

**California Environmental Quality Act
Initial Study**

**Juniper Elementary School Project
Atwater, California
(State Clearinghouse No. 2019120473)**

Lead Agency and Project Sponsor:

Atwater Elementary School District

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Executive Summary

The proposed Juniper Elementary School Project (project) includes the construction and operation of a new elementary school on a 9.82-acre site owned by the Atwater Elementary School District (District). The site is located at the northwest corner of Juniper Avenue and Bridgewater Street in the City of Atwater, Merced County. Figures 1, 2, and 3 depict the Project Location, Project Site, and Site Plan, respectively.

The elementary school would serve up to 600 students in grades TK-6. The campus would have 25 classrooms, administrative offices, a multi-purpose building, hardcourt areas and athletic fields, which may include lighting. The school would be staffed by up to 45 employees, including administrators, faculty, and support staff. The school would be in regular session on weekdays from late August to early June, but may host special events and classes during evenings, on weekends, and during summer recess.

The District estimates that construction of the project would begin in late 2021, with operation of the proposed elementary school beginning in August 2023.

Based on the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (CEQA Guidelines), the purpose of this Initial Study is to provide the District with environmental information on the project to use as the basis for deciding whether to prepare an EIR or a Negative Declaration for the project. This Initial Study concluded:

1. The Initial Study identified several potentially significant environmental effects of the project in the following subject areas: air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, geology and soils, noise, transportation, and tribal cultural resources. The District can avoid or reduce these impacts to an insignificant level by incorporating in the project the mitigation measures listed in the table on the following pages.
2. The project would have a less than significant impact or no impact on most of the environmental resources and conditions evaluated in the Initial Study. The Initial Study explains why there would be no impacts, or the impacts would be less than significant.
3. Based on items 1 and 2, above, the District should adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration for the project.

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Mitigation Measures

Table A-1

AQ-1	<p>Air Quality: Localized Air Pollutant Emissions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. On-road diesel vehicles shall comply with Section 2485 of Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations. This regulation limits idling from diesel-fueled commercial motor vehicles with gross vehicular weight ratings of more than 10,000 pounds and licensed for operation on highways. It applies to California and non-California based vehicles. In general, the regulation specifies that drivers of said vehicles:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Shall not idle the vehicle's primary diesel engine for greater than 5 minutes at any location, except as noted in Subsection (d) of the regulation; and,b. Shall not operate a diesel-fueled auxiliary power system to power a heater, air conditioner, or any ancillary equipment on that vehicle during sleeping or resting in a sleeper berth for greater than 5.0 minutes at any location when within 1,000 feet of a restricted area, except as noted in Subsection (d) of the regulation.2. Off-road diesel equipment shall comply with the 5-minute idling restriction identified in Section 2449(d)(2) of the California Air Resources Board's In-Use off-Road Diesel regulation. The specific requirements and exceptions in the regulations can be reviewed at the following web sites: www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/truck-idling/2485.pdf and www.arb.ca.gov/regact/2007/ordiesl07/frooal.pdf.3. Signs shall be posted at the project site construction entrance to remind drivers and operators of the state's 5-minute idling limit.4. To the extent available, replace fossil-fueled equipment with alternatively-fueled (e.g., natural gas) or electrically-driven equivalents.5. Construction truck trips shall be scheduled, to the extent feasible, to occur during non-peak hours and truck haul routes shall be selected to minimize impacts to nearby residential dwellings.6. The burning of vegetative material shall be prohibited.7. The proposed project shall comply with SJVAPCD Regulation VIII for the control of fugitive dust emissions. Regulation VIII can be obtained on the SJVAPCD's website at website URL: https://www.valleyair.org/rules/1ruleslist.htm. At a minimum, the following measures shall be implemented:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. All disturbed areas, including storage piles, which are not being actively utilized for construction purposes, shall be effectively stabilized of dust emissions using water, chemical stabilizer/suppressant, covered with a tarp or other suitable cover or vegetative ground cover.b. All on-site unpaved roads and off-site unpaved access roads shall be effectively stabilized of dust emissions using water or chemical stabilizer/suppressant.c. All land clearing, grubbing, scraping, excavation, land leveling, grading, cut & fill, and demolition activities shall be effectively controlled of fugitive dust emissions utilizing application of water or by presoaking.d. With the demolition of buildings up to six stories in height, all exterior surfaces of the building shall be wetted during demolition.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">e. When materials are transported off-site, all material shall be covered, or effectively wetted to limit visible dust emissions, and at least six inches of freeboard space from the top of the container shall be maintained.f. All operations shall limit or expeditiously remove the accumulation of mud or dirt from adjacent public streets at the end of each workday. (The use of dry rotary brushes is expressly prohibited except where preceded or accompanied by sufficient wetting to limit the visible dust emissions.) (Use of blower devices is expressly forbidden.)g. Following the addition of materials to, or the removal of materials from, the surface of outdoor storage piles, said piles shall be effectively stabilized of fugitive dust emissions utilizing sufficient water or chemical stabilizer/suppressant.h. On-road vehicle speeds on unpaved surfaces of the project site shall be limited to 15 mph.i. Sandbags or other erosion control measures shall be installed sufficient to prevent silt runoff to public roadways from sites with a slope greater than one percent.j. Excavation and grading activities shall be suspended when winds exceed 20 mph (Regardless of wind speed, an owner/operator must comply with Regulation VIII's 20 percent opacity limitation). <p>8. The above measures for the control of construction-generated emissions shall be included on site grading and construction plans.</p>
BR-1	<p>Biological Resources: Mitigation for Potential Impacts to Nesting Birds</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">1. <u>Pre-construction Surveys:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">a. If construction is to begin during the nesting season (February 1 through August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey within 14 days prior to initiation of disturbance activities. This survey will search for nest sites on buildings and in trees, bushes, or grass within the project area.b. Surveys for burrowing owl will occur within 14 days prior to any ground disturbance, no matter the season. This survey will cover potential burrowing owl burrows in the project area and suitable habitat within 150 m (500 ft). Evaluation of use by owls shall be in accordance with California Department of Fish and Wildlife survey guidelines (CBOC 1993, CDFG 1995, CDFG 2012). Surveys will document if burrowing owls are nesting or using habitat in or directly adjacent to the project area. Survey results will be valid only for the season (breeding (Feb 1-Aug 31) or non-breeding (Sept 1-Jan 31) during which the survey is conducted.c. If the pre-construction survey does not detect any active nests or burrows, then no further action is required. If the survey does detect an active nest or burrow, then the District shall implement the following mitigation measures.2. <u>Minimization/Establish Buffers:</u><ul style="list-style-type: none">a. If any active nests are discovered (and if construction will occur during bird breeding season), the District shall contact the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and/or California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine protective measures required to avoid take. These measures could include fencing an area where a nest occurs or shifting construction work temporally or spatially away from the nesting birds. Biologists would be required on site to monitor construction

	<p>activity while protected migratory birds are nesting in the project area. If an active nest is found after the completion of the pre-construction surveys and after construction begins, all construction activities shall stop until a qualified biologist has evaluated the nest and erected the appropriate buffer around the nest.</p> <p>b. If burrowing owls are detected within the survey area, CDFW will be consulted to determine the suitable buffer. These buffers will consider the level of disturbance of the project activity, existing disturbance of the site (vehicle traffic, humans, pets, etc.), and time of year (nesting vs. wintering). If avoidance is not feasible, the District will work with CDFW to determine appropriate mitigation, such as passive exclusion or translocation, and associated mitigation land offset (CDFG 2012).</p>
CR-1	<p>Cultural Resources: Subsurface Resources</p> <p>If cultural resources are encountered during ground disturbing activities, work shall stop in the immediate vicinity of the find and a qualified cultural resources specialist shall be consulted to determine the significance of the resources in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5. If potentially significant, the qualified cultural resources specialist shall make recommendations to the Lead Agency on mitigation measures to be implemented to protect the discovered resources in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 and Public Resources Code §21083.2.</p>
CR-2	<p>Cultural Resources: Human Remains</p> <p>If human remains are encountered during ground disturbing activities, work shall stop in the immediate vicinity of the find and the County Coroner notified in accordance with Health and Safety Code §7050.5 and CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(e). If the remains are determined to be of Native American descent, the procedures and requirements set forth in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(d) and (e) and Public Resources Code §5097.98 shall be implemented.</p>
GEO-1	<p>Geology and Soils: Subsurface Paleontological Resources</p> <p>If paleontological resources are discovered during ground disturbing activities, work shall stop in the immediate vicinity of the find and a qualified paleontologist shall be consulted to determine whether the resources require further study. If the resources are determined to be potentially significant, the qualified paleontologist shall make recommendations to the District on the measures that shall be implemented to protect the discovered resources, including but not limited to, excavation and evaluation of the find, as well as providing the resources to an appropriate institution or person who is capable of providing long-term preservation to allow future scientific study.</p>
N-1	<p>Noise: Mitigation for Construction Noise</p> <p>a. Construction activities (excluding activities that would result in a safety concern to the public or construction workers) shall be limited to between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.</p> <p>b. Stationary construction equipment (e.g., portable power generators) should be located at the furthest distance possible from nearby residences. If deemed necessary, portable noise barriers shall be erected sufficient to shield nearby residences from direct line-of-sight of stationary construction equipment.</p> <p>c. Construction equipment shall be properly maintained and equipped with noise-reduction intake and exhaust mufflers and engine shrouds, in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations. Equipment-engine shrouds shall be closed during</p>

	<p>equipment operation.</p> <p>d. When not in use, motorized construction equipment shall not be left idling for periods greater than five minutes.</p>
T-1	<p>Transportation: Existing plus Project Traffic Conditions</p> <p>a. The project shall retain the existing Class I Bike Path along its frontage to Juniper Avenue.</p> <p>b. The project shall retain existing ADA compliant walkways along its frontages to Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue.</p> <p>c. A high-visibility crosswalk with a rapid rectangular flashing beacon system shall be implemented across the south leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Arrowwood Lane and a rapid rectangular flashing beacon shall be implemented across the west leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue.</p> <p>d. The District shall provide a school crossing guard at the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue at the beginning and end of the school day when most students are entering and leaving school. The crossing guard shall be provided until such time as a traffic signal is installed at the intersection.</p> <p>e. The project shall prepare a school signage and striping plan in the vicinity of the project pursuant to the CA MUTCD Part 3 - Markings and Part 7 - Traffic Control for School Areas. The plan shall be reviewed and approved by the City of Atwater and subsequently implemented prior to opening day of the school component of the project.</p> <p>f. Atwater Elementary School District shall work with the City of Atwater to implement a Safe Routes to school plan and seek grant funding to help build walkways and bikeways where they are lacking within a one-mile radius of the proposed project site.</p>
T-2	<p>Transportation: Near Term plus Project Traffic Conditions</p> <p>Modify Sierra Madre Drive full access to Juniper Avenue to limited left-in, right-in and right-out access only. To accomplish this, it is recommended that a raised median island be extended across the intersection along the center of Juniper Avenue for approximately 200 feet in both directions. With the extension of the raised median island, northbound and southbound left-turns would need to be redirected. Northbound left-turning traffic from Sierra Madre Drive could utilize Almador Terrace to access Juniper Avenue and continue westbound. Southbound left-turning traffic from Sierra Madre Drive would be forced to utilize Sierra Nevada Drive to access Juniper Avenue and continue eastbound. The project shall contribute its equitable fair share as presented in Table IX of Initial Study Appendix G for those future improvements which are not currently covered by an existing impact fee program or grant funds. This measure is not required at the time of school opening and the timing of implementation shall be determined as warranted by subsequent traffic analysis or as agreed upon by the City of Atwater and the District.</p>
T-3	<p>Transportation: Cumulative 2040 plus Project Traffic Conditions</p> <p>Signalize the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue with protective left-turn phasing in all directions. The project shall contribute its equitable fair share as presented in Table IX of Initial Study Appendix G for those future improvements which are not currently covered by an existing impact fee program or grant funds. This measure is not required at the time of school opening and the timing of implementation shall be determined as warranted by subsequent traffic analysis or as agreed upon by the City of Atwater and the District.</p>

TC-1	Tribal Cultural Resources: Unanticipated Discoveries If tribal cultural resources are discovered during ground disturbing activities, work shall stop in the immediate vicinity of the find and a qualified professional with expertise in tribal cultural resources shall be consulted to recommend an appropriate course of action with the input of potentially affected tribes. If it is determined that the project may cause a substantial adverse change to a tribal cultural resource, mitigation measures to be considered should include those identified in Public Resources Code Section 21084.3.
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A. Project Background Information

1. Project Title, Lead Agency, and Lead Agency Contact Information

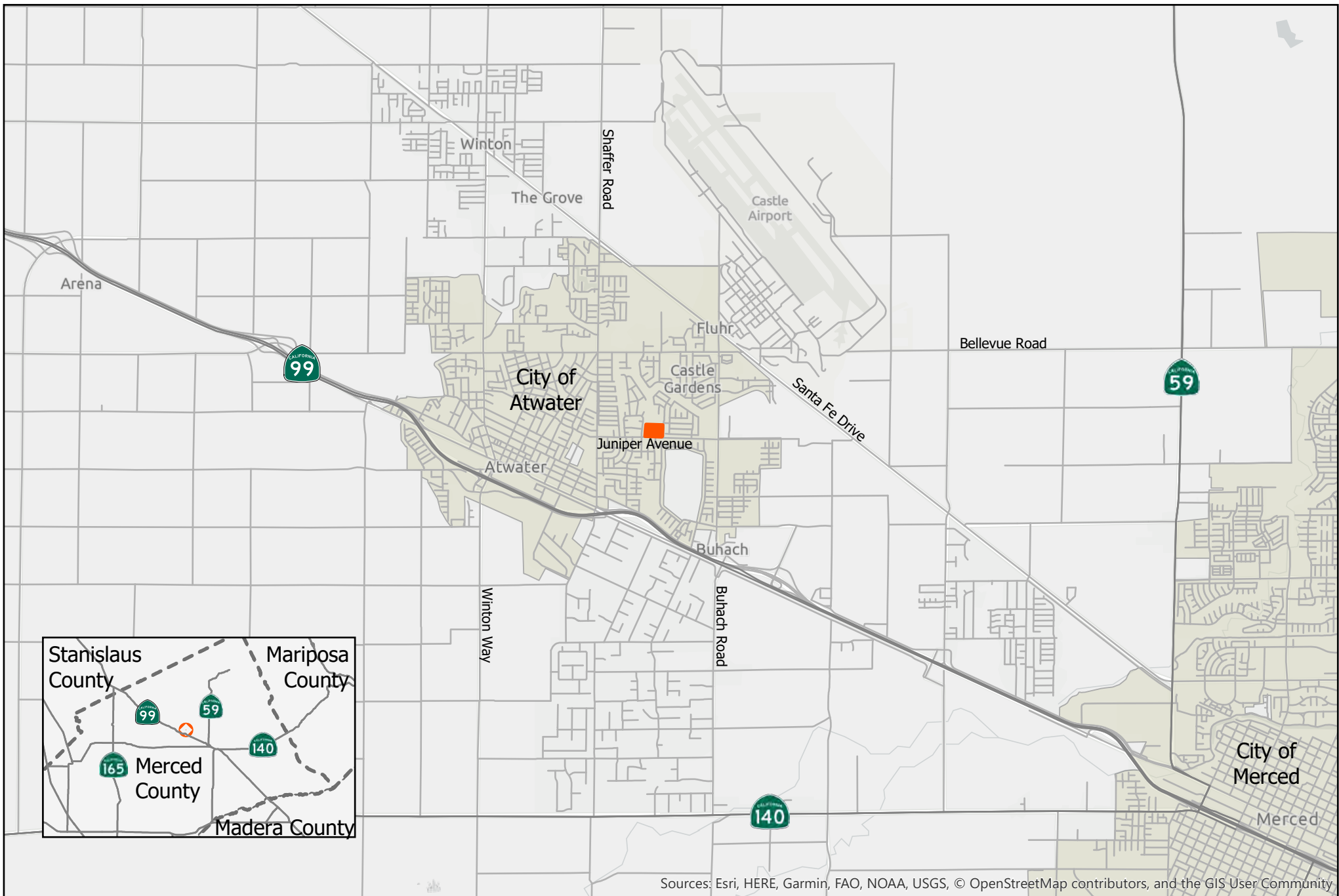
TABLE A-2 Project Information	
Project Title:	Juniper Elementary School Project
Lead Agency and Project Sponsor's Name and Address:	Atwater Elementary School District 1401 Broadway Avenue Atwater, CA 95301
Contact Information:	Aaron Delworth Director of Business Services Telephone: (209) 357-6100 ext. 355 Email: ADelworth@aesd.edu

2. Project Location and Description

The proposed project includes the construction and operation of a new elementary school on a 9.82-acre site owned by the District. The site is located at the northwest corner of Juniper Avenue and Bridgewater Street in the City of Atwater, Merced County, CA. Figures 1 and 2 depict the Project Location and Project Site. Figure 3 depicts the Site Plan.

