

Los Angeles Unified School District

Office of Environmental Health and Safety

ALBERTO M. CARVALHO
Superintendent of Schools

CARLOS A. TORRES
Director, Environmental Health and Safety

JENNIFER FLORES
Deputy Director, Environmental Health and Safety

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION


THIS NOTICE WAS POSTED

ON February 17 2026

UNTIL March 19 2026

REGISTRAR – RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

2026 036400



FILED
Feb 17 2026

Dean C. Logan, Registrar – Recorder/County Clerk

Electronically signed by BYRON PATTON JR

To:
**County Clerk and Registrar-Recorder
County of Los Angeles
12400 Imperial Highway
Norwalk, CA 90650**

From:
**LA UNIFIED OEHS
333 S. Beaudry Avenue
21st Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90017**

Project Title:

Kester Elementary School Playground and Campus Exterior Upgrades with Underground Utilities Project

Project Location – Specific:

The Kester Elementary School Playground and Campus Exterior Upgrades Project with Underground Utilities project (Project) will be located on the approximately 8-acre Kester Elementary School campus (Kester ES or Campus). The Campus is located at 5353 Kester Avenue in the Sherman Oaks neighborhood of the City of Los Angeles. It is bound by Clark Street to the north, Kester Avenue to the east, Weddington Street to the south, and Lemona Avenue to the west. The Campus is located in an urbanized community primarily consisting of residential uses. The Project will occur across the Campus.

Project Location – City:

Los Angeles

Project Location – County:

Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

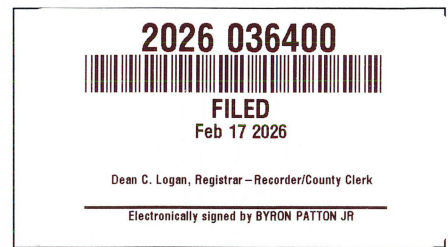
The Project will replace approximately 108,000 square feet of paved surfaces in the main playground, kindergarten playground, parking lot, and select circulation areas with new paving. The scope of work includes solar reflective coating in playgrounds, an outdoor learning environment, greening, and landscaping upgrades throughout the Campus. Additionally, the Project will provide infrastructure upgrades including site drainage, underground utilities, a new trash enclosure, and accessibility upgrades (Figure 1). The Los Angeles Unified School District Board of Education approved the Project's budget of \$14,982,806 on August 22, 2023.

The Project will be implemented pursuant to all applicable State, federal, and local regulations, and all applicable Los Angeles Unified School District (LA Unified) specifications, standards, and/or guidelines, including those in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the updated Standard Conditions of Approval for District

333 South Beaudry Avenue, 21st Floor, Los Angeles, CA 90017 • Telephone (213) 241-3199

Our Mission: To ensure a safe and healthy environment for students to learn, teachers to teach, and employees to work.

Our Vision: To eliminate all environmental health and safety risks at schools.



Construction, Upgrade, and Improvements Projects (SCs) as adopted by the Board of Education in December 2023.¹ LA Unified's SCs, design guidelines, and best management practices are designed to be incorporated into the Project design in order to avoid or limit potential adverse impacts associated with the District's projects.

The beneficiaries of the Project include Kester ES students, faculty, staff, families, school supporters, and the community at large who may request access to the playground 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 15268²]:
- 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*
- 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.

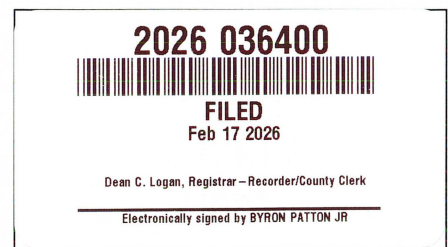
The Project will replace approximately 108,000 square feet of paved surfaces in the main playground, kindergarten playground, parking lot, and select circulation areas with new paving. The scope of work includes solar reflective coating in playgrounds, an outdoor learning environment, greening, and landscaping upgrades throughout the Campus. Additionally, the Project will provide infrastructure upgrades including site drainage, underground utilities, a new trash enclosure, and accessibility upgrades. The Project would constitute operation, repair, maintenance, and minor alteration of existing public facilities involving no expansion of the facilities' use. Therefore, the Project constitutes minor alterations to an existing school site that result in no expansion of use and meets the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15301.

