

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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

From: Rancho Santiago Community College District
2323 N. Broadway
Santa Ana, CA 92706

County Clerk-Recorder
County of Orange
601 N. Ross Street
Santa Ana, CA 92701

FILED

DEC 17 2024

Santa Ana College Digital Media Center Improvements Project
Project Title

HUGH NGUYEN, CLERK-RECORDER

BY: ME. DEPUTY

1300 S. Bristol Avenue
Project Location - Specific

Santa Ana
Project Location - City

Orange
Project Location - County

The Vista Meridian Global Academy (Academy) is seeking a five-year lease to house high school students and staff members on the second floor of the Digital Media Center. The Academy's initial use of the building includes only a portion of the second floor, including two classrooms and two conference rooms that will be used for group study areas; 29 existing offices that will be used as individual study areas and one-on-off meetings with teachers; and a dining lounge for a limited number of students. The project site will have a capacity of 200 students; however, approximately 156 students will be on campus at any given time. All students will begin school at 8:30 am on Monday through Friday; and dismissal will be at 3:30 pm on Monday through Thursday and 1:50 pm on Fridays. Additionally, approximately 20 percent of the students arrive by bus/charter vans and some parents have multiple students at the school which would result in additional carpooling during drop-off and pick-up times. No major interior or exterior improvements are proposed. The second floor of the Digital Media Center would be used as is; and no conversion or improvements would be necessary.

The first floor of the Digital Media Center building will continue to be used by the students and staff of Santa Ana College.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project

Rancho Santiago Community College District
Name of Public Agency Approving Project

Rancho Santiago Community College 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 1, CCR §15301, Existing Facilities

Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

The proposed project is exempt from CEQA under Class 1, Existing Facilities (Section 15301), whereas "Class 1 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." The proposed project will reuse the existing classrooms, conference room and dining lounge to house a limited number of Academy students. The project involves only minor interior modifications and no exterior improvements to accommodate the students. Therefore, the project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15301.

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.

Reasons why project is exempt

Carri M. Matsumoto

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Contact Person:

Area Code/Telephone/Extension:

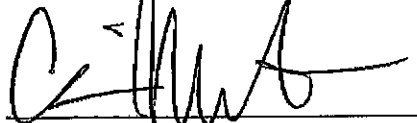
If filed by applicant:

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:

12/17/2024

Signature:



Title: Assistant Vice Chancellor of Facility Planning, Construction & District Support Services

Signed by Lead Agency Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for Filing at OPR: _____

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BY: M.G. DEPUTY

Attachment to Notice of Exemption
Santa Ana College Digital Media Center Improvements Project
Rancho Santiago Community College District
SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

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BY: M.G. DEPUTY

The Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD or District) proposes to modify the vacant second floor of the Santa Ana College Digital Media Center, to house students of the Vista Meridian Global Academy (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, Section 15301.

1. EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROJECT LOCATION

The Santa Ana College Digital Media Center (or Digital Media Center) is a 1.21-acre site located at 1300 S. Bristol Street in the City of Santa Ana in Orange County (project site) (see Figure 1, *Project Location*). It is bounded by Bristol Street to the east, Wilshire Avenue to the north, and residential properties to the west and south (see Figure 2, *Aerial Photograph*). The campus has a land use designation of Professional & Administrative Office (PAO), and a zoning designation of Bristol Street Corridor Specific Plan (SP1) (Santa Ana 2023; Santa Ana 2024).

SURROUNDING LAND USES

The Digital Media Center site is surrounded by Low Density Residential (LR-7) land uses to the west and south that are zone Single-Family Residential (R1), additional PAO land uses to the north across Wilshire Avenue that are zoned SP1, and Open Space (OS) and LR-7 land uses to the east across Bristol Street that are zoned SP1 and R1 (Santa Ana 2023; Santa Ana 2024).

