

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To: Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: Saugus Union School District
24930 Avenue Stanford
Santa Clarita, CA 91355

County Clerk
County of Los Angeles

12400 Imperial Hwy
Norwalk, CA 90650

Playground and Outdoor Classroom Improvements at Rio Vista Elementary School

Project Title

20417 Cedarcreek Street

Project Location – Specific

Santa Clarita

Project Location – City

Los Angeles

Project Location – County

The District proposes to construct playground, and outdoor classroom improvements on an approximately 4-acre portion of the Rio Vista Elementary School campus. The proposed project includes new paving and pavement marking on existing play areas as well as two separate paved areas. Two existing play structures will be replaced by new play structures in the same locations. The proposed project will also construct an outdoor classroom on the central eastern portion of the campus. The outdoor classroom will consist of a circular concrete seat wall and mulch, turf, synthetic turf, and planter areas throughout the classroom. The proposed project includes a new concrete walking track around the perimeter of the grass field on the northeastern portion of the campus. The existing students, staff and surrounding communities are the beneficiaries of the project.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project

Saugus Union School District

Name of Public Agency Approving Project

Saugus Union School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project

Exempt Status: (check one below)

Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);

CEQA: California Environmental Quality Act

- Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
 Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
 Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: § 15302, Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction.
 Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

The proposed project includes improvements to existing play areas, replacement of existing play structures in the same areas, improvements to the existing grass field, and construction of an outdoor classroom. Project improvements will serve the same purpose and capacity of the replaced structures. No increase in student capacity will occur. Therefore, the proposed project is exempt from further CEQA analysis under Section 15302.

The proposed project was also reviewed for possible exceptions under Section 15300.2 and found that the exceptions do not apply. See Attachment to Notice of Exemption for further explanation of the evaluation, which is available at the Saugus Union School District, 24930 Avenue Stanford, Santa Clarita, CA 91355.

Reasons why project is exempt

Kathie Pisano

Contact Person:

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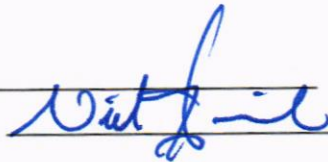
Area Code/Telephone/Extension:

If filed by applicant:

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

Date
Received for
Filing:

Signature:



Title: Asst. Superintendent of Business

Attachment to Notice of Exemption

Playground, and Outdoor Classroom Improvements at Rio Vista Elementary School

SAUGUS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

The Saugus Union School District (District) proposes to construct playground, and outdoor classroom improvements at the existing Rio Vista Elementary School (RVES) at 20417 Cedar creek Street, Santa Clarita (proposed project). This supplemental information provides justification for the Categorical Exemption pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines under California Code of Regulations, Title 14 § 15302.

1. EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROJECT LOCATION

The project site is located at 20417 Cedar creek Street, Canyon Country, in the City of Santa Clarita, in Los Angeles County (project site). The project site is located on the central and eastern portion of the existing RVES (Assessor Parcel Number [APN] 2805-013-900). The project site is bordered by Cedar creek Street to the south, Honby Avenue to the west, the Santa Clara River to the north, and residential uses to the east. Regional access to the facility is provided via State Route (SR) 14 and Interstate (I) 5, approximately 2.5 miles to the southeast and 5 miles to the west, respectively.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The approximately 4-acre project site comprises the central and eastern portion of the existing 9.2-acre RVES. The RVES campus includes school buildings on the western and southern portions, two paved parking lots and a drop-off area on the western portion and southern portions, paved play areas and play structures on the central and eastern portions, and a grass field on the northern portion. The project site encompasses all paved play areas including two play structures, two separate paved areas, the eastern half of the grass field, and additional fencing and a storage container adjacent to the concrete wall. Main vehicular access is provided via Cedar creek Street and Honby Avenue.

GENERAL PLAN AND ZONING

The project site has a zoning and general plan land use designation of Public/Institutional (PI). The PI zoning and general plan land use designation are used for various types of public and/or community serving facilities owned and operated by public agencies, special districts, nonprofit organizations, and other entities (Santa Clarita 2011, 2022).

SURROUNDING LAND USES

The project site is surrounded by a mixture of residential, institutional, and commercial uses. Residential properties are located to the east and south of the project site and have a zoning and land use designation of Urban Residential 2 (UR2). The Santa Clarita River, bordering the north end of the project site, also has a zoning and land use designation of UR2. Commercial properties and churches located west of the project site have a zoning and land use designation of Business Park (BP).

