

# NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

To:  Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation  
1400 Tenth Street, Room 121  
Sacramento, CA 95814

From: El Rancho Unified School District  
9333 Loch Lomond Drive  
Pico Rivera, CA 90660

County Clerk - Recorder  
County of Los Angeles

12400 Imperial Hwy  
Norwalk, CA 90650

El Rancho High School Science Building Project  
Project Title

6501 Passons Boulevard  
Project Location - Specific

Pico Rivera  
Project Location - City

Los Angeles  
Project Location - County

The proposed project would include the construction of a new 15,000 square-foot (sf) two-story science building that would contain four classrooms on each floor, for a total of eight new classrooms; three work rooms; restrooms; custodial and storage rooms; and an elevator. The proposed building will have a maximum height of 33 feet-8 inches. The project includes the installation of concrete flatwork around the proposed new science building to provide accessible pedestrian pathways, outdoor gathering areas, and connections to existing campus circulation. The proposed additional classrooms will serve the existing student population and will not expand student capacity.

The proposed project will be constructed in one phase. Construction of the proposed science building will occur over approximately 20 months, beginning in January 2026 and be completed in September 2027.

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project

El Rancho Unified School District  
Name of Public Agency Approving Project

El Rancho Unified School District  
Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project

Exempt Status: (check one below)

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 14, CCR §15314, *Minor Additions to Schools*

Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

The proposed project includes construction a new two-story science building on the existing El Rancho HS campus. The proposed building will be constructed within the boundaries of the fully developed El Rancho HS. The proposed building will consist of four new classroom on each floor, a total of 8 additional classrooms. Other uses include work rooms, restrooms, custodial and storage rooms and an elevator. The proposed project is exempt from CEQA under Class 14, *Minor Additions to Schools* (Section 15314) because the proposed project will not alter or expand the existing school use or increase student capacity or the number of classrooms, and would only result in minor improvements to the existing campus. The proposed project will not increase student capacity on the campus by 25 percent or 10 new classrooms, consistent with the exemption. No off-campus improvements will occur. Therefore, the project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15314.

The proposed project was also reviewed for possible exceptions under Section 15300.2 and found that the exceptions do not apply.

Reasons why project is exempt

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Luis Torres, Facilities Project Manager

(562) 801-7413

Contact Person:

Area Code/Telephone/Extension:

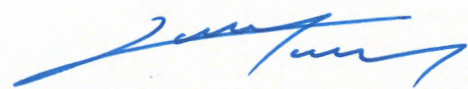
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If filed by applicant:

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

Date  
Received for  
Filing: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_



Title: \_\_\_\_\_

FACILITIES PROJECT MANAGER

**Attachment to Notice of Exemption**  
**El Rancho High School Science Building Project**  
**El Rancho Unified School District**

**SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

The El Rancho Unified School District (ERUSD or District) proposes to construct a new two-story science building on the existing El Rancho High School campus (proposed project). This supplemental information provides justification for the Categorical Exemptions pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines under California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Section 15314. The District will serve as the lead agency for the proposed project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Section 15051(c).

## **1. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **1.1 Project Location**

El Rancho High School campus (El Rancho HS or campus) is a 45-acre school located at 6501 Passons Boulevard (Assessor Parcel Number [APN] 6378-009- 900), in the City of Pico Rivera, Los Angeles County. The proposed project will be constructed along the eastern edge of the campus, adjacent to the parking lot along Passons Boulevard (project site).

El Rancho HS is bound by Passons Boulevard to the east, Loch Alene Avenue to the west, Homebrook Street to the south, and single-family residences to the north. The campus is approximately 0.65-mile west of Interstate 605 (I-605), approximately 2.2 miles north of Interstate 5 (I-5), and approximately 3.6 miles south of State Route 60 (SR-60) (See Figure 1, *Regional Location*).

Vehicular access to the campus is provided primarily from Passons Boulevard, with additional service and parking lot entrances along adjacent side streets. (See Figure 2, *Aerial Photograph*)

### **1.2 Local Setting**

Surrounding land uses primarily consist of single-family homes, with some institutional and recreational uses nearby, including Smith Park located approximately one block north of the campus and the Pico Rivera City Hall and Pico Rivera Library located approximately one half mile to the northeast.

### **1.3 Existing Land Use and Zoning**

The campus is zoned Public Facilities (P-F), which is intended for continued use and future development of public and quasi-public uses, including schools, government administrative facilities, police/sheriff stations, and libraries. The zoning designation is consistent with the project site's City of Pico Rivera General Plan land use designation of public facilities, which allows for a wide range of public, quasi-public, and institutional uses. This designation is intended to support uses such as schools, hospitals, government offices, cultural facilities, and similar functions that contribute to the public benefit.

