

Los Angeles Unified School District

Office of Environmental Health and Safety

AUSTIN BEUTNER
Superintendent of Schools

VIVIAN EKCHIAN
Deputy Superintendent

CARLOS A. TORRES
Director, Environmental Health and Safety

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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ORIGINAL FILED

FEB 08 2019

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 South Beaudry Avenue
21st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Project Title:

Canoga Park High School Visual and Performing Arts Facilities Upgrade Project

Project Location – Specific:

The Canoga Park High School Visual and Performing Arts Facilities Upgrade Project (Project) will be located on the 21.7-acre Canoga Park High School (HS; Campus), located at 6850 Topanga Canyon Blvd. in the Canoga Park neighborhood of the City of Los Angeles, CA. The Campus is bound by Hart Street to the north; Jordan Avenue to the east; Vanowen Street to the south; and Topanga Canyon Boulevard to the west. Portions of Bell Creek and Calabasas Creek run through the Campus.

Project Location – City:

Los Angeles

Project Location – County:

Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Project entails implementation of a Visual and Performing Arts (VAPA) program within the existing facilities at Canoga Park HS. The VAPA program will provide an arts pathway for area middle school students matriculating to the high school in the west San Fernando Valley. The Project will include the following improvements:

- Upgrading the Assembly Hall including new stage lighting system, sound system, projection system, automatic theatrical rigging system, accessible control booth, fixtures (in the dressing rooms), exterior lighting, and interior paint. The Assembly Hall Building will also be expanded to allow for the construction of new accessible dressing rooms and restrooms.
- Upgrading the Oral Arts Room including new stage lighting, stage sound system, projection system, flooring system, and fixed seating. The control room will also be upgraded to align with updated standards.

Doc# 668145

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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.

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- Reconfiguring and remodeling of the shop building to provide a dance room consisting of new wood flooring, mirrors, and a wall mounted dance barre system.
- Interior improvements to the instrumental music room and choral room.
- Furnishing and equipping upgraded facilities.
- Upgrading site infrastructure as required to support the facility improvements.

The Project will also include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance improvements and upgrades to utilities and fire & life safety equipment and connections.

The Project will be implemented per all applicable local and State regulations, as well as all District Standards and Specifications; such as those provided in LAUSD's Program Environmental Impact Report for the School Upgrade Program (Program EIR).¹ The Project will be constructed per Division of the State Architect (DSA) approved plans. The beneficiaries of this Project include the District's students and staff as well as families, school supporters and the community at large who may be served by the Campus.

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 15314 – Minor Addition to Schools*
- Statutory Exemption:

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 Project entails various improvements and minor alterations to existing classrooms and facilities at an existing Campus to accommodate a VAPA instructional program. These improvements constitute minor alterations to existing public facilities. The Project will not result in the physical expansion of school facilities and will not increase the intensity of use. While the Project will not increase capacity at Canoga Park HS, the introduction of the VAPA program may lead to a

¹ LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Environmental Impact Report," <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>, Adopted by the Board of Education on November 10, 2015

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

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negligible increase in enrollment (discussed further below). Therefore, the Project satisfies the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15301.

Section 15314 – Minor Addition to Schools

Class 14 consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25% or ten classrooms, whichever is less. The addition of portable classrooms is included in this exemption.

The Project entails various improvements and minor alterations to existing classrooms and facilities at an existing Campus to accommodate a VAPA instructional program. These improvements constitute minor alterations to existing public facilities. The Project will not expand the capacity of the Campus, as it currently has sufficient classroom capacity to support a new VAPA program and upgrades are required in only a few core spaces. It is anticipated that the VAPA program will utilize up to 10 existing classrooms once the program has fully expanded to serve approximately 270 students. According to the 2018/2019 Capacity Assessment Summary, the 2018/2019 enrollment is at 1,445 students. Even if the VAPA program were to introduce all new students to the Campus at once, it would still not exceed the 25% increase in capacity threshold.³ Therefore, the Project satisfies the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15314.