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The Digital Media Center was opened in 2000 after an acre of land was donated to the District by the City of Santa Ana (City). The Digital Media Center site is a 28,200-square foot, 2-story building (14-080 square foot first floor; and 14-120 square foot second floor) and contains a 66-space parking lot, including three ADA parking spaces (see Figure 3, *Project Site Plan*). The Digital Media Center features a business incubator for start-up companies, instructional space for Santa Ana College's digital media arts, TV/video production and digital music programs. The facility also houses the Public Service Institute (PSI), a collection of business seminars related to the digital media and business industries, offered through Santa Ana College's Business Division. The Digital Media Center also received funding from two outside sources with an acre of land being donated by the City of Santa Ana and a \$1.6 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce (Ranch Santiago Community College District 2024).

DISTRICT

The RSCCD contains two community college campuses served Orange County, including the Santa Ana College and Santiago Canyon College. Additionally the District maintains eight facilities including the Centennial and Orange Continuing Education Centers, the Digital Media Center, the Orange County Regional Fire Training Center, the Orange County Sheriff's Regional Training Academy, the College and Workforce Preparation, Remington Adult Education Center and the District Operations Center (Ranch Santiago Community College District 2024).

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Vista Meridian Global Academy (Academy) is seeking a five-year lease to house high school students and staff members on the second floor of the Digital Media Center. The Academy's initial use of the building includes only a

portion of the second floor, including two classrooms and two conference rooms that will be used for group study areas; 29 existing offices that will be used as individual study areas and one-on-off meetings with teachers; and a dining lounge for a limited number of students. The project site will have a capacity of 200 students; however, approximately 156 students will be on campus at any given time. All students will begin school at 8:30 am on Monday through Friday; and dismissal will be at 3:30 pm on Monday through Thursday and 1:50 pm on Fridays. Additionally, approximately 20 percent of the students arrive by bus/charter vans and some parents have multiple students at the school which would result in additional carpooling during drop-off and pick-up times. No major interior or exterior improvements are proposed. The first floor of the Digital Media Center building will continue to be used by the students and staff of Santa Ana College.

CONSTRUCTION

The second floor of the Digital Media Center would be used as is; and no conversion or improvements would be necessary.

3. REASONS WHY THE PROJECT IS EXEMPT

The proposed project is exempt from further environmental review under the requirements of the CEQA (Public Resources Code §§ 21000 et seq.) because it is consistent with a Class 1 exemption.

» **Class 1, Existing Facilities (CEQA Guidelines § 15301)** 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.

The proposed project is exempt from CEQA under Class 1, Existing Facilities (Section 15301), whereas "Class 1 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." The proposed project will reuse the existing classrooms, conference room and dining lounge to house a limited number of Academy students. The project involves only minor interior modifications and no exterior improvements to accommodate the students. Therefore, the project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15301.

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 have an 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 on an existing college facility. The project site includes an existing 2-story building, a 66-space parking lot, concrete walkways, and exterior landscaping. Due to the developed nature of the Digital Media Center and frequent human disturbance, it does not contain any sensitive biological species or habitat. No mapped wetlands exist on the project site (FWS 2024). Additionally, there is no evidence of hazardous materials or substances on the campus (see section (e) below). Therefore, this exception does not apply to the proposed project.

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- (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 proposed improvements are the only known and planned improvements to the project site during the planned construction. No other cumulative projects are ongoing at the project site. The proposed project will not create a cumulative impact under CEQA. Cumulative impacts will not apply. Therefore, 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 project site is on a currently occupied college campus. The construction manager will execute construction activities per current local, state, and federal laws, regulations, construction Best Management Practices (BMPs), and District standards and guidelines. Therefore, this exemption does not apply to the proposed project.

Traffic and Circulation

Based on the Vehicle Queuing Analysis prepared for the proposed project (see Appendix A), during the morning peak drop-off period, the project site will be able to accommodate the students that will be dropped-off at the Digital Media Center, along the on-site curb area at the front of the building. The projected queue for drop-offs is 6 cars while the curb area adjacent to the building can accommodate 12 cars. During the afternoon peak pick-up period, the project site would not be able to accommodate the additional students that will be picked-up at the Digital Media Center, along the on-site curb area at the front of the building. However, it can be accommodated within the parking lot by using the parking lot aisles on the north side of the building and between the building and the Wilshire Avenue driveway. The projected queue for pick-ups is 20 cars while the combination of the curb area adjacent to the building and the two parking lot aisles can accommodate 24 cars. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a significant impact to traffic and circulation at 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 campus. According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) California Scenic Highway Mapping System, the closest eligible state scenic highway is State Route 1 (SR-1 or Pacific Coast High [PCH]) from Post Mile (PM) R0.13 to PM 33.71, approximately 8 miles to the south of the project site; and the nearest officially designated state scenic highway is State Route 91 (SR-91), from PM R9.2 to PM R13.4, approximately 8.5 miles north of the project site (Caltrans 2024). All proposed project improvements will occur within the boundaries of the existing campus; thus, the proposed project will not affect any scenic highways. Therefore, the proposed project will not affect any scenic resources along any officially designated or eligible scenic highways, and 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

