

Attachment to Notice of Exemption
SERRANO INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
Saddleback Valley Unified School District
SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

The Saddleback Valley Unified School District (District) is proposing renovations of the existing administration building and bathrooms; as well as installing new fencing and gates. This supplemental information provides justification for the Categorical Exemption under California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Sections 15301 (14 CCR §§ 15301) and 15303 (14 CCR §§ 15303).

1. EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROJECT LOCATION

Serrano Intermediate School is located in the City of Lake Forest, in Orange County. The project site is located at 24642 Jeronimo Road. The City of Lake Forest is in southeast Orange County and is surrounded by the cities of Laguna Woods and Laguna Hills to the south and southwest; Irvine to the west; unincorporated Orange County to the north; and Rancho Santa Margarita and Mission Viejo to the east. Regional Access to the School is from Interstate 5 (I-5) to the west (see Figure 1, *Regional Location*).

SURROUNDING LAND USES

Serrano Intermediate School is surrounded by residential development to the north, east, south and west (see Figure 2, *Local Vicinity*). Serrano Intermediate School is bounded by Amtrack railroad lines to the southeast of the campus, traversing northwest to southeast.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Serrano Intermediate School is a 7-8 intermediate school with a 2022/23 enrollment of 977 students (CDE 2023). Serrano Intermediate School consists of an athletic field and blacktop; a gymnasium; 12 relocatable classrooms and a relocatable restroom building; 5 classroom buildings, an administration building, a lunch building, a lunch building, and shade structures (including a solar panel shade structure), and a parking lot with a solar panel structure. The Campus parking lot is on the northeast area of campus, with campus access provided via an ingress only driveway (left and right turn in only) to the north of campus and an egress only driveway (left and right turn out only) to the south of campus to Jeronimo Road (see Figure 3, *Existing Site*).

DISTRICT

The Saddleback Valley Unified School District provides school services to Foothill Ranch, Laguna Hills, Lake Forest, Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, Trabuco Canyon, and areas of unincorporated Orange County. The District includes 23 elementary schools, four intermediate schools (middle schools), four high schools and four alternative schools. Districtwide enrollment in the 2022/2023 school year was 23,711 students (CDE 2023).

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed Serrano Intermediate School Modernization project includes improvements to the existing administration building, improvements to Classroom Building 1 restrooms, and the installation of a new fence (see Figure 4, *Elementary School Site Plan*).

The proposed project will require demolition of a portion of the interior space (i.e. wall, doors, and windows) of the current administration building. Improvements to the interior space of the administration building will include a new

entry way, mechanical and electrical upgrades, lighting improvements and other interior improvements for ADA accessibility. The proposed project includes improvements to both the facility/administration restroom and student's restroom. The facility/administration restroom will require demolition of two facility non-compliment restrooms for two new gender neutral/ADA accessible restroom. The student restroom improvements will include adding door operators to student facilities. Additionally, the proposed project will remove the existing entry fence and gate and will demolish a portion of the sidewalk; install new automatic roll-down grills and the installation of new fences and gates. The proposed modernization project is limited to the Serrano Intermediate School campus.

3. REASONS WHY THE PROJECT CATEGORICALLY IS EXEMPT

The proposed project is exempt from further environmental review under the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq.) because it is consistent with the following class of Categorical Exemption:

- » **Class 1, Existing Facilities (CEQA Guidelines CCR § 15301)** consist of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alterations of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.

The proposed improvements of the existing administration building and restroom renovations are exempt from CEQA under Class 1, Existing Facilities (Section 15301) which includes “[i]nterior or exterior alterations, involving such things as interior partitions, plumbing, and electrical conveyances” and “[R]estoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment...”. The renovations/ improvements of restrooms and the administration building will be located within the project site and will serve the same purposes. The proposed renovations/ improvements will not increase the floor area of the existing structures. Since the modernized structures and improvements are located in the same site and do not involve the expansion of use, the project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15301.

- » **Class 3, New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures (CEQA Guidelines CCR § 15303)** 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 in the exterior of the structure. The numbers of structures described in this section are the maximum allowable on any legal parcel.

