

Los Angeles Unified School District

Office of Environmental Health and Safety

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NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

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FEB 01 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 South Beaudry Avenue
21st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017

Project Title:

Topanga Charter Elementary School Department of Housing (DOH) Portable Removal and Replacement Project

Project Location – Specific:

Topanga Charter Elementary School (Campus) is located at 22075 Topanga School Road, Topanga, California, 90290. The 12.2-acre Campus is accessed via a cul de sac at the end of Topanga School Road. The Campus is located in a rural area and is surrounded by native vegetation in the Santa Monica Mountain Range, with some single family residential homes east of the Campus.

Project Location – City:

Los Angeles

Project Location – County:

Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The scope of the Project includes removing one DOH relocatable building and replacing it with a Division of State Architect (DSA) certified relocatable building. The Project will also include Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)¹ components to provide access to the new facilities, installing one relocatable sanitary building (if necessary), and demolishing and replacing paved play areas. The ADA compliance improvements are legal requirements mandated by the California Building Code Standard via the DSA and include path of travel and accessibility upgrades.

¹ United States Department of Justice. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Revised Regulations Implementing Title II and Title III.
https://www.ada.gov/2010_regs.htm

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No increases in enrollment, capacity, or intensity of use are proposed as part of this Project. The Project will be implemented pursuant to all District Standards and Specifications, as well as all applicable State, federal, and local regulations, including DSA review and approval of drawings and those Standard Conditions provided in LAUSD's Program Environmental Impact Report for the School Upgrade Program (Program EIR).² The beneficiaries of the Project include Topanga Charter Elementary School students, faculty, staff, families, school supporters, and the community at large who may request access to the Campus 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 15268³]:
- 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*
 - *CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 – Minor Alterations to Land*
 - *CEQA Guidelines Section 15311 – Accessory Structures*
- 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 includes infrastructure upgrades and ADA compliance improvements at an existing campus. Specifically, ADA improvements include accessible path of travel associated with the upgrades. The Project will not result in the physical expansion of school facilities and will not increase the intensity of use, nor will it increase student or staff capacity. Therefore, the Project satisfies 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.

The Project will replace classrooms in a DOH relocatable building with classrooms in a DSA certified relocatable building and may include the installation of one relocatable sanitary building. The new buildings will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the relocatable buildings being replaced. Therefore, the Project satisfies the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15302.

² LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Environmental Impact Report," <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>, Adopted by the Board of Education on November 10, 2015

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

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Section 15311 Accessory Structures

Class 11 consists of construction or placement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities, including, but not limited to, on premise signs and small parking lots.

The ADA compliance components of the Project include the construction or replacement of minor structures accessory to existing school facilities, including path of travel and accessibility upgrades. These components of the Project qualify as construction or replacement of minor structures accessory to existing school facilities. Therefore, the Project satisfies the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15311.

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 is located on a fully developed, existing school site. The Campus has not been designated as a biologically sensitive location but is adjacent to open space areas containing native vegetation, including protected native trees.^{4,5} The native vegetation and nearby riparian areas do contain suitable habitat for protected bird species, however, Project activities are limited to the Campus and are not expected to impact adjacent areas with native vegetation. If the Project includes the removal or trimming 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 protected native species. Additionally, written approval from the school principal will be required before any trees can be removed. If tree removal or trimming is scheduled to occur between February 1 and August 31, a nesting bird survey would be performed prior to removal or trimming activities, per Standard Condition of approval SC-BIO-3 of the Program EIR.⁶ No impacts to sensitive environments, listed species or their habitat is expected to occur as a result of this Project.

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

LAUSD has portable replacement projects at other LAUSD campuses. While there will be successive projects of the same type, they will not occur at the Topanga Charter Elementary School campus. Therefore, there will be no cumulative impacts because of 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 that would have a significant effect on the environment. Some minor ground-disturbing activities associated with the Project will occur. 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 excavated soils associated with earthwork activities for the

⁴ City of Los Angeles, Planning Department, *Zoning and Information Management System*, <http://zimas.lacity.org/>, accessed January 5, 2018.

⁵ Department of Regional Planning, Significant Ecological Areas, http://planning.lacounty.gov/assets/upl/project/sp_2035_2014-FIG_9-3_significant_ecological_areas.pdf, accessed January 5, 2018.

⁶ LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Environmental Impact Report," <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>, Adopted by the Board of Education on November 10, 2015.

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 4524,⁷ 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-19⁸ 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.⁹ 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;*

The closest designated scenic highway to the Project is the State Route 2, located approximately 24 miles northeast of the Campus.¹⁰ This is a sufficient distance from this resource to be outside of the view shed and would 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 an existing school campus that is not included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.¹¹ 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.*

Originally constructed in 1940, Topanga Charter Elementary School meets the age criteria for evaluation as an historical resource pursuant to CEQA. The Campus was evaluated as part of a historic resources survey conducted in 2013 and was assigned a California Historical Resource Status Code of 3D, which indicates that the Campus appears eligible for the National Register as a contributor to a National Register eligible district through survey evaluation.¹²

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*, the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (Secretary's Standards)* and *Los Angeles Unified School District Design Guidelines and Treatment Approaches for Historic Schools (LAUSD Design Guidelines)*.^{13,14,15} The Project will avoid removing, destroying, or

⁷ http://www.laschools.org/documents/file?file_id=219798234&show_all_versions_p=t

⁸ LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Environmental Impact Report," <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>, Adopted by the Board of Education on November 10, 2015.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm. October 9, 2009

¹¹ California, State of, Department of Toxic Substances Control, Envirostor Database, <http://www.envirostor.dts.ca.gov/public/search.asp>, accessed January 5, 2018.

¹² LAUSD Historic Resource Inventory Database. Sapphos Environmental, Inc. Research Notes 2013-2014.

¹³ 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."

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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 following considerations will guide the design of new construction; infrastructure upgrades; ADA compliance components; and restoration of landscape, hardscape, and playgrounds.

- The Design-Build team will include a Historic Architect meeting the professional qualifications standards described in the *LAUSD Design Guidelines*.¹⁶
- All work will follow the *LAUSD Design Guidelines* and the *Secretary's Standards*.¹⁷
- The Historic Architect will identify and provide to the Design-Build team options for meeting the above-mentioned guidelines. The focus of the Historic Architect's work will be (1) identifying design options, with respect to mass/scale, siting, and architectural character, that will retain and reinforce character-defining features of the historic district and its contributing features, and (2) ensuring that ADA compliance components, and restoration of landscape, hardscape, and playgrounds follow the applicable historic preservation guidelines and standards.
- The Historic Architect will identify design options for ensuring that (1) new construction meets the Project needs and is compatible but differentiated from the surrounding historic resources and that (2) infrastructure upgrades; ADA components; and restoration of landscape, hardscape, and playgrounds are carried out in a way that retains and protects character-defining features.
- The Historic Architect will provide a brief written memo, on a template to be provided by LAUSD, describing how principal Project components conform with the *Secretary's Standards* and above-mentioned guidelines.
- The Project will be subject to internal review by OEHS 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 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.

¹⁴ 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>

¹⁵ LAUSD OEHS, 2015. "Los Angeles Unified School District Design Guidelines and Treatment Approaches for Historic Schools."

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ 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."

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Prepared By:

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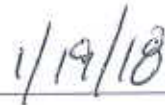
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Signed by:



Date:



Robert Laughton
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