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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)
- » EIScreen. 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 State Water Resources Control Board's GeoTracker database, there are five Leaking Underground Storage Tank (LUST) sites located within 0.25 mile of the project site. However cleanup at all five sites has been completed, and all cases have been closed. The project site is not within 0.25-mile of any additional hazardous materials sites, and does not appear on any of the additional databased listed above. Thus, the project site is not identified as a hazardous materials site pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and the project will not create a hazard to the public. Therefore, 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.

The project site is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, a California Historical Landmark, California Point of Historical Interest nor is there a listed historic resource within a 0.25-mile radius of the project site (NPS 2024; OHP 2024). No historical resources have been identified on-site during preparation of this Categorical Exemption. Therefore, the historical sites exception does not apply to the proposed project.

5. CONCLUSION

The proposed project at the Santa Ana College Digital Media Center is exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301. As substantiated in this document, the proposed project will not meet the conditions specified in § 15300.2, *Exceptions*, of the CEQA Guidelines, and the project is categorically exempt under Class 1.

6. REFERENCES

- California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). 2024. SWIS Facticity/Site Search. <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SWFacilities/Directory>
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2024. California Scenic Highway Mapping System. http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/.
- Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). 2024. EnviroStor. <http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/>.
- Rancho Santiago Community College District (RSCCD). Accessed 2024. Digital Media Center. <https://rscdd.edu/Bond-Projects/Pages/Digital-Media-Center.aspx>

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<https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/santaanaca/2022/03/General-Plan-FAR-Map-30x24-v2-November-2023.pdf>

_____. 2024, March. City of Santa Ana Zoning Map.
<https://docs.google.com/viewerng/viewer?url=https://storage.googleapis.com/proudcity/santaanaca/2023/12/Zoning-FULL-CITY-2024-03-21-24.pdf>

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2024. GeoTracker. <http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>.

US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2024. EJSCREEN. <https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>.

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<https://www3.epa.gov/enviro/index.html>.

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<https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.HTML>.