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 it will not violate any of the exceptions, as described in the following section.

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

The Project will occur on the existing Campus that is located within an urban-residential setting.⁴ The surrounding land uses are primarily commercial and multi-family residential.⁵ The Campus and the surrounding area have not been designated as biologically sensitive sites or locations and do not contain sensitive resources or habitat that will be impacted by the Project. The nearest sensitive environment to the Project site is the Upper Las Virgenes Canyon Open Space Preserve, located approximately 3.7 miles west of the Campus.⁶ As such, the Project will not have the potential to impact any sensitive environments or locations.

³ According to the Board of Education Report 138-18/19, it is likely that many of the students enrolling in the VAPA program would attend Canoga Park HS as their neighborhood school regardless of whether or not the VAPA program was introduced there. Student and parent surveys indicate VAPA is a high interest curriculum and there are no similar programs available in the immediate vicinity. Establishing a high school VAPA focused academic program that explores the connections between arts and innovation, creative problem solving and collaboration, and coursework and career at Canoga Park HS responds to the expressed needs of this community.

The proposed project will provide upgraded specialized facilities to support a visual and performing arts instructional pathway between Canoga Park High School and the surrounding west San Fernando Valley middle schools, including Hale Charter Academy which provides a VAPA program, and Columbus Middle School, which provides a conservatory of music program.

⁴ City of Los Angeles. ZIMAS. Available at: <http://zimas.lacity.org>. Accessed January 2019.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html. Accessed January 2019.

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

The Project is not expected to result in significant cumulative environmental impacts. While there will likely be routine general maintenance occurring on the Campus, there are currently no known successive projects of the same type or scale planned for the Campus. Therefore, no cumulative impacts will result from the Project and successive projects of the same type occurring at the same place over time.

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

There are no known unusual circumstances associated with the Project that will have a significant effect on the environment. If the Project scope changes 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 and Local District Superintendent 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 (SC) of approval SC-BIO-3 of the Program EIR.⁷

The Project may require 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. If the Project involves the removal of pavement, soil sampling and testing for characterization is required prior to demolition and removal of the paving materials. Excavated soils will only be reused onsite if they are placed beneath paved areas. 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 standard conditions of approval SC-CUL-13, SC-CUL-15, SC-CUL-18, and SC-CUL-19 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 standard condition of approval SC-USS-1 of the Program EIR.¹⁰ Therefore, the Project would 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 scenic highway;*

⁷ LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Environmental Impact Report," <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>, Adopted by the Board of Education on November 10, 2015.

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.*

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The Campus is located more than 23 miles southwest of State Route 2 (SR 2), an officially designated State scenic highway.¹¹ The Project will not be visible from SR 2. Therefore, the Project will not result in damage to scenic resources or similar resources within a highway that is officially designated as a 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 will occur on an existing school Campus which is not included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.¹² Therefore, the Project will not have an impact related to being located on a hazardous waste site.

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

Originally called Owensmouth High School after the former name of the town of Canoga Park, Canoga Park HS was founded in the early 1910s and annexed to LAUSD in 1915. It occupied the upper story of a Neoclassical building that it shared with local elementary school students until a new building was erected in 1915. Campaigns of primary construction subsequently took place in the 1920s, 1930s, the late 1950s, and the mid-1970s. The Campus retains elements from each of these periods, and surviving resources include the 1924 Shop Building; 1926 Gymnasium; 1939 Assembly Hall; 1954 Cafeteria; two 1958 classroom buildings; and the 1975-1977 administration, classroom, and oral arts buildings. No substantial, permanent new construction has taken place since 1978.¹³