The proposed installation of new automatic roll-down grills and new fences and gates are exempt from CEQA under Class 3, New Construction or Construction of Small Structures (Section 15303) which includes “Accessory (appurtenant) structures including garages, carports, patios, swimming pools, and fences.” The installation of new automatic roll-down grills, and the new fences and gates will be located where the existing galvanized fence is, within the project site. Since the installation of new automatic roll-down grills and new fences and gates are considered an accessory structure and limited to the project site, the project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15303.

4. REVIEW OF EXCEPTIONS TO THE CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION

The project has been reviewed under CEQA Guidelines § 15300.2 - Exceptions, for any characteristics or circumstances that might invalidate findings that the project is exempt from CEQA. Each exception is listed below followed by an assessment of whether that exception applies to the project.

- (a) **Location.** Classes 3,4,5,6 and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project would be located—a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.

The project site is a built-out Intermediate School campus in an urbanized neighborhood. No environmental resources of critical concern—such as threatened or endangered species or habitats thereof; or critical habitat designated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service pursuant to the federal Endangered Species Act—are present onsite (USFWS 2023a; USFWS 2023b). Serrano Intermediate School is not a hazardous materials site (see Hazardous Waste Sites below). The location exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(b) Cumulative Impacts. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.

The proposed project is not part of a series of projects at Serrano Intermediate School. The Serrano Intermediate School project is part of the District's improvement project at four schools. The nearest school project is Rancho Canada Elementary School approximately 0.9 miles northeast of the project site. The proposed project at Serrano Intermediate School would not trigger the Cumulative impact exception respecting the proposed project as it would include minor improvements to the school and would be within the boundaries of the ES campus. The cumulative impact exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(c) Significant Effects. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

There are no unusual circumstances on or next to the school that would cause significant environmental impacts. The existing school is in operation, and no unusual circumstances are anticipated with the project construction.

The nearest sensitive receptors to noise and hazardous air emissions are residential homes approximately 50 feet to the north, east, south or west of the project site. Project construction and operation would, however, not cause any unusual circumstances resulting in significant environmental impacts. The significant effects exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which 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 nearest officially State scenic highway is State Route 91 (SR-91) approximately 16 miles northwest of the school; and the nearest eligible State scenic highway is SR-74 approximately 9 miles southeast of the school (Caltrans 2021). Project development would not damage scenic resources in SR-91 or SR-74. Therefore, the Scenic Highways exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Government Code § 65962.5.

California Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the compiling of lists of the following types of hazardous materials sites: hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action; hazardous waste discharges for which the State Water Quality Control Board has issued certain types of orders; public drinking water wells containing detectable levels of organic contaminants; underground storage tanks with reported unauthorized releases; and solid waste disposal facilities from which hazardous waste has migrated.

Five environmental databases were searched for hazardous materials sites on or within 0.25 mile of Serrano Intermediate School:

- GeoTracker. State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB 2023)

- EnviroStor. Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC 2023)
- EJScreen. US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 2023a)
- EnviroMapper. US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 2023b)
- Solid Waste Information System. California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle 2023)

No hazardous materials sites were identified on or within 0.25 miles of Serrano Intermediate School. The hazardous waste sites exception does not apply to the proposed project.

(f) Historical Resources. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of historical resources. Under Public Resource Code § 21084.1, a historical resource is a resource listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. Additionally, historical resources included in a local register of historical resources are presumed to be historically or culturally significant, and a lead agency can determine whether the resource may be an historical resource.

Serrano Intermediate School is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NPS 2014) or as a California Historical Landmark or California Point of Historical Interest (OHP 2023). Neither the school nor any adjoining property are listed as historic resources or potential historic resources by the County of Orange. No historical resources have been identified on-site during preparation of this Notice of Exemption, and the historical sites exception would not apply to the proposed project.

5. CONCLUSION

The proposed project at Serrano Intermediate School is exempt from CEQA review pursuant to Sections 15301 Existing Facilities (CCR §§ 15301) and 15303 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures (CCR §§ 15303). As discussed above, the exceptions pursuant to Section 15300.2 are inapplicable to the proposed project. As substantiated in this document, the proposed project will not meet the conditions specified in CEQA Guidelines Section 21080.35(d) through (f).

6. REFERENCES

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- California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). 2023, July 14 (accessed). SWIS Facticity/Site Search. <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SolidWaste/Site/Search>
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<https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/>
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State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2023, July 14 (accessed).
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US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2023a, July 14 (accessed). EJSCREEN.
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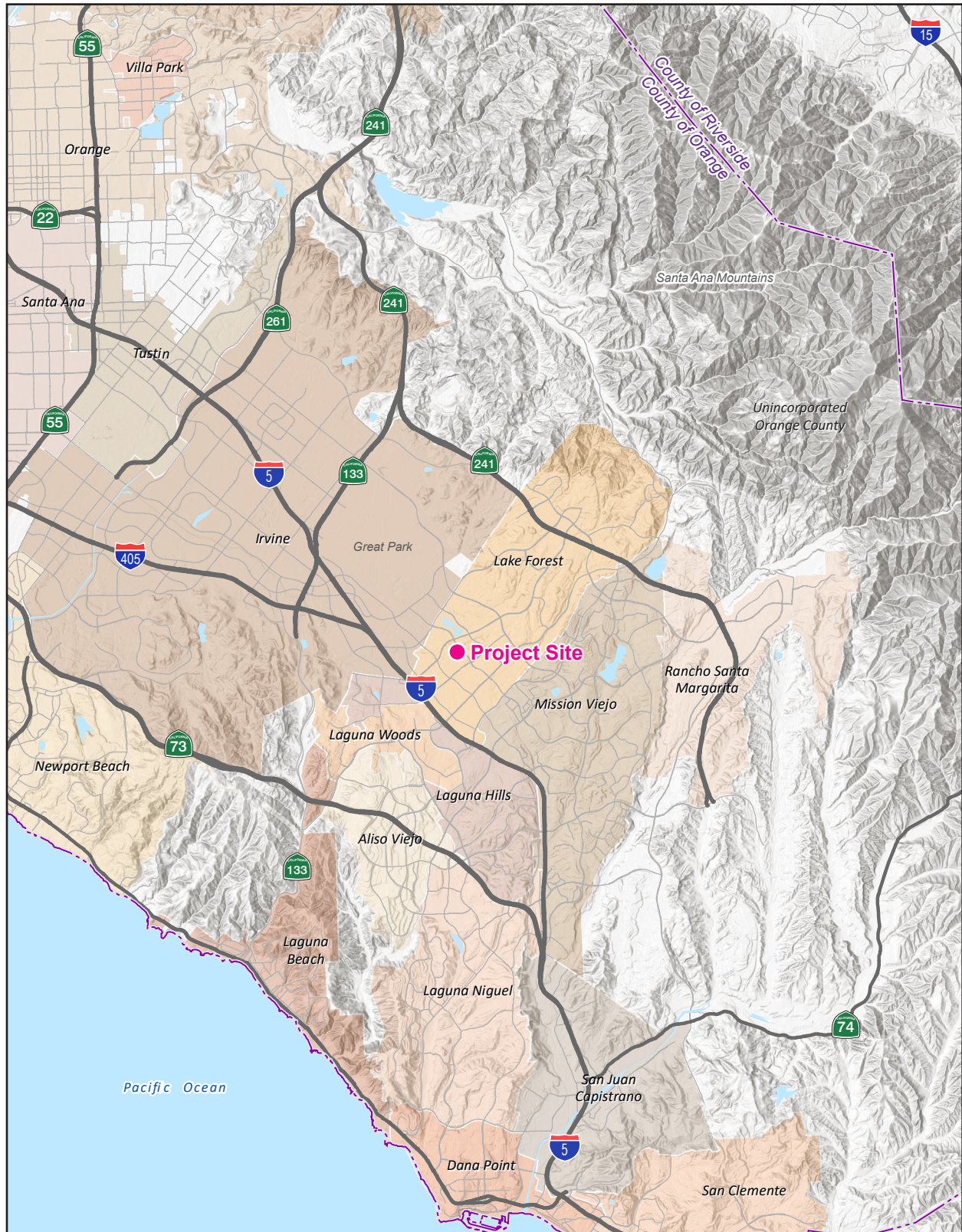
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U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2023, July 14 (accessed). National Wetlands Inventory – Wetlands Mapper.
<https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.HTML>.

_____. 2023, July 14 (accessed). Critical Habitat for Threatened and Endangered Species.
<https://fws.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=9d8de5e265ad4fe09893cf75b8dbfb77>.

FIGURES

Figure 1 - Regional Location



--- County Boundary

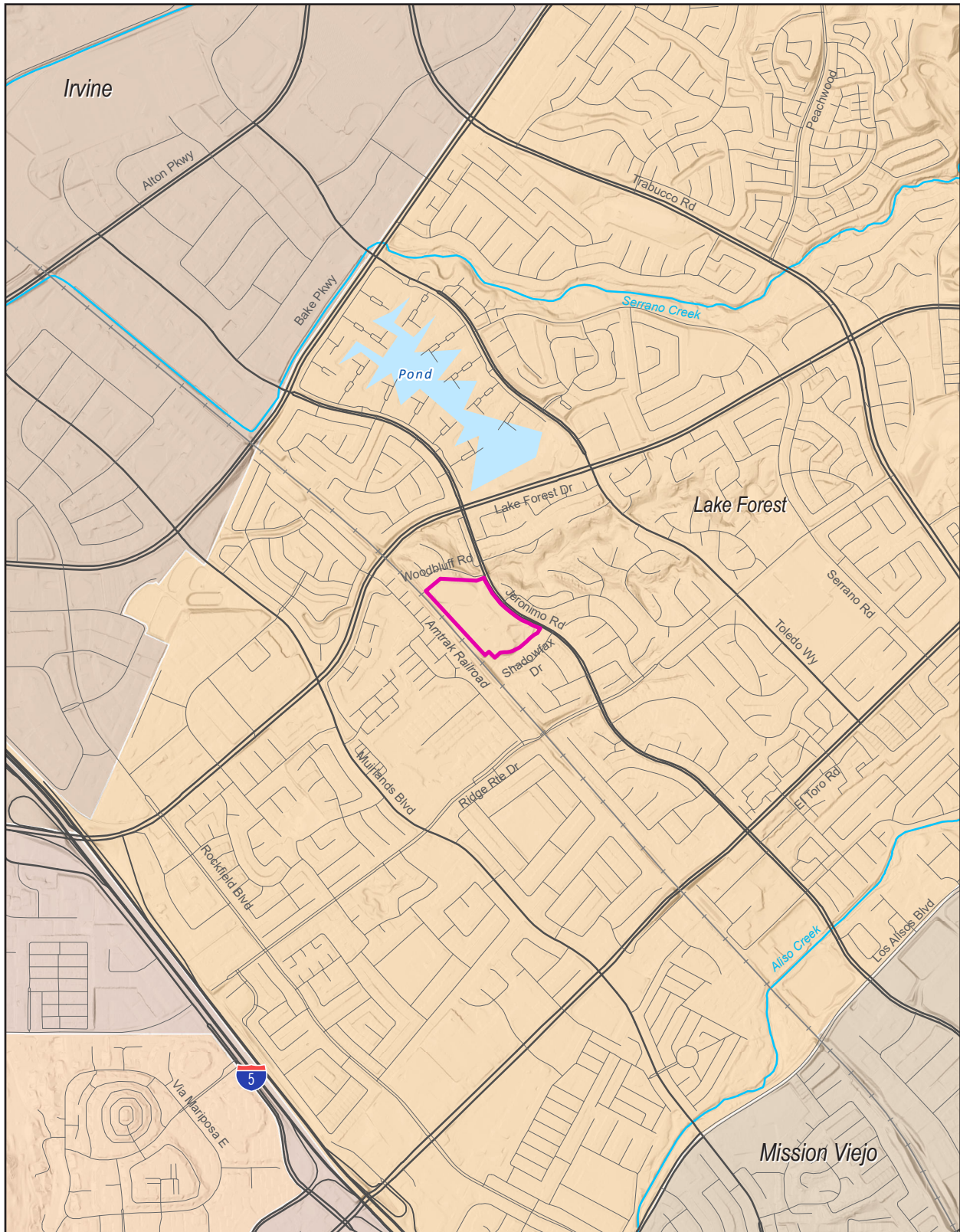
Note: Unincorporated county areas are shown in white.

Source: Generated using ArcMap, 2023.

0 3
Scale (Miles)



Figure 2 - Local Vicinity



— Serrano Intermediate School Boundary

0 2,000
Scale (Feet)



Source: Generated using ArcMap, 2023.

Figure 3 - Existing Site



— Serrano Intermediate School Boundary

0 260
Scale (Feet)



Source: Nearmap, 2023.

1. Introduction

Figure 4 - Planned Site