### **1.4 Surrounding General Plan Land Use Designation**

The campus is surrounded predominantly by residential neighborhoods (single-family and multifamily) to the north, east and west. The campus is surrounded by properties zoned Single-Family Residential (S-F) on all sides, with additional properties zoned P-F and General Commercial (C-G), to the south and east. Public facilities including the Pico Rivera City and Sherrif's Station are located to the south of the campus.

### **1.5 El Rancho Unified School District**

The District provides school services to the City of Pico Rivera, and consists of 14 open campuses and 3 leased sites consisting of eight elementary schools, three middle schools, one high school, one continuation school, and one adult school. Districtwide enrollment in the 2024-2025 school year is 6,878 students (CDE 2025a).

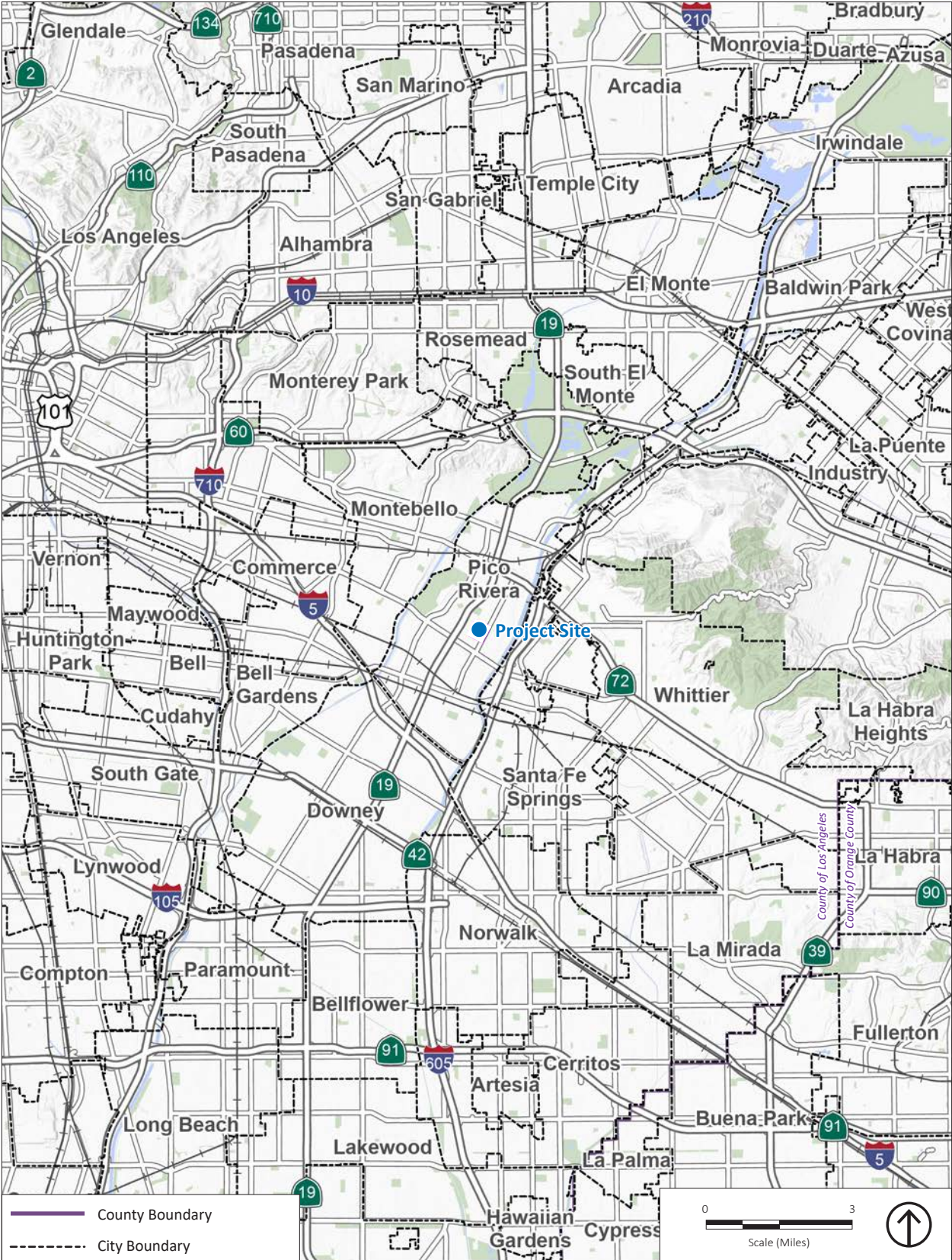
### **1.6 El Rancho High School**

El Rancho High School is a 9th through 12th grade public school with a 2024-2025 enrollment of 1,995 students (CDE 2025b). The proposed project improvements will be focused on the construction of a new science building as described below, and will not include construction on any other portion of the campus.

