

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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

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

County Clerk
County of Los Angeles

12400 Imperial Hwy

Norwalk, CA 90650

West Creek Academy School Improvements Project

Project Title

28767 W Hills Drive

Project Location - Specific

Santa Clarita

Project Location - City

Los Angeles

Project Location - County

The District proposes to resurface the existing parking lot and add shade structures to the campus.

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);

Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));

Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));

Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Class 11, Accessory Structures (CEQA Guidelines § 15311)

Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

CEQA: California Environmental Quality Act

The proposed project includes improvements to the existing campus parking lot, which is exempt from CEQA under Class 11, Accessory Structures (Section 15311). The resurfacing of the existing parking lot and addition of three shade structures within the District's West Creek Academy consists of construction, or placement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) and existing institutional facility. Therefore, the proposed project is exempt from further CEQA analysis under Section 15311.

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 for review at the District office.

Reasons why project is exempt

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(661) 294-5300

Contact Person:

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: Assistant Superintendent of Business

Attachment to Notice of Exemption
West Creek Academy Improvements Project
SAUGUS UNION SCHOOL DISTRICT
SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

West Creek Academy is one of 15 elementary schools within the Saugus Union School District (SUSD or District). The District proposes improvements for the West Creek Academy campus parking lot and the addition of three shade structures (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 § 15311.

1. EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROJECT LOCATION

The West Creek Academy campus (campus) is at 28767 W. Hills Drive (Assessor Parcel Number [APN] 2810-119-901), in the City of Santa Clarita, Los Angeles County (project site). The City of Santa Clarita is surrounded by unincorporated Los Angeles and the community of Castaic to the north, unincorporated Los Angeles to the west and east, the City of Los Angeles and unincorporated Los Angeles to the south. Regional access to the facility is provided via Interstate-5 (I-5), approximately 2.2 miles to the southwest of the campus, respectively.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

West Creek Academy serves students from kindergarten through sixth-grade, with an enrollment of 1,024 students as of the 2022-2023 school year (CDE 2023). Vehicular access to the campus is via two driveways on West Hills Drive along the northeast side of the campus.

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 provides for civic and governmental offices, public works yards, public or private schools, libraries, day care centers, airports, hospitals and supporting medical facilities, museums, fire stations, police stations, landfills, and prisons. Building height and coverage will be determined by the lead agency for each project, based upon the type and intensity of use. (City of Santa Clarita, 2023).

SURROUNDING LAND USES

The project site is surrounded by residential uses. All properties surrounding the project site have a zoning and land use designation of Urban Residential-1 and Urban Residential 2.

DISTRICT

The Saugus Unified School District provides school services to the City of Santa Clarita, unincorporated-Los Angeles County and the mountain areas to the northeast. The District consists of 15 TK through sixth-grade schools, including 13 elementary schools and two academies. Districtwide enrollment in the 2022-2023 school year was 9,097 students (CDE 2023).

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The District proposes to resurface the existing parking lot and add shade structures to the campus.

CONSTRUCTION

All construction equipment and workers will be located within the boundaries of the project site and contractors will adhere to construction noise regulations.

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 11, Accessory Structures, as explained below.

- » **Class 11, Accessory Structures (CEQA Guidelines § 15311)** consists of construction, or placement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities, including, but not limited to, (b) small parking lots.

The proposed project includes improvements to the existing campus parking lot, which is exempt from CEQA under Class 11, Accessory Structures (Section 15311). The resurfacing of the existing parking lot and addition of three shade structures within the District's West Creek Academy consists of construction, or placement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) and existing institutional facility. Therefore, the proposed project is exempt from further CEQA analysis under Section 15311.

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 completely within the West Creek Academy Campus, which is surrounded by residential uses. Due to the project site's developed nature and frequent human disturbance, it does not contain any sensitive biological species or habitat. No mapped wetlands exist on the site (FWS 2024). Therefore, this exception does not apply to the 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 will be executed individually and are anticipated to have site-specific impacts. Similar projects at nearby schools will not have an impact on the proposed project. Thus, the proposed project, when combined with cumulative District projects, will 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 are no unusual circumstances on or next to the school that will cause significant environmental impacts. The existing school is in operation, and no unusual circumstances are anticipated with the project construction. The nearest sensitive receptors to noise and hazardous air emissions are residential homes to the north, west and south the of the campus. Project construction and operation will, however, not cause any unusual circumstances resulting in significant environmental impacts. The construction manager will execute construction activities per current, local, state, and federal laws, regulations, construction Best Management Practices, District standards, and guidelines. The significant effects exception does not apply to the proposed project.

- (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 proposed project. 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 35 miles to the southeast of the project site. Additionally, Interstates 5 (I-5) is eligible for designation; however, it is located approximately 2.9 miles southwest of the project site (Caltrans 2024). Construction and operation of the proposed project will 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 2024)
- » GeoTracker. State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB 2024)
- » EJScreen. US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 2024a)
- » EnviroMapper. US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 2024b)
- » Solid Waste Information System. California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle 2024)

According to the DTSC's EnviroStor, there is one designated cleanup sites that requires no action within a quarter mile from the project site. Additionally, according to the SWCRB's GeoTracker, there are no designated cleanup sites within a quarter mile from the project site.

The project site and its surroundings are not identified in any of the other databases and are not identified as a hazardous materials site pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. Therefore, the project will 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 (NPS 2024), the California Register of Historical Resources (OHP 2024a), or as a California State Historical Landmark (OHP 2024b). 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 improvements at the West Creek Academy is exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15311. 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 11.

6. REFERENCES

- California Department of Education (CDE). 2024, March 27 (accessed). West Creek Academy Report, 2022-23 Enrollment by Ethnicity and Grade.
<https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dqcensus/EnrEthGrd.aspx?cds=19649980119230&aggllevel=school&year=2022-23>
- City of Santa Clarita. 2023. Zoning Map. https://santaclarita.gov/wp-content/uploads/sites/42/migration/UDC_zoning_Feb2023.pdf
- . 2024. Santa Clarita Municipal Code. Chapter 11.44.80, Special Noise Sources—Construction and Building <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/Cerritos/#!/Cerritos22/Cerritos2280.html#22.80.480>
- Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). 2024. EnviroStor.
<https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?myaddress=gahr+high+school>
- Federal Transit Administration. 2018. Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual.
https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/research-innovation/118131/transit-noise-and-vibration-impact-assessment-manual-fta-report-no-0123_0.pdf
- National Park Service (NPS). 2024. National Register of Historic Places.
<https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm>
- Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). 2024a. California Historical Resources.
<https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/?view=county&criteria=19>
- Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). 2024b. California Historical Landmarks.
https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21427
- State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2024. GeoTracker.
<https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/?CMD=runreport&myaddress=gahr+high+school#>
- US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2024a. EJSscreen. <https://ejsscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>.
- US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2024b. EnviroMapper for EnviroFacts.
<https://www3.epa.gov/enviro/index.html>.
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS). 2024. National Wetlands Inventory – Wetlands Mapper.
<https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.HTML>.