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 December 26 2025

UNTIL January 26 2026

REGISTRAR – RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

2025 285176

FILED
Dec 26 2025

Dean C. Logan, Registrar – Recorder/County Clerk

Electronically signed by IBAURA CORREA

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:
Northridge Middle School – Solar Photovoltaic Project

Project Location – Specific:

The Northridge Middle School – Solar Photovoltaic Project will be located on the approximately 27.1-acre Northridge Middle School campus (Northridge MS or Campus). The Campus is located at 17960 Chase Street in the City of Los Angeles. It is bound by Chase Street to the north, Zelzah Avenue to the east, Schoenborn Street to the south and Lindley Avenue to the west. The Campus is located in an urbanized community primarily consisting of single-family residences located on Chase Street and Zelzah Avenue. Multi-family residential land uses are located on Schoenborn Street and Lindley Avenue.

Project Location – City:
Los Angeles

Project Location – County:
Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:
The project will install a photovoltaic system mounted on new carport and shade structures to produce 674 kW of solar energy. It will also include the installation of two electric vehicle (EV) charging stations. Supporting infrastructure for the solar and EV systems will be integrated to enhance site sustainability. In the northeast parking lot, the Project will provide two new accessible handicap parking stalls and an accessible pedestrian path connecting the parking lot to the existing handicap-accessible gate and the rest of the Campus. For the solar panel arrays located within the existing playground area, the Project will provide an accessible path of travel (POT) that connects to an existing handicap-accessible route serving the remainder of the Campus. The Board of Education (BOE) approved the Project's budget of $4,888,613 on February 11, 2025.

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The Project will be implemented pursuant to all applicable State, federal, and local regulations and all applicable Los Angeles Unified School District (LA Unified or District) 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 Construction, Upgrade, and Improvements Projects (SC) as adopted by the Board of Education on December 2023.[1] LAUSD'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 this Project are the students, faculty, staff, families, school supporters, and the community at large who may request access to the facilities and grounds of the Campus pursuant to the Civic Center act (CA Ed. Code Sections 38130-38139).[2]

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 15268[3]]:
- ☐ Declared Emergency [PRC Section 21080(b)(3); CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(a)]:
- ☐ Emergency Project [PRC Section 21080(b)(4); CEQA Guidelines Section15269(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*
  - *CEQA Guidelines Section 15311 – Accessory Structures*
- ☐ 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 consist of the installation of PV canopies, POT upgrades, and other minor alterations of existing public structures and mechanical equipment. The project involves no expansion of the facility's use at this time. It therefore fulfills the requirements for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption.

Section 15303 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures

[1] LA Unified OEHS, "Standard Conditions of Approval for District, Construction, Upgrade, and Improvements Projects," Adopted by the Board of Education of December 12, 2023.
[2] Los Angeles Unified School District. October 17, 2023. Board of Education Report (File #: Rep-008-23/24). Define and Approve the New Chatsworth Early Education Center Project and Amend the Facilities Services Division Strategic Execution Plan to Incorporate Therein.
[3] CEQA Guidelines can be found at California Code of Regulations Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15000 - Section 15387.

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Class 3 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 to the exterior of the structure.

The installation of new PV canopies constitutes the construction of new small structures. The solar arrays would be characterized as new, small facilities or accessory structures as defined by Section 15303 (e) "Accessory (appurtenant) structures including garages, carports, patios, swimming pools, and fences." It therefore fulfills the requirements for a Class 3 Categorical Exemption.

Section 15304 – Minor Alterations

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 include installation of carports and shade structures that involves minimal land disturbance. Installation will not involve major grading, excavation, or other significant alterations to land. Installation of the new carport shade structures will not result in the removal of any trees. Therefore, the Project fulfills the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15304.

Section 15311 – Accessory Structures

Class 11 consists of construction or replacement of minor structures accessory to (appurtenant to) existing commercial, industrial, or institutional facilities, including, but not limited to, on-premises signs and small parking lots.

The Project will include installation of carport and shade structures on the existing Campus. The shade structures will benefit staff members and visitors that drive to the Campus, and the solar infrastructure will support energy conservation goals of the District. The Project will serve as supplementary facilities to enhance the functionality of the existing parking lots. Therefore, the Project fulfills the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15311.

