

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)
North Monterey County Unified School District
13994 Castroville Boulevard
Castroville, CA 95012

County Clerk
County of Monterey
168 West Alisal Street, 1st Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

Project Title: North Monterey County High School Improvements

Project Applicant: North Monterey County Unified School District

Project Location – Specific: North Monterey County High School, 13990 Castroville Boulevard, Castroville, CA 95012

Project Location – City: Unincorporated Monterey
County

Project Location – County: Monterey

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of the Project:

The North Monterey County Unified School District plans to make minor additions and several campus improvements within the existing high school campus. The proposed project includes the construction of one new classroom for use as a learning kitchen, with an adjoining outdoor kitchen area. Additionally, the project includes campus improvements, such as upgraded parking, a new covered bus shelter booth and reception booth, new hardscaping to improve accessibility, new monument signage, a flagpole, pedestrian lights, upgraded irrigation, removal of four landscaping trees, and new landscaping and raised planter beds. All additions and improvements would be constructed within the existing school campus.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: North Monterey County Unified School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: North Monterey County Unified School District

Exempt Status:

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

Reasons why project is exempt:

The project includes a minor addition of one new classroom (learning kitchen), as well as several other non-classroom improvements, which will not increase the original student capacity by more than 25 percent or ten classrooms. See attachment.

Lead Agency

Contact Person: Mary E. Dawson, Associate
Suprintendent

Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (831) 633-3343

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: *Teri Wessler Adam*

Date: 05/17/24

Title: Consultant to School District

- Signed by Lead Agency
- Signed by Applicant

Filed in County Clerk's Office

Xochitl Marina Camacho
Monterey County Clerk-Recorder

27-05282024-108

05/28/2024
CEQA
Pages: 5
Fee: \$ 50.00

By bmanroy, Deputy



North Monterey County High School Improvements Project Description and Evidence for Categorical Exemption

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project comprises minor additions and improvements within the existing campus, including the construction of one new classroom for use as a learning kitchen, with an adjoining outdoor kitchen area. Additionally, the project includes several campus improvements described in detail below. The proposed improvements are located within the existing campus. The school is located at 13990 Castroville Boulevard, approximately one mile northeast of the unincorporated town of Castroville. The classroom addition and other campus improvements are summarized below.

Learning Kitchen Building

The proposed project includes constructing a 1,635 square foot classroom building, located within an existing partially paved and landscaped area at the high school. The new building is intended for use as a learning kitchen and will include a teaching area, student work stations, dish wash station, hand wash stations, storage area, and an office. The building includes an adjoining outdoor kitchen area that is approximately 960 square feet. The outdoor kitchen area includes a hand wash station, dish wash station, pizza oven, and a grill station.

Campus Improvements

Campus improvements for the proposed project include the reconstruction of the existing parking lot entrance and exit. This includes the demolition of the existing asphalt driveway and the installation of a new driveway, along with fencing, vehicle gates, monument signs, pedestrian lights, and additional ADA parking spaces. New hardscape walkways and ADA ramps will also be incorporated.

The project will also include construction of an approximately 72 square foot covered bus shelter booth and an approximately 64 square foot reception booth. Upgrades to the stadium entryway are also planned, including new fencing, gates, hardscape features, pedestrian lights, stadium signage, and a flagpole. Additionally, the project includes improvements

such as enhancing the irrigation system, removal of four landscaping trees, and installing new landscaping with raised planter beds.

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 Addition 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 percent or ten classrooms, whichever is less. The addition of portable classrooms is included in this exemption.

Evidence and Findings

The proposed project includes a minor addition of one new classroom for use as a learning kitchen. Additionally, the project includes several campus improvements, such as upgraded parking, a new covered bus shelter booth and reception booth, new hardscaping to improve accessibility, new monument signage, a flagpole, pedestrian lights, upgraded irrigation, removal of four landscaping trees, and new landscaping and raised planter beds. All additions and improvements would be constructed on the same site as the existing school.

Given the specific intended use of the new classroom as a learning kitchen, an increase in student capacity is unlikely. Additionally, the project does not aim to increase student capacity by adding more than 10 classrooms, which is within the thresholds identified in Article 19, Section 15314. Therefore, the proposed project would not increase capacity by more than 25 percent or 10 classrooms.

For these reasons, the proposed project is categorically exempt as the project is characterized as a minor addition to an existing school campus and does not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or 10 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 15302.

- 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 proposed project includes several improvements to be implemented in phases and therefore, represents the cumulative improvements proposed at the school. The school district is not planning other 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. All of the proposed improvements are within the existing developed campus.

- 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 Caltrans Scenic Highway System Map website, State Route 156 is an officially designated scenic highway. The closest proposed improvements at the project site are located approximately 0.40 miles from the highway. Some of the existing high school buildings are visible from only one location on eastbound State Route 156, generally at the westernmost beginning of the scenic designation. The new kitchen classroom facility, 960 square feet and 20 feet high, may be visible at this one location for just a couple of seconds on

Project Description and Evidence for Categorical Exemption

the highway, but would blend in with the existing campus facilities. Therefore, the proposed project would not 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.

- 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 listed 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 Monterey County Register of Historic Resources, last updated in June 2020, the project site is not registered as a historic resource. Therefore, the project site does not contain any known historical resources and all proposed changes are limited to a minor addition of one new classroom building and associated campus improvements all within existing school grounds. Therefore, the proposed project would not cause a change in the significance of a historical resource.