Notice of Exemption

Appendix E

To: Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044, Room 113
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

County Clerk
County of: Contra Costa
725 Court Street #103
Martinez, CA 94553

From: (Public Agency): Walnut Creek School District
960 Ygnacio Valley Road
Walnut Creek, CA 94596
(Address)

Project Title: Indian Valley School Modernization Project

Project Applicant: Walnut Creek School District

Project Location - Specific:
551 Marshall Drive, Walnut Creek, CA

Project Location - City: Walnut Creek Project Location - County: Contra Costa

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The proposed project includes relocation of library and tiered support (in existing buildings); adding an outdoor learning area, new fabric shade structures, shaded outdoor seating areas, covered walkways, security fencing, accessibility ramp, and interior renovations.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Walnut Creek School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Walnut Creek School District

Exempt Status: **(check one):**

- ☐ Ministerial (Sec. 21080(b)(1); 15268);
- ☐ Declared Emergency (Sec. 21080(b)(3); 15269(a));
- ☐ Emergency Project (Sec. 21080(b)(4); 15269(b)(c));
- ☒ Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Class 1, Section 15301
- ☐ Statutory Exemptions. State code number: _____

Reasons why project is exempt:

Restoration and rehabilitation of structures, as well as interior and exterior alterations of existing structures are also covered under this exemption (Section 15301 (d) and (a)). Demolition and minor (up to 2500 sq. ft.) additions to existing structures also are permissible under this exemption. See attached Discussion.

Lead Agency Contact Person: Vincent Morales, Chief Business Area Code/Telephone/Extension: 925-944-6850 ex

If filed by applicant:

1. Attach certified document of exemption finding.
2. Has a Notice of Exemption been filed by the public agency approving the project? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Signature: _____ Date: 9/16/2025 Title: Chief Business Official

☒ Signed by Lead Agency ☐ Signed by Applicant

Authority cited: Sections 21083 and 21110, Public Resources Code.
Reference: Sections 21108, 21152, and 21152.1, Public Resources Code.

Date Received for filing at OPR: _____

INDIAN VALLEY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MODERNIZATION PROJECT
NOTICE OF EXEMPTION DISCUSSION

Project Description

Existing Conditions

The Indian Valley Elementary School, located at 551 Marshall Drive in Walnut Creek, is owned and operated by the Walnut Creek School District. The school is in a single-family residential neighborhood, with houses adjacent to the school to the west, and public open space (Shell Ridge) to the north, east, and south. A large ballfield park is located adjacent to the school to the south. The school currently has 20 classrooms and 325 students.

Proposed Project

The proposed project includes relocation of library and tiered support (in existing buildings); adding an outdoor learning area, new fabric shade structures, shaded outdoor seating areas, covered walkways, security fencing, accessibility ramp, and interior renovations.

The library would be relocated to the existing kindergarten building and the tiered support offices would be relocated to the existing library building. An existing school building with 6 classrooms that will be reconfigured into 2 transitional kindergarten (TK) and 2 kindergarten classrooms.

Interior upgrades (painting, hardware, flooring, lighting) also would be implemented in the administration building. Interior improvements including a new HVAC system, removal of the stage, and flooring and lighting replacement would occur in the multi-purpose room.

A maximum of 16 trees over 9" in diameter (or 28" circumference, which is the City of Walnut Creek's criteria size for requiring a removal permit), including non-native landscape species and "highly protected" species (coast live oak, valley oak), would be removed as part of the project. Removal would occur either outside of the Feb 1- August 31 nesting season for protected birds, or after a nesting bird survey by a biologist clears the trees as either not housing nests or that the young birds have fledged. The surveys would be done within 14 days of the proposed cutting.

The primary purpose of the project would be to update and improve the school classrooms, and better provide for kindergarten and TK students at the school; other purposes are to improve vehicular access and provide shade for students.

The proposed interior modernizations would occur in the summer of 2026, and the site work would occur the following summer.

No other construction on the school grounds is proposed as part of this project.

Categorical Exemption Analysis

Class 1 Exemption

The CEQA Class 1 Exemption (Class 1-Existing Facilities [CEQA Guidelines, Section 15301]) applies to operation and minor expansions of existing facilities. It includes upgrades of existing building interiors and exteriors, demolition and removal of small structures, addition of safety or health protection devices, restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated structures, and additions to existing structures that will not result in an increase of more than 50% of the floor area before the addition, or 2500 sq. ft., whichever is less.

The proposed project would consist of relocation of existing school facilities to existing structures, minor interior and outdoor area modifications, and construction of a new access area and shade structures in an existing school campus. Therefore, this exemption would apply to the project.

Analysis of Exceptions to Categorical Exemption

Per CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2, exceptions to Section 15301 categorical exemption can apply where the following occur:

- Cumulative impact of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.
- Significant effect due to unusual circumstances.
- Damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a state scenic highway.
- Hazardous Waste Sites included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.
- A substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

As summarized below, none of these exceptions appear to apply to this project and therefore this exemption would apply:

- The project area is a developed residential neighborhood and mostly surrounded by dedicated open space. Therefore, there is no potential for new development that would have impacts to which the project's impacts would contribute to in a cumulatively considerable manner.

- As noted above, a maximum of 16 trees over 9" in diameter, some of which are "highly protected" species, would be removed as part of the project. Removal would occur either outside of the Feb 1- August 31 nesting season for protected birds, or after a nesting bird survey by a biologist clears the trees as either not housing nests or that the young birds have fledged. The surveys would be done within 14 days of the proposed cutting. There are no other potentially sensitive resources on the site. The project landscape plan includes planting of

replacement trees. Therefore there is no reasonable possibility of a significant impact.

- Minimal exterior changes to the school are proposed. The site also is not within the viewshed of a State Scenic Highway.

- The site is not on or near a listed hazardous waste site (database search performed April 29, 2025): https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?myaddress=Indian+Valley+School

- The proposed project would not demolish or substantially alter any historic structures. The renovations proposed by the project would entail interior modernizations of existing school buildings as well as landscaping improvements. There are no historic resources at the school. Therefore, no historic resources would be affected.

- The project site is a developed school campus in an established residential neighborhood. There are no unusual environmental features or potential impacts on or near the site.

Conclusion

As described above, the project falls under the parameters of the Class 1 Categorical Exemption, and none of the exceptions to the exemption are present.