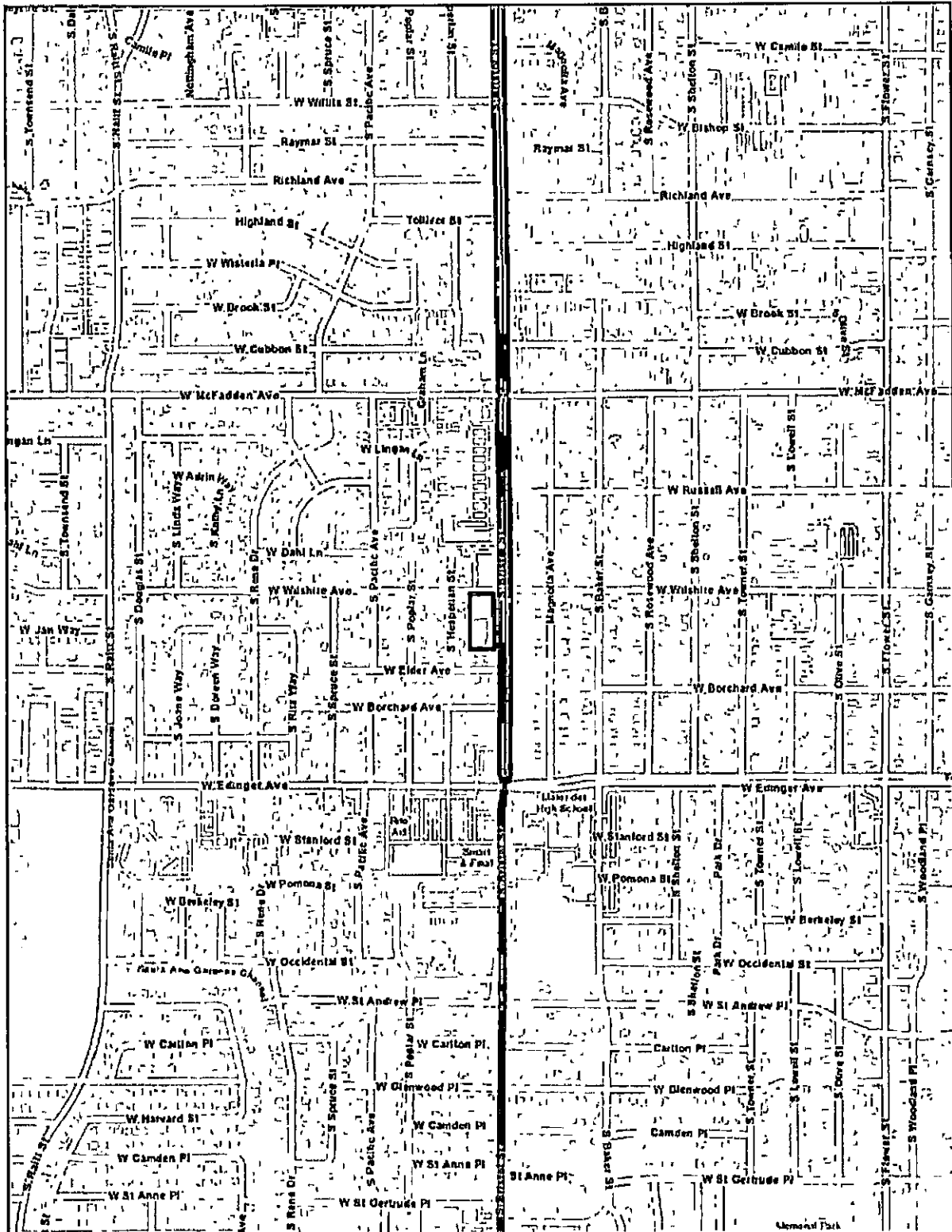
7. FIGURES

Figure 1 Project Location Map
Figure 2 Aerial Photograph
Figure 3 Project Site Plan
Figure 4 Proposed Project Improvements

Appendix A Vehicle Queuing Analysis - Vista Meridian Global Academy at
Santa Ana College Digital Media Center Building

SANTA ANA COLLEGE DIGITAL MEDIA CENTER IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT
 RANCHO SANTIAGO COMMUNITY COLLEGE DISTRICT

