

Los Angeles Unified School District

Office of Environmental Health and Safety

AUSTIN BEUTNER
Superintendent of Schools

DIANE PAPPAS,
Chief Executive Officer, Office of Educational Services

CARLOS A. TORRES
Director (Acting), Environmental Health and Safety

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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JUN 15 2018

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:

Proposition 39 Energy Efficiency Projects at Five (5) LAUSD Campuses

Project Location – Specific:

- Frost Middle School – 12314 Bradford Pl., Granada Hills, CA 90023
- Hollenbeck Middle School – 2510 6th St., Los Angeles, CA 90023
- Portola Middle School – 18720 Linnet St., Tarzana, CA 91356
- University High School – 11800 Texas Ave., Los Angeles, 90025
- Verdugo Hills High School – 10625 Plainview Ave., Tujunga, CA 91042

Project Location – City:

Various (see above)

Project Location – County:

Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The scope of the project includes Proposition 39 (Prop 39) energy efficiency improvements at the five (5) Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) school campuses listed above (collectively referred to as the "Project"). Approved by California voters in 2012, Prop 39 (the California Clean Energy Jobs Act) is a State grant program that allocates revenue to local education agencies to support energy efficiency projects. Through Prop 39, LAUSD will receive funds over a five year period to implement projects that improve energy efficiency in the District's existing buildings. The Project is predicted to significantly reduce energy use in existing building systems on approximately 70 campuses and will focus on lighting, heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems, controls, and plumbing. LAUSD's Prop 39 program will focus on schools with high electricity costs. The table below summarizes the various energy efficiency improvements that would occur at each school.

333 South Beaudry Avenue, 21st Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90017 • Telephone (213) 241-3199 • Fax (213) 241-6816

*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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**Summary of Proposed Energy Efficiency
Improvements at Each School**

School	Interior lighting fixture retrofit,	Interior Lighting Occupancy	Exterior Lighting Retrofits	High Efficiency Transformer Replacement	Pool Pump upgrades.	HVAC Upgrades
Frost MS	X	X	X	X		
Hollenbeck MS	X	X	X	X		
Portola MS	X	X	X	X	X	
University HS	X	X	X	X		X
Verdugo Hills HS	X	X	X	X		

The primary purpose of the Project is to retrofit or replace existing electrical, HVAC and plumbing fixtures with new energy efficient ones. The above table represents the specific details for each of the five campuses that are included in the Project.

The Project will be constructed per Division of State Architect approved design specifications. The Project will be implemented per all applicable local and State regulations, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), 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 would not cause an increase in student capacity or enrollment and would not result in an increase in the intensity of use. The beneficiaries of the Project include students and staff at each of the respective schools and the community at large who may request access to the facilities and grounds 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 15302 – Replacement or Reconstruction*

¹ LAUSD. 2015. 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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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 scope of the Project includes various energy efficiency improvements at each of the campuses, focusing on upgrading lighting, HVAC, controls, and plumbing systems. All of the proposed activities would occur within the area occupied by existing facilities at the school sites. The Project would not require the addition or construction of any new or expanded facilities. The improvements would not present a new or expanded use of the 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 15302 Replacement or Reconstruction

Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced. Specifically, it includes the replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity.

The Prop 39 energy efficiency improvements include upgrades to existing structures and facilities with no change in purpose of use and no expansion of capacity. Therefore, the Project satisfies the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15302.

Section 15300.2 Exceptions

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

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

This exception only applies to Class 3, 4, 5, 6 or 11 exemptions. Therefore, it does not apply to the Project.

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

The Project will not be expected to result in significant cumulative environmental impacts. As active school campuses, it is anticipated that projects such as routine maintenance activities or upgrades will occur on the campuses in the future. However, there are currently no known successive projects of the same type or scale planned for the campuses. As it stands, the Project is not expected to result in significant impacts. Therefore, no cumulative impacts will result from the Project and successive projects of the same type occurring at the same place over time.

