

**Riverside County**  
**Facilities Management**  
3450 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Riverside, CA 92501

## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

September 24, 2024

**Project Name:** Riverside University Health System Department of Public Health (RUHS-PH) Oasis Community Infrastructure Project, Thermal

**Project Number:** FM08420013081

**Project Locations:**

Oasis del Desierto Park: 88775 Avenue 76, east of Harrison Street, Thermal California, 92274, Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 755-150-028

Las Palmitas Elementary School: 86150 66<sup>th</sup> Avenue, east of Tyler Street, Thermal, California, 92274, APN 751-070-031

Oasis Elementary School: 88175 74<sup>th</sup> Avenue, east of Harrison Street, Thermal California, 92274, APN 755-142-016

**Description of Project:** On April 4, 2023, Item 3.22, the Board of Supervisors (Board) approved the Restricted Grant Agreement No. CCL-5956-285 from the State of California to implement the Clean California Local Grant Program activities authorized by the State for the community of Oasis. Among the grant activities are recreational infrastructure improvements which will help enhance a sense of community and connectivity. Three locations have been selected within the unincorporated community of Thermal: Oasis del Desierto Park, Las Palmitas Elementary School, and Oasis Elementary School. The scope of the Oasis Community Infrastructure Project includes, but is not limited to, installation of shade structures, benches, native trees for shade and pollinator garden landscaping. The site improvements at the three locations in Thermal are identified as the proposed project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The operation of the facilities will continue to provide public services and will not result in a significant expansion of existing use. No additional direct or indirect physical environmental impacts are anticipated.

**Name of Public Agency Approving Project:** Riverside County

**Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:** Riverside County Facilities Management

**Exempt Status:** State California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, Section 15301 Class 1 Existing Facilities Exemption; Section 15311 Class 11 Accessory Structures Exemption, and 15061(b) (3), General Rule or "Common Sense" Exemption, Codified under Title 14, Articles 5 and 19, Sections 15061, 15301, and 15311.

**Reasons Why Project is Exempt:** The proposed project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA specifically by the State CEQA Guidelines as identified below. The project will not result in any specific or general exceptions to the use of the categorical exemption as detailed under State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. The project will not cause an impact to an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern nor would the project include unusual circumstances which could have the possibility of having a significant effect on the environment. The project would not result in impacts to scenic highways, hazardous waste sites, historic resources, or other sensitive natural environments, or have a cumulative effect to the environment. No significant environmental impacts are anticipated to occur with the at the site improvements at the three locations within the Thermal community.

- **Section 15301-Existing Facilities Exemption:** This Class 1 categorical exemption includes the operation, repair, maintenance, leasing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures or facilities, provided the exemption only involves negligible or no expansion of the previous site's use. The project, as proposed, includes outdoor recreational improvements to the Oasis del Desierto Park, Las Palmitas Elementary School, and Oasis Elementary School so that the facilities can provide more functional outdoor space for the community. The improvements include shade structures, benches, native trees and pollinator garden landscaping that would be within the existing facilities footprints. The use of the facilities would continue to provide public services to the community and would not result in a significant increase in capacity or intensity of use. Therefore, the project is exempt as it meets the scope and intent of the Categorical Exemption identified in Section 15301, Article 19, Categorical Exemptions of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Section 15311 – Class 11 Accessory Structure Exemption:** This Class 11 categorical exemption includes the construction, or placement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities. The project, as proposed, includes the addition of shade cover structures, benches, native trees and pollinator landscaping at the outdoor recreational areas. These features are new accessory structures to provide shade and increase functionality to the existing outdoor recreational areas. These improvements would be appurtenant to the existing community facilities and will not substantially increase or expand the use of the site; therefore, the project is exempt as the project meets the scope and intent of the Class 11 Exemption identified in Section 15311, Article 19, Categorical Exemptions of the CEQA Guidelines.
- **Section 15061 (b) (3) – “Common Sense” Exemption:** In accordance with CEQA, the use of the Common Sense Exemption is based on the “general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.” State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15061(b) (3). The use of this exemption is appropriate if “it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment.” *Ibid.* This determination is an issue of fact and if sufficient evidence exists in the record that the activity cannot have a significant effect on the environment, then the exemption applies and no further evaluation under CEQA is required. See *No Oil, Inc. v. City of Los Angeles* (1974) 13 Cal. 3d 68. The ruling in this case stated that if a project falls within a category exempt by administrative regulation or 'it can be seen with certainty that the activity in question will not have a significant effect on the environment', no further agency evaluation is required. The proposed improvements to the existing facilities will not result in any direct or indirect physical environmental impacts. The improvements would require limited construction activity within the existing sites and would not alter the function or use of the site or have any external physical effects. The improvements are limited to the improvement of existing recreational space with shade structures, benches, native trees, and pollinator landscaping. The site improvements would improve the function of the facilities and the use and operation of the facilities will be substantially similar to the existing use and will not create any new environmental impacts. Therefore, in no way, would the project as proposed have the potential to cause a significant environmental impact and the project is exempt from further CEQA analysis.

Based upon the identified exemptions above, the County of Riverside, Facilities Management hereby concludes that no physical environmental impacts are anticipated to occur and the project as proposed is exempt under CEQA. No further environmental analysis is warranted.

Signed:  Date: 9-24-2024

Mike Sullivan,  
County of Riverside, Facilities Management