Figure 1 - Project Location Map



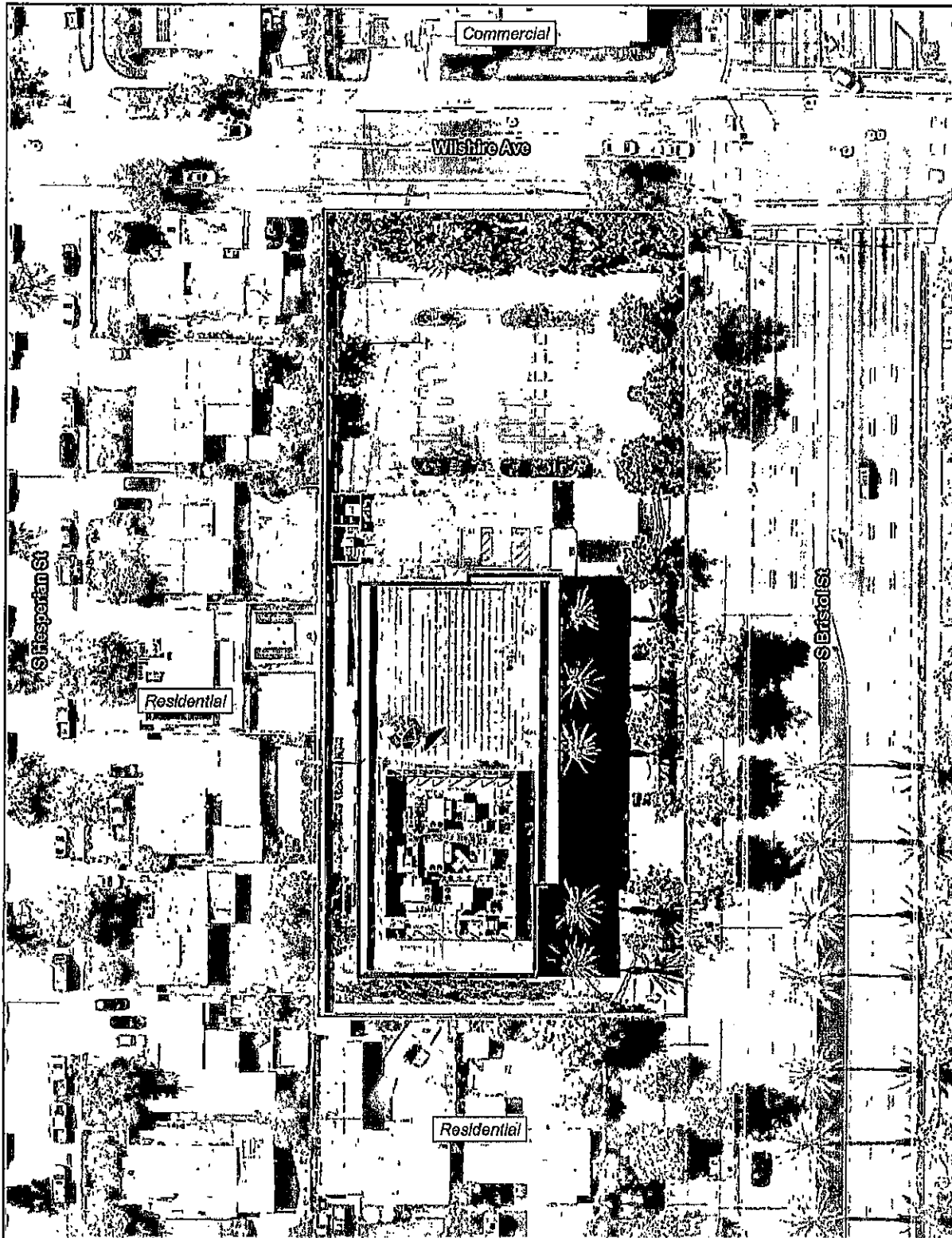
Santa Ana College Digital Media Center

0 1,000
 Scale (Feet)



Source: Generated using ArcMap 2024.

