



## NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

**To:** Office of Planning and Research  
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113  
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

**From:** Development Services Department  
32400 Paseo Adelanto  
San Juan Capistrano, California 92675

Orange County Clerk-Recorder  
County Administration South  
Attn: Recorder Operations  
601 N. Ross Street  
Santa Ana, CA 92701

**APPLICANT:** St. Margaret's Episcopal School

**ADDRESS:** 31641 La Novia, San Juan Capistrano, CA 92675

**PHONE NUMBER:** (949) 661-0108

**LEAD AGENCY:** City of San Juan Capistrano, 32400 Paseo Adelanto, San Juan Capistrano, CA, 92675

**PROJECT MGR.:** Laurel Reimer, AICP, Contract Planner

**PHONE NUMBER:** (949) 443-6324

**PROJECT TITLE:** General Plan Amendment (GPA) 24-001, Code Amendment (CA) 24-003, Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 24-002, and Development Agreement (DA) Amendment 24-001, St. Margaret's Episcopal School Expansion

**PROJECT LOCATION:** 31726, 31734, and 31736 Rancho Viejo Road (APNs 666-261-04, 666-261-05, 666-261-12 and a Portion of 666-261-14)

**DESCRIPTION OF NATURE, PURPOSE, AND BENEFICIARIES OF PROJECT:**

The City Council approved General Plan Amendment (GPA) 24-001 to change the Land Use Designation from "Neighborhood Commercial" to "Public & Institutional" and Code Amendment (CA) 24-003 to change the sector designation within the Ortega Planned Community Comprehensive Development Plan 78-01 from Sector A-2, Subsections 2 and 3, to Sector D in order to allow educational uses; Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 24-002 to allow the property at 31734 Rancho Viejo Road to be utilized for educational uses; and Development Agreement (DA) Amendment 24-001 to amend the existing Development Agreement between the City of San Juan Capistrano and St. Margaret's Episcopal School ("Project").

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:**

This project has been reviewed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The City's Environmental Administrator has determined that the entire project is categorically exempt from further review under Section 15301, Class 1 (Existing Facilities). The Project consists of a change of use and minor interior improvements to existing buildings. It qualifies for a Class 1 exemption because there will be no change to the existing physical environment since the project does not include any new development proposal. The existing and proposed square footage of the buildings to be occupied by St. Margaret's will remain unchanged. St. Margaret's will utilize the existing buildings for student instruction and athletics. There will be no increase in the number of students enrolled, and no increase in the number of school employees as a result of the project. Additionally, development standards for the current zone and proposed zone are the same. Any future development on the project site would be subject to separate environmental review under CEQA and be subject to development review by the City.

Further, the City has also considered whether the project is subject to any of the six (6) exceptions that would prohibit the use of a categorical exemption as set forth in State CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. The six (6) exceptions to this Exemption are: (a) Location; (b) Cumulative Impacts; (c) Significant Effect; (d) Scenic Highways; (e) Hazardous Waste Sites; and (f) Historical Resources.

- a. Class 1 is not qualified by the location consideration.
- b. There is no evidence of a potentially significant cumulative impact because successive projects of the same type in the same place have not been approved and are not currently proposed. The project proposes a change of use and interior improvements to existing buildings. There is no foreseeable successive project at this site and there is no possibility of a cumulative impact from this same type of project in this area over time.
- c. The project is not marked by unusual circumstances. The project proposes a change of use and interior improvements in an area zoned and designated for institutional and commercial development. The surrounding area is developed with commercial and institutional uses. No exterior changes are proposed to the existing buildings. Therefore, there are no unusual circumstances which may lead to a significant effect on the environment.
- d. The project would not damage 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. The project is not located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
- f. The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. The project site has not been identified as a historical resource. The Project is limited to a change of use and interior improvements to existing buildings. No exterior improvements, additions, or alterations are proposed. Therefore, this exception does not apply and the existing buildings are not considered historic resources for the purposes of CEQA.

Therefore, the Planning Commission has determined that further environmental evaluation is not required because:

- The project is not subject to CEQA because it “*does not involve the exercise of discretionary power,*” or “*will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment,*” or, “*is not a project as defined in Section 15378 of the CEQA guidelines.*” (Sections 15060(c)(1), (2) & (3)); or,
- “*The activity is covered by the common sense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA*” (Section 15061(b)(3)); or,
- The project is statutorily exempt, Section 15268, Ministerial Project (Sections 15260-15277); or,
- In the alternative, the project is categorically exempt per State CEQA Guidelines, Section 15301, Class 1 (Existing Facilities).

Was a public hearing held by the Lead Agency to consider the exemption?

Yes  No  If yes, the date of the public hearing was: March 4, 2025.

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Joel Rojas, Environmental Administrator

March 5, 2025

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Date