### **1.7 Existing Facilities**

El Rancho HS contains a variety of permanent and portable structures that support educational and extracurricular functions. The campus includes academic/classroom buildings, administration/student services buildings, library, multipurpose/cafeteria facilities, gymnasium and locker rooms, performing arts or related support space. Outdoor athletic/ recreational facilities include athletic fields, track, courts, a stadium, pool and associated facilities.

EL RANCHO HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE BUILDING PROJECT  
EL RANCHO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Source: Generated using GIS Pro 2025.

Figure 1  
Regional Location

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EL RANCHO HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE BUILDING PROJECT  
 EL RANCHO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Source: Nearmap 2025.

Figure 2  
 Aerial Photograph

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On-site circulation, parking, utilities, hardscape, and landscaping already exist. The campus is currently fully developed. Infrastructure (water, sewer, storm drainage, electrical, lighting, walkways) are already in place and supporting current operations.

## **2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **2.1 New Science Building**

The proposed project will be developed along the eastern edge of the campus, adjacent to the parking lot along Passons Boulevard. The area is currently paved, vacant, and will not require demolition of any existing buildings or structures. The proposed project will include the construction of a new 15,000 square-foot (sf) two-story science building that will contain four classrooms on each floor, for a total of eight new classrooms; three work rooms; restrooms; custodial and storage rooms; and an elevator. The proposed building will have a maximum height of 33 feet-8 inches. The project includes the installation of concrete flatwork around the proposed new science building to provide accessible pedestrian pathways, outdoor gathering areas, and connections to existing campus circulation. The proposed additional classrooms will serve the existing student population and will not expand student capacity (see Figure 3, *Project Site Plan*).

### **2.2 Project Construction and Phasing**

The proposed project will be constructed in one phase. Construction of the proposed science building will occur over approximately 20 months, beginning in January 2026 and be completed in September 2027. Less than one acre of the project site will be disturbed during construction. No demolition of existing buildings or structures will be required. Additionally, no trees will need to be removed during construction.