Section 15302 - Replacement or Reconstruction

Class 2 consists of replacing or reconstructing 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.

¹ LA Unified OEHS, "Standard Conditions of Approval for District Construction, Upgrade, and Improvements Projects," Adopted by the Board of Education on December 12, 2023.

² CEQA Guidelines can be found at California Code of Regulations Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15000 - Section 15387.



As previously noted, the Project will replace approximately 108,000 square feet of paved surfaces in the main playground, kindergarten playground, parking lot, and select circulation areas with new paving. The scope of work includes solar reflective coating in playgrounds, an outdoor learning environment, greening, and landscaping upgrades throughout the Campus. Additionally, the Project will provide infrastructure upgrades including site drainage, underground utilities, a new trash enclosure, and accessibility upgrades. The Project will not result in an increase or alteration of the current use, function, or capacity of the existing campus. Therefore, the Project fulfills the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15302.

Section 15304 - Minor Alterations to Land

Class 4 consists of minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry or agricultural purposes.

The Project will repave existing asphalt as well as provide solar reflective coating in playgrounds, greening, landscaping, and infrastructure upgrades throughout the campus. The Project will not remove healthy, mature, scenic trees. Therefore, the Project fulfills the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15304.

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 they would not violate any of the exceptions, as described below.

1. *The project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments or locations;*

The Project site is a fully developed campus within urbanized communities.³ The Project site is not designated as a biologically sensitive site or location and does not contain sensitive resources or habitat that will be impacted by the Project. The Project will be contained exclusively within the boundaries of the Campus. The nearest significant ecological area is the Santa Monica Mountains located approximately 3.1 miles southwest of Kester ES and the nearest critical habitat is Braunton's milk-vetch located approximately 7.5 miles southwest of the Campus.^{4,5} As such, the Project will not impact sensitive environments or locations.

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

The Campus is an active school site and there will likely be ongoing maintenance activities and minor projects on the Campus to keep the schools operational. As the Project will not result in any lasting adverse impacts once construction of the Project is complete, the Project would not contribute to cumulative impacts when considered with expected successive projects.

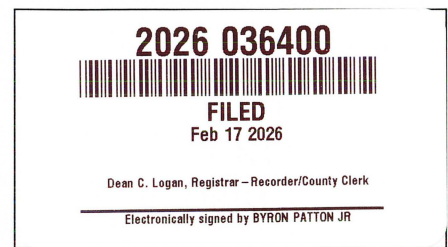
3. *There is a reasonable possibility that the activity would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

There are no known unusual circumstances that would have a significant effect on the environment. The removal of trees is anticipated as part of the proposed scope of work. District policy requires consultation with an arborist

³ City of Los Angeles Planning Department, *Zoning and Information Management System*, <http://zimas.lacity.org/>, accessed January 2026.

⁴ United States Fish and Wildlife Service Critical Habitat Portal, <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/table/critical-habitat.html> accessed January 2026.

⁵ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html, accessed January 2026.



to determine if the trees are a protected native species. Additionally, written approval from the school principal will be required before any trees can be removed. If tree removal is scheduled to occur between February 1 and August 31, a nesting bird survey would be performed prior to removal activities, per Standard Condition of Approval (SC) SC-BIO-3 of the Subsequent Program Environmental Impact Report (SPEIR).^{6,7}

The Project may include minor ground-disturbing activities. 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 pavement removal and excavated soils associated with earthwork activities for the Project. As the Project involves the removal of pavement, soil sampling and testing for characterization is required prior to demolition and removal of the paving materials. If construction or earthmoving activities require import or export of soils and materials, OEHS must be notified to provide oversight to ensure that these activities are conducted in compliance with the requirements of District Specification 01 4524, relevant provisions of South Coast Air Quality Management District Rule 1466, and other applicable environmental agency rules and requirements.⁸ Furthermore, as set forth in SC-CUL-6, SC-CUL-7, SC-CUL-9, SC-CUL-10, and SC-GEO-2 of the SPEIR, 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.⁹ Lastly, any construction and demolition waste shall be recycled to the maximum extent feasible per SC-USS-1 of the SPEIR.¹⁰ Therefore, the Project will 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 state scenic highway;*

The closest designated state scenic highway to the Project site is State Route 27 (SR 27), which is located approximately 9.8 miles southwest of Kester ES.¹¹ The Project will not be visible from SR 27. 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 is not located on a site included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.¹² Therefore, the Project will 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 historical resource.*

⁶ LA Unified OEHS, "Standard Conditions of Approval for District Construction, Upgrade, and Improvements Projects," Adopted by the Board of Education on December 12, 2023

⁷ LA Unified OEHS, "Tree Trimming and Removal Procedure", <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>.

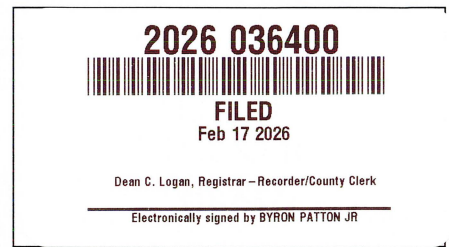
⁸ LA Unified OEHS, "Section 01 4524 Environmental Import/Export Materials Testing", http://www.laschools.org/documents/file?file_id=219798234&show_all_versions_p=t

⁹ LA Unified OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report," <http://achieve.lausd.net/ceqa>, Adopted by the Board of Education on December 12, 2023

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html, accessed January 2026.

¹² http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Cortese_List.cfm, accessed January 2026.



Kester ES is over 45 years old, meeting LA Unified’s threshold for review as a potential historic resource and requiring evaluation for historic eligibility. LA Unified has identified Kester ES as eligible for listing as a historic resource per Section 18955 of the California State Historical Building Code (CHBC).¹³ Architect Richard Neutra designed the Kester Avenue School in 1951 in the International Style, including the juxtaposition of narrow, vertical walls with lower horizontal elevations. Flat-roofed classrooms have glass walls that open onto patios, extending the space to the outdoors. Covered walkways supported by metal posts connect the buildings, which could be extended in a modular plan that was envisioned by the architect. Inclined fixed metal louvers shade the interiors.

The repaving of existing asphalt, as well as solar reflective coating in playgrounds, greening and landscaping, and infrastructure upgrades will not impact the character defining features of the Campus. Accessibility upgrades including the repaving of path of travel to the Kindergarten Building will be replaced in kind and will not impact the Campus’ historic eligibility. Kester ES will continue to convey its historical significance upon Project completion and would retain its historic eligibility. Therefore, LA Unified’s Historic Preservation Specialist has determined that the Project will not be expected to materially impair the significance of the historic resource and therefore will not be expected to cause a substantial adverse historic impact.

Prepared By:

Christy Wong
CEQA Project Manager/Contract Professional

Phone and Email:

(213) 241-3394
cp-christy.wong@LAUSD.net

Signed by:

Date:

Carlos A. Torres,
CEQA Officer of the Los Angeles Unified School District

¹³ State of California. 2003. State Historical Building Code, Health and Safety Code, Division 13, Part 2.7, Section 18955. Available at: http://www.dgs.ca.gov/dsa/AboutUs/shbsb/shbsb_health_safety.aspx. Also see California Building Standards Commission. 2014. California Code of Regulations, Title 24, California Historical Building Code, Section 8-101.2. Washington, DC. p. 4.

2026 036400



FILED
Feb 17 2026

Dean C. Logan, Registrar - Recorder/County Clerk

Electronically signed by BYRON PATTON JR

Figure 1. Site Plan