Figure 2 - Aerial Photograph



— Santa Ana College Digital Media Center

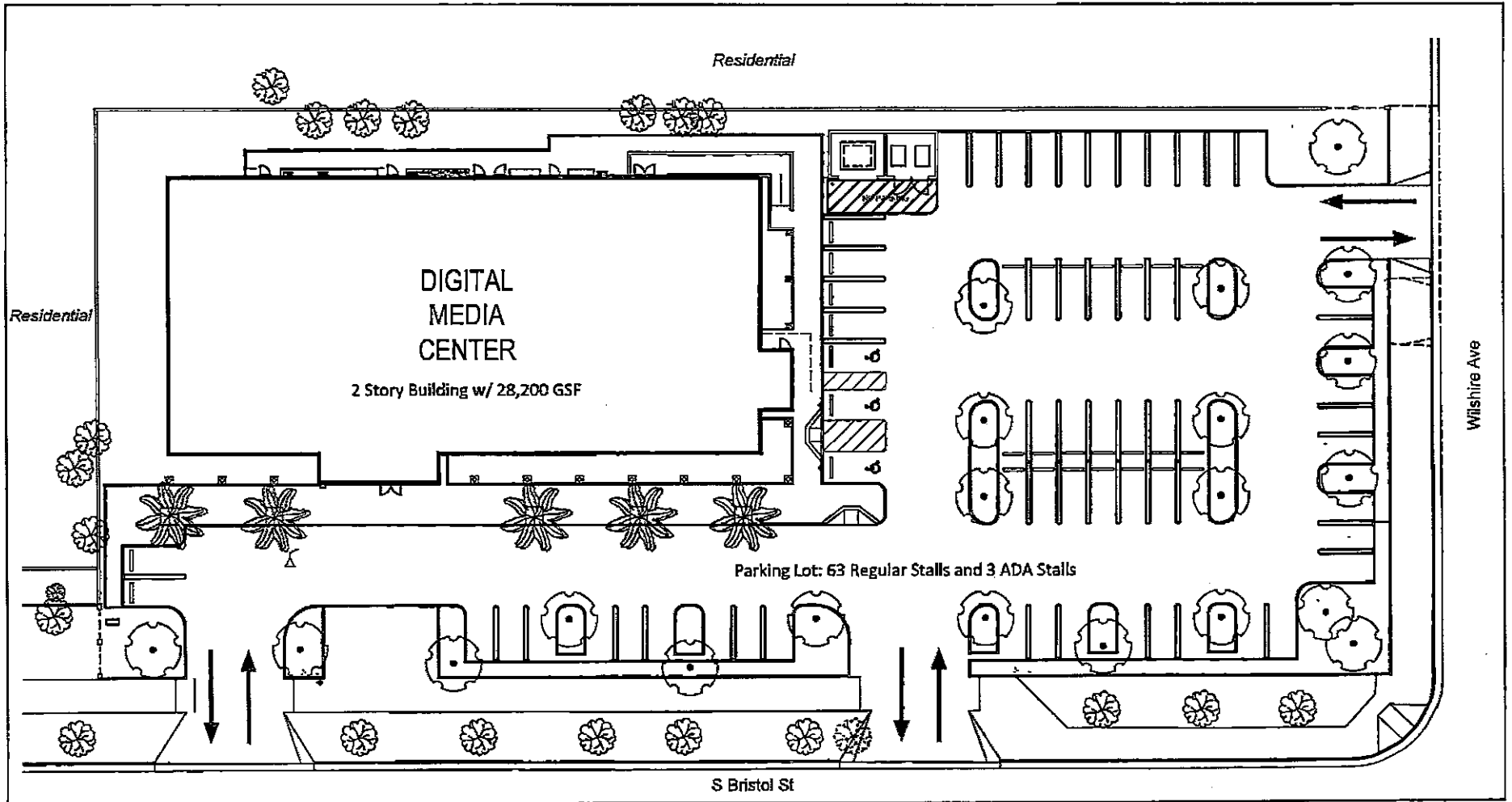
— Project Site



Source: Nearmap 2024.