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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 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, then 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 vegetation 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.³ Compliance with District specifications would ensure that there is not a reasonable possibility that the project would have a significant effect on the environment due to unforeseen circumstances.

There will be some electromagnetic fields (EMF) emitted from the new energy efficient transformers. EMFs are generated by the current flow in a conductor with its strength determined by the magnitude of the current being generated. An important consideration to limit EMF field strengths is to maintain distance from the transformer source, which decrease exponentially with distance. Installations adjoining a common wall may produce field strengths at elevated levels within adjacent classroom/office space. Generally, there should not be an appreciable increase in stray fields above existing background levels following the replacement of the transformer. However, out of an abundance of caution, in cases where a transformer will be placed immediately next to a wall shared with rooms occupied by students or staff, OEHS shall be notified to determine if the fields associated with the transformer installation are within acceptable limits. If it is determined that the fields are elevated above anticipated background levels, OEHS will identify measures to limit field strengths to acceptable levels. Therefore, the Project would not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

There may be some minor ground-disturbing activities associated with the Project that will occur, but such activities are not considered unusual circumstances for the classes of projects under which this exemption is claimed. Nevertheless, consideration must be given to the management of excavated soils associated with earthwork activities for the Project. 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, the OEHS must be notified to provide oversight to ensure that these activities are conducted in compliance with the requirements of District Specification 01 4524,⁴ relevant provisions of South Coast Air Quality Management District Rule 1466, and other applicable environmental agency rules and requirements. Furthermore, as set forth in LAUSD's Standard Conditions of Approval (SC) SC-CUL-13, SC-CUL-15, SC-CUL-18, and SC-CUL-19⁵ 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. Construction and demolition waste shall be recycled to the maximum extent feasible per SC-USS-1 of the Program EIR.⁶ 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;*

³ LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Environmental Impact Report," <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>, Adopted by the Board of Education on November 10, 2015.

⁴ http://www.laschools.org/documents/file?file_id=219798234&show_all_versions_p=t

⁵ LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Environmental Impact Report," <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>, Adopted by the Board of Education on November 10, 2015.

⁶ *Ibid.*

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The closest designated scenic highway to the Project is the State Route 2, located approximately 6.5 miles southeast of Verdugo Hills HS, which is the closest of the five schools.⁷ This is a sufficient distance from this resource to be outside of the view shed, so the Project will not degrade the characteristics that contribute to its scenic eligibility. Therefore, the 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 will occur on existing school campuses that are not included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.⁸ Therefore, the Project would 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 historic resource.*

All schools are over 45-years old, meeting the age criterion for consideration as an historic resource under CEQA guidelines. District surveys found University HS, Hollenbeck MS, Verdugo Hills HS and Portola MS to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and registered in the California Register of Historic Resources.⁹ While SurveyLA found Frost MS to be ineligible for the National and California Register, the District found the site to potentially be eligible for listing in California Register of Historic Resources.

Therefore, the Project shall follow 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 Guidelines)*.^{10,11,12} 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. To ensure that the Project follows the *Secretary's Standards* and *LAUSD Design Guidelines*, and avoids adverse impacts to the historic district, 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's Standards* and applicable guidelines.

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 work shall conform with the *Secretary's Standards* and the *LAUSD Design Guidelines*, therefore

⁷ http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm. October 9, 2009

⁸ California, State of, Department of Toxic Substances Control, Envirostor Database, <http://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/search.asp>, accessed May 23, 2018.

⁹ LAUSD OEHS. 2017. LAUSD Historic Resource Inventory Database.

¹⁰ 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."

¹¹ 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>

¹² LAUSD OEHS, 2015. "Los Angeles Unified School District Design Guidelines and Treatment Approaches for Historic Schools."

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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:

Alex Campbell,
Assistant CEQA Project Manager/Contract Professional

Phone and Email:

(213) 241-4210
cp-alexis.campbell@LAUSD.net

Signed by:



Carlos Torres,
CEQA Officer of the Los Angeles Unified School District (Acting)

Date:

