

Los Angeles Unified School District

Office of Environmental Health and Safety

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NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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AUG 02 2022
LOS ANGELES, COUNTY CLERK

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To:
County Clerk and Registrar-Recorder
County of Los Angeles
12400 Imperial Highway
Norwalk, CA 90650

From:
LAUSD OEHS
333 S. Beaudry Avenue
21st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Project Title:

Pacoima Middle School Campus Greening Project

Project Location – Specific:

The Pacoima Middle School Campus Greening Project (Project) will be located on the 21.8-acre Pacoima Middle School campus (Campus). The Campus is located at 9919 Laurel Canyon Boulevard in the City of Los Angeles. It is bound by Laurel Canyon Boulevard to the north, Kagel Canyon Street to the east, Cranford Avenue to the south, and Terra Bella Street to the west. The Project will occur on the northern portion of campus. The Campus is located in an urbanized community primarily consisting of commercial uses, multi-family, and single-family residences.

Project Location – City:

Los Angeles

Project Location – County:

Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Project will provide a new multi-use garden, planting twenty-four (24) new trees and incorporating two (2) existing trees into the garden area. The scope also includes but is not limited to the following: excavation of asphalt paving and gravel; soil removal; decomposed granite paths and gathering areas; new interlocking concrete pavers; new log benches and stools; a natural meadow area in center of large garden; and low volume irrigation systems. The Project will also plant 147 new trees throughout the Campus.

The Project will be implemented pursuant to all applicable State, federal, and local regulations, and all applicable LAUSD specifications, standards, and/or guidelines, including those in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the updated Standard Conditions of Approval for District Construction, Upgrade, and Improvements Projects

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*Our Mission: To ensure a safe and healthy environment for students to learn, teachers to teach, and employees to work.
Our Vision: To eliminate all environmental health and safety risks at schools.*

(SCs) as adopted by the Board of Education in February 2019.¹ LAUSD's SCs, design guidelines, and best management practices are designed to be incorporated into the Project design in order to avoid or limit potential adverse impacts associated with the District's projects.

The beneficiaries of this Project are the Pacoima Middle School (Pacoima MS) students, faculty, staff, families, school supporters, and the community at large who may request access to the facilities and grounds of the Campus pursuant to the Civic Center Act (CA Ed. Code Sections 38130 - 38139).

Name of Public Agency Approving the Project:

Los Angeles Unified School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:

Los Angeles Unified School District

Exempt Status: (check one below)

- Ministerial [Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21080(b)(1); CEQA Guidelines Section 15268²]:
- Declared Emergency [PRC Section 21080(b)(3); CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(a)]:
- Emergency Project [PRC Section 21080(b)(4); CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(b)(c)]:
- Categorical Exemption (PRC Section 21084; CEQA Guidelines Sections 15300 -15333):
 - *CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities*
 - *CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 – New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures*
 - *CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land*
- Statutory Exemption:

¹ LAUSD OEHS, "Standard Conditions of Approval for District Construction, Upgrade, and Improvements Projects," Adopted by the Board of Education on February 5, 2019.

² CEQA Guidelines can be found at California Code of Regulations Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15000 - Section 15387.

Reasons why project is exempt:

Section 15301 Existing Facilities

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 installation of the new multi-use garden is within an existing outdoor area on Campus and would constitute operation, repair, maintenance, and minor alteration of existing public structures involving no expansion of the facilities' use.

The proposed Project components would involve minor alterations to an existing campus and would occur within the area occupied by existing facilities at the Project site. The Project components would not present a new or expanded use of the Project site. Therefore, the Project constitutes minor alterations to an existing school site that result in no expansion of use and meets the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15301.

Section 15303 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures

Class 3 consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made to the structure.

The installation of the new multi-use garden and irrigation system is within an existing outdoor area on Campus and would constitute operation, repair, maintenance and minor alteration of an existing campus involving no expansion in enrollment or of the facilities' use. Therefore, the Project satisfies the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15303.

Section 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes.

The Project includes the installation of a new multi-use garden area and planting of 147 new trees across Campus. The Project will not remove healthy, mature, or scenic trees. Therefore, the Project fulfills the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15304.

Section 15300.2 – Exceptions

Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines, Exceptions, provides conditions under which categorical exemptions are inapplicable. Review of the Project indicates that they would not violate any of the exceptions, as described below.

1. The project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments or locations;

The Project site is a fully developed campus within urbanized communities.³ The Project site is not designated as a biologically sensitive site or location and does not contain sensitive resources or habitat that will be impacted by the Project. The Project will be contained exclusively within the boundaries of the Campus. The nearest Significant Ecological Area is the Tujunga Valley Hansen Dam located approximately 1.3 miles east of Pacoima MS.^{4,5} As such, the Project will not impact sensitive environments or locations.