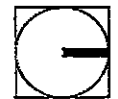


Figure 3 - Project Site Plan



Project Site

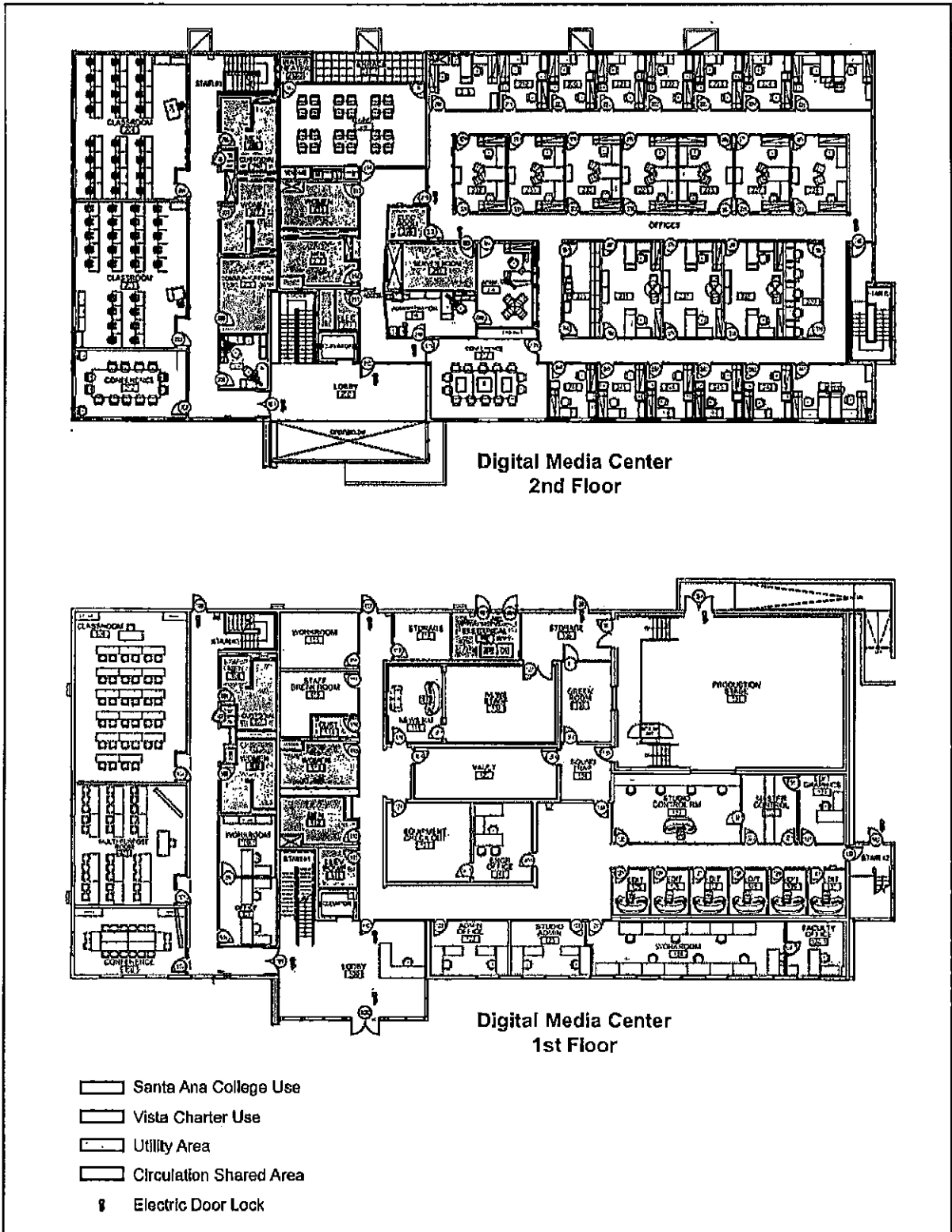
0 45
Scale (Feet)



Source: MMA Architects 2024.

PlaceWorks

Figure 4 - Proposed Project Improvements



**VEHICLE QUEUING ANALYSIS
VISTA MERIDIAN GLOBAL ACADEMY
AT SANTA ANA COLLEGE DIGITAL MEDIA CENTER BUILDING**

Prepared for: Rancho Santiago Community College District and PlaceWorks

Prepared by: Garland Associates – Traffic/Transportation Consultants

Date: August 26, 2024

Introduction and Project Description

Vista Meridian Global Academy is proposing to expand their charter school operation and occupy the second floor of the existing Santa Ana College Digital Media Center building at 1300 S. Bristol Street in Santa Ana. The building is owned and operated by the Rancho Santiago Community College District (District), and is located on the west side of Bristol Street south of Wilshire Avenue, as shown on the attached aerial photograph. An analysis has been conducted to evaluate the capacity of the parking lot at the District's building to accommodate the vehicle queuing demands generated by the proposed charter school.

The approach for the analysis was to observe the queuing patterns at the existing Vista Meridian Global Academy, which is located at 2609 W. 5th Street in Santa Ana (existing school), and then estimate the anticipated queuing demands for the proposed school at the Digital Media Center. The existing school has 326 students while the proposed school would accommodate up to 156 students at any given time. The number of vehicles that were observed in the queues at the existing school were adjusted downward to estimate the queuing demands that would be generated by the proposed school, which would have fewer students. The observations at the existing school were conducted during the peak arrival time at the beginning of the school day and the peak departure time at the school's dismissal.

Queuing Demand at Existing Charter School

The student drop-off and pick-up activities at the existing Vista Meridian Global Academy are conducted at the rear of the building at a circular drop-off/pick-up area and at an additional pick-up area adjacent to the building that is used for afternoon student pick-ups. Motorists enter the site at the east end of the building and approach the drop-off/pick-up areas along a gravel road that runs adjacent to the railroad tracks at the rear of the school building. As the circular drop-off/pick-up area can accommodate only six cars and the other pick-up area can accommodate only five cars, the additional waiting vehicles form queues along the gravel road. There are two adjacent rows of vehicles in the queue during the afternoon student pick-up time: one going to the circular drop-off/pick-up area and the other going to the pick-up area adjacent to the building.

