

**Riverside County
Office of Economic Development**

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

January 6, 2025

Project Name: Riverside County Lake Elsinore Library Renovation Project

Project Number: 26395

Project Location: 17600 Collier Avenue, Suite G170, south of Nichols Road, Lake Elsinore, Assessor's Parcel Number (APNs) 389-210-068, 389-210-063

Description of Project: The Riverside County Library System (RCLS) covers the state's fourth largest geographic library service area, more than 7,000 square miles, and includes thirty-six libraries within the County. The Lake Elsinore Library is located at the Outlets at Lake Elsinore, 17600 Collier Ave., Suite G170 in the City of Lake Elsinore. The library occupies a 6,000 square-foot suite within the Outlets at Lake Elsinore, offering a safe and modern space for patrons and open floor plan. To optimize the space for both patrons and staff, several improvements will be made, including the addition of a staff breakroom, a study room, a branch manager's office, new furniture, and a comprehensive renovation of the existing floor plan to accommodate library services. The renovations at the Lake Elsinore Library are identified as the project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). No 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 Office of Economic Development

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

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 renovation of the Lake Elsinore Library.

- Section 15301 –Existing Facilities:** 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, is the renovation of the existing facility to maintain and enhance local access. Renovations, which include the addition of a staff breakroom, a study room, a branch manager's office, new furniture, and other minor modifications would not expand the footprint of the facility or increase the capacity of the site. The facility would continue to provide public services and the improvements to the existing facility are exempt as they meet the scope and intent of the Categorical Exemption identified in Section 15301, 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. With certainty, there is no possibility that the project may have a significant effect on the environment. The proposed renovation of the library will not result in any direct or indirect physical environmental impacts. The minor modifications would occur within the existing facility and would not expand the building footprint or substantially increase the capacity of the site. 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 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:** 1-6-2025 _____

Mike Sullivan, Senior Environmental Planner
County of Riverside