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project would remove the canopy in the first separated paved area and the fencing and storage container adjacent to the cement wall on the eastern portion of the project site. The proposed project would repave the existing play areas as well as the two separate paved areas. New paving marking would be included on the play areas throughout the project site. The two existing play structures would be replaced by new play structures in the same locations. The proposed project would also construct an outdoor classroom on the central eastern portion of

the project site adjacent to the concrete wall. The outdoor classroom would consist of a circular concrete seat wall and mulch, turf, synthetic turf, and planter areas throughout the classroom. The seat wall would be comprised of four curved concrete segments situated in a circle. Furthermore, the proposed project would construct a new concrete walking track around the perimeter of the grass field that is included within the project site.

CONSTRUCTION

All construction equipment and workers will be located within the boundaries of the project site and contractors will adhere to construction noise regulations. The remaining infrastructure, including play structures, school buildings, fencing along the perimeter of the campus, and concrete wall along the eastern border of the campus would be protected during project construction.

3. REASONS THAT THE PROJECT IS EXEMPT

The proposed project is exempt from further environmental review under the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code §§ 21000 et seq.) because it is consistent with Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction, as explained below.

- » **Class 2, Replacement or Reconstruction (CEQA Guidelines § 15302)** 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 of the structure replaced.

The proposed project would include paving improvements to existing play areas, replacement of existing play structures in the same areas, improvements to the existing grass field, and construction of an outdoor classroom. Project improvements would generally serve the same purpose and capacity of the replaced structures. Therefore, the proposed project is exempt from further CEQA analysis under Section 15302.

4. REVIEW OF EXCEPTIONS TO THE CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION

The proposed project has been reviewed under CEQA Guidelines § 15300.2 - Exceptions, for any characteristics or circumstances that might invalidate findings that the proposed project is exempt from CEQA. Each exception is listed below followed by an assessment of whether that exception applies to the proposed project.

- (a) **Location.** Classes 3,4,5,6 and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project would 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.

The project site is located on paved play areas and walkways and a portion of a dirt lot on the existing RVES. It is surrounded by a mixture of residential, institutional, and commercial uses. Due to the developed nature of the project site and frequent human disturbance, it does not contain any sensitive biological species or habitat. Although the Santa Clara River is adjacent to the project site, the river contains flowing surface water for only part of the year (from a few days to a few weeks), and the water table usually lies well below the ground surface for most of the growing season. Thus, the environment is not particularly sensitive, and the proposed project's impacts on the riverine system would not be significant (FWS 2023). Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

- (b) **Cumulative Impacts.** 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.

The District does not intend to construct any additional projects of the same type at the project site over time. Construction schedules at other District school improvement sites could overlap with the proposed project. However, proposed improvements at each project site would be executed individually and are anticipated to have site-specific impacts. Similar projects at nearby schools would not have an impact on the proposed project. Thus, the proposed project, when combined with cumulative District projects, would not create a significant cumulative under CEQA, and no cumulative impacts will occur. This exception does not apply to the proposed project.

- (c) **Significant Effects.** 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.

There is no reasonable possibility that the proposed project will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. The proposed project will not increase the student capacity at RVES. The construction manager will execute construction activities per current, local, state, and federal laws, regulations, construction Best Management Practices, District standards, and guidelines.

There will be some temporary noise and vibration impacts associated with construction activities. However, all temporary construction and vibration impacts, and operational noise impacts, are considered less than significant. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

Temporary Construction Noise

Noise created by construction within 300 feet of residentially zoned properties is allowed between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday but is prohibited during early morning, evening, nighttime hours, and all hours on Sundays and major holidays, according to the City of Santa Clarita Municipal Code (SCMC) Section 11.44.080 (City of Santa Clarita 2022). The proposed project's daily schedule for construction is anticipated to comply with the City's construction noise regulations, and therefore, construction activities will occur within the allowable construction hours of the SCMC. Short-term construction noise would be generated by demolition, site preparation, and construction activities. These activities will utilize equipment such as, but not limited to, dozers, backhoes, excavators, loaders, rollers, and construction vehicles for delivery and transport of equipment, material, and workers.

The closest sensitive receptors are the residences adjacent to the east, south, and west of the proposed project and the two churches situated at the southwest portion of the Hornby Avenue and Santa Clara Street intersection. Because of the proximity of the project site to these sensitive receptors, construction activities would elevate the ambient noise environment in the vicinity of noise-sensitive receptors. However, all construction activities would be temporary and cease upon project completion. Additionally, project development would be required to comply with Section 11.44.080, Special Noises – Construction and Building, of the Santa Clarita Municipal Code, which sets the hours of operation for construction. In addition, construction equipment and trucks will utilize the best available noise control techniques (e.g., improved mufflers, equipment re-design, use of intake silencers, ducts, engine enclosures, and acoustically attenuating shields, shrouds, or temporary noise barriers), wherever feasible. As a result, construction activities would be restricted to the least noise-sensitive portions of the day. Temporary construction noise impacts would be less than significant.