The observations during the morning drop-off period indicated that the maximum queue length was 12 vehicles, which occurred from 8:05 to 8:15 a.m. The observations during the afternoon pick-up period indicated that the maximum queue length was 42 vehicles, which occurred between 3:05 and 3:20 p.m. Most of the parents arrived at the school prior to dismissal time and waited until the students came out to the pick-up area. School employees served as attendants to assist

with the drop-off and pick-up activities by waving for the drivers to proceed and opening car doors for the students.

Projected Queuing Demand at Proposed School

The anticipated queuing demands at the proposed school were projected by adjusting the queue lengths observed at the existing school in proportion to the number of students attending the two schools. As the existing school where the queuing demands were monitored has 326 students and the proposed school would have 156 students, it is assumed that the queue lengths at the new school would be approximately 48 percent of the queue lengths observed at the existing school ($156 / 326 = 0.4785$).

As the maximum queue length in the morning during the student drop-off time at the existing school is 12 vehicles, it is assumed that the maximum queue length at the proposed school would be 6 vehicles ($12 \times 0.48 = 5.76$). As the maximum queue length in the afternoon during the student pick-up time at the existing school is 42 vehicles, it is assumed that the maximum queue length at the proposed school would be 20 vehicles ($42 \times 0.48 = 20.16$).

Adequacy of Parking Lot at Proposed School Site to Accommodate Projected Queuing

The existing parking lot at the District building at 1300 S. Bristol Street has 66 parking spaces. It also has an on-site sidewalk along the front of the building (on the east side) with a red curb "no parking" zone. The red curb zone is approximately 210 feet long. If the red curb were to be repainted as a white curb loading zone, it could accommodate 12 cars (assuming that each car would occupy 18 feet, including the gap between cars). This would readily accommodate the projected morning peak drop-off queue of 6 vehicles for the proposed school.

The proposed white curb zone could not accommodate the projected afternoon peak pick-up queue of 20 vehicles. However, the excess of 8 vehicles could use the east-west circulation aisle along the north side of the building and the north-south circulation aisle that extends from the building to Wilshire Avenue. The east-west circulation aisle on the north side of the building is 90 feet long, which could accommodate 5 cars and the north-south circulation aisle that aligns with the driveway on Wilshire Avenue is 130 feet long, which could accommodate 7 cars. If these circulation aisles were to be temporarily used as a queuing area for vehicles during the peak afternoon pick-up times, the total queuing area length would be 430 feet, which could accommodate 24 cars. As the anticipated maximum vehicle queue at the proposed school would be 20 vehicles, the queues could be accommodated on-site in the existing parking lot aisles.

Findings/Recommendations

The key findings of the queuing analysis are as follows:

- The vehicle queuing during the morning peak drop-off period can be accommodated along the on-site curb area at the front of the building. The projected queue for drop-offs is 6 cars while the curb area adjacent to the building can accommodate 12 cars.

- The vehicle queuing during the afternoon peak pick-up period cannot be accommodated along the on-site curb area at the front of the building. It can be accommodated within the parking lot by using the parking lot aisles on the north side of the building and between the building and the Wilshire Avenue driveway. The projected queue for pick-ups is 20 cars while the combination of the curb area adjacent to the building and the two parking lot aisles can accommodate 24 cars.

Recommendations

The recommendations for the operation of the parking lot during peak drop-off and pick-up times are:

- Repaint the on-site curb along the east side of the building as a white curb (loading zone) to replace the existing red curb.
- Designate the circulation aisle on the east side of the building between the building and Bristol Street as a one-way southbound circulation aisle by installing arrows on the pavement.
- Designate the south driveway on Bristol Street as an exit-only driveway by repainting the arrows on the pavement.
- Manage the parking lot during the afternoon peak pick-up period to designate the east-west circulation aisle on the north side of the building and the north-south circulation aisle between the building and the Wilshire Avenue driveway as a queuing area for parents' vehicles with the use of attendants and/or cones.
- Notify parents/caregivers of the queuing area and procedures.