³ City of Los Angeles Planning Department, *Zoning and Information Management System*, <http://zimas.lacity.org/>, accessed January 2021.

⁴ United States Fish and Wildlife Service Critical Habitat Portal, <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/table/critical-habitat.html> accessed January 2021.

⁵ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html, accessed January 2021.

2. *Cumulative impacts would be considerable because successive projects of the same type would occur at the same place over time;*

The Campus is an active school site and there will likely be ongoing maintenance activities and minor projects on the Campus to keep the schools operational. As the Project will not result in any lasting adverse impacts once construction of the Project is complete, the Project would not contribute to cumulative impacts when considered with expected successive projects.

3. *There is a reasonable possibility that the activity would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

There are no known unusual circumstances that would have a significant effect on the environment. The removal of trees is not anticipated as part of the proposed scope of work. However, should the Project be altered to include the removal of trees, LAUSD's Office of Environmental Health & Safety (OEHS) must be notified immediately. District policy requires consultation with an arborist to determine if the trees are a protected native species. Additionally, written approval from the school principal will be required before any trees can be removed. If tree removal is scheduled to occur between February 1 and August 31, a nesting bird survey would be performed prior to removal activities, per Standard Condition of Approval (SC) SC-BIO-3 of the Program EIR.^{6,7}

The Project may include minor ground-disturbing activities. These activities are not considered unusual circumstances for the classes of projects under which an exemption is claimed. Nevertheless, consideration must be given to the management of pavement removal and excavated soils associated with earthwork activities for the Project. As the Project involves the removal of pavement, soil sampling and testing for characterization is required prior to demolition and removal of the paving materials. If construction or earthmoving activities require import or export of soils and materials, OEHS must be notified to provide oversight to ensure that these activities are conducted in compliance with the requirements of District Specification 01 4524, relevant provisions of South Coast Air Quality Management District Rule 1466, and other applicable environmental agency rules and requirements.⁸ Furthermore, as set forth in SC-CUL-6, SC-CUL-7, SC-CUL-9, SC-CUL-10, and SC-CUL-11 of the Program EIR, construction activities must be stopped immediately and OEHS notified upon discovery of subsurface features, such as buried resources (i.e., paleontological resources, archaeological resources), tanks or seepage pits, or stained/odoriferous soils.⁹ Lastly, any construction and demolition waste shall be recycled to the maximum extent feasible per SC-USS-1 of the Program EIR.¹⁰ Therefore, the Project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

4. *The project 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;*

The closest designated state scenic highway to the Project site is State Route 2 (SR 2), which is located approximately 13.7 miles northeast of Pacoima MS.¹¹ The Project will not be visible from SR 2. Therefore, the

⁶ LAUSD OEHS, "Standard Conditions of Approval for District Construction, Upgrade, and Improvements Projects," Adopted by the Board of Education on February 5, 2019.

⁷ LAUSD OEHS, "Tree Trimming and Removal Procedure", <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>.

⁸ LAUSD OEHS, "Section 01 4524 Environmental Import/Export Materials Testing", http://www.laschools.org/documents/file?file_id=219798234&show_all_versions_p=t

⁹ LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Environmental Impact Report," <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>, Adopted by the Board of Education on November 10, 2015.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html, accessed January 2021.

Project would not result in damage to scenic resources or similar resources within a highway officially designated as a State scenic highway.

5. *The project is located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; or*

The Project is not located on a site included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.¹² Therefore, the Project will have no impacts related to being located on a hazardous waste site.

6. *The project may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.*

Pacoima MS is over 45 years old, meeting LAUSD's threshold for review as a potential historic resource and requiring evaluation for historic eligibility. LAUSD has identified Pacoima MS as eligible for listing as a historic resource per Section 18955 of the California State Historical Building Code (CHBC).¹³ The scope of the Project replaces existing landscape in kind and would not affect the historic eligibility of the Campus. Therefore, LAUSD's Historic Preservation Specialist has determined that the Project will not be expected to materially impair the significance of the historic resource and therefore will not be expected to cause a substantial adverse historic impact.

Prepared By:

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Signed by:



Digitally signed by Carlos
A. Torres
Date: 2021.06.07
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Carlos A. Torres,
CEQA Officer of the Los Angeles Unified School District

Date:

6/7/21

¹² http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Cortese_List.cfm, accessed January 2021.

¹³ State of California. 2003. State Historical Building Code, Health and Safety Code, Division 13, Part 2.7, Section 18955. Available at: http://www.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/AboutUs/shbsb/shbsb_health_safety.aspx. Also see California Building Standards Commission. 2014. California Code of Regulations, Title 24, California Historical Building Code, Section 8-101.2. Washington, DC. p. 4.