

# HILLSDALE HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING J & K CHILLER REPLACEMENT PROJECT NOTICE OF EXEMPTION DISCUSSION

## **Project Description**

### Existing Facilities

The Hillsdale High School, located at 3115 Del Monte Street in San Mateo, is a grades 9-12 school owned and operated by the San Mateo Union High School District. The school site is approximately 35 acres and has a current enrollment of approximately 1385 students.

The school is immediately adjacent to single-family houses to the south, and across the street from single-family houses to the north, east, and west (across 31<sup>st</sup> Street, Alameda de las Pulgas, and Del Monte Street, respectively). West Hillsdale Blvd. runs to the south of the adjacent homes.

### Proposed Project

The project includes replacement of existing chiller systems at Building 5, Zones J and K, with two new chiller systems and buffer tanks (one on each building wing). The existing mechanical wells will receive a new roofing system. The new chillers would have an overall height of 8'-8." This is including the height for: the equipment with storage tank (88") + Isolator springs (4") plus 4" for the steel beams used for the platform plus an 8" minimum height above the new roofing. The new unit will rise almost 5' above the top of the mechanical well. No new or expanded uses of any school facilities are proposed as part of this project.

The project would be constructed over a 9-week period, in the summer of 2025.

## **Categorical Exemption Analysis**

### Class 1 Exemption

The CEQA Class 1 Exemption (Class 1-Existing Facilities [CEQA Guidelines, Section 15301]) applies to repairs and maintenance of existing facilities including interior or exterior alterations involving no or negligible expansion of the facilities, and restoration and rehabilitation of deteriorated structures and facilities, as well as health and safety improvements. The project would include exterior HVAC improvements for the existing school to improve reliability and allow for increased comfort for students and staff at the school. Therefore, this exemption would apply.

### Analysis of Possible Exceptions to Class 1 Exemption

The exemptions are subject to the following exceptions:

- **Cumulative Impact.** This exception would apply if the project were to contribute to significant impacts to a resource in combination with other proposed new

development nearby. The proposed project would involve minor construction work at the existing school that would not have the potential to result in any cumulatively considerable impacts. An electrical switchgear improvement project may be constructed at the school simultaneously, however both projects are so small that there would not be the potential of a cumulatively significant impact.

- **Scenic Highways.** This exception would apply if the project were to result in damage to scenic resources within a scenic highway corridor. There are no highways or roadways in the project area or from which the project area can be seen that are designated as Scenic or are eligible for scenic designation. Highway 280, which runs north-south approximately three miles to the west of the project area, is the nearest designated scenic roadway. The roadway nearest to the project area that is eligible for scenic designation is the segment of State Route 92 west of Highway 280. The City of San Mateo General Plan does not designate any roadways in the project vicinity as locally scenic. Hillsdale Boulevard is indicated in the Urban Design Element of the General Plan as a major corridor in the City, but is not given any formal scenic designation. Therefore, the project would not affect views from Scenic Highways.

The new rooftop chiller facilities would not substantively change the school's exterior appearance, and there would be no changes to building massing, heights, or layout. The approximately 5' extension above the existing roof would be similar aesthetically to the existing rooftop solar array.

- **Hazardous Waste Sites.** This exception would apply if the project were to be located on a hazardous waste site listed pursuant to California Government Code Section 65962.5. A search of the State Envirostor database conducted on January 20, 2025, found no listed hazardous wastes sites on or near the school site. A School Investigation was conducted but no action was required<sup>1</sup>. In addition, no past uses that caused contamination, or actual potential contamination, are known for the school.
- **Historical Resources.** This exception would apply if the project were to potentially significantly adversely affect an historical resource. When it opened in 1955, Hillsdale High School was awarded the School Design Award from the American Institute of Architects for its "Neo-Brutalist" style. It served as the prototype for Bay Area high schools, with indoor/outdoor passages, landscaped courtyards, and skylights in classrooms. Therefore, the school may be of historical architectural significance. However, Building 5, where the chillers are proposed, was constructed in approximately 2007, and therefore is not historically significant. Therefore, the proposed project would not significantly alter the school's historical architectural characteristics.
- **Significant Effect.** The exception would apply if the project would have the potential for a significant effect to the environment due to unusual circumstances. Unusual circumstances may include historic structures, hazardous materials

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?global\\_id=21880002](https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?global_id=21880002)

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contamination, protected species or habitats, and other similar conditions. There are no unusual circumstances on the site and there is no potential for significant effect, therefore this exception would not apply.

Conclusions

As discussed above, the project is within the parameters of the Class 1 Exemption and none of the exceptions to the exemption would apply. Therefore, this exemption would apply to the proposed project.