Because of the lack of unity in design and periods of construction of these buildings and the campus landscape plan, the resources at Canoga Park High School do not reflect school development patterns consistent with LAUSD history and therefore, are not eligible for listing as a historic district in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) for historical significance (Criteria 1). However in 1961, the Assembly Hall hosted a speech by Dr. Martin Luther King at the request of the Woodland Hills Community Church. Dr. King chose to speak at the church, and at Canoga Park High School on the same day to an audience of almost 1,000 persons. It was reported that this was the first time Dr. King had spoken anywhere west of the Mississippi up to that time. The day Dr. King spoke at Canoga Park HS is a cultural and socio-political event associated with the Campus, and specifically with the Assembly Hall. Therefore, the Assembly Hall is eligible under Criteria 1 of the CRHR, and contributes directly to the significance theme of "The LAUSD and the Civil Rights Movement, 1954-1980," with a period of significance of 1961 and LAUSD considers it a historical resource for the purposes of CEQA.¹⁴

The Project does not propose any significant alterations that would result in material impairment of the potential historical resource and would not result in a negative effect on their eligibility. However, the Project will be subject to internal review by OEHS' Historic Preservation Specialist at the schematic, 50 percent/design development phase, and 100 percent construction drawings phase to ensure ongoing compliance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (Secretary's Standards)* and *Los Angeles Unified School District Design Guidelines and Treatment Approaches for Historic Schools (LAUSD Design*

¹¹ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html. Accessed January 2019.

¹² California Department of Toxic Substances Control. DTSC Databases. Available at: <http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/database/>. Accessed January 2019.

¹³ Sapphos Environmental, Inc., *Canoga Park High School*, California DPR523 series forms prepared for LAUSD, 25 January 2017.

¹⁴ Ibid.

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Guidelines).^{15,16,17} OEHS' Historic Preservation Specialist will verify that the Project will avoid removing, destroying, or obstructing any historic character-defining features, shall use the least invasive methods for all work involving character-defining features, and shall ensure that any new additions, materials, or features are compatible with the historic character of the school.

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)(3), a project that conforms with the *Secretary's Standards* is generally considered to be a project that will not cause a significant adverse impact and material impairment (14 CCR Section 15126.4(b)(1)). If a project meets the *Secretary's Standards*, the project can, in most cases, be considered categorically exempt from CEQA (14 CCR Section 15331) and qualify for a Notice of Exemption. The new construction at Canoga Park HS shall conform with the *Secretary's Standards* and the *LAUSD Design Guidelines*, therefore the Project meets the requirements specified in CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5(b)(3), will not materially impair the significance of a historic resource, and will not result in an impact to the environment.

Should the scope of the Project be altered from the components that are described above, standard District procedure requires that OEHS must be notified immediately to ensure that these activities are conducted in compliance with the *Secretary's Standards* a would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historic resource.

Prepared By:

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Signed by:



Date:

2/8/19

Carlos A. Torres
CEQA Officer of the Los Angeles Unified School District

¹⁵ National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 1995. "The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, with Guidelines for Rehabilitating, Preserving, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings."

¹⁶ National Park Service, Department of the Interior, Washington DC. 1997. *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. Available at: <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehabilitation-guidelines.pdf>

¹⁷ LAUSD OEHS, 2015. "Los Angeles Unified School District Design Guidelines and Treatment Approaches for Historic Schools."

LAUSD Revolving Account
 Los Angeles County Registrar-
 Date 01/24/2019 Type Reference 10370091-CEQA Original Amt. \$75.00 Balance Due \$75.00
 01/31/2019 054041 Discount \$0.00 Payment \$75.00
 Check Amount \$75.00

Dean C. Logan
 Los Angeles County Registrar / Recorder
 12400 Imperial Highway, Norwalk, CA
 (800)201-8999
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 NORWALK DEPARTMENT HEADQUARTER

Cashier: S. PRAK
 * 2 0 1 9 0 2 0 8 1 2 2 0 0 3 2 *
 Friday, February 08, 2019 3:06 PM

Item(s)	Qty	Total
Fee		
NOE - County Posting Fee 2019034557	1	\$75.00
Total		\$75.00

Total Documents: 1
 Customer payment(s):
 Check \$75.00

Check List:
 #54041 \$75.00

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