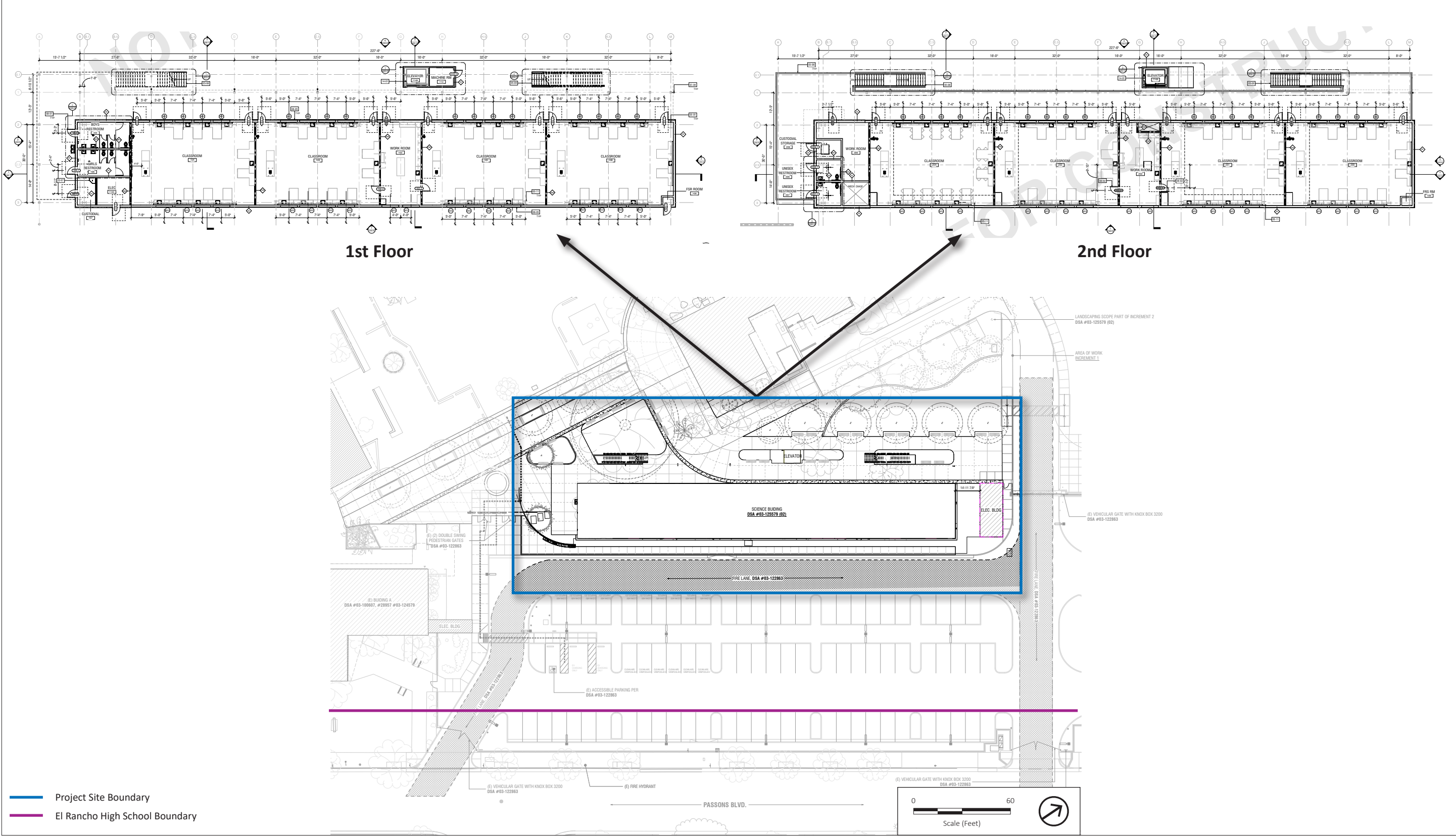
The proposed project will comply with all construction noise regulations of the Pico Rivera Municipal Code (PRMC), including Section 18.42.050, *Property Development Regulations*, which states that construction activities on the site are permitted only between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. (except in emergency situations). Additionally, PRMC Chapter 8.40 prohibits unnecessary, harsh or prolonged noises which may affect the comfort of neighborhood residents. The proposed project will adhere to these hours to minimize noise impacts on surrounding residential uses. The proposed project will serve the existing student population and will not expand the school's student capacity. All project improvements will occur on campus, and no off-site improvements will be included as part of the proposed project.

### **3. REASONS WHY THE PROJECT IS EXEMPT**

The proposed project is exempt from further environmental review under the requirements of the CEQA (Public Resources Code Sections 21000 et seq.) because it is consistent with Class 14 exemptions.

- **Class 14, Minor Additions to Schools (CEQA Guidelines Section 15314)** consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or 10 classrooms, whichever is less.

The proposed project includes construction a new two-story science building on the existing El Rancho HS campus. The proposed building will be constructed within the boundaries of the fully developed El Rancho HS. The proposed building will consist of four new classroom on each floor, a total of 8 additional classrooms. Other uses include work rooms, restrooms, custodial and storage rooms and an elevator. The proposed project is exempt from CEQA under Class 14, *Minor Additions to Schools* (Section 15314) because the proposed project will not alter or expand the existing school use or increase student capacity or the number of classrooms, and will only result in minor improvements to the existing campus. The proposed project will not increase student capacity on the campus by 25 percent or 10 new classrooms, consistent with the exemption. No off-campus improvements will occur. Therefore, the project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15314.



Source: YC+D Architecture 2025.

Figure 3  
 Site Plan

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## 4. REVIEW OF EXCEPTIONS TO THE CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION

The proposed project has been reviewed under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 - Exceptions, for any characteristics or circumstances that might invalidate findings that the proposed project is exempt from CEQA. Each exception is listed below followed by an assessment of whether that exception applies to the proposed 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 have an 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 located on the existing El Rancho HS campus. The campus has buildings, concrete walkways, athletic fields, parking lots, and ornamental landscaping. Due to the school's developed nature and frequent human disturbance, it does not contain any sensitive biological species or habitat. No waterway runs through or adjacent to the project site. No mapped riparian habitats or wetlands exist on or near the project site (USFWS 2025). All proposed improvements will occur within the boundaries of the existing campus. Additionally, there is no evidence of hazardous materials or substances on the campus (see section (e) below). The project site is not considered to be a particularly sensitive environment. Therefore, this 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.

There are no other projects proposed on the campus at this time. No off-campus improvements will occur as part of the proposed project. Similar projects at nearby schools will not have an impact on the proposed project and the project site. When combined with proposed cumulative District projects, the proposed project will not create a cumulative impact under CEQA. Therefore, this 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.