Temporary Construction Vibration

Construction can generate varying degrees of ground vibration, depending on the construction procedures and equipment. Operation of construction equipment generates vibrations that spread through the ground and diminish with distance from the source. The effect on buildings in the vicinity of the construction site varies depending on soil type, ground strata, and receptor-building construction. The effects from vibration can range from no perceptible

effects at the lowest vibration levels, to low rumbling sounds and perceptible vibrations at moderate levels, to slight structural damage at the highest levels. Vibration from construction activities rarely reaches the levels that can damage structures.

For reference, a vibration level of 0.2 inches per second (in/sec) peak particle velocity (PPV) is used as the limit for non-engineered timber and masonry buildings (which could be applied to the surrounding residential structures) (Federal Transit Administration 2018). At a distance of greater than 25 feet, vibration levels from typical construction equipment including vibratory rollers attenuate to less than the 0.2 in/sec PPV. Commercial, institutional, and residential properties are located adjacent to the western, southern, and eastern boundary of the project site; however, construction of the proposed project would not result in vibration levels that would disrupt the operation of adjacent properties or damage any structures near the project site. Therefore, vibration levels will not exceed the 0.2 in/sec PPV threshold, and vibration impacts will be less than significant.

Operational Noise

The proposed project will not introduce any new noise sources to the project area. The project site is located within the existing RVES campus. Implementation of the proposed project would not increase student capacity; therefore, the proposed project would not significantly increase noise levels near or within the project site.

- (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.

There are no designated state scenic highways near the project site or RVES. According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) California Scenic Highway Mapping System, the closest officially designated state scenic highway is State Route 2, approximately 20.4 miles southeast of the project site. Additionally, Interstates 5 (I-5) is eligible for designation; however, it is located approximately 5.3 miles west of the project site (Caltrans 2023). Construction and operation of the proposed project would be completely within the project; thus, the proposed project will not affect scenic resources along any scenic highways. Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed 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 Government Code § 65962.5.

California Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the compiling of lists of the following types of hazardous materials sites: hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action; hazardous waste discharges for which the State Water Quality Control Board has issued certain types of orders; public drinking water wells containing detectable levels of organic contaminants; underground storage tanks with reported unauthorized releases; and solid waste disposal facilities from which hazardous waste has migrated.

Five environmental databases were searched for hazardous materials sites on the site and within a quarter mile radius:

- » EnviroStor. Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC 2023)
- » GeoTracker. State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB 2023)
- » EJScreen. US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 2023a)
- » EnviroMapper. US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 2023b)
- » Solid Waste Information System. California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle 2023)

There are no hazardous materials sites identified within a quarter mile of the project site in the EnviroStor, GeoTracker, EJScreen, and EnviroMapper databases. According to CalRecycle's Solid Waste Information System, there

are three active waste sites near the project site. However, all three waste sites are approximately 0.34 miles west of the project site and handle inert or electronic waste. Therefore, the waste sites would not affect the proposed project.

The project site and its surroundings are not identified as a hazardous materials site pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. Therefore, the project would not create a hazard to the public. This exception does not apply to the proposed project.

- (f) Historical Resources.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of historical resources. Under Public Resource Code § 21084.1, a historical resource is a resource listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. Additionally, historical resources included in a local register of historical resources are presumed to be historically or culturally significant, and a lead agency can determine whether the resource may be an historical resource.

There are no historic resources on or within a 0.25-mile radius of the project site that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, or as a California State Historical Landmark (NPS 2023, OHP 2023a, OHP 2023b). Therefore, implementation of the proposed project will not cause significant impacts to historical resources, and the historical resources exception will not apply to the proposed project.

5. CONCLUSION

The proposed project at the existing RVES is exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15302. As substantiated in this document, the proposed project will not meet conditions specified in § 15300.2, Exceptions, of the CEQA Guidelines, and the proposed project is categorically exempt under Class 2.

6. REFERENCES

California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). 2023, March 17 (accessed). SWIS Facticity/Site Search. <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SolidWaste/Site/Search>.

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2023, March 16 (accessed). California Highway System. <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>
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National Park Service (NPS). 2023, March 16 (accessed). National Register of Historic Places. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm>.

Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). 2023a, March 16 (accessed). California Historical Resources. <https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/?view=county&criteria=19>.

Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). 2023b, March 16 (accessed). California Historical Landmarks. https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21427.

Santa Clarita, City of. 2011. City of Santa Clarita General Plan. <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/SantaClarita/html/SantaClaritaGP/SantaClaritaGP.html>.

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State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2023, March 16 (accessed). GeoTracker.
<https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/?CMD=runreport&myaddress=26501+Ruether+Ave%2C+Santa+Clarita%2C+CA+91350>.

US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2023a, March 16 (accessed). EJSCREEN.
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS). 2023, March 16 (accessed). National Wetlands Inventory – Wetlands Mapper.
<https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.HTML>.