facilities since opening, it is unlikely these building would be eligible for consideration as historic resources. The Proposed Project would, therefore, have less than significant impacts to any historical resources. Work associated with the Proposed Project would be completed on the existing field and would not involve any improvements on the existing permanent buildings.

References:

Caltrans

2022. Scenic Highway Mapper. Accessed August 15, 2022 at:
<https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>

California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)

2022. Envirostor Database. Accessed August 15, 2022 at:
<https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/>

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)

2022. Geotracker Database. Accessed August 15, 2022 at:
<https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/>