

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: Murwood Elementary School Modernization Project

Project Applicant: Walnut Creek School District
960 Ygnacio Valley Rd, Walnut Creek, CA 94596
Steve Miller, Director, Construction & Maintenance 925.944.6850

Project Location - Specific:
2050 Vanderslice Avenue, Walnut Creek, CA

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

Description of Nature, Purpose and Beneficiaries of Project:

The proposed project would renovate existing buildings and replace three existing modular buildings with three new buildings, and other minor improvements at the school. Up to 10 trees would be removed. Nesting bird monitoring would occur for any tree removal during the nesting season.

Name of Public Agency Approving Project: Walnut Creek School District
960 Ygnacio Valley Rd, Walnut Creek, CA 94576
Steve Miller, Director, Construction & Maintenance 925.944.6850

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project: Walnut Creek School District
960 Ygnacio Valley Rd, Walnut Creek, CA 94576
Steve Miller, Director, Construction & Maintenance 925.944.6850

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));
[X] Categorical Exemption. State type and section number: Class 1, 3 and 14, Sections 15301, 15302
Statutory Exemptions. State code number:

Reasons why project is exempt:

Restoration and rehabilitation of structures and facilities are covered under the Section 15301 exemption. The new modular buildings would fall within these parameters. The CEQA Class 14 Exemption applies to expansion of schools of less than 25%, to which the project conforms. See attached Discussion.

Lead Agency
Contact Person: Steve Miller, Director, Construction and Maintenance
Area Code/Telephone/Extension: (925) 944-6850

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? [X] Yes [] No

Signature: [Signature] Date: 1/27/2026 Title: Director, Construction and Maintenance

[X] 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:

**MURWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL MODERNIZATION PROJECT
NOTICE OF EXEMPTION DISCUSSION**

Project Description

Existing Conditions

The Murwood Elementary School, located at 2050 Vanderslice Avenue in Walnut Creek, is owned and operated by the Walnut Creek School District. The school is in a residential neighborhood, with houses on the north and east, and multiple-family residences to the south and across South Broadway to the west. The school is less than 1,000 feet to the east of Highway 680.

Murwood is a 365-student transitional kindergarten (TK) through fifth grade elementary school. The school currently has 22 classrooms and 39,972 sq. ft. of interior building space.

Proposed Project

The proposed project would include:

- Renovated administration building;
- New kindergarten modular building;
- Demolition of three portable classroom buildings (total 2,880 sq. ft.) and replacement with two new modular classroom buildings, new modular kindergarten classroom, and new tiered support modular building, new modular restroom building (total 5,215 sq. ft.).
- Modernization of Building 100, Building 200, Building 300, two existing classrooms at Portable 500, and two existing classrooms at Portable 600;
- Convert existing administration area to tiered support offices;
- Renovated Multi-Purpose Room with new outdoor eating area;
- Provide a new outdoor classroom and update the existing outdoor classroom;
- Renovated existing restrooms;
- New kindergarten and transitional kindergarten play areas; and
- Reconfigured parking lot and entry area at the Kayser Court entrance, with a reduction from the current 63 spaces to 57 spaces.
- Eight to ten mature trees will be removed - these are mostly non-natives but include one large coast redwood. If construction activities commence during the nesting season for migratory and native birds (February 1 through August 31), project would adhere to the following protocols:

- A qualified biologist will conduct a pre-construction nesting bird survey within 14 days prior to the start of ground-disturbing or vegetation-removal activities. If construction activities are delayed for 14 days or more, an additional nesting bird survey will be conducted prior to resuming work.
- If active nests of native bird species protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act or California Fish and Game Code Sections 3503 and 3503.5 are identified within or adjacent to the construction area, a temporary no-disturbance buffer will be established around the active nest. The buffer will remain in place until a qualified biologist determines that the young have successfully fledged or the nest is no longer active.
- Buffer distances shall be established based on species sensitivity, nesting stage, and site conditions, and shall follow agency-accepted standards, generally as follows:
 - Non-raptor passerines: 100 feet
 - Raptors: 500 feet
- Buffer distances may be adjusted by a qualified biologist in coordination with the appropriate agencies based on observed nesting behavior and construction intensity.

The primary purpose of the project would be to update and improve the school classrooms, tiered support and staff areas, and recreation areas; and better provide for kindergarten and transitional kindergarten students at the school. Access improvements would be intended to enhance safety and handicapped access.

Overall, the project would change the number of classrooms from 22 to 21, and school area from 39,972 to 41,272 sq. ft. No increase in school capacity or operations is proposed.

The project would be constructed over the summers of 2025 and 2026.

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 building renovations, play structure refreshes, parking lot modifications, updated landscaping, and improved accessibility and safety features structure in an existing school campus. Therefore, this exemption would apply to those aspects of the project.

Class 3 Exemption

The CEQA Class 3 Exemption (Class 3-New Construction [CEQA Guidelines, Section 15303]) applies to 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. In urban areas, structures of up to 10,000 sq. ft and garages (and presumably parking lots) would be subject to this exemption (per CEQA Guidelines Sections 15303(c) and (e)).

- The project would construct a new kindergarten classroom, two new modular classrooms, and a new modular restroom building, and a new tiered support building, totaling 5,215 sq. ft. These would be within the exemption's 10,000-sq. ft. structure size limitations.

Class 14 Exemption

The CEQA Class 14 Exemption (Minor additions to schools - CEQA Guidelines, Section 15314) applies to minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than twenty-five (25) percent or ten (10) classrooms, whichever is less.

As detailed above, the project would not increase the number of classrooms at the school. The project would not increase the school's capacity or classroom count (net reduction of one classroom), therefore this exemption would apply.

Analysis of Exceptions to Categorical Exemptions

Per CEQA Guidelines section 15300.2, exceptions to Section 15301 and 15314 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.

The Section 15303 (Class 3) categorical exemption also includes an exception if a project would be located in an extremely sensitive environment.

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, based on a review of the Walnut Creek Community Development Department's Major Projects Map <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/f921c8aee5a04c7eab7f65c606b9384f> (accessed March 19, 2024), no development has been identified that would have impacts to which the project's impacts would contribute to in a cumulatively considerable manner.
- There do not appear to be any unusual circumstances that could result in significant environmental impacts at the site.
- The existing portable buildings to be removed are not a scenic resource, nor are there any such resources on the school campus. In addition, the new one-story modular buildings would be located in the interior of the school campus, distant from any public or neighbors' views. 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 March 15, 2024):
https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/map/?global_id=CAD009448382
- The proposed project would not demolish or substantially alter any historic structures. The renovations proposed by the project would entail mostly interior and exterior renovations to an existing school that would not substantially change the school's architectural character. The buildings proposed for removal are standard portable structures with no historic significance. 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 extremely sensitive environmental features on or near the site. If tree removal starts during the nesting season for protected birds, nesting bird surveys and avoidance would be conducted, as described above.