The elementary school would serve up to 600 students in grades TK-6. The campus would have 25 classrooms, administrative offices, a multi-purpose building, hardcourt areas and athletic fields, which may include lighting. The school would be staffed by up to 45 employees, including administrators, faculty, and support staff. The school would be in regular session on weekdays from late August to early June, but may host special events and classes during evenings, on weekends, and during summer recess.

TABLE A-3 Project Location	
City or CDP, County, and Zip Code	Atwater, Merced County, 95301
Assessor's Parcel Number(s)	004-010-026-000
Nearest Existing Major Cross Streets	Juniper Avenue and Bridgewater Street
Elevation	Approximately 162 ft. AMSL
USGS Map	Atwater Quadrangle
Section, Township & Range	Section 06, Township 7S, Range 13E, MDB&M
Latitude/Longitude	37° 21' 2"N, -120° 35' 12"W



Project Location

Juniper Elementary School Project
Atwater Elementary School District

ODELL Planning & Research, Inc.
Environmental Planning • School Facility Planning • Demographics

 Project Site
 City Limits

0 0.5 1 2
Miles



Figure 1



Project Site

Juniper Elementary School Project
Atwater Elementary School District

ODELL Planning & Research, Inc.
Environmental Planning • School Facility Planning • Demographics

0 125 250 500
Feet



Figure 2



10.61	KNOX BOX, EMERGENCY SERVICES KEY STORAGE - COORDINATE SIZE, LOCATION, AND MOUNTING WITH LOCAL FIRE AUTHORITY
32.31	PAINT FACE AND TOP OF CURB RED WITH "FIRE LANE" MARKING PAINTED IN WHITE AS REQUIRED BY LOCAL FIRE AUTHORITY
32.61	PAIR OF 10'-0" WIDE ORNAMENTAL GATES
32.62	4'-0" WIDE ORNAMENTAL GATE
32.63	4'-0" WIDE CHAIN LINK GATE

 (E) F.H.

EXISTING FIRE HYDRANT,
SEE CIVIL AND FIRE SUPPRESSION

CHAIN LINK FENCING

DECORATIVE METAL FENCING

ACCESSIBLE
BOYS/GIRLS/MENS/WOMENS/
GENDER NEUTRAL RESTROOM

ACCESSIBLE DRINKING FOUNTAIN

..... ACCESSIBLE ROUTE
(2019 C.B.C. SECTION 11B - 206)

THE ACCESSIBLE ROUTE IS A CONTINUOUS UNOBSTRUCTED PATH CONNECTING ACCESSIBLE ELEMENTS AND SPACES OF AN ACCESSIBLE SITE. ACCESSIBLE ROUTES CAN BE NEGOTIATED BY A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY USING A WHEELCHAIR, AND THAT IS ALSO SAFE FOR AND USABLE BY PERSONS WITH OTHER DISABILITIES. ACCESSIBLE ROUTES SHALL COMPLY WITH CBI 11B.18.10, GENERALLY, "EXTERIOR ACCESSIBLE ROUTES," AND COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING. SHALL BE STABLE, FIRM, AND SLIP RESISTANT; HAVE A 1/2" MAXIMUM RUNNING SLOPE; HAVE A 1/2" MAXIMUM CROSS SLOPE; HAVE 1/4" MAXIMUM CURBS AND CURB RAMPS; HAVE A 1/4" MAXIMUM CROSS SLOPE; HAVE A 48" MINIMUM WIDTH; HAVE NO VERTICAL OFFSETS GREATER THAN 1/4"; OFFSETS SHALL BE FLARED AND SHARPENED; HAVE A SLOPE NOT EXCEEDING 1/2%; HAVE NO OPENINGS ALLOWING THE PASSAGE OF A 1/2" DIAMETER SPHERE; ELONGATED OPENINGS SHALL BE PERPENDICULAR TO THE ROUTE; HAVE NO OPENINGS IN CURBS, HIGH CURB OR GUARDRAIL AT EDGES WHERE THE DROP OFF EXCEEDS 4" EXCEPT WHERE ADJACENT TO VEHICULAR WAYS BE FREE OF ELEMENTS OF TRAFFIC MORE THAN 10 FEET BETWEEN 27" AND 80" ABOVE THE WALKING SURFACE, AND HAVE 80" MINIMUM VERTICAL CLEARANCE.

DESIGN PROFESSIONAL IN CHARGE STATEMENT:

- THE PATH OF TRAVEL (P.O.T.) IDENTIFIED IN THESE CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS MEETS THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE CURRENT APPLICABLE CALIFORNIA BUILDING CODE (CBC) ACCESSIBILITY PROVISIONS FOR PATH OF TRAVEL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALTERATIONS, ADDITIONS AND STRUCTURAL REPAIRS.
- AS PART OF THE DESIGN OF THIS PROJECT, THE P.O.T. WAS EXAMINED AND ANY ELEMENTS, COMPONENTS, OR PORTIONS OF THE P.O.T. THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO BE NONCOMPLIANT WITH THE CBC HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AND THE CORRECTIVE WORK NECESSARY TO BRING THEM INTO COMPLIANCE HAS BEEN INCLUDED WITHIN THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT. THE WORK REQUIRED THROUGH DETAILS, DRAWINGS, AND SPECIFICATIONS INCORPORATED INTO THESE CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS.
- ANY NONCOMPLIANT ELEMENTS, COMPONENTS OR PORTIONS OF THE P.O.T. THAT WILL NOT BE CORRECTED BY THIS PROJECT BASED ON VALUATION THRESHOLD LIMITATIONS OR A FINDING OF UNREASONABLE HARDSHIP ARE INDICATED IN THESE CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS. DURING CONSTRUCTION, THE ITEMS OUTSIDE THE SCOPE OF THE PROJECT REPRESENTED AS CBC COMPLIANT ARE FOUND TO BE NONCONFORMING BEYOND REASONABLE CONSTRUCTION TOLERANCES. THEREFORE, THE OWNER SHALL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE CBC AS A PART OF THIS PROJECT BY MEANS OF A CONSTRUCTION CHANGE DOCUMENT.

GENERAL NOTES

- A. THE CONTRACTOR SHALL ACCEPT THE SITE IN ITS PRESENT CONDITION & DEMOLISH AND/OR REMOVE FROM THE AREA OF THE PROJECT ALL STRUCTURES, BOTH SURFACE & SUBSURFACE, INCLUDING CURBS, ROOTS, CREEPS, ROCKS, GROUND MATTELS & ALL OTHER MATTER DETERMINED BY THE INSPECTOR TO BE DELETERIOUS. SUCH MATERIAL SHALL BE REMOVED FROM THE SITE BY THE CONTRACTOR.
- B. EXCAVATIONS SHALL BE ADEQUATELY SHORED, BRACED & SHEETED SO THAT THE EARTH WILL NOT SLIDE OR SETTLE & SO THAT ALL EXISTING IMPROVEMENTS OF ANY KIND WILL BE FULLY PROTECTED FROM DAMAGE. WHERE THE EXCAVATION FOR A CONCRETE TRENCH, AND/OR STRUCTURE IS FIVE FEET OR MORE IN DEPTH, THE CONTRACTOR SHALL PROVIDE ADEQUATE SHEETING, WHICH SHALL CONFORM TO THE APPLICABLE CONSTRUCTION SAFETY ORDERS OF THE DIVISION OF INDUSTRIAL SAFETY OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA. THE CONTRACTOR SHALL ALWAYS COMPLY WITH OSHA REQUIREMENTS.
- C. FINISH GRADE SHALL HAVE A 1.5% SLOPE AWAY FROM THE BLDG. FOR A DISTANCE NOT LESS THAN 5'-0" FROM THE BLDG.
- D. EXISTING UNDERGROUND UTILITIES & IMPROVEMENTS ARE SHOWN IN THEIR APPROX. LOCATIONS BASED UPON RECORD INFO. AVAILABLE TO THE ARCHITECT AT THE TIME OF PREPARATION OF THESE PLANS. LOCATIONS MAY NOT HAVE BEEN VERIFIED IN THE FIELD & NO GUARANTEE IS MADE AS TO THE ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS OF THE INFO. SHOWN. THE CONTRACTOR SHALL NOTIFY UTILITY COMPANIES AT LEAST 2 WORKING DAYS IN ADVANCE OF CONSTRUCTION TO FIELD LOCATE UTILITIES. CALL UNDERGROUND SERVICE ALERT (U.S.A.), 1-800-642-2444.
- E. ALL SITE CONC. CURBS, GUTTERS, DRIVE APPROACHES, & WALKS SHALL BE CLASS "B" CONC. (5 SACK MIX) WITH A MAX. SLUMP OF 5" & 28 DAY COMPRESSIVE STRENGTH OF 2000 PSI.
- F. PROPERTY DIMENSIONS AS SHOWN ARE BASED ON RECORD INFO. & SHOULD BE FIELD VERIFIED BY A PROPERTY SURVEY PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION.
- G. EXTERIOR CONC. LANDINGS AT DOORS SHALL NOT BE MORE THAN 1/2 INCH LOWER THAN DOORWAY THRESHOLD WITH 1/4 INCH PER FOOT SLOPE MAX.
- H. SEE CIVIL FOR A.C. & CONC. PAVING SECTIONS, AND CURB DETAILS. FOR ALL OFF-SITE IMPROVEMENTS (E.G. SIDEWALK ALONG SANDPIPER AVENUE) REFER TO CITY OF _____ STANDARD DETAIL _____. STANDARD COMMERCIAL DRIVE APPROACH PER CITY OF _____ STANDARD DETAILS D-3, D-6 AND D-9.
- I. REFER TO CIVIL, LANDSCAPE, PLUMBING & ELECTRICAL FOR UTILITY INFORMATION. CONTRACTOR TO COORDINATE ALL TRADES TO MAINTAIN PROPER CLEARANCES & AVOID CONFLICTS.

PARKING LOT B	
<u>28</u>	TOTAL PARKING STALLS
<u>2</u>	REQD. ACCESSIBLE PARKING STALLS (1 IN 6 STALLS TO BE VAN ACCESSIBLE)
<u>2</u>	ACCESSIBLE PARKING STALLS PROVIDED (1 VAN ACCESSIBLE, 1 EV VAN ACCESSIBLE)
<u>2</u>	REQD. EV STALLS
<u>2</u>	EV STALLS PROVIDED (1 STANDARD, 1 VAN ACCESSIBLE)

BICYCLE PARKING (CALGREEN 5.106.4.2)	
<u>48</u>	REQD. STUDENT BICYCLE SPACES (8 PER BUILDING)
<u>48</u>	ACTUAL STUDENT BICYCLE SPACES PROVIDED
<u>12</u>	REQD. STAFF BICYCLE SPACES PER BLDG. (2 PER BUILDING)
<u>12</u>	ACTUAL STAFF BICYCLE SPACES PROVIDED

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MARK	DATE	DESCRIPTION
B	09/28/2020	100% DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

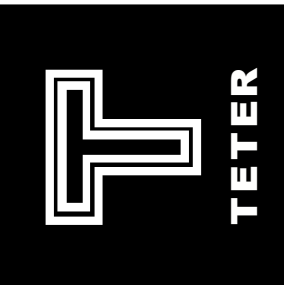


TETER, LLP

FRESNO HEADQUARTERS

MARKERSFIELD | MODESTO | SAN LUIS OBISPO

CTS ENGINEERS CONNECTED



NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ATWATER ESD
JUNIPER AVE.

DRAWING TITLE
OVERALL SITE PLAN

PROJECT NO.

18-11163

DRAWING

A100

3. Actions Required to Implement Project

Atwater Elementary School District must undertake the following actions in order to implement the project:

- Complete the California Environmental Quality Act process for the project. This would involve either the adoption of a mitigated negative declaration for the project or the preparation of an environmental impact report. Based on the results of this Initial Study, the District should consider the adoption of a mitigated negative declaration for the project;
- Adopt and implement the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program identified in Section F of this Initial Study;
- Approve the Project;
- Secure approvals, permits, and agreements, as necessary, from agencies and utilities that are responsible for public facilities the project would construct, modify, or otherwise affect within or near the school site.

4. Project Schedule

The District estimates that construction of the project would begin in late 2021, with operation of the proposed elementary school beginning in August 2023.

5. Project Setting

a. Existing Land Uses

The proposed project site is a vacant lot. Surrounding existing land uses include a park to the north, vacant land and age-restricted senior residential to the west, and urban residential to the south and east.

b. Public Land Use Policy

The City of Atwater General Plan provides adopted public land use policy for the project site and vicinity. The project site is designated for use as a Future School. Surrounding land use designations include a Future Park to the north (this park site has been developed as Joan Faul Park) and Low Density Residential.

c. Zoning

The Atwater Municipal Code Zoning Ordinance designation for the project site is PD-9 (Planned Development). The site is surrounded by PD-9 to the west, north, east, and southeast, and R-1 (Low Density Residential) to the southwest.

The overall purpose of the Planned Development (PD) zone is to provide a flexible zone district which will implement the City General Plan and achieve a higher standard of quality of development than typically found in conventional zones.

d. Streets and Highways

Juniper Avenue is an existing east-west four-lane collector adjacent to the proposed project site. Juniper Avenue exists a two-lane undivided collector between Winton Way and Shaffer Road, a four-lane collector divided by a two-way left-turn lane between Shaffer Road and Valley Street, and a four-lane raised-median divided collector between Valley Street and Buhach Road. East of Buhach Road, Juniper Avenue is known as Avenue Two. The City of Atwater General Plan Circulation Element

designates Juniper Avenue as a two-lane urban connector between Winton Way and Buhach Road. However, the segment of Juniper Avenue between Shaffer Road and Buhach Road is currently constructed as a four-lane divided collector. A raised median exists on Juniper Avenue between west of Valley Street to Buhach Road.

Bridgewater Street is an existing north-south two-lane local roadway adjacent to the proposed project site and is designated as such by the City of Atwater General Plan Circulation Element. Bridgewater street extends a distance of approximately 1,800 feet north of Juniper Avenue. Bridgewater Street is a divided roadway along the southern half of the project frontage.

Sierra Madre Drive is an existing north-south two-lane undivided local roadway in the vicinity of the proposed project site and is designated as such by the City of Atwater General Plan Circulation Element. North of Juniper Avenue, Sierra Madre Drive exists as a two-lane undivided local roadway and provides access to a gated, multifamily senior residential neighborhood. South of Juniper Avenue, Sierra Madre Drive exists as a two-lane undivided local roadway for approximately 900 feet and provides access to a single-family residential neighborhood.