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 it will not violate any of the exceptions, as described in the following section.

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

   The Project site is a fully developed Campus within an urbanized area of Los Angeles in the neighborhood of Chatsworth surrounded by residential communities on all sides. The site is not designated as a biologically sensitive location. The nearest significant ecological area (SEA) is the Santa Susana Mountains/Simi Hills SEA located approximately 1.7 miles west of the Project site.[4] The nearest critical habitat is the Coastal California gnatcatcher habitat located approximately 1.5

[4] Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html, accessed October 2025.

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miles north of the Project site.[5,6] As such, the Project will not impact sensitive environments or locations.

2. *Cumulative impacts will 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 school operational. There are currently no known successive projects of the same type or scale planned for the Campus. As the Project would not result in any lasting impacts once construction of the Project is complete, the Project would not contribute to cumulative impacts when considered with expected successive projects. Therefore, no cumulative impacts will result from the Project and successive projects of the same type and at the same place over time.

3. *There is a reasonable possibility that the activity will 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 Project does not include removal of trees. Should the Project be altered to include the removal of trees, LAUSD's Office of Environmental Health & Safety (OEHS) must be notified immediately. District policy requires consultation with an arborist to determine if the trees are a protected native species. All tree trimming and removal conducted on District property is required to adhere to the procedures described in the LAUSD OEHS Tree Trimming and Removal Procedure.[7] 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 (SC) of approval SC-BIO-3.[8]

The Project will 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.[9] Furthermore, as set forth in SC-CUL-6, SC-CUL-7, SC-CUL-10, and SC-GEO-2, construction activities must be stopped immediately and OEHS

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[5] United States Fish and Wildlife Service Critical Habitat Portal, https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/table/critical-habitat.html accessed October 2025.
[6] Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html, accessed October 2025.
[7] LAUSD OEHS, "Tree Trimming and Removal Procedure," https://www.lausd.org/ceqa
[8] LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report," https://www.lausd.org/CEQA, Adopted by the Board of Education on December 12, 2023.
[9] LAUSD OEHS, "Section 01 4524 Environmental Import/Export Materials Testing", http://www.laschools.org/documents/file?file_id=219798234&show_all_versions_p=t

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notified upon discovery of subsurface features, such as buried resources (i.e., paleontological resources, archaeological resources), tanks or seepage pits, or stained/odoriferous soils.[10] Lastly, any construction and demolition waste shall be recycled to the maximum extent feasible per SC-USS-1.[11] 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 the Topanga Canyon State Scenic Highway, a 0.5-mile portion of State Route 27 (SR-27), which is located approximately 1 mile west of the Campus.[12] The Project will not result in the removal of historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or other scenic resources. Therefore, the Project will 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 site is not located on any sites that are included on any list compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5.[13] 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 historic resource.*

Northridge MS is over 45 years old, meeting LA Unified's threshold for review as a potential historic resource. LA Unified has evaluated Northridge MS and identified it as a historical resource as defined in Section 18955 of the California State Historical Building Code (CHBC).[14] Northridge MS is an example of a finger-plan school, reflecting the prevalent campus development patterns during the period in which it was constructed. Characteristic features of finger-plan campuses include multiple classroom buildings radiating from a central axis or courtyard, connected by covered walkways, and separated by landscaped areas. The scope of the Project is focused on installation of a photovoltaic system in non-character defining spaces (parking lot and playground area). OEHS' Historic Preservation Specialist has reviewed the Project and confirmed that the Project will not materially impair the significance of the historic resource and therefore will not cause a substantial adverse historic impact.

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[10] LAUSD OEHS, "School Upgrade Program Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report," https://www.lausd.org/CEQA. Adopted by the Board of Education on December 12, 2023.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html, accessed October 2025.
[13] California Department of Toxic Substances, http://www.dtsc.ca.gov/SiteCleanup/Cortese_List.cfm, accessed May 2025.
[14] 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.

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Should the scope of the Project activities be altered from the components that are described above, standard District procedure requires that OEHS must be notified immediately to ensure that these activities are conducted in compliance with the Secretary's Standards and would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

Prepared By:

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Environmental Planning Specialist

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Signed by:

Date: 11/20/25

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

Attachment: Exhibit A – Site Plan

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EXHIBIT A – SITE PLAN (not to scale)

PROJECT SITE