The project site is on a currently occupied high school campus. There is no reasonable possibility that the project will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. Proposed improvements will not change access and circulation of the surrounding area. The construction manager will execute construction activities per current local, state, and federal laws, regulations, construction Best Management Practices (BMPs),

**NOTICE OF EXEMPTION ATTACHMENT**

and District standards and guidelines. Therefore, this 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.

According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) California Scenic Highway Mapping System, the closest eligible State scenic highway is State Route 57 (SR-57) from Post Mile (PM) 19.858 to PM R4.518R, approximately 13 miles east of the project site. The closest officially designated scenic highway is State Route 91 (SR-91) from PM R9.2 to PM 14.4R, approximately 18 miles southeast of the project site (Caltrans 2025). All proposed improvements will occur within the boundaries of the existing El Rancho HS campus and are not visible from any eligible or designated scenic highways due to distance; thus, the proposed project will not affect any scenic highways. Thus, no scenic resources within a state scenic highway will be damaged with the implementation of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project will not affect any scenic resources along any officially designated or eligible scenic highways, and this 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 Section 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.

Four environmental databases were searched for hazardous materials sites on the site and within a quarter mile radius:

- EnviroStor. Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC 2025)
- GeoTracker. State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB 2025)
- EnviroMapper. US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA 2025)
- Solid Waste Information System. California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle 2025)

A search of the databases did not identify any hazardous materials site on the school campus. GeoTracker identified one LUST Cleanup site within a quarter mile radius. However, the cleanup status for this site has been completed and case closed. Construction activities will require small amounts of hazardous materials, which include vehicle fuels, lubricants, grease

and transmission fluids, as well as paints and coatings. The use, transportation, and disposal of hazardous materials will be in accordance with regulatory standards and manufacturers' specifications. Hazardous materials will be used in small quantities and stored so they do not pose significant safety hazards. Operation of the proposed project will transport, use, store, and dispose of small amounts of hazardous materials typical of school facilities, such as cleaning and maintenance supplies (cleaners, gasoline, paint, and pesticides). Operation of the proposed project will use cleaners and other chemicals in relatively small quantities, which is not typically considered hazardous materials that could result in a significant hazard to the public or the environment. Compliance with applicable federal and State laws and regulations governing the use, storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials will ensure impacts will be less than significant. Additionally, the project site is not identified as a hazardous materials site pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and the project will not create a hazard to the public. Therefore, this 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 Section 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.

El Rancho HS is not listed as a historical resource in the National Register of Historic Places (NPS 2025). Additionally, El Rancho HS is not listed in the California Historical Landmarks, Points of Historical Interest, or State Historic Structures (OHP 2025a, 2025b). Neither the school nor any adjoining properties are listed as historic resources or potential historic resources by the City of Pico Rivera. Construction of the proposed project will only occur on the existing El Rancho HS campus, and no structures on campus will be altered during construction of the proposed project. No off-campus improvements will occur as part of the proposed project. Thus, no historical resources have been identified on-site during preparation of this Notice of Exemption. Therefore, the historical sites exception does not apply to the proposed project.

## **5. CONCLUSION**

The proposed project at El Rancho HS is exempt from CEQA review pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15314. As substantiated in this document, the proposed project will not meet the conditions specified in Section 15300.2, Exceptions, of the CEQA Guidelines, and the project is categorically exempt under Class 14.

## 6. REFERENCES

California Department of Education (CDE). 2025a. DataQuest. Enrollment Report. Enrollment Multi-Year Summary by Grade. El Rancho Unified School District Report. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sdprofile/details.aspx?cds=19645270000000>.

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California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). 2025. Solid Waste Information System.

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2025. California Scenic Highway Mapping System. <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways>.

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National Park Service (NPS). 2025. National Register of Historic Places. <https://www.nps.gov/maps/full.html?mapId=7ad17cc9-b808-4ff8-a2f9-a99909164466>

Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). 2025a. California Historical Resources. <https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/?view=name&criteria=High+School>

\_\_\_\_\_. 2025b. California Historical Landmarks. [https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page\\_id=21427](https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21427)

Pico Rivera, City of. 2023. City of Pico Rivera Zoning Map. <http://www.pico-rivera.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Zoning-and-MU-Overlay-Map-11x17-9.11.23.pdf>

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2025. GeoTracker. <http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>.

US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA). 2025. EnviroMapper for EnviroFacts. <https://www3.epa.gov/enviro/index.html>.

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS). 2025. National Wetlands Inventory – Wetlands Mapper. <https://www.fws.gov/wetlands/data/mapper.HTML>.