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# I. SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

The City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning administers the process by which environmental documents for private projects are prepared and reviewed by the City pursuant to the applicable provisions of the City of Los Angeles Municipal Code and the City's guidelines for implementation of CEQA. On the basis of these procedures, it was determined that the proposed project may have a significant effect on the environment, and that an EIR should be prepared. Subsequent to this decision, a Draft Environmental Impact was prepared for the proposed project. The Draft EIR for the Hillcrest Christian School and Church West Campus Expansion Plan, dated June 21, 2001, was circulated for a 45 day public review period that ended on August 6, 2001. In accordance with Section 15132 of the State CEQA Guidelines:

*“The final EIR shall consist of: (a) The Draft EIR or a revision of the draft; (b) Comments and recommendations received on the Draft EIR either verbatim or in summary; (c) A list of persons, organizations, and public agencies commenting on the Draft EIR; (d) The responses of the Lead Agency to significant environmental points raised in the review and consultation process; and (e) Any other information added by the lead agency.”*

## EIR CERTIFICATION

Certification of the EIR is not the same as project approval, but simply marks the end of the environmental review phase. Certification is a judgment that the EIR is a legally adequate informational document in compliance with CEQA. Only when the EIR document adequately identifies all significant environmental impacts associated with the project can it be used in the project approval phase along with consideration of other relevant factors. To approve a project, CEQA requires that either the significant impacts of the project (as identified in the EIR) be reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of mitigation measures, or the approving body must adopt a finding of overriding considerations stating that mitigation measures are nonexistent or infeasible and thus constitute an unavoidable significant impact. The finding of overriding considerations states, in effect, that the benefits of the project outweigh the environmental impacts that would result upon implementation of the project.

The following discussion presents an overview of the project and the environmental consequences that could occur as a result of the proposed project. Where the following summary information updates or corrects the information presented in the Draft EIR, such changes are noted in redline type.

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## **PROJECT LOCATION**

Hillcrest Christian School and Church is located at 17531 Rinaldi Street in Granada Hills, California. The project site is located in the northern end of the San Fernando Valley approximately 25 miles northwest of Los Angeles Civic Center. The project site and surrounding area is located within the Granada Hills Community Planning Area of the City of Los Angeles.

The existing Hillcrest School and Church site is bounded by Rinaldi Street to the south and Shoshone Street to the west. The site is bordered by residential properties to the north and east. The proposed West Campus project site is bounded by Rinaldi Street to the south, Shoshone Street to the east and Ridgeway Road to the west and north. The proposed West Campus site is immediately surrounded by residential properties to the north and west.

## **PROJECT SUMMARY**

The Hillcrest Christian School and Church West Campus Expansion Plan includes expanding the existing school operations to an adjacent property on the west side of Shoshone Avenue. Upon completion the Hillcrest Christian School and Church will include two separate campuses, referred to thereafter as the “East Campus” and “West Campus”, respectively. Operations on the East Campus will serve elementary students, while operations on the West Campus will serve secondary students.

No physical or structural improvements are proposed for the East Campus site. Therefore, for purposes of this EIR, the existing East Campus is not considered a part of the proposed project site. However, for impacts which may be created or increased as a result of operations on both campuses (i.e., a maximum student enrollment of 1,200 students), the cumulative impacts created by both campuses are considered within the scope of this EIR. The West Campus site will include demolition of two existing residential structures and the relocation on one structure. The West Campus will be developed with one 75,000 square foot, two-and-three-story education building with classrooms, administration offices, a gymnasium, and other school-related ancillary uses. Approximately 124 parking spaces would be provided in a surface parking lot, located to the west of the proposed education building with vehicular access along Rinaldi Street. Upon completion, the West Campus would be landscaped throughout with grass, trees and ornamental shrubs. As described in greater detail in Section III. Project Description, some of the project’s main objectives include:

- To increase the existing maximum permitted student capacity of the Hillcrest Christian School from 800 to 1,200 students in order to meet the student enrollment demands for the 2002 school year and beyond.
- To expand and promote extra-curricular athletic programs as part of Hillcrest Christian School’s primary and secondary educational services.

- To provide a phased development program to allow for temporary classroom operations to be in place and operational concurrent with the final development of the West Campus facilities.

Modifications to the proposed site plan have been made to reduce the amount of trees that will be removed as a result of project development. The modification includes realigning and reducing the height of the retaining wall to a maximum of 35 feet. It was previously designed to be on the order of 40 feet high and set along the northwestern property line. The retaining wall will now be set back away from the property line and will retain the existing slope and vegetation between the wall and the property line. This change will have a beneficial impact on tree resources as up to mature 22 trees will remain in place at this location.

## **SUMMARY OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

Based on the analysis contained in the Draft EIR, potentially significant impacts have been identified for the following environmental issue areas: Biological Resources (the loss of 10 oak trees); Historic Resources (demolition of an historic resource); Construction Noise (during construction only); Traffic (a.m. peak hour traffic at the intersections of Rinaldi Street and Balboa Boulevard, Rinaldi Street and Louise Avenue, and Rinaldi Street and Shoshone Avenue); Parking (on an occasional basis during special events); Risk of Upset (potential exposure of asbestos containing materials and lead based paint during the demolition phase). With the exception of special event parking, all of the potentially significant impacts identified above can be mitigated to less than significant levels with successful implementation of project mitigation measures.

### **Unavoidable Significant Impacts**

Of the environmental issue areas evaluated in the scope of the EIR, one remaining issue area would result in an unavoidable significant impact: Event parking on an occasional basis during special events. While the parking demand analysis suggests adequate on-site parking exists between the East and West Campuses to accommodate special event parking, a significant unavoidable parking impact would occur on an occasional basis if event attendance exceeds the anticipated attendance levels.

### **Environmental Analyses**

A summary of environmental impacts for each of the environmental issue areas analyzed in the Draft EIR is presented below. All of these issue areas would either result in less than significant impacts or would be adequately mitigated to a level below significance thresholds with implementation of the mitigation measures listed in Section IV, Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program.

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## **Aesthetics**

The proposed project will include demolition of the existing residential structures on the site and construction of a 75,000 square foot education building. The education building will be a maximum of 45 feet high from the lowest natural grade elevation of the site (i.e., 1125 feet). Due to the ascending topography of the site, the structure would appear as a one story structure when viewed from the north, extending 13 feet above the average grade of the athletic field (proposed at an average elevation of 1140 feet). The proposed Campus will include landscaping features to buffer the structural components of the project from adjacent residential properties. The education building would be built with a 25 foot setback from Rinaldi Street and a 15 foot setback from Shoshone Avenue. The roof line will be further stepped to provide a one story roof elevation along Shoshone Avenue, with the second and third level increasing the buildings height towards the interior of the site.

Public Views from adjacent roadways would be buffered by landscaping features. The massing of the structure would be reduced as a result of the proposed setbacks and stepped roof elevation designed. Views would be further buffered by landscaping elements which include street trees and on the sidewalks areas of Rinaldi Street and Shoshone Avenue.

Views from adjacent properties along Ridgeway Road will be replaced with the newly introduced project features. Views of the parking lot will be buffered by the tree cover provided by the 50 trees proposed within the parking lot area. The proposed education building would extend approximately 17 feet above the natural grade level of Ridgeway Road. A six foot retaining wall is proposed along the western property line (set back to allow for a landscaped buffer) for noise abatement purposes. Views would be further buffered by landscaping features and trees along the western perimeter of the site.

The finished project site would be visually compatible with the adjacent East Campus property. Overall aesthetic impacts would be less than significant.

## **Air Quality**

### *Construction*

Construction impacts will generate air pollution in the form of dust and particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) as a result of grading and demolition activities and Reactive Organic Compounds (ROG), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Nitrogen Oxides (NO<sub>x</sub>), particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>), and Sulfur Oxides (SO<sub>x</sub>) as a result of diesel emissions from equipment and materials used throughout the construction process. The most intensive air quality pollution will be generated during the grading and excavation period. PM<sub>10</sub> impacts associated with grading and demolition activities would be approximate 106 pounds of PM<sub>10</sub> per day, which is well below the 150 lbs/day threshold.

Emissions from construction equipment for all five criteria pollutants would be as follows: ROG (6.0 lbs/day); CO (19.0 lbs/day); NOx (86.0 lbs/day); PM<sub>10</sub> (3.0 lbs/day); and SOx (6.0 lbs/day). Construction emissions for all five criteria pollutants would be below SCAQMD thresholds and would be less than significant.

The project is planned to be developed in two phases so that the anticipated student enrollment can be accommodated on site in temporary classroom bungalows during construction of the permanent education building. The most intensive air pollution would occur during the initial grading operations prior to any student occupancy of the site. Students on the West Campus would, however, be exposed to construction emissions during the Final Phase construction period. Strict adherence to SCAQMD Rule 403 for fugitive dust is recommended to further reduce air quality impacts.

### *Operation*

Operation of the project would generate increased vehicle emissions as a result of 1,400 additional vehicle trips being generated per day. Vehicle emissions for all SCAQMD criteria pollutants would be as follows: CO (73.4 lbs/day); ROC (15.9 lbs/day); NOx (9.7 lbs/day); PM<sub>10</sub> (7.8 lbs/day); and SOx (3.5 lbs/day). Operational emissions for all five criteria pollutants would be below SCAQMD thresholds and would be less than significant.

Increased carbon monoxide emissions accumulate at areas where cars idle. A CO hotspot emissions analysis indicates hourly CO emissions at the corner of Rinaldi Street and Balboa Boulevard would exceed State standards (i.e., 20 ppm) during the p.m. peak hour as a result of cumulative (“2005 pre-project”) background traffic volumes. Maximum differences in future CO exposures for the “with project” versus the “no project” scenario would be 1.0 ppm or less. SCAQMD Rule 1303 shows any CO increase of 1.0 ppm or less to be a “de minimis” increase. The project contribution to 1-hour CO emissions at this location would thus be less than significant.

### **Biological Resources**

No natural plant assemblages or vegetation communities are present on the West Campus site. Existing vegetation on the site consists of exotic and native ground cover and ornamental tree species. No sensitive, candidate or special status species nor supporting habitat for such species are known to occur within the project site or surrounding locale. Therefore, grading and development of the project site would not impact any federal or state protected species identified as a candidate, sensitive or otherwise special status species.

As a result if the modified retaining wall and improvements to the proposed landscape plan, 42 trees will either remain in place or be transplanted to other areas on the HCS Campus. For aesthetic and tree survival purposes, in order to avoid crowding some of the trees identified for transplantation will be

relocated to the East Campus. In addition, as compared to the Draft EIR analysis, which concluded 162 trees would be planted as part of the proposed project, 238 trees will be planted, transplanted or remain in place as a result of the proposed changes. Overall, impacts upon tree resources would be improved as compared to the previous plans documented in the Draft EIR. While the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in the Draft EIR would reduce project impacts to less than significant levels, the revisions to the proposed retaining wall and landscape plan would further reduce project impacts on tree resources.

### **Geotechnical Hazards**

The project will include a two phase process to allow for the temporary placement and operation of modular classroom trailers to accommodate the school's anticipated enrollment concurrent with the final phase construction period. Initial Phase grading will require approximately 35,000 cubic yards (cy) of cut and 7,000 cy of fill. Final Phase grading will require approximately 62,000 cy of cut and 12,500 cy of fill. Cut and fill during the Final Phase will require the export of approximately 49,500 cy of soil. Excavation into the slope will require the construction of retaining walls to a maximum height of 35 feet.

#### *Slope Stability*

Slope conditions on the West Campus property are considered favorable with respect to the gross stability of the site. However, special attention to daylighted bedding conditions will be required with future temporary excavations for south-facing retaining walls. The results of Geosystems' analyses indicate that 40-foot-high cut slopes will have a static and pseudostatic factor of safety greater than 1.5 and 1.1, respectively, and are considered grossly stable in their proposed configurations. Modifications in the proposed site plan to reduce the height of the retaining wall to a maximum height of 35 feet would reduce the height of the cut of the slope, which would have a positive effect on slope stability. Specific slope stability analyses will be performed again at the completion of the finalized grading plans. Based on Geosystems' observations of the geotechnical factors found at the subject site, the subject site is grossly stable and suitable for the proposed development.

#### *Seismic Hazards*

Property owners and the general public should be aware that any structure or slope in the southern California region could be subject to significant damage as a result of a moderate or major earthquake. The project will attract a greater number of individuals to the West Campus site on a day to day basis. The project will thus increase the potential for human health hazards or destruction of property to occur on the project site during a sizable seismic event. These risks are unavoidable, but can be mitigated to less than significant levels through adherence to applicable building codes and construction practices and recommendations in the Fault Rupture Hazard Investigation Report.

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### *Fault Rupture*

The Fault Rupture Hazard Report prepared by Geosystems concluded the site is considered suitable for development from a soils and engineering-geologic standpoint. No evidence of active faulting was observed during field exploration. No setback restriction zones with regard to active faults are applicable to the proposed project site. Major foundation problems are not anticipated as a result of earthquake induced liquefaction, fault ground rupture or displacement, and differential settlement of natural earth materials, provided the foundation system is constructed as recommended. Therefore, impacts associated with fault rupture hazards would be considered less than significant.

### **Historical Resources**

The proposed project will require the demolition and removal of all of the residential structures on the West Campus property. All three residential structures were originally constructed as bunkhouses for the old Sunshine Ranch Company. The residences at 11515 Shoshone Avenue and 11525 Shoshone Avenue are not considered historic resources as they lack the physical integrity requisite for listing in the California Register. The residential structure identified at 17551 Rinaldi Street, however, is eligible for listing in the California Register as a historic resource under Criteria A. This structure is also potentially eligible for designation as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument. Under the CEQA Guidelines for determining significant impacts upon historic resources, the residence at 17551 Rinaldi Street is considered an historic resource, even though it is not currently listed on any official federal, state, or local listings. The Hillcrest Christian School has continued to pursue the relocation method as a way to reduce the project's historic impact to a less than significant level. Through continued discussions with the SFVHS, a mitigation plan to relocate this structure has been formalized and agreed to between both parties. See Topical Response 3 in Section III, Response to Comments. Impacts upon historic resources would therefore be reduced to less than significant levels.

### **Hydrology/Water Quality**

The proposed project would increase the amount of impervious surface area on the project site through the development of the education building, paved parking areas, paved walkways, and hardscape areas. Approximately 100,000 square feet of area (or approximately 42 percent of the site) will be converted to impervious surface area, increasing existing impervious surface area by approx. 80,000 square feet. Approximately 58 percent of the site will remain pervious surface areas, most of which will be developed as a grass covered athletic field.

The project would provide a system of catch basins and drainage pipes directing all surface water runoff to the storm drain system under Shoshone Avenue. Therefore, the project would not substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area to the extent that on or off-site flooding would occur. An analysis of hydrologic conditions for the proposed project concluded the

project will not exceed capacity of the existing or planned storm water drainage systems or provide substantial amounts of polluted runoff.

During construction, grading activities would have the potential to result in soil erosion or discharge of sedimentation, which could degrade the quality of water. Though required by law, BMPs would be included as project mitigation measures to ensure potentially significant impacts would be reduced to less than significant levels.

During operation of the project, the deposition of certain chemicals by cars on parking lot surfaces could have the potential to contribute metals, oil and grease, solvents, phosphates, hydrocarbons, and suspended solids to the storm drain system. Compliance with existing regulations would reduce the potential for water quality impacts to a less than significant level.

### **Land Use**

The proposed project is an allowable use for the underlying A1-1 Zone. The project, if approved, will be permitted on a conditional use basis with conditions of approval established by the Zoning administrator. The proposed project will be an extension of an existing use and will not introduce an incompatible use to the area. Based on a review of the project characteristics and applicable land use documents, the project appears to be substantially consistent with the plans established for the project area. It is anticipated that any land use compatibility impacts would be reduced to levels of insignificance through appropriate conditions of approval. Land use impacts would be less than significant.

### **Noise**

#### *Construction Noise*

Short term construction activities would expose adjacent sensitive receptors to significant noise impacts. Noise levels of approximately 90 dBA can be expected within 50 feet of the construction site. These levels will be above the acceptable community noise levels. Assuming construction activities are conducted in compliance with City Ordinances, construction noise associated with school expansion will create a less than significant short term impact on the adjacent community.

#### *Operational Noise*

Noise associated with vehicular traffic is expected to increase as a result of 1,400 additional daily vehicle trips being generated by the project. Roadway noise levels from project traffic were calculated using the Caltrans version of the federal highway traffic noise model (FHWA-RD-77-108). Noise



impacts generated by future traffic volumes are expected to increase by less than 0.4 dBA. Traffic noise impacts are considered individually and cumulatively less than significant.

Increased noise levels generated by student assembly and activity of the athletic field will be attenuated by the proposed retaining walls and building design. Increased noise levels to the west of the project site will be effectively attenuated by the proposed retaining walls and dense tree cover proposed along the northwestern slope of the property. Noise impacts would be less than significant.

Additional noise will be generated by the proposed parking lot. A six foot concrete block wall is proposed along the western property line adjacent to the proposed parking lot area to attenuate increased noise levels. Noise reduction effectiveness of this barrier will reduce single-event noise by 5-10 dB. The proposed wall will create off-site, single-event noise levels below the ambient levels experienced due to background noise. Noise impacts from the proposed parking lot would therefore be less than significant.

## **Public Services**

### *Police Protection*

Implementation of proposed project would result in an increase of 460 students and staff on the project site, thereby generating a potential increase in the level of service calls from the project site. Responses to thefts, vehicle burglaries, damage to vehicles, traffic related incidents, and crimes against persons would be anticipated to result from an increase in traffic on adjacent streets and arterials, and an increase in activity levels. According to the LAPD, the proposed project, absent any mitigation measures, is anticipated to have a significant impact on police services in the project area.

The proposed expansion includes crime prevention features such as night time lighting, locks on all entrance gates, and the entire proposed project would be fenced in. In addition, with the involvement of LAPD's Community Relations Section, Community Liaison/Crime Prevention Unit (CL/CPU), and their advisement involving crime prevention features, impacts could be reduced to less than significant levels.

### *Fire Protection*

Implementation of the proposed project would result in an increase in students and employees on the project site, thus increasing the existing demands for fire service provided by the LAFD. The existing site is currently operating at its maximum permitted student capacity of 800 students. The proposed project will increase the student capacity to 1,200 students. The LAFD stated that the water system in the area may require infrastructure improvements to meet the 2,000 gpm fire-flow requirement. The costs of improving the water system may be charged to the developer. However, based on response

time and response distance from the existing fire stations in the area, fire protection would be adequate. [Furthermore, traffic impacts, found in Section IV.J, were found to be less than significant and that fire response time would be maintained. In addition, the Ridgeway Road access easement, which directly abuts the westerly and northwesterly property line, would remain unobstructed for fire service access.] As such, LAFD access to the project site and the surrounding residential properties to the west and north would be maintained.

With relation to the project being located in a Hillside Fire District, the project will be required to comply with all applicable provisions of the Planning and Zoning Code. All the vegetation for the proposed project would be removed and replaced with replacement trees, shrubs, and an on-site irrigation system, in accordance with the landscape plan. Therefore, reducing the fire hazard impacts. Also, Hillcrest Christian School implements an existing emergency evacuation plan, which is routinely rehearsed with the students during emergency drills. Therefore, project impacts relative to fire protection service would be less than significant.

### **Transportation/Circulation**

The proposed project will generate approximately 1,400 additional daily trips to the project area; 368 during the a.m. peak hour and 168 during the p.m. peak hour.

Access to the proposed parking lot on the West Campus will be provided via one ingress/egress driveway located approximately 250 feet west of Shoshone Avenue on Rinaldi Street. This driveway will permit full access to the West Campus with left and right turn entry and exiting onto and from Rinaldi Street. Traffic impacts projected for the 2005 buildout year show that the project will result in significant impacts at the following three intersections during the a.m. peak hour:

- Rinaldi Street and Balboa Boulevard,
- Rinaldi Street and Louise Avenue,
- Rinaldi Street and Shoshone Avenue.

No significant traffic impacts are anticipated for the p.m. peak hour. None of the freeway segments and freeway ramps analyzed will be significantly affected by project traffic.

### *Neighborhood Traffic Impacts*

Approximately three percent of the project traffic is expected to use Shoshone Avenue north of the project site (42 trips per day-- 21 trips in each direction). These trips represent 0.5 percent of the final average daily trips on Shoshone, or about one-twentieth the amount of project. This increase is below 12 percent threshold, thus a less than significant impact on residential street traffic would be created.

### *Pedestrian Safety*

The West Campus expansion will separate Hillcrest's existing elementary school operations from the secondary schools operations, which currently operate on one campus. As such, crossing Shoshone Avenue to access both campuses will be a routine occurrence for many students and staff administrators. Since pedestrian traffic between the east and west side of Shoshone Avenue will increase as a result of the proposed West Campus expansion, impacts associated with pedestrian/vehicle interaction and safety would be potentially significant.

### **Parking**

#### *Daily Parking*

Parking for the West Campus will be provided in a 124-space surface parking lot. A total of 272 spaces will be provided between the two campuses. This parking supply will be sufficient to accommodate the faculty, students, and visitors, and no significant daily parking impacts will occur.

#### *Special Event Parking*

Using a conservative estimate for events utilizing outdoor areas (such as graduation ceremonies and athletic events), a demand of approximately 400 parking spaces would be generated. Because special events would occur outside school hours, parking would be provided from both the East and West Campus parking lots. Utilizing the overflow parking area, which provides 130 additional spaces, a total of 402 parking spaces would be available during special events. However, should actual attendance at special events exceed the anticipated attendance levels, a parking deficiency would occur. This would result in an unavoidable significant impact on an occasional basis during special events.

### **Risk of Upset**

Development of the proposed project would involve demolition and/or removal of the existing residential structures and ancillary buildings located on the project site. Due to their age of construction and remodeling, these structures have the potential to have been constructed with building materials containing lead-based paint and/or ACMs.

Small quantities of common household cleaning solvents, paints, landscape fertilizers, and pesticides typically used in institutional settings would be handled in accordance with all applicable rules and regulations associated with school settings. Due to the limited use and storage of these materials on-site, they would be disposed of in accordance with the City's household hazardous waste requirements and would not require routine transport to or from the project site.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

The Draft EIR evaluates four alternatives to the proposed project. The alternatives identified for this project were based on a rule of reason and best represent alternatives that could potentially reduce the project's impact on the environment. The four alternatives analyzed within this EIR include the following:

- No Project Alternative;
- Reduced Building Size Alternative;
- Residential Development Alternative; and
- Reduced Density Alternative;

A summary matrix comparison of impacts resulting from each of the alternatives relative to impacts identified for the proposed project is provided in Table VI.E-1 in Section VI of the Draft EIR. Aside from the No Project Alternative, the Residential Development Alternative is the only project alternative that would substantially reduce the potentially significant impacts identified for the proposed project as compared to all of the other alternatives.

As compared to the proposed project, the Residential Development Alternative would reduce project impacts in all of the environmental issue areas, and would avoid a potentially significant impact upon an historic resource. Preservation in place is the preferred alternative with regard to mitigating project impacts upon an historic resource. The Residential Development Alternative is the only alternative which would avoid the removal of the historic structure, as all other school related alternatives would necessitate the relocation of this historic structure.