(Please see Section E, 17, for additional information on streets and highways.)

e. Public Utilities and Services

The following is primarily drawn from the most recent City of Atwater Municipal Services Review Update which was approved by the Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission on December 13, 2017:

Water: Water service within the project area is provided by the City of Atwater. The system supplies the City with drinking water and provides water for fire protection through fire hydrants. In 2016, the City produced an average of about eight million gallons of water per day (mgd). The system has pumping capacity of 15,388 gallons per minute (gpm) and two million gallons of storage. The system serves about 6,800 residential connections, 520 commercial connections, six industrial connections, and 45 irrigation connections. As of 2015, the City of Atwater is pumping water from nine (9) approved water supply wells. All wells are located within the City except for Well #21 which is located at the northeast corner of the Castle Airport facility adjacent to USP Atwater federal prison. The City's water supply is obtained from the Merced Subbasin, a component of the larger San Joaquin River Groundwater Basin. The water is distributed through a grid system of buried pipelines that range from 4 to 14 inches in diameter. There is an existing 12" water main in Juniper Avenue and a 10" water main in Bridgewater Avenue adjacent to the site. The location and design of water facilities would be subject to review and approval by the City of Atwater.

Sewer: Sewer service within the project area is provided by the City of Atwater. The City's sewage disposal and treatment system consists of pipelines, pump stations, and a wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The design average dry weather treatment capacity for the WWTP is 6.0 MGD and the wet weather design hydraulic capacity is 12.0 MGD with a regulation restriction of 10.0 MGD. Effluent from the WWTP is discharged to the Atwater Drain, a tributary of Bear Creek, which flows to the San Joaquin River. There is an existing 10" sewer main in Bridgewater Street adjacent to the site. The location and design of sewer facilities would be subject to review and approval by the City of Atwater.

Storm Water Drainage: Storm water drainage within the project area is provided by the City of Atwater and Merced Irrigation District (MID). Atwater's storm drainage system primarily consists of MID irrigation canals that carry storm runoff and two drainage canals that provide drainage from

the City. The canals transport storm water from the City, and the storm water eventually drains to the San Joaquin River. In addition, the system consists of catch basins that collect runoff water from the street, pump stations that are used to remove stormwater from sections of road that cannot be drained by gravity, pipes of various sizes, as well as detention basins to prevent flooding. The location and design of storm water facilities would be subject to review and approval by the City of Atwater and MID.

Solid Waste: The City of Atwater contracts with Allied Waste Services, a subsidiary of Republic Services, Inc. to provide residential and commercial refuse collection, recycling and disposal services. Solid waste is transported to and disposed in Merced County's Highway 59 Landfill, located on Highway 59, north of Merced, which is owned and operated by Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority (MCRWMA). The overall design capacity of the existing landfill is approximately 36,358,000 cubic yards, and the current estimated closure date is 2065 (MCRWMA 2016).

Law Enforcement, Fire Protection and Emergency Services: The Atwater Police Department provides law enforcement services within the project area. The Atwater Police Department employs 28 sworn officers and 10.5 non-sworn staff, including an administrative supervisor, clerks, dispatchers, a part time community services officer, and a code enforcement officer. The Department provides police protection with a ratio of about 0.93 sworn police officers per 1,000 residents, and about 1.3 total staff per 1,000 residents. The City's average response time to an emergency call is two minutes. The Atwater Police Department is located approximately 1.5 miles from the project site.

The California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CalFire) operates the Atwater Fire Department, which provides fire protection services within the project area. The CalFire contract provides daily staffing at fire stations, dispatch, management, incident command, training, investigation, and fire prevention activities. The Contract ensures a minimum of four on-duty fire fighters and one supervisor per day in City's two fire stations (two staff members in each station). The Atwater Fire Department is located approximately 1.3 miles from the project site.

Emergency medical services are provided by the County of Merced through a contract with Riggs Ambulance Service.

(Please see Section E, 15 and E, 19, for additional information on Public Services and Utilities.)

6. Request for Preliminary Comment

The District distributed a Request for Preliminary Comment for the proposed school project to agencies that might have an interest in the project. The Request provided an opportunity for the agencies to comment on the potential environmental effects of the project, including whether an Environmental Impact Report, Mitigated Negative Declaration, or Negative Declaration should be prepared for the project. The District also sent the Request to residents and property owners in the project vicinity.

7. Other Public Agencies Whose Approval is Required

Implementation of the proposed school project would require approvals from the following public agencies in addition to the District:

TABLE A-4 Responsible Agencies	
Public Agency	Approval(s)
California Department of Education, School Facilities Planning Division	Review and approve proposed school for conformance with applicable state rules and regulations governing the siting and development of public schools
California Department of Toxic Substances Control	Responsible for ensuring that the proposed school sites are free of contamination or, if the properties were previously contaminated, that they have been cleaned up to a level that protects the students and staff who will occupy the new schools. Review and approve compliance with Education Code sections 17213.1 and 17213.2
City of Atwater	Review and approve the location, design, and construction of street, water, sewer, and storm water drainage improvements. Review of developments in PD zone and Planning Commission/General Plan conformity review per Public Resources Code Section 21151.2 and Government Code Section 65402(c). Review (Note: Government Code Section 53094 allows a school district to render a city or county zoning ordinance inapplicable to a proposed use of property. Section 65402(c) allows a school district to overrule a city or county finding regarding general plan conformity,)
Merced Irrigation District	Review and approve storm drainage improvements
Merced County Division of Environmental Health	Review and approve cafeteria facilities.

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B. Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

Based on the evaluations in Section E, the project would have a less than significant impact on the environmental factors listed in the following table. Those factors that require mitigation to be incorporated into the project to be less than significant are noted with an "X".

Table B-1 Environmental Factors Potentially Affected					
	Aesthetics		Agricultural & Forestry Resources	X	Air Quality
X	Biological Resources	X	Cultural Resources		Energy
X	Geology & Soils		Greenhouse Gas Emissions		Hazards & Hazardous Materials
	Hydrology & Water Quality		Land Use & Planning		Mineral Resources
X	Noise		Population & Housing		Public Services
	Recreation	X	Transportation	X	Tribal Cultural Resources
	Utilities & Service Systems		Wildfire	X	Mandatory Findings of Significance

C. Determination

Based on this Initial Study, I find that the Juniper Elementary School Project could have significant effects on the environment but by incorporating into the project the mitigation measures identified in Section E, the Atwater Elementary School District will avoid the effects or render them less than significant. Therefore, a Mitigated Negative Declaration is recommended for adoption.

Aaron Delworth

1/20/21

Signature

Date

Aaron Delworth

Director of Business Services

Print Name

Title

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D. Evaluation of Environmental Impacts

1. State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G: Environmental Checklist Form

Section E in this Initial Study address all of the environmental issues that Appendix G in the State CEQA Guidelines suggests an Initial Study should address. In addition, it addresses several environmental issues that the California Department of Education requires be considered in the evaluation of a school site.

The discussion of each impact in Section E concludes with a determination that the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, less than significant, or does not involve any impact (no impact).

The “potentially significant” determination is applied if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. Under the State CEQA Guidelines, a significant effect, or impact, on the environment means a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project, including land, air, water, minerals, flora, fauna, ambient noise, and objects of historic or aesthetic significance. (sec. 15382) The District must prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the project if the Initial Study identifies one or more potentially significant impacts.

The “less than significant impacts with mitigation incorporated” determination applies when the incorporation by the District of mitigation measures in the project would reduce an impact from potentially significant to less than significant. This Initial Study describes each mitigation measure the District has incorporated in the project to reduce potentially significant impacts to a less than significant level.

The “less than significant” determination applies when the project would not result in a significant effect on a resource or condition. The less than significant determination is used only in cases where no mitigation measures are required to reduce an impact to a less than significant level.

The “no impact” determination applies when the project would have no impact on a resource or condition, or the resource or condition does not apply to the project or its location.

The discussion of impacts in this Initial Study lists each potential impact as stated in Appendix G, provides an analysis of the impact, describes each mitigation measure required to avoid the impact or reduce it to an insignificant level, and concludes with a determination of the level of significance of the impact. References to documents that would provide background information on an impact are provided where applicable.

This Initial Study incorporates by reference all documents and other sources of information cited in Section E and Section H (Sources Consulted).

2. Existing Laws, Regulations and Policies

Introduction: In some cases, an impact that might appear significant is determined to be less than significant because it is subject to state, regional, or local laws, regulations, or policies, the application of which would reduce the impact to a less than significant level or avoid the impact entirely. In evaluating impacts, this Initial Study considered the applicable laws, regulations, and policies to determine the effect they would have on preventing or reducing potentially significant impacts. The Initial Study, however, does not cite them as mitigation measures because they would apply to the project regardless of the outcome of the Initial Study.

For the proposed project, applicable laws, regulations, and policies include but are not limited to the following:

State of California

The selection and approval of a site for a public school in California is subject to numerous state rules and regulations, most of which the California Department of Education administers to protect the health and safety of students and staff at the school. Before the Department of Education will approve a school site and the school becomes eligible for state funding, a school district must certify that "the proposed site is suitable for educational purposes and is free, or will be free prior to occupancy, from hazards that could be considered harmful to student and staff health and safety. The school district has complied with and will comply with all applicable laws and policies associated with the acquisition of the school site, including commitments for Department of Toxic Substances Control required activities..." (SFPD 4.03, 2). The state requirements include but are not limited to the following:

- *Education Code Section 17210-17224*: Specifies the environmental review process the Department of Toxic Substance Control (DTSC) administers for new school sites. DTSC ensures that proposed school sites are free of contamination or, if the properties were previously contaminated, that they have been cleaned up to a level that protects the students and staff who will occupy the new school. All proposed school sites that will receive State funding for acquisition or construction are required to go through a rigorous environmental review and cleanup process under DTSC's oversight.
- *Education Code Section 17212.5; California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 14010 Geological and Other Environmental Hazards Report*: District must prepare a Geological Hazards Report and other environmental hazards report as described in Appendix H of the *School Site Selection and Approval Guide, 2000 Edition*. This will include a survey of high-pressure pipelines, liquid storage tanks, railroads, airports, electrical transmission lines, and areas subject to flooding, dam inundation, seismic faulting, and liquefaction.
- *Education Code Section 17213, Public Resources Code Section 21151.8; and California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 14011[h],[i]; Title 14, Section 15093*: Requires District Board to adopt findings stating: (1) the proposed school site is not a current or former waste disposal site; (2) the site is not a hazardous substance release site; (3) the site does not contain pipelines; and (4) whether a qualified freeway and/or qualified traffic corridor is located within 500 feet of the site. In addition, requires board-adopted findings for hazardous air emitters and hazardous material handlers located within a 1/4 mile of the site.
- *Education Code Section 17215 and California Code of Regulations, Title 21, Division 2.5, Chapter 2.1: airports*: Requires providing a notice to the State Department of Education if a proposed school site is within two nautical miles, measured by air line, of that point on an airport runway or a potential runway included in an airport master plan that is nearest to the site. The Department of Education is required to consult with the Department of Transportation as to the safety of the site in relation to airport operations.
- *Public Resources Code Section 21151.2 and Government Code Sections 53094, 65402[c]*: Requires consultation with local planning commission to determine conformity of proposed school site with the general plan (school districts can overrule city or county findings on general plan conformity and render the zoning ordinance inapplicable to school district property)

- *Public Resources Code Section 21151.4*: Addresses CEQA consultation requirements for the proposed construction or alteration of a facility within one-quarter mile of school that might reasonably be anticipated to emit or handling of hazardous or acutely hazardous material.
- *Title 5, California Code of Regulations, Article 2, Section 14010, Standards for School Site Selection*: The standards address: possible hazards related to power line easements, railroads, airports, major streets, above ground pipelines, underground pipelines, above ground storage tanks, traffic, noise, seismicity, geology, soils, flooding, dam flood inundation, incompatible zoning, and other safety-related factors.
- *Title 24, California Code of Regulations, Part 1 through Part 12*: Specifies the State of California building regulations for public schools. The Division of the State Architect is responsible for administering the regulations.

San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

<https://www.valleyair.org/rules/1ruleslist.htm>

- *Regulation VIII – Fugitive PM10 Prohibitions*
- *Regulation IX – Mobile and Indirect Sources*

Merced County Health Department

<https://www.co.merced.ca.us/597/Environmental-Health>

Environmental Health Bureau is responsible for permitting and inspecting retail food businesses, including school cafeterias, reviewing construction plans and inspection of new and remodeled food facilities, investigating complaints regarding violations involving unsanitary conditions, investigates suspected food borne illnesses, etc.

City of Atwater

- City of Atwater General Plan
http://www.atwater.org/dept_communitydevelopment.html
- Atwater Municipal Code of Ordinances
https://library.municode.com/ca/atwater/codes/code_of_ordinances

Merced Irrigation District

<http://www.mercedid.com/index.cfm/water/storm-drainage/>

The purpose for the creation of the Merced Irrigation District Drainage Improvement District No. 1 is to utilize the District's existing canal system to provide drainage services for the benefit of commercial, industrial and residential developments in areas where there are no natural channels for the conveyance of storm water, and proportionally share the cost of maintaining the dual use canals between the farmers' irrigation demands and the storm drainage demands based on benefit received. The District, pursuant to Irrigation District Law, constructs, owns, operates, and maintains canals for irrigation and storm drainage/urban drainage purposes for the benefit of customers and property owners within the District.

E. Environmental Checklist

(The questions in Sections E, 1-19 are from the State CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G: Environmental Checklist Form, Evaluation of Environmental Impacts).

1. Aesthetics

Except as provided in Public Resources Code § 21099, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?				✓
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?				✓
c. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?			✓	
d. Create a new source of light and glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?			✓	

a.-b. No Impact:

The project site and the adjoining land do not constitute a scenic vista, and the project would not block any vistas in the area, scenic or otherwise. The project site is not adjacent to a state scenic highway and does not contain scenic resources such as trees and rock outcroppings. The General Plan EIR did not identify any scenic resources within or near the project area. Therefore, the project will have no impact on scenic vistas or resources.

c. Less Than Significant

Although the project would change the visual character of the site, the proposed project may constitute an improvement over the existing vacant lot. Additionally, educational facilities are common visual elements in an urban setting as is surrounding the site. Schools are typically a common and congruent visual feature within residential areas. The school was designed by a topflight architectural firm with extensive experience in developing schools. The site plan (Figure 3) and building elevations (included at the end of this Initial Study) demonstrate that the proposed school will be an aesthetic asset to the City and project vicinity. Outdoor storage, trash enclosures, loading, and equipment areas, including roof-top equipment, will be

screened from public view, as required by the Atwater Municipal Code Title 17. Therefore, the project would have a less than significant impact on visual character and quality of public views.

d. Less Than Significant:

Project buildings and parking areas will be lighted in the evening for security and playfields may be lighted. Site lighting, however, must comply with existing requirements, including CALGreen Non-Residential Mandatory Measures and Atwater Municipal Code Title 17, which mandates lighting shall be shielded and directed away from adjacent properties and roadways. Therefore, the potential impact of the project related to light and glare is less than significant.

2. Agriculture and Forestry Resources

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?				✓
b. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?				✓
c. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forestland, timberland, or timberland zoned Timberland Production?				✓
d. Result in the loss of forestland or conversion of forestland to non-forest use?				✓
e. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forestland to non-forest use?				✓

a.-e. No Impact:

No impacts to agricultural or forestry resources would result from the project. The Merced County Important Farmland 2016 map indicates that the project site does not contain any Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The project site is surrounded by urban uses and per Google Earth aerial photography has been not been used for agriculture for at least 20 years. There are no agricultural-zoned areas on or adjacent to the project site. There is no forestland, timberland, or Williamson Act land on or near the site.

3. Air Quality

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?		✓		
b. Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is in non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality?			✓	
c. Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?		✓		
d. Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?			✓	

This section is based on the Air Quality & Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment prepared by Ambient Air Quality & Noise Consulting, which can be found in Appendix A.

(Table E-3-1 provides definitions for the air quality terms used in this section.)

TABLE E-3-1
Air Quality Definitions

Carbon Monoxide (CO)

A colorless, odorless gas resulting from the incomplete combustion of hydrocarbon fuels. CO interferes with the blood's ability to carry oxygen to the body's tissues and results in numerous adverse health effects. Over 80 percent of the CO emitted in urban areas is contributed by motor vehicles. CO is a criteria air pollutant.

Nitrogen Oxides (Oxides of Nitrogen, NOx)

A general term pertaining to compounds of nitric oxide (NO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and other oxides of nitrogen. Nitrogen oxides are typically created during combustion processes and are major contributors to smog formation and acid deposition. NO₂ is a criteria air pollutant and may result in numerous adverse health effects.

Particulate Matter (PM)

Any material, except pure water, that exists in the solid or liquid state in the atmosphere. The size of particulate matter can vary from coarse, wind-blown dust particles to fine particle combustion products.

PM_{2.5}

Includes tiny particles with an aerodynamic diameter less than or equal to a nominal 2.5 microns. This fraction of particulate matter penetrates most deeply into the lungs.

PM10 (Particulate Matter)

A criteria air pollutant consisting of small particles with an aerodynamic diameter less than or equal to a nominal 10 microns (about 1/7 the diameter of a single human hair). Their small size allows them to make their way to the air sacs deep within the lungs where they may be deposited and result in adverse health effects. PM10 also causes visibility reduction.

Reactive Organic Gas (ROG)

A photochemically reactive chemical gas, composed of non-methane hydrocarbons, that may contribute to the formation of smog. Also sometimes referred to as Non-Methane Organic Gases (NMOGs). (See also Volatile and Hydrocarbons.)

Sulfur Dioxide (SO₂)

A strong smelling, colorless gas that is formed by the combustion of fossil fuels. Power plants, which may use coal or oil high in sulfur content, can be major sources of SO₂ and other sulfur oxides contribute to the problem of acid deposition. SO₂ is a criteria air pollutant.

Toxic Air Contaminants (TAC)

An air pollutant which may cause or contribute to an increase in deaths or in serious illness, or which may pose a present or potential hazard to human health. Health effects to TACs may occur at extremely low levels and it is typically difficult to identify levels of exposure which do not produce adverse health effects.

Source: California Air Resources Board. *Glossary of Air Pollution Terms* (2015)

a. Less Than Significant with Mitigation:

In accordance with San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD)-recommended methodology for the assessment of air quality impacts, projects that result in significant air quality impacts at the project level are also considered to have a significant cumulative air quality impact. As noted in Impact E. 3. b., short-term construction and long-term operational emissions would not exceed applicable thresholds. In addition, the proposed project's contribution to localized concentrations of emissions, including emissions of CO, TACs, and odors, are considered less than significant. However, as noted in Impact E. 3. c., the proposed project could result in a significant contribution to localized PM concentrations for which the San Joaquin Valley Air Basin (SJVAB) is currently designated non-attainment. For this reason, implementation of the proposed project could conflict with air quality attainment or maintenance planning efforts. However, with the implementation of Mitigation Measure AQ-1, this impact would be considered less than significant.

Mitigation Measure: Implement Mitigation Measure AQ-1 (refer to Impact E. 3. c.).

b. Less Than Significant:

The proposed project is in the County of Merced, which is within the SJVAB. The SJVAB is designated nonattainment for the national 8-hour ozone and PM_{2.5} standards. On September 25, 2008, the U.S. EPA redesignated the San Joaquin Valley to attainment for the PM₁₀ (National Ambient Air Quality Standards) NAAQS and approved the PM₁₀ Maintenance Plan (SJVAPCD 2019). Potential air quality impacts associated with the proposed project could potentially occur during project construction or operational phases. Short-term construction and long-term air quality impacts associated with the proposed project are discussed, as follows:

Short-term Construction Emissions

Short-term increases in emissions would occur during the construction process. Construction-generated emissions are of temporary duration, lasting only as long as construction activities occur, but have the potential to represent a significant air quality impact. The construction of the proposed project would result in the temporary generation of emissions associated with site grading and excavation, paving, motor vehicle exhaust associated with construction equipment, and worker trips; as well as, the movement of construction equipment on unpaved surfaces. Short-term construction emissions would result in increased emissions of ozone-precursor pollutants (i.e., ROG and NOX) and emissions of PM. Emissions of ozone-precursors would result from the operation of on-road and off-road motorized vehicles and equipment. Emissions of airborne PM are largely dependent on the amount of ground disturbance associated with site grading and excavation activities and can result in increased concentrations of PM that can adversely affect nearby sensitive land uses. Estimated construction-generated annual emissions associated with the proposed project are summarized in Table 5 of Appendix A.

As noted in Table 5 of Appendix A, construction of the proposed project would generate maximum uncontrolled annual emissions of approximately 0.6 tons/year of ROG, 1.8 tons/year of NOx, 1.8 tons/year of CO, and approximately 0.1 tons/year of both PM10 and PM2.5. Emissions of SO2 would be negligible (less than 0.1 tons/year). Estimated construction-generated emissions would not exceed the SJVAPCD's significance thresholds of 10 tons/year of ROG, 10 tons/year of NOx, or 15 tons/year PM10.

Estimated average-daily on-site construction emissions are summarized in Table 6 of Appendix A. To be conservative, maximum average-daily emissions assume that building construction, paving, and architectural coatings could potentially occur on the same day. As noted in Table 6 of Appendix A, construction of the proposed project would generate maximum uncontrolled average-daily on-site emissions of approximately 9.1 lbs/day of ROG, 26.1 lbs/day of NOx, 28.1 lbs/day of CO, 6.7 lbs/day of PM10, and 3.3 lbs/day of PM2.5. Emissions of SO2 would be negligible (less than 0.1 tons/year). Average-daily on-site construction emissions would not exceed the SJVAPCD's recommended localized ambient air quality significance thresholds of 100 lbs/day for each of the criteria air pollutants evaluated.

Short-term construction of the proposed project would not result in a significant impact to regional or local air quality conditions. Furthermore, it is important to note that project construction is not anticipated to require extensive grading and would be required to comply with SJVAPCD Regulation VIII (Fugitive PM10 Prohibitions). Mandatory compliance with SJVAPCD Regulation VIII would further reduce emissions of fugitive dust from the project site and minimize the project's potential to adversely affect nearby sensitive receptors. With compliance with SJVAPCD Regulation VIII, emissions of fugitive PM would be reduced by approximately 50 percent, or more. Given that project-generated emissions would not exceed applicable SJVAPCD significance thresholds, short-term construction activities would not be projected to violate or contribute substantially to existing or projected non-attainment conditions or associated adverse health impacts.

Long-term Operational Emissions

Estimated annual operational emissions for the proposed project are summarized in Table 7 of Appendix A. As depicted, the proposed project would result in operational emissions of approximately 0.5 tons/year of ROG, 2.9 tons/year of NOx, 2.4 tons/year of CO, 0.7 tons/year of PM10, and 0.2 tons/year of PM2.5 during the initial year of operation. Emissions of SO2 would be negligible (less than 0.1 tons/year). Operational emissions would be projected to decline in future years, with improvements in fuel-consumption emissions standards. Operational emissions would not exceed SJVAPCD's annual mass-emissions significance thresholds.

Estimated average-daily on-site operational emissions are also summarized in Table 7. Average-daily on-site operational emissions would be largely associated with area sources (e.g., landscape maintenance activities and use of consumer products) and the use of natural-gas fired appliances. Average-daily on-site emissions would total approximately 1.8 lbs/day of ROG, 0.5 lbs/day of NOX, and 0.4 lbs/day of CO. Average-daily on-site emissions of other pollutants would be negligible (less than 0.1 lbs/day). Average-daily on-site emissions would not exceed the SJVAPCD's recommended localized ambient air quality significance thresholds of 100 lbs/day for each of the criteria air pollutants evaluated.

Long-term operation of the proposed project would not result in a significant impact to regional or local air quality conditions. It is important to note that estimated operational emissions are conservatively based on the default vehicle fleet distribution assumptions contained in the model, which include contributions from medium and heavy-duty trucks. Mobile sources associated with schools typically consist largely to light-duty vehicles and buses. As a result, actual mobile-source emissions would likely be less than estimated. Given that project-generated emissions would not exceed applicable SJVAPCD significance thresholds, long-term operational activities would not be projected to violate or contribute substantially to existing or projected non-attainment conditions or associated adverse health impacts.

c. Less Than Significant with Mitigation:

Sensitive land uses located in the vicinity of the proposed project site consist predominantly of residential land uses, including age-restricted senior housing located adjacent to the western boundary of the project site. Residential land uses are also located to the south and east of the project site (refer to Figure 1). Long-term operational and short-term construction activities and emission sources that could adversely impact these nearest sensitive receptors are discussed, as follows:

Long-term Operation

Localized Mobile-Source CO Emissions

Carbon monoxide is the primary criteria air pollutant of local concern associated with the proposed project. Under specific meteorological and operational conditions, such as near areas of heavily congested vehicle traffic, CO concentrations may reach unhealthy levels. If inhaled, CO can be adsorbed easily by the blood stream and can inhibit oxygen delivery to the body, which can cause significant health effects ranging from slight headaches to death. The most serious effects are felt by individuals susceptible to oxygen deficiencies, including people with anemia and those suffering from chronic lung or heart disease.

Mobile-source emissions of CO are a direct function of traffic volume, speed, and delay. Transport of CO is extremely limited because it disperses rapidly with distance from the source under normal meteorological conditions. For this reason, modeling of mobile-source CO concentrations is typically recommended for sensitive land uses located near signalized roadway intersections that are projected to operate at unacceptable levels of service (i.e., LOS E or F). Localized CO concentrations associated with the proposed project would be considered less-than-significant impact if: (1) traffic generated by the proposed project would not result in deterioration of a signalized intersection to a LOS of E or F; or (2) the project would not contribute additional traffic to a signalized intersection that already operates at LOS of E or F.

No signalized intersections are located in the project area that would be significantly affected by project implementation. With implementation of the proposed traffic improvements, the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue would be signalized in the future and would be projected to operate at LOS A under future cumulative conditions (JLB 2020). In comparison to the CO screening criteria, implementation of the proposed project would not result in or contribute to unacceptable levels of service (i.e., LOS E, or worse) at nearby signalized intersections. As a result, the proposed project would not be

anticipated to contribute substantially to localized CO concentrations that would exceed applicable standards.

Short-term Construction

Naturally Occurring Asbestos

Naturally-occurring asbestos, which was identified by ARB as a TAC in 1986, is located in many parts of California and is commonly associated with ultramafic rock. The project site is not located near any areas that are likely to contain ultramafic rock (DOC 2000). As a result, risk of exposure to asbestos during the construction process would be considered less than significant.

Diesel-Exhaust Emissions

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the generation of DPM emissions during construction associated with the use of off-road diesel equipment for site preparation, grading, paving, and building construction activities. Health-related risks associated with diesel-exhaust emissions are primarily associated with long-term exposure and associated risk of contracting cancer. For residential land uses, the calculation of cancer risk associated with exposure of to TACs are typically calculated based on a 25 to 30-year period of exposure. The use of diesel-powered construction equipment, however, would be temporary and episodic and would occur over a relatively large area. Assuming that construction activities involving the use of diesel-fueled equipment would occur over an approximate 12-month period, project-related construction activities would constitute less than four percent of the typical exposure period. It is also important to note that the use of heavy-duty diesel-fueled equipment (e.g., graders, scrapers) would be largely limited to the initial site preparation, grading, and paving phases. Based on the CalEEMod construction phasing assumptions, site preparation and grading activities are estimated to occur over an approximate two-week period. Paving activities would, likewise, be estimated to occur over an approximate two-week period. Other construction activities, such as building foundation work, would involve the intermittent use of smaller diesel-fueled equipment (e.g., backhoes, front-end loaders, forklifts). However, construction of the proposed project would not involve the intensive use of heavy-duty equipment over an extended period of time (e.g., years). For these reasons, exposure to construction-generated DPM would not be anticipated to exceed applicable thresholds (i.e., incremental increase in cancer risk of 20 in one million). In addition, implementation of Mitigation Measure AQ-1 would result in further reductions of on-site DPM emissions. This impact would be considered less than significant.

Localized PM Concentrations

Project construction would also result in short-term increases of fugitive dust associated predominantly with site preparation, grading, material handling, and vehicle travel on unpaved and paved surfaces. On-site off-road equipment and trucks would also result in short-term emissions of diesel-exhaust PM, which could contribute to elevated localized concentration at nearby receptors. Uncontrolled emissions of fugitive dust may also contribute to increased occurrences of Valley Fever and potential increases in nuisance impacts to nearby receptors. For these reasons, localized uncontrolled concentrations of construction-generated PM would be considered to have a potentially-significant impact.

Mitigation Measure AQ-1: The following measures shall be implemented to reduce potential exposure of nearby sensitive receptors to localized concentrations of construction-generated PM:

1. On-road diesel vehicles shall comply with Section 2485 of Title 13 of the California Code of Regulations. This regulation limits idling from diesel-fueled commercial motor vehicles with gross vehicular weight ratings of more than 10,000 pounds and licensed for operation on highways. It

applies to California and non-California based vehicles. In general, the regulation specifies that drivers of said vehicles:

- a. Shall not idle the vehicle's primary diesel engine for greater than 5 minutes at any location, except as noted in Subsection (d) of the regulation; and,
 - b. Shall not operate a diesel-fueled auxiliary power system to power a heater, air conditioner, or any ancillary equipment on that vehicle during sleeping or resting in a sleeper berth for greater than 5.0 minutes at any location when within 1,000 feet of a restricted area, except as noted in Subsection (d) of the regulation.
2. Off-road diesel equipment shall comply with the 5 minute idling restriction identified in Section 2449(d)(2) of the California Air Resources Board's In-Use off-Road Diesel regulation. The specific requirements and exceptions in the regulations can be reviewed at the following web sites: www.arb.ca.gov/msprog/truck-idling/2485.pdf and www.arb.ca.gov/regact/2007/ordiesl07/frooal.pdf.
3. Signs shall be posted at the project site construction entrance to remind drivers and operators of the state's 5-minute idling limit.
4. To the extent available, replace fossil-fueled equipment with alternatively-fueled (e.g., natural gas) or electrically-driven equivalents.
5. Construction truck trips shall be scheduled, to the extent feasible, to occur during non-peak hours and truck haul routes shall be selected to minimize impacts to nearby residential dwellings.
6. The burning of vegetative material shall be prohibited.
7. The proposed project shall comply with SJVAPCD Regulation VIII for the control of fugitive dust emissions. Regulation VIII can be obtained on the SJVAPCD's website at website URL: <https://www.valleyair.org/rules/1ruleslist.htm>. At a minimum, the following measures shall be implemented:
 - a. All disturbed areas, including storage piles, which are not being actively utilized for construction purposes, shall be effectively stabilized of dust emissions using water, chemical stabilizer/suppressant, covered with a tarp or other suitable cover or vegetative ground cover.
 - b. All on-site unpaved roads and off-site unpaved access roads shall be effectively stabilized of dust emissions using water or chemical stabilizer/suppressant.
 - c. All land clearing, grubbing, scraping, excavation, land leveling, grading, cut & fill, and demolition activities shall be effectively controlled of fugitive dust emissions utilizing application of water or by presoaking.
 - d. With the demolition of buildings up to six stories in height, all exterior surfaces of the building shall be wetted during demolition.
 - e. When materials are transported off-site, all material shall be covered, or effectively wetted to limit visible dust emissions, and at least six inches of freeboard space from the top of the container shall be maintained.
 - f. All operations shall limit or expeditiously remove the accumulation of mud or dirt from adjacent public streets at the end of each workday. (The use of dry rotary brushes is expressly prohibited except where preceded or accompanied by sufficient wetting to limit the visible dust emissions.) (Use of blower devices is expressly forbidden.)

- g. Following the addition of materials to, or the removal of materials from, the surface of outdoor storage piles, said piles shall be effectively stabilized of fugitive dust emissions utilizing sufficient water or chemical stabilizer/suppressant.
 - h. On-road vehicle speeds on unpaved surfaces of the project site shall be limited to 15 mph.
 - i. Sandbags or other erosion control measures shall be installed sufficient to prevent silt runoff to public roadways from sites with a slope greater than one percent.
 - j. Excavation and grading activities shall be suspended when winds exceed 20 mph (Regardless of wind speed, an owner/operator must comply with Regulation VIII's 20 percent opacity limitation).
8. The above measures for the control of construction-generated emissions shall be included on site grading and construction plans.

d. Less Than Significant:

Other emissions potentially associated with the proposed project would be predominantly associated to the generation of odors during project construction. The occurrence and severity of odor impacts depends on numerous factors, including: the nature, frequency, and intensity of the source; wind speed and direction; and the sensitivity of the receptors. While offensive odors rarely cause any physical harm, they still can be very unpleasant, leading to considerable distress among the public and often generating citizen complaints to local governments and regulatory agencies.

Construction of the proposed project would involve the use of a variety of gasoline- or diesel-powered equipment that would emit exhaust fumes. Exhaust fumes, particularly diesel exhaust, may be considered objectionable by some people. In addition, pavement coatings and architectural coatings used during project construction would also emit temporary odors. However, construction-generated emissions would occur intermittently throughout the workday and would dissipate rapidly within increasing distance from the source. As a result, short-term construction activities would not expose a substantial number of people to frequent odorous emissions. In addition, no major sources of odors have been identified in the project area. Therefore, the project will have a less than significant impact with respect to odor emissions.

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4. Biological Resources

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service?		✓		
b. Have a substantially adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, and regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U. S. Wildlife Service?				✓
c. Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?			✓	
d. Interfere substantially with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?				✓
e. Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?				✓
f. Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?				✓

a. Less Than Significant:

The project site is located in an urban area. The site is clear of vegetation with the exception of a row of trees lining the west side of Bridgewater Avenue and a row of trees between Juniper Avenue and the Class 1 bike path along the south side of the site. The site plan was designed to preserve as many of the existing trees along Juniper and Bridgewater Avenue as possible.

The direct impacts of the proposed school will be possible direct mortality for common animal species in the path of construction equipment, such as common fossorial (ground dwelling) or slow-moving mammals and reptiles within the project area. Concern has been expressed by a nearby resident about construction activity causing a nuisance migration of rodents to nearby properties. This is not expected to be a substantial problem. The District has regularly disced the property, which disrupts rodent activity and their habitat on the site; actual construction of the school will result in the mortality of many fossorial (ground dwelling) rodents in the path of the construction equipment and those rodents that are driven off site will tend to go to more open space areas such as the adjacent park and vacant property to the west along Juniper, rather than developed residential properties.

Assessment Methods

A background search and literature review of all existing data pertaining to biological resources within the area was conducted. This included searching *California Natural Diversity Data Base* and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service *IPaC Trust Resource List* (see Appendix C), other available CEQA/NEPA documents, maps, and photographs. From this review, a list of potentially occurring special status species was compiled for the project (see Appendices). Special status biological resources include special-status plant and wildlife species (including State or Federally designated, rare, threatened, endangered, Migratory Bird Treaty Act species, species of concern, or unique species); potential wetland/riparian habitats; sensitive plant communities; and other environmentally sensitive habitat areas.

Database queries indicated 20 species with special status occur or have historically occurred within the project area. Many of the species from the generated list either were historic, extirpated occurrences, or were species with very specialized habitat requirements that were not present on the site or within the vicinity. Due to the highly disturbed and altered state of the site, none of the plant species are expected to occur. In addition to the site's disturbed nature, it is surrounded by urban development and has very sparse vegetation (grasses). Therefore, the habitat present is likely unsuitable for special-status species. As a result, all of the special-status species were "ruled out". Additionally, there are six migratory birds protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act which could potentially exist within the project vicinity.

Special Status Birds

Migratory birds could be nesting in the project vicinity, most of which are protected by the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (USCA 1918). Birds may nest on buildings, on the ground, or in vegetation in the project vicinity. Construction-related disturbance could result in nest abandonment or direct mortality of eggs, chicks, and/or fledglings. This type of impact to migratory birds, including special status bird species, would be considered take under the MBTA and CESA, and therefore is a potentially significant impact. In order to avoid impacts to avian species, nests and nesting habitat should not be disturbed or destroyed. Based on the District incorporating Mitigation Measures BR-1 in the project, the impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Mitigation Measure BR-1:

1. Pre-construction Surveys:

- a. If construction is to begin during the nesting season (February 1 through August 31), a qualified biologist shall conduct a pre-construction survey within 14 days prior to initiation of disturbance activities. This survey will search for nest sites on buildings and in trees, bushes, or grass within the project area.
- b. Surveys for burrowing owl will occur within 14 days prior to any ground disturbance, no matter the season. This survey will cover potential burrowing owl burrows in the project area and

- suitable habitat within 150 m (500 ft). Evaluation of use by owls shall be in accordance with California Department of Fish and Wildlife survey guidelines (CBOC 1993, CDFG 1995, CDFG 2012). Surveys will document if burrowing owls are nesting or using habitat in or directly adjacent to the project area. Survey results will be valid only for the season (breeding (Feb 1-Aug 31) or non-breeding (Sept 1-Jan 31) during which the survey is conducted.
- c. If the pre-construction survey does not detect any active nests or burrows, then no further action is required. If the survey does detect an active nest or burrow, then the District shall implement the following mitigation measures.

2. Minimization/Establish Buffers:

- a. If any active nests are discovered (and if construction will occur during bird breeding season), the District shall contact the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and/or California Department of Fish and Wildlife to determine protective measures required to avoid take. These measures could include fencing an area where a nest occurs or shifting construction work temporally or spatially away from the nesting birds. Biologists would be required on site to monitor construction activity while protected migratory birds are nesting in the project area. If an active nest is found after the completion of the pre-construction surveys and after construction begins, all construction activities shall stop until a qualified biologist has evaluated the nest and erected the appropriate buffer around the nest.
- b. If burrowing owls are detected within the survey area, CDFW will be consulted to determine the suitable buffer. These buffers will consider the level of disturbance of the project activity, existing disturbance of the site (vehicle traffic, humans, pets, etc.), and time of year (nesting vs. wintering). If avoidance is not feasible, the District will work with CDFW to determine appropriate mitigation, such as passive exclusion or translocation, and associated mitigation land offset (CDFG 2012).

b. No Impact:

There are no riparian or sensitive natural communities within the project area.

c. Less Than Significant:

A narrow north-south trending area along the west side of the project site is designated Riverine habitat (R5UBFx) in the National Wetlands Inventory. This area was included as Riverine habitat due to the past existence of an irrigation canal (Merced Irrigation District (MID) Livingston Lateral A). The entire project site, including the Riverine habitat on the west side of the parcel, has been highly disturbed by past agricultural cultivation, regular disking of the site as vacant land during the past 20 years and by the past dismantling and filling of the Merced Irrigation District (MID) Livingston Lateral A in the early 2000s. There is no evidence of an actual wetland on the site; therefore, the project will have a less than significant impact on wetlands.

d.-f. No Impact:

The site does not constitute a "movement corridor" for native wildlife that would attract wildlife to move through the site any more than the surrounding developed lands. The project site is bordered by residential development and streets, which restricts access for wildlife.

The project does not conflict with applicable City of Atwater General Plan Policies.

Policy CO-6.1 Minimize impacts of development on wildlife and wildlife habitat, particularly special status species: As established in E, 4, a-c, the project will not have a significant impact on wildlife, wildlife habitat, or special status species with mitigation incorporated.

Policy CO-6.2 Encourage the preservation of corridors between natural habitat areas to allow for the movement of wildlife and to prevent the creation of “biological islands”: As established above, the site is not a movement corridor.

The City of Atwater is not part of any HCP or NCCP, so the project would not conflict any provisions of any local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan.

5. Cultural Resources

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5?		✓		
b. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5?		✓		
c. Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?		✓		

a.-c. Less Than Significant with Mitigation:

A California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) records search (see Appendix C) was conducted through the Central California Information Center. The CHRIS review indicated that the project area is within the Merced Irrigation Historical District (P-24-001909), a district covering over 14 USGS quadrangles and that has been proposed but has not been officially recognized as a district or formally evaluated. An unnamed lateral of the Livingston Canal (P-24-000552), which has not been formally recorded, previously existed along the western boundary of the project site. It has been evaluated as not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places but has not been evaluated for the California Register of Historical Resources or for Local Listing. There are no formally recorded prehistoric or historic archaeological resources or buildings or structures within the project area or immediate vicinity.

According to Merced Irrigation District (MID), Livingston Lateral A was dismantled and filled in in the early 2000s.

A Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File search was conducted (see Appendix C), which did not identify any known areas of concern in the NAHC inventory.

A Request for Preliminary Comment and AB 52 Notification was sent to each of the three tribes identified by the NAHC. No responses were received.

No historic, archaeological, or human remains are evident on the project land surface. However, in the event that subsurface resources are discovered during construction, the following mitigation measures shall apply:

Mitigation Measure CR-1: If cultural resources are encountered during ground disturbing activities, work shall stop in the immediate vicinity of the find and a qualified cultural resources specialist shall be

consulted to determine the significance of the resources in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5. If potentially significant, the qualified cultural resources specialist shall make recommendations to the Lead Agency on mitigation measures to be implemented to protect the discovered resources in accordance with CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 and Public Resources Code §21083.2.

Mitigation Measure CR-2: If human remains are encountered during ground disturbing activities, work shall stop in the immediate vicinity of the find and the County Coroner notified in accordance with Health and Safety Code §7050.5 and CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(e). If the remains are determined to be of Native American descent, the procedures and requirements set forth in CEQA Guidelines §15064.5(d) and (e) and Public Resources Code §5097.98 shall be implemented.

6. Energy Resources

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?			✓	
b. Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?			✓	

a.-b. Less Than Significant:

Implementation of the proposed project would increase electricity, diesel, gasoline, and natural gas consumption associated with construction activities, as well as long-term operational activities.

Energy consumption would occur during construction of the school, including fuel use associated with the on-site operation of off-road equipment and vehicles traveling to and from the construction site. Construction equipment use and associated energy consumption would be typical of that commonly associated with the construction of new land uses. As a result, project construction would not be anticipated to require the use of construction equipment that would be less energy efficient than those commonly used for the construction of similar facilities. Idling of on-site equipment during construction would be limited to no more than five minutes in accordance with San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (SJVAPCD) requirements. Furthermore, on-site construction equipment may include alternatively-fueled vehicles (e.g., natural gas) where feasible. Energy use associated with construction of the proposed facilities would be temporary and would not be anticipated to result in the need for additional capacity, nor would construction be anticipated to result in increased peak-period demands for electricity. As a result, the construction of proposed facilities and improvements would not result in an inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy.

The plans for all public-school projects in California must be submitted to the Division of the State Architect (DSA) for plan review and must comply with Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards and the 2019 California Green Building Standards Code, which would include increased building insulation and energy-efficiency requirements, including the use of energy-efficient lighting, energy-efficient appliances, and use

of low-flow water fixtures. These requirements ensure that the proposed project would not result in the inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy.

Furthermore, as noted in Section E, 17, b, the project will have a less than significant impact in relation to vehicle miles traveled (VMT) due to its infill location and the fact that existing neighborhoods to be served by the new school are currently served by other schools located further away. Therefore, for the reasons noted in the preceding paragraphs, the project will have a less than significant impact on energy resources.

7. Geology and Soils

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury or death involving:				
(i) rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.			✓	
(ii) strong seismic ground shaking?			✓	
(iii) seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?			✓	
(iv) landslides?			✓	
b. Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?			✓	
c. Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?			✓	
d. Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-a-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life or property?			✓	

e. Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?				✓
f. Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?		✓		

a.-d. Less Than Significant:

The following summarizes the findings of the Geologic and Seismic Hazards Report prepared for the project by BSK and included as Appendix D:

- The project site is not located in a Fault-Rupture Hazard Zone. The closest Fault-Rupture Hazard Zone is associated with the Ortigalita Fault, approximately 34 miles west of the Site.
- There are no mapped areas that have Seismic Hazard Zones in the project area.
- The project area is essentially flat and the potential hazard due to landslides from adjacent properties is not applicable.
- The potential for lateral spreading to take place at the project site is low.
- The near-surface soils encountered within the current borings throughout the site are silty sand which exhibit a low to non-expansion potential.
- The project site is not located in an area known to be susceptible to subsidence due to petroleum or groundwater withdrawal or located in an area in which soils are known to be impacted by hydrocompaction.
- Liquefaction may occur in some of the sandy units below a depth of 35 feet bgs during the design earthquake.

The potential for water-or wind-borne erosion and loss of topsoil would be low during the construction phase of the proposed project because the project site will require minimal clearing, grubbing, and grading. Once construction is completed, the potential for erosion would be minimal because the ground would be covered by buildings, hard surfaces, and landscaping. The project would be subject to the requirements of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. For these reasons, the potential impacts of the project are less than significant.

e. No Impact:

The project site is served by the City of Atwater sewer system. The proposed project would not involve the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems.

f. Less Than Significant with Mitigation:

While no paleontological resources or unique geological features are evident on the surface of the land, undiscovered subsurface paleontological resources could nevertheless be present. The following mitigation measure addresses the potential discovery of subsurface resources.

Mitigation Measure GEO-1: If paleontological resources are discovered during ground disturbing activities, work shall stop in the immediate vicinity of the find and a qualified paleontologist shall be

consulted to determine whether the resources requires further study. If the resources are determined to be potentially significant, the qualified paleontologist shall make recommendations to the District on the measures that shall be implemented to protect the discovered resources, including but not limited to, excavation and evaluation of the find, as well as providing the resources to an appropriate institution or person who is capable of providing long-term preservation to allow future scientific study.

8. Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?			✓	
b. Conflict with any applicable plan, policy, or regulation of an agency adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?			✓	

This section is based on the Air Quality & Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment prepared by Ambient Air Quality & Noise Consulting, which can be found in Appendix A.

a. Less Than Significant:

Short-term Emissions

Based on the modeling conducted, annual emissions of GHGs associated with construction of the proposed project would total approximately 361.3 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalents (MTCO₂e). There would also be a small amount of GHG emissions from waste generated during construction; however, this amount is speculative. Actual emissions would vary, depending on various factors including construction schedules, equipment required, and activities conducted. Assuming an average project life of 30 years, amortized construction-generated GHG emissions would total approximately 12.0 MTCO₂e/yr. Amortized construction-generated GHG emissions were included in the operational GHG emissions inventory for the evaluation of project-generated GHG emissions (refer to Table 10 of Appendix A).

Long-term Emissions

Estimated long-term increases in GHG emissions associated with the proposed project are summarized in Table 10 of Appendix A. Based on the modeling conducted, operational GHG emissions would total approximately 1,374.7 MTCO₂e/year in 2023 and approximately 1,209.8 MTCO₂e/year in 2030. With the inclusion of amortized construction emissions, operational GHG emissions would total approximately 1,386.7 MTCO₂e/year in 2023 and approximately 1,209.8 MTCO₂e/year in 2030. Based on these estimates and assuming an on-site population of 600 students and 45 employees, the calculated GHG efficiency for the proposed project would be 2.1 MTCO₂e/SP/yr in 2023 and 1.9 MTCO₂e/SP/yr in 2030. The GHG efficiency for the proposed project would not exceed the thresholds of 4.2 MTCO₂e/SP/yr in 2023 or 3.3 MTCO₂e/SP/yr in 2030.

Based on the modeling conducted, the calculated GHG efficiency for the proposed project would be 2.1 MTCO₂e/SP/yr in 2023 and 1.9 MTCO₂e/SP/yr 2030. As depicted in Table 10 of Appendix A, operational GHG emissions associated with the proposed project would be predominantly associated with mobile sources. It is important to note that mobile-source emissions were conservatively calculated, based on the default fleet-distribution assumptions contained in the model, which includes medium and heavy-duty vehicles. Mobile sources associated with schools typically consist largely to light-duty vehicles and buses. As a result, actual mobile-source emissions would be less. Because the GHG efficiency for the proposed project would not exceed the efficiency thresholds of 4.2 MTCO₂e/SP/yr in 2023 or 3.3 MTCO₂e/SP/yr in 2030, this impact would be considered less than significant.

b. Less Than Significant:

As noted in Section E, 8, a, above, the proposed project would not result in increased GHG emissions that would conflict with AB 32 GHG-reduction targets. The proposed project would be designed to meet current building energy-efficiency standards, which includes measures to reduce overall energy use, water use, and waste generation. The project would also be designed to promote the use of alternative means of transportation, such as bicycle use, and to provide improved pedestrian access that would link the project site to nearby land uses. The project will retain the existing Class 1 bicycle path along Juniper Avenue. These improvements would help to further reduce the project's GHG emissions and would also help to reduce community-wide GHG emissions. For these reasons, the proposed project would not conflict with local or state GHG-reduction planning efforts.

9. Hazards and Hazardous Materials

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?			✓	
b. Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?			✓	
c. Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?			✓	
d. Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?				✓

e. For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?			✓	
f. Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
g. Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury, or death involving wildland fires?				✓
h. Be located on the site of a current or former hazardous waste or solid waste disposal facility and, if so, have the wastes have been removed				✓
i. Be located on a hazardous substance release site identified by the Department of Toxic Substances Control in a current list adopted pursuant to Section 25356 of the Health and Safety Code for removal or remedial action pursuant to Chapter 6.8 (commencing with Section 25300) of Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code				✓
j. Be located on the site of one or more buried or above ground pipelines that carry hazardous substances, acutely hazardous materials, or hazardous wastes, as defined in Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code? (This does not include a natural gas pipeline used only to supply the school or neighborhood),				✓
k. Be located within 500 feet of the edge of the closest traffic lane of a freeway or other busy traffic corridor.				✓
l. Be located within one quarter mile of facilities that might reasonably be anticipated to emit hazardous air emissions, or to handle hazardous or extremely hazardous materials, substances, or waste?				✓

a.-c. Less Than Significant:

Construction of the project would involve the transport and use of fuels, lubricants, greases, solvents, and architectural coatings, including paints. Operation of the project would involve hazardous materials used for cleaning and maintenance purposes: cleansers, solvents, paints, pesticides, and fertilizers.

The project itself entails construction and operation of an elementary school campus. No other existing or proposed schools are located within one-quarter mile of the project site.

During both construction and operational activities, the project would be subject to federal, state, and local regulations governing the routine transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials and the release of hazardous materials into the environment. For instance, the project would be required to prepare a spill prevention and treatment plan for safe and effective clean-up and disposal of any spills or releases that may occur during construction at the project site. As required under state and federal law, notification and evacuation procedures for site workers and local residents would be included as part of the plan in the event of a hazardous materials release during on-site construction. SWRCB Construction General Permit (2009-0009 DWQ) additionally requires spill prevention and containment plans to avoid spills and releases of hazardous materials and wastes into the environment. Additionally, the use and storage of hazardous materials plus disposal of hazardous wastes are subject to numerous laws and regulations at all levels of government; these regulations function to provide safe accommodations and prevent accidental release to the environment.

In addition, the California Education Code requires that the school site undergo an environmental review process overseen by the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). The purpose of the process is to determine if a release or threatened release of any hazardous materials found on the proposed site or presence of any naturally occurring hazardous materials on the site present a risk to human health or the environment. The District, working with DTSC, must identify and implement measures that would mitigate any hazardous conditions before the California Department of Education would approve the project and provide funding for the project (Education Code sections 17210, 17210.1, 17213.1, and 17213.2). Given the characteristics of the project and the regulations and oversight processes in place to prevent and/or reduce potential impacts, this impact is less than significant.

d., h., i., and j. No Impact:

Based on the information contained in the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (BSK 2019), the project is not a hazardous materials site, hazardous substance release site, or the site of a current or former hazardous waste or solid waste disposal facility, nor does it contain any pipelines that carry hazardous substances, acutely hazardous materials, or hazardous wastes. The State Water Resources Control Board's GeoTracker interactive web map indicated that a Military Cleanup Site was located approximately 800 feet west of the project site, west of Sierra Madre Drive. The cleanup is complete, and the case has been closed as of September 2002.

e. Less Than Significant:

The project site is within 2 nautical miles the Castle Airport. However, it is not within the Airport Influence Area or an Airport Land Use Compatibility Zone.

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), Division of Aeronautics analyzed the proposed project (Appendix E). Caltrans determined there is generally a low risk of an accident occurring at the proposed site because the proposed site is unlikely to be directly flown over, is located outside the 65dB Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL) aircraft noise contour and is located outside all safety zones as defined by the California Code of Regulations, the California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook, and the Merced County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (Caltrans 2020). Therefore, the project will result in a less than significant impact in relation to potential airport-related safety hazards.

f. No Impact:

All schools have emergency response/evacuation plans. The project has no design or operational characteristics that impair implementation of or physically interfere with the City of Atwater Emergency Operations Plan. The project does not conflict with General Plan policies related to emergency access or evacuation routes (Policies SF-10.1, SF-10.2, SF-12.1 and SF-12.2).

g. No Impact:

The project site is in an urban area and not within an area subject to high wildland fire risk (CalFire 2007). (See Section E, 20 for additional information on wildfire risk.)

k. No Impact:

Based upon maps provided in the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (BSK 2019) and Google Earth, the project site is not within 500 feet of the edge of the closest traffic lane of a freeway or other busy traffic corridor. The site is adjacent to Juniper Avenue, which is designated as a connector street in the Atwater General Plan, but it does not meet the definition of a busy traffic corridor. Per Education Code Section 17213(d)(9) "Freeway or other busy traffic corridors" means those roadways that, on an average day, have traffic in excess of 50,000 vehicles in a rural area as defined in Section 50101 of the Health and Safety Code, and 100,000 vehicles in an urban area, as defined in Section 50104.7 of the Health and Safety Code.

l. No Impact:

Based upon information provided in the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment (BSK 2019), there are no facilities that might reasonably be anticipated to emit hazardous air emissions, or to handle hazardous or extremely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one quarter mile of the school site.

10. Hydrology and Water Quality

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality?			✓	
b. Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?			✓	
c. Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner that would:				
(i) result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;			✓	

(ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on-or off-site?			✓	
(iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional resources of polluted runoff; or			✓	
d. In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?			✓	
e. Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?			✓	

a.-c. Less Than Significant:

The City of Atwater water supply and wastewater treatment systems will serve the proposed project site. The City of Atwater operates 9 wells to provide a public water source for its customers. Water is pumped from the Merced Subbasin and regulated under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) by the Merced Irrigation-Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency (GSA). (Please see Subsection E. 10. e. for discussion of Groundwater Sustainability Planning). The water supply system complies with applicable water quality standards except for 1,2,3-trichloropropane (1,2,3-TCP) and the wastewater discharge system complies with applicable waste discharge requirements. The City is in the process of implementing a 1,2,3-TCP Mitigation Project, which includes the installment of Wellhead Treatment Centers using granular activated carbon (GAC) treatment to manage 1,2,3-Trichloropropane (TCP) levels by bringing the measured level of TCP to below the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) of 5 parts per trillion (ppt) (City of Atwater, 2020). The design and operational characteristics of the project related to water and wastewater would not incrementally or directly cause the existing systems to violate or contribute to an existing violation of the applicable requirements.

The amount of water anticipated to be used for the site is consistent with what would be typically expected for a school site in an urbanized area and anticipated in the City of Atwater General Plan. A typical school uses approximately 3 acre-feet per acre (af/acre/year) for domestic uses and 4 af/acre/year for landscape irrigation, and has approximately 10% indoor building area, 40% hardscape, and 50% landscape (Tully 2007). The proposed school is consistent with this estimate. For a 10-acre school site, assuming 1 acre of indoor space and 5 acres of landscaped area, water demand for the project would be approximately 3 af/year for domestic uses and 20 af/year for landscape irrigation. However, because the project is serving a majority of existing students currently housed at other schools, the net increase in domestic demand would be less.

No streams or rivers exist on or near the project site. Livingston Lateral A, an open ditch canal, was previously present along the west side of the site. In the early 2000s, all Merced Irrigation District facilities were removed, and the ditch was filled in. The project site is generally flat and will be covered with buildings, hardscape, and landscaping, which will not result in erosion.

A typical school would consist of approximately 10% indoor building area, 40% hardscape, and 50% landscape (Tully 2007). The proposed school is consistent with this estimate. Therefore, the 10-acre project will result in approximately 5 acres of the project area being converted to impermeable surface, contributing

to a reduction in recharge and an increase in runoff over the current condition. The effects of the project would be consistent with that anticipated for a site designated for school use in the City of Atwater General Plan.

Onsite storm drainage will be collected using a private positive storm drain system which will be connected into an existing 54" storm drain pipeline in Bridgewater Street. There is an existing 24" stub at the northeast corner of the site that the onsite system will connect to, which the District's engineer indicates should be sufficient to handle the drainage requirements of the site. The City of Atwater is responsible for managing urban stormwater runoff within the City of Atwater in accordance with its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Stormwater permit. The city's storm drain system ultimately flows to a detention basin to the north of the site and is then pumped into MID canals. Drainage infrastructure for the site will be subject to coordination and fees from the MID Drainage Improvement District. The District will comply with applicable Best Management Practice requirements for the prevention of pollution from construction-related or operational runoff.

For these reasons, the project would have a less than significant impact on hydrology and water quality.

d. Less Than Significant:

The following summarizes the findings of the Geologic and Seismic Hazards Report prepared for the project by BSK and included as Appendix D:

- The project site lies in Zone X, an area of minimal flooding outside the 500-year and 100-year floodplains.
- The project site is located in the pathway of inundation from a catastrophic breach of the Lake Yosemite dam.

However, a more recent map accessible from the California Department of Water Resources Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) web site indicates that the site is not within the dam inundation area of the Lake Yosemite Dam (https://fmds.water.ca.gov/webgis/?appid=dam_prototype_v2). The BSK report uses 2013 data from the California Emergency Management Agency, while the map accessible from the California Department of Water Resources DSOD web site is the current approved inundation map from the DSOD. The DSOD map shows that the edge of the inundation area is at approximately 1.4 miles from the school site. Therefore, the District considers dam inundation to be a less than significant impact for the site.

The project site is located approximately 75 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean and greater than eight miles from the nearest reservoir of significant size. Therefore, the potential for a tsunami and/or seiche to affect the project site is considered low and the impact would be less than significant.

e. Less Than Significant:

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act of 2014 (SGMA) requires the formation of local Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) that are responsible for developing Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). The project site is located within the Merced Subbasin, which is under the jurisdiction of the Merced Irrigation-Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency. The Merced Groundwater Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan, adopted in December 2019, was developed in coordination with the Merced Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability agency and the Turner Island Water District Groundwater Sustainability Agency to address the subbasin's critical overdraft and bring it into balance by 2040.

As discussed above in Section E. 10. b., the project is not anticipated to significantly impact groundwater supplies or recharge. Therefore, the project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of the Merced Groundwater Subbasin GSP.

11. Land Use and Planning

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Physically divide an established community?				✓
b. Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect?			✓	

a. No Impact:

The location and scale of the proposed project would not physically divide an established community. Therefore, there is no impact.

b. Less Than Significant:

Elementary schools are a normal, important, and compatible component of urban residential neighborhoods. The City of Atwater General Plan has designated the site for an elementary school for many years, and the District has owned the site since 1999. The PD zone is primarily intended to provide for a compatible relationship between land uses and higher quality development. Any potential environmental effects that would manifest themselves as an incompatibility (i.e. aesthetics, noise, air quality, traffic) have been addressed in the various other sections of this Initial Study and have been found to either be less than significant or less than significant with mitigation.

12. Mineral Resources

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?				✓
b. Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or other land use plan?				✓

a.-b. No Impact:

The project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource or locally important mineral resource recovery site because no known resources exist on or near the project site. The project site

is located in Mineral Resource Zone 1, an area where available geologic information indicates that little likelihood exists for the presence of significant mineral resources. (Clinkenbeard 1999)

13. Noise

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?		✓		
b. Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?			✓	
c. For a project located within a private airstrip or airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?			✓	

a. Less Than Significant with Mitigation:

The Noise Impact Study (Appendix F) indicates that noise generated by the proposed project would occur during short-term construction and long-term operation. Noise-related impacts associated with short-term construction and long-term operations of the proposed project are discussed separately, as follows:

Short-term Construction Noise

Construction noise typically occurs intermittently and varies depending upon the nature or phase (e.g., demolition/land clearing, grading and excavation, erection) of construction. Noise generated by construction equipment, including earth movers, material handlers, and portable generators, can reach high levels. Although noise ranges were found to be similar for all construction phases, the initial site preparation phase tended to involve the most equipment.

As noted in Table 4 of Appendix F, instantaneous noise levels (in dBA L_{max}) generated by individual pieces of construction equipment typically range from approximately 80 dBA to 85 dBA L_{max} at 50 feet (FTA 2018). Typical operating cycles may involve 2 minutes of full power, followed by 3 or 4 minutes at lower settings. Based on typical off-road equipment usage rates, average-hourly noise levels would be approximately 82 dBA Leq, or less, at 50 feet.

The City has not adopted noise standards that apply to short-term construction activities. However, based on screening noise criteria commonly recommended by federal agencies, construction activities would generally be considered to have a potentially significant impact if average-hourly daytime noise levels would exceed 80 dBA Leq at noise-sensitive land uses, such as residential land uses (FTA 2018). Assuming an

average-hourly construction noise level of 82 dBA Leq at 50 feet, the highest predicted noise levels at the nearest residences would be approximately 76 dBA Leq. Predicted exterior noise levels would not exceed the exterior noise threshold of 80 dBA Leq. However, with regard to residential land uses, activities occurring during the more noise-sensitive evening and nighttime hours could result in increased levels of annoyance and potential sleep disruption. Section 8.44.050 of the Atwater Municipal Code requires that all construction for which a grading or building permit is required shall be conducted between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. This would be applicable to construction activities on the project site. While these hourly restrictions for noise-generating construction activities would be beneficial, noise-generating construction activities would still be considered to have a potentially significant short-term noise impact. Therefore, measures in addition to the hourly restrictions are proposed.

Mitigation Measure N-1:

- a. Construction activities (excluding activities that would result in a safety concern to the public or construction workers) shall be limited to between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays.
- b. Stationary construction equipment (e.g., portable power generators) should be located at the furthest distance possible from nearby residences. If deemed necessary, portable noise barriers shall be erected sufficient to shield nearby residences from direct line-of-sight of stationary construction equipment.
- c. Construction equipment shall be properly maintained and equipped with noise-reduction intake and exhaust mufflers and engine shrouds, in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations. Equipment-engine shrouds shall be closed during equipment operation.
- d. When not in use, motorized construction equipment shall not be left idling for periods greater than five minutes.

Implementation of the above mitigation measures would limit construction activities to the less noise-sensitive daytime hours, which would reduce potential increases in levels of annoyance and sleep disruption to occupants of nearby residential dwellings. Additional measures, such as limitations on equipment idling and use of equipment exhaust mufflers, would further reduce potential noise impacts to nearby land uses. With mitigation and given that construction-related activities would be short-term, this impact is considered less than significant.

Long-term Operational Noise

Potential long-term increases in noise associated with the proposed project would be primarily associated with the operation of building equipment, such as heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) units, outdoor recreational activities, and vehicle use within onsite parking lots.

Stationary Equipment

The proposed project would not result in the introduction of any new major sources of stationary noise sources. Stationary noise sources would be predominantly associated with the operation of building mechanical equipment. Building mechanical equipment would be located within the structure, enclosed, or placed on rooftop areas away from direct public exposure. In addition, the operation of building mechanical equipment would be predominantly limited to the daytime hours of operations. As a result, significant increases in noise levels associated with onsite building mechanical equipment would not be projected to occur with project implementation.

Recreational Facilities

The proposed project would include construction of onsite playground areas. No major outdoor recreational facilities that would generate high noise levels are proposed, such as ball fields or stadiums that would involve the use of amplified public address systems or involve large spectator crowds. Noise generated by playgrounds typically includes elevated children's voices and occasional adult voices. Based on measurement data obtained from existing elementary schools and similar land uses, noise levels associated with small playgrounds can generate intermittent noise levels of approximately 55-60 dBA Leq at 50 feet. Noise associated with the use of onsite playgrounds would be intermittent and limited predominantly to the daytime hours of operation.¹ As a result, the use of onsite playgrounds would not result in a significant increase in average-daily noise levels at nearby residential land uses. In addition, noise generated by playgrounds are typically not considered uncharacteristic of or incompatible with residential land uses.

Vehicle Parking Areas

No large parking facilities or garages are proposed. However, the proposed project would include construction of smaller onsite vehicle parking areas. However, parking facilities commonly associated with elementary schools typically average fewer than 100 parking spaces. Noise levels commonly associated with smaller vehicle parking areas (e.g., less than 100 parking spaces) typically average approximately 45 dBA Leq, or less, within approximately 10 feet of the parking lot. Based on the traffic analysis prepared for this project, the proposed school would generate a maximum of approximately 402 vehicles during the a.m. peak hour. Based on this volume and a conservative assumption that all vehicles would utilize onsite parking areas, the highest predicted noise level at 10 feet from the parking lot would 50 dBA Leq. Actual noise levels would likely be less given that not all vehicles would be anticipated to utilize onsite parking. Noise levels generated by onsite parking areas would not be predicted to exceed the City's exterior daytime noise standard of 55 dBA Leq.² In addition, as previously noted, average-hourly daytime noise levels at the project site boundaries generally range from the low to mid 60's in dBA Leq. In comparison to ambient daytime noise levels, proposed onsite parking areas would not be anticipated to result in a substantial increase in ambient noise levels at nearby receptors.

Long-term Increases in Traffic Noise

Ambient noise levels in the project area are predominantly influenced by vehicular traffic on area roadways. The Federal Highway (FHWA) roadway noise prediction model was used to predict traffic noise levels along primarily affected roadway segments. Predicted noise levels were calculated for baseline conditions, with and without implementation of the proposed project, based on traffic volumes obtained from the traffic analysis prepared for this project. Predicted increases in traffic noise levels are summarized in Table 5 of Appendix F.

As noted in Table 5 of Appendix F, implementation of the proposed project would result in increases of approximately 1.9 dBA Ldn/CNEL, or less, along area roadways. Implementation of the proposed project would not result in a noticeable increase (i.e., 3 dBA or greater) in ambient noise levels.

¹ If the playgrounds were open to community use after school and on weekends, the noise levels would be similar to school use and less than significant.

² Note: The bus loading area is at least 100 feet from the nearest residences across Bridgewater Street. Given the distance and the short durations of use during the day, bus operations are not anticipated to be a significant noise source.

Land Use Compatibility

In accordance with City of Atwater General Plan policies, school uses exposed to transportation noise sources are typically limited to 60 dB Ldn in outdoor activity areas and 45 dB Ldn in interior spaces. Based on the traffic noise modeling noted above, predicted future cumulative exterior traffic noise levels at the boundary of the project site would be approximately 66 dBA CNEL at 50 feet from the Juniper Avenue near-travel-lane centerline. Based on this predicted noise level, the projected on-site 60 dBA CNEL noise contour would extend to approximately 184 feet from the centerline of Juniper Avenue.

Based on this predicted noise level and assuming an average exterior-to-interior noise reduction of 25 dBA, which is typical for newer building construction, predicted onsite interior noise levels would be approximately 41 dBA CNEL, or less. Predicted interior noise levels would not exceed the City's interior noise standard of 45 dBA CNEL. Regarding predicted noise levels at exterior activity areas, the project would not exceed the City's noise standard of 60 dBA CNEL because outdoor activity areas are located at least 184 feet of the centerline of Juniper Avenue.

b. Less Than Significant:

Long-term operational activities associated with the proposed project would not involve the use of any equipment or processes that would result in potentially significant levels of ground vibration. Increases in groundborne vibration levels attributable to the proposed project would be primarily associated with short-term construction-related activities. Construction activities associated with the proposed project would likely require the use of various off-road equipment, such as tractors, concrete mixers, and haul trucks. The use of major groundborne vibration-generating construction equipment, such as pile drivers, would not be required for this project.

Groundborne vibration levels associated with representative construction equipment are summarized in Table 6 of Appendix F. As depicted, ground vibration generated by construction equipment would be approximately 0.08 in/sec ppv, or less, at 25 feet. Predicted vibration levels at the nearest existing structures would not exceed the minimum recommended criteria for structural damage and human annoyance (0.5 and 0.2 in/sec ppv, respectively). Therefore, the impact to groundborne vibration would be less than significant.

c. Less Than Significant:

The nearest airport is the Merced County Castle Airport located approximately 1.4 miles northeast of the project site. The project site is not located within the projected 60 dBA CNEL contour of this airport (City of Atwater 2000). No private airstrips are located within two miles of the project site. Therefore, the project would have a less than significant impact with respect to exposure to excessive airport noise levels.

14. Population and Housing

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Induce substantial unplanned population growth either in an area, directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly				✓

(for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?				
b. Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?				✓

a.-b. No Impact:

The project does not include housing. The project site is located within a largely built out urban area and has been designated by the City of Atwater General Plan land use map for development of school facilities. Thus, the project will not induce unplanned growth. The project site is vacant and will not displace any existing housing or people.

15. Public Services

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities or need for new or physically altered government facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
(i) Fire Protection?			✓	
(ii) Police Protection?			✓	
(iii) Schools?				✓
(iv) Parks?			✓	
(v) Other public facilities?				✓

a. Less Than Significant:

The project would not result in the need for new or physically altered fire protection, police protection, parks, other public facilities in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives. The project is located in an urban area that is well-served by public services. The project would lessen impacts on other schools in the area currently serving students that would attend the new school. The project site is within two miles of the Atwater Police Department and the Atwater Fire Department. The project would not significantly affect park facilities, as noted in Section E, 16, a. The District received no comments from agencies providing public services in response to the request for preliminary comment for the proposed project. The project's impact to public services would be less than significant.

16. Recreation

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Increase the use of existing neighborhood or regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?			✓	
b. Include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?			✓	

a. & b. Less Than Significant:

Joan Faul Park is located to the north of the proposed project. The establishment of a new elementary school may increase the use of the adjacent park after school hours by parents and their children, but not to a significant degree. However, the proposed project includes recreational facilities that the District could make available to the community and, if so, this could lessen the use of the adjacent park. The project would have a less than significant impact on existing parks.

The recreational facilities associated with the project are discussed throughout this document as part of the whole project. No additional impacts specific to the recreational facilities portion of the project are anticipated.

17. Transportation

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities?		✓		
b. Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3, subdivision (b)?			✓	
c. Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?		✓		
d. Result in inadequate emergency access?				✓

The discussion of transportation and traffic impacts in this section primarily reflects information in the Traffic Impact Analysis (TIA) prepared for the project by JLB Traffic Engineering, Inc (Appendix G). The City of Atwater commissioned a peer review of the JLB traffic study and the results of that review are presented in Appendix H of this Initial Study. JLB prepared a response to the peer review comments, which also appears in Appendix H.

a. & c. Less Than Significant with Mitigation:

The following conclusions and recommendations are made with evidence from the aforementioned TIA.

Project Access

Based on the latest project site plan, access to and from the project site will be from five (5) access points located along the west side of Bridgewater Street and north side of Juniper Avenue. Access to Bridgewater will be from three (3) points located approximately 525 feet (full access), 325 feet (bus only entrance) and 125 feet (bus only exit) north of Juniper Avenue. Access to Juniper Avenue will be from two (2) points located approximately 750 feet (exit-only) and 200 feet (entrance-only) west of Bridgewater Street.

JLB analyzed a prior version of the project site plan after which it was recommended that the project exit-only driveway along Juniper Avenue be widened to accommodate a southbound left-turn lane and dedicated right-turn lane and maintain a minimum throat depth of 60 feet before any vehicular openings to the east side of the parking lot. Furthermore, it was recommended that eastbound to westbound U-turns be accommodated at the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue. The latest project site plan addresses these recommendations. Furthermore, JLB analyzed the location of the proposed access points relative to the existing local roads and driveways in the project's vicinity. A review of the access points to be constructed indicates that they are located at points that minimize traffic operational impacts to the existing roadway network.

Trip Generation

Trip generation rates for the proposed project were obtained from the 10th Edition of the Trip Generation Manual published by the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE). Table II of Appendix G presents the trip generation for the proposed project with trip generation rates for 600 Elementary School students. At build-out, the project is estimated to generate a maximum of 1,134 daily trips, 402 AM peak hour trips and 204 PM peak hour trips.

Trip Distribution

The trip distribution assumptions were developed based on existing travel patterns, the existing roadway network, data provided by AESD, knowledge of the study area, engineering judgment, existing residential densities, and the City of Atwater General Plan Circulation Element. Figure 4 of Appendix G illustrates the Project Only Trips to the study intersections.

Bikeways

Currently, bike lanes exist adjacent to the proposed project site along Juniper Avenue. Juniper Avenue contains a Class III Bike Route west of Sierra Madre Drive and a Class I Bike Path along the north side between Sierra Madre Drive and Augusta Lane. The City of Atwater General Plan Circulation Element recommends a Class I Bike Path along the north side of Juniper Avenue between Sierra Madre Drive and Buhach Road and a Class III Bike Route along Juniper Avenue west of Sierra Madre Drive. The latest project Site Plan retains the existing Class I Bike Path along its frontage to Juniper Avenue.

Walkways

Currently, walkways exist adjacent to the proposed project site along Sierra Madre Drive, Juniper Avenue and Bridgewater Street. Pedestrian facilities in the form of sidewalks built to current City of Atwater standards within and around the proposed project site provide enhanced safety to those students who walk to and from the proposed project site. Therefore, it is recommended that the project retain existing ADA compliant walkways along its frontages to Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue. The latest project site plan includes on-site pedestrian features and high-visibility crosswalks across the north leg and west leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue. It is recommended that a) a high-visibility crosswalk with a rapid rectangular flashing beacon system be implemented across the south leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Arrowwood Lane and b) a rapid rectangular flashing beacon be implemented across the west leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue.

Transit

The Bus, sponsored by Merced County Transit, provides fixed-route and paratransit service in the City of Atwater. At present, The Bus Route A1 (Atwater Loop) operates adjacent to the proposed project site.

Route A1 operates at 60-minute intervals on weekdays and weekends and its nearest stop to the project site is located along the north side of Juniper Avenue approximately 50 feet west of Bridgewater Street. This route provides a direct connection to Jack-in-the-Box, Atwater Community Center, Castle Human Services Agency, Castle Clinic, Castlewood Castle Park, and Anberry Outpatient. Retention of the existing and expansion of future transit routes is dependent on transit ridership demand and available funding.

Paratransit is a complimentary curb-to-curb transit service that requires customers to make a reservation to get service. It is not a taxi service, but a shared ride public transportation service where you and others are assigned bus service according to where you want to go. Paratransit service is available in every city, community and township in Merced County, but is limited for the use of persons with disabilities who are unable to navigate the fixed route services of The Bus without special assistance. Paratransit is open for service between 6:00 AM and 8:00 PM on weekdays and 8:00 AM and 6:00 PM on weekends.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Existing Traffic Conditions

- At present, all study intersections operate at an acceptable LOS during both peak periods.

Existing plus Project Traffic Conditions

- The latest Project Site Plan addresses recommendations for the Project exit-only driveway along Juniper Avenue and the northwest corner of Bridgewater and Juniper Avenue.
- A review of the access points to be constructed indicates that they are located at points that minimize traffic operational impacts to the existing roadway network.
- At build-out, the Project is estimated to generate a maximum of 1,134 daily trips, 402 AM peak hour trips and 204 PM peak hour trips.
- the latest Project Site Plan retains the existing Class I Bike Path along its frontage to Juniper Avenue.
- It is recommended that the Project retain existing ADA compliant walkways along its frontages to Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue.
- The latest Project Site Plan includes on-site pedestrian features and high-visibility crosswalks across the north leg and west leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue.

- It is recommended that a) a high-visibility crosswalk with a rapid rectangular flashing beacon system be implemented across the south leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Arrowwood Lane and b) a rapid rectangular flashing beacon be implemented across the west leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue.
- Upon completion of the Project, the average trip length to Bellevue, Shaffer and Thomas Olaeta will be reduced and the average trip length to the Project will be low due to its location. Additionally, the proposed Project is located near transit services and adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- In order to promote alternative modes of transportation, it is recommended that AESD work with the City of Atwater to implement a Safe Routes to School plan and seek grant funding to help build walkways and bikeways where they are lacking within a one-mile radius of the proposed Project site.
- It is recommended that the Project prepare a school signage and striping plan in the vicinity of the Project pursuant to the CA MUTCD Part 3 - Markings and Part 7 - Traffic Control for School Areas. The plan shall be reviewed and approved by the City of Atwater and subsequently implemented prior to opening day of the school component of the Project.
- Under this scenario, all study intersections are projected to operate at an acceptable LOS during both peak periods.

In order to implement the recommendations of the Existing plus Project Conditions, the following mitigation measures are included in the project:

Mitigation Measure T-1:

- a. The project shall retain the existing Class I Bike Path along its frontage to Juniper Avenue.
- b. The project shall retain existing ADA compliant walkways along its frontages to Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue.
- c. A high-visibility crosswalk with a rapid rectangular flashing beacon system shall be implemented across the south leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Arrowwood Lane and a rapid rectangular flashing beacon shall be implemented across the west leg of the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue.
- d. The District shall provide a school crossing guard at the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue at the beginning and end of the school day when most students are entering and leaving school. The crossing guard shall be provided until such time as a traffic signal is installed at the intersection.
- e. The project shall prepare a school signage and striping plan in the vicinity of the project pursuant to the CA MUTCD Part 3 - Markings and Part 7 - Traffic Control for School Areas. The Plan shall be reviewed and approved by the City of Atwater and subsequently implemented prior to opening day of the school component of the project.
- f. Atwater Elementary School District shall work with the City of Atwater to implement a Safe Routes to school plan and seek grant funding to help build walkways and bikeways where they are lacking within a one-mile radius of the proposed project site.

Near Term plus Project Traffic Conditions

- The total trip generation for the Near Term Projects is 9,695 daily trips, 450 AM peak hour trips and 818 PM peak hour trips.

- Under this scenario, the intersection of Sierra Madre Drive and Juniper Avenue is projected to exceed its LOS threshold during the AM peak period only. To improve the LOS at this intersection, Mitigation Measure T-2 shall be included in the project.

Mitigation Measure T-2: Modify Sierra Madre Drive full access to Juniper Avenue to limited left-in, right-in and right-out access only. To accomplish this, it is recommended that a raised median island be extended across the intersection along the center of Juniper Avenue for approximately 200 feet in both directions. With the extension of the raised median island, northbound and southbound left-turns would need to be redirected. Northbound left-turning traffic from Sierra Madre Drive could utilize Almador Terrace to access Juniper Avenue and continue westbound. Southbound left-turning traffic from Sierra Madre Drive would be forced to utilize Sierra Nevada Drive to access Juniper Avenue and continue eastbound. The project shall contribute its equitable fair share as presented in Table IX of Appendix G for those future improvements which are not currently covered by an existing impact fee program or grant funds. This measure is not required at the time of school opening and the timing of implementation shall be determined as warranted by subsequent traffic analysis or as agreed upon by the City of Atwater and the District.

Cumulative 2040 plus Project Traffic Conditions

- Under this scenario, the study intersections are projected to exceed their LOS threshold during one or both peak periods. The Sierra Madre/Juniper intersection is addressed by Mitigation Measure T-2. Mitigation Measures T-3 shall be included in the project to address the Bridgewater/Juniper intersection. (Note: these improvements would be needed in the cumulative scenario both with and without the project).

Mitigation Measure T-3: Signalize the intersection of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue with protective left-turn phasing in all directions. The project shall contribute its equitable fair share as presented in Table IX of Appendix G for those future improvements which are not currently covered by an existing impact fee program or grant funds. This measure is not required at the time of school opening and the timing of implementation shall be determined as warranted by subsequent traffic analysis or as agreed upon by the City of Atwater and the District.

With the implementation of Mitigation Measures T1-T3, the project's impact on transportation would be less than significant.

b. Less Than Significant:

Senate Bill (SB) 743 (Steinberg 2013) was approved by then Governor Brown on September 27, 2013. SB 743 created a path to revise the definition of transportation impacts according to CEQA. The revised CEQA Guidelines requiring Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) Analysis became effective December 28, 2018 and agencies had until July 1, 2020 to finalize their local guidelines on VMT Analysis. The intent of SB 743 is to align CEQA transportation study methodology with and promote the statewide goals and policies of reducing VMT and greenhouse gases (GHG). Three objectives of SB 743 related to development are to reduce GHG, diversify land uses, and focus on creating a multimodal environment. It is hoped that this will spur infill development.

The Technical Advisory on Evaluating Transportation Impacts in CEQA published by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) dated December 2018 acknowledges that lead agencies should set criteria and thresholds for VMT and transportation impacts. However, the Technical Advisory provides guidance to residential, office and retail land uses citing these as the most common. Beyond the three most common

land uses, no other guidance is provided. The Technical Advisory also notes that land uses may have a less than significant impact if located within low VMT areas of a region. Screening maps are suggested for this determination.

VMT is simply the product of a number of trips and the length of those trips. Based on data provided by AESD, the project site is located within a defined service area that is currently being served by other schools – Bellevue, Shaffer and Thomas Olaeta. When this is considered, the estimated average trip length (one-way) for students within the proposed project attendance boundary to: a) Bellevue is 1.68 miles; b) Shaffer is 2.10 miles; and c) Thomas Olaeta is 2.00 miles. For comparison, the project’s estimated average trip length (one-way) is 1.10 miles. Upon completion of the project, the average trip length to Bellevue, Shaffer and Thomas Olaeta will be reduced and the average trip length to the project will be low due to its location. Additionally, the proposed project is located near transit services and adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities. Based on the above the project’s impacts related to VMT are less than significant. In the near future, the City of Atwater may wish to coordinate with the regional agency (Merced County Association of Governments) and develop criteria and thresholds that balance the direction from OPR and the goals of SB 743 with the vision for the City of Atwater.

d. No Impact

The project will have emergency access from public streets on both the east and south sides of the site. Access points will comply with the City’s development standards.

18. Tribal Cultural Resources

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in the Public Resource Code § 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is:				
(i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in the Public Resources Code § 5020.1(k)?			✓	
(ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code § 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider		✓		

the significance of the resource to a California Native American Tribe?				
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a. Less Than Significant with Mitigation

A California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS) records search (see Appendix C) was conducted through the Central California Information Center. The CHRIS review indicated that there are no formally recorded prehistoric or historic archaeological resources or buildings or structures within the project area or immediate vicinity.

A Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File search was conducted (see Appendix C), which did not identify any known areas of concern in the NAHC inventory.

A Request for Preliminary Comment and AB 52 Notification was sent to each of the three tribes identified by the NAHC. No responses were received.

Based on the above, the potential for the project to affect tribal cultural resources is considered unlikely. However, in the event that subsurface resources are discovered during ground disturbing activities, the following mitigation measure shall apply:

Mitigation Measure TC-1. If tribal cultural resources are discovered during ground disturbing activities, work shall stop in the immediate vicinity of the find and a qualified professional with expertise in tribal cultural resources shall be consulted to recommend an appropriate course of action with the input of potentially affected tribes. If it is determined that the project may cause a substantial adverse change to a tribal cultural resource, mitigation measures to be considered should include those identified in Public Resources Code Section 21084.3.

19. Utilities and Service Systems

Would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental effects?			✓	
b. Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry, and multiple dry years?			✓	
c. Result in determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project, that it has adequate capacity to serve the			✓	

project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?				
d. Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?			✓	
e. Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?			✓	

a.-e. Less Than Significant:

The project site is located in a developed urban area that is served by existing water, wastewater, stormwater, electric, gas, and telecommunications facilities and such facilities are located proximate to the project site. The project site has been designated as a future school by the City of Atwater General Plan for many years and as such, the potential service needs for the school would, as a matter of proper planning practice, be anticipated and accounted for in the City's and other public utility provider's planning efforts.

With respect to water, wastewater and storm drainage service, the streets abutting the project site have water mains, a sewer line and a storm drainage pipeline that can serve the site (please refer to Section A. 5. e. and Section E. 10. b and c) and the District's civil engineer has indicated that the school site can be adequately served by these facilities. Thus, the project will not result in the construction of new facilities that would cause significant environmental effects. It is noted that more than half the project's student capacity consists of existing students from nearby schools. As a result, demand for water and wastewater treatment would be partially offset by a reduction at surrounding schools.

The City of Atwater contracts with Allied Waste Services, a subsidiary of Republic Services, Inc. to provide residential and commercial refuse collection, recycling and disposal services. Solid waste is transported and disposed in the Highway 59 Landfill, located on Highway 59, north of Merced, which is owned and operated by Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority (MCRWMA). The overall design capacity of the existing landfill is approximately 36,358,000 cubic yards, and the current estimated closure date is 2065 (MCRWMA 2016). Solid waste generation at District schools is in compliance with state and local requirements and given the long-term capacity at the Highway 59 Landfill, the solid waste-related effects of the project would be less than significant.

20. Wildfire

If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				✓
b. Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations				✓

from wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of wildfire?				
c. Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in the temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?				✓
d. Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?				✓

a.-d. No Impact:

No impacts related to wildfire would occur. The project site is not located in a State Responsibility Area or classified as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. (CalFire 2007)

21. Mandatory Findings of Significance

Does the project:	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
a. Have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?		✓		
b. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects)			✓	
c. Have environmental effects, which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?		✓		

a. Less Than Significant with Mitigation:

Based on the information in Sections E, 1 – E, 20, the potential for the proposed project to have any of the impacts described in this subsection 21, a, would be less than significant with the mitigation measures incorporated into the project (see Section E, 4, Biological Resources, and Section E, 5, Cultural Resources).

b. Less Than Significant:

Based on the information in Sections E, 1 – E, 20, the proposed project would not have impacts that would be individually limited but cumulatively considerable.

c. Less Than Significant with Mitigation:

Based on the information in Sections E, 1 – E, 20, with the mitigation measures incorporated into the project (see Section E, 3, Air Quality; Section E, 13, Noise; and Section E, 17, Transportation) the potential for the project to cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly, would be less than significant.

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F. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program

1. Purpose

Atwater Elementary School District has prepared this Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program to comply with Section 15097 of the State CEQA Guidelines. The purpose for the Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program is to ensure implementation of the mitigation measures identified in this Initial Study.

2. Lead Agency

The District will undertake the project and is the Lead Agency for the project. The District is responsible for the implementation of all mitigation measures identified in this Initial Study, with the exception of Mitigation Measures T-1, T-2, and T-3, which will be implemented in coordination with the City of Atwater.

3. Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Coordinator

The Assistant Superintendent, Business Services, or her/his designee shall act as the Project Mitigation Reporting Coordinator ("Coordinator").

4. Monitoring and Reporting Procedures for Design-, Site Clearing-, and Construction Mitigation Measures

- a. The Coordinator shall provide a copy of all project design-, site clearing- and construction-related mitigation measures to the architect, project engineer and contractor for incorporation in the project plans, construction specifications, permits, and contracts, as appropriate.
- b. Prior to award of bid, the Coordinator shall determine that all project design-, site clearing- and construction-related mitigation measures have been incorporated in the project plans, construction specifications, permits, and contracts, as appropriate.
- c. During construction, the Coordinator, through the construction management team, shall inspect the project area regularly to ensure all work complies with the mitigation measures. If a discrepancy is not resolved within a reasonable time, the Coordinator may order work to cease until the discrepancy is resolved.
- d. Prior to the District accepting the project improvements, the Coordinator shall certify that the project incorporates all project design and construction-related mitigation measures.

5. Monitoring and Reporting Procedures for Operational- and Maintenance-Related Mitigation Measures

There are no direct operations-related mitigation measures, but there are two traffic-related mitigation measures (T-2 and T-3) that will likely be implemented after the project becomes operational. The Coordinator shall monitor the situation and after the first year of operation, and each year thereafter, consult with the City of Atwater to discuss the implementation timing for the measures.

G. Names of Persons Who Prepared or Participated in the Initial Study/Environmental Checklist

1. Lead Agency

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Aaron Delworth, Director of Business Services

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Billy Martin, Facilities Project Coordinator

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2. Initial Study/Environmental Checklist Consultant:

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612 12th Street, Suite 201

Paso Robles, California, 93446

(805) 226-2727

www.ambient.consulting

JLB Traffic Engineering, Inc. (Transportation)

1300 E. Shaw Avenue, Suite 103

Fresno, California, 93710

(559) 570-8991

www.JLBtraffic.com

H. Sources Consulted

Following are the documents and other sources consulted in preparing this Initial Study:

Ambient Air Quality & Noise Consulting. *Air Quality & Greenhouse Gas Impact Assessment for Juniper Elementary School Project, Atwater Elementary School District, Atwater, CA*. April 2020. (see Appendix A)

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BSK Associates. *Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment Proposed School Site, Merced County APN 004-010-026, Southwest Corner of Juniper Road and Bridgewater Street, Atwater, California*. December 17, 2019.

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California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). *Staff report on burrowing owl mitigation. State of California Natural Resources Agency*. March 7, 2012.

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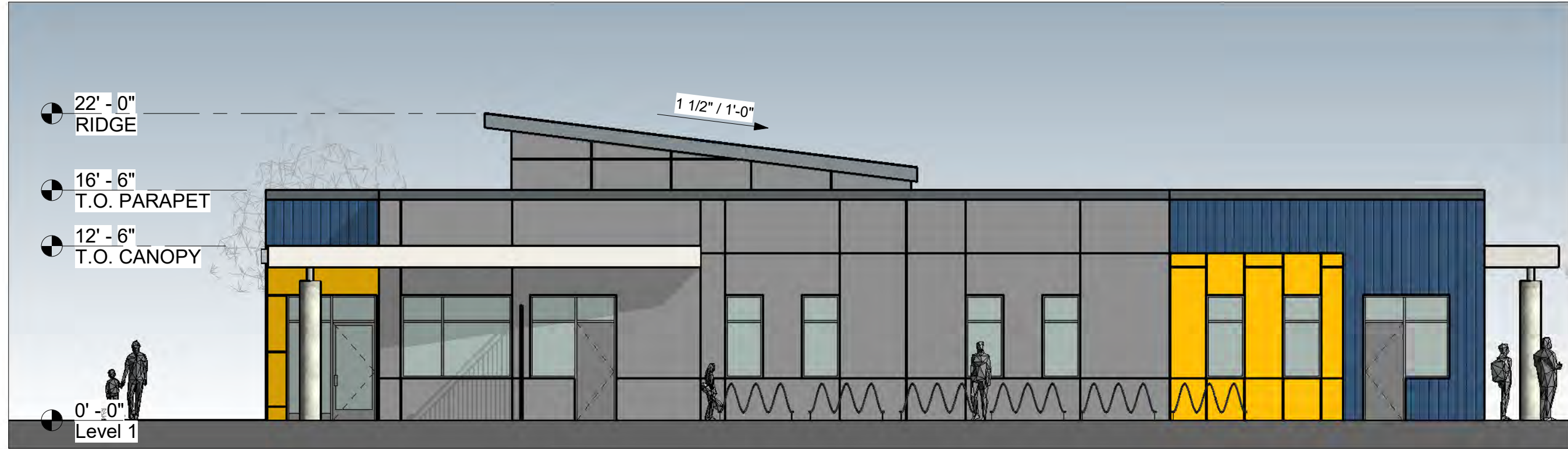
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- California State Water Resources Control Board. *GeoTracker*. (see <http://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/map/?CMD=runreport&myaddress=Atwater>)
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- Clinkenbeard, J.P. *Mineral Land Classification of Merced County, California*. 1999.
- Economic & Planning Systems, Inc. (EPS). *City of Atwater Municipal Service Review Update*. December 13, 2017.
- JLB Traffic Engineering, Inc. *Traffic Impact Analysis Report, Atwater Elementary School District Elementary School Located on the Northwest Corner of Bridgewater Street and Juniper Avenue in the City of Atwater, California*. September 3, 2020. (see Appendix G)
- Mead & Hunt. *Merced County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan*. June 2012.
- Merced County Regional Waste Management Authority. *Findings of Fact and Statement of Overriding Considerations for the Highway 59 Landfill Valley Fill Project Environmental Impact Report. Prepared by Ascent Environmental, Inc.* May 2016.
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Building Elevations



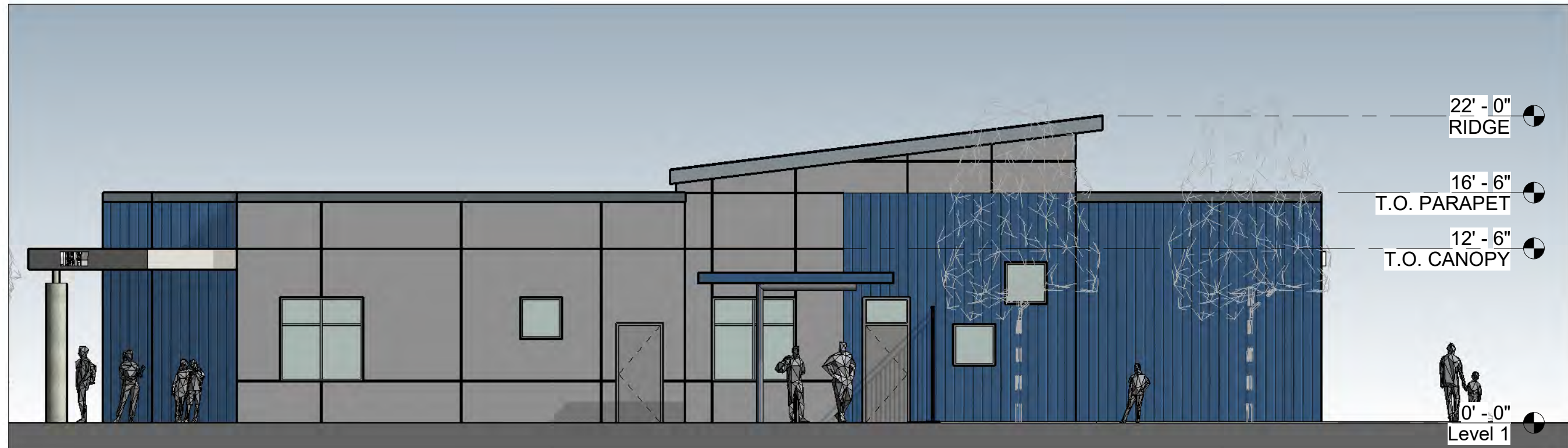
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SOUTH

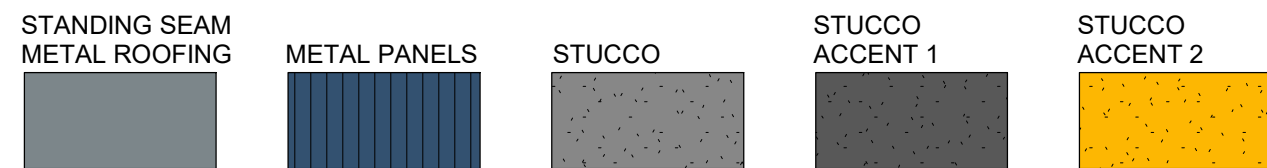
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EXTERIOR FINISHES



ATWATER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT
NEW ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ATWATER, CA

PROJECT #18-11163

BUILDING A (ADMIN / LRC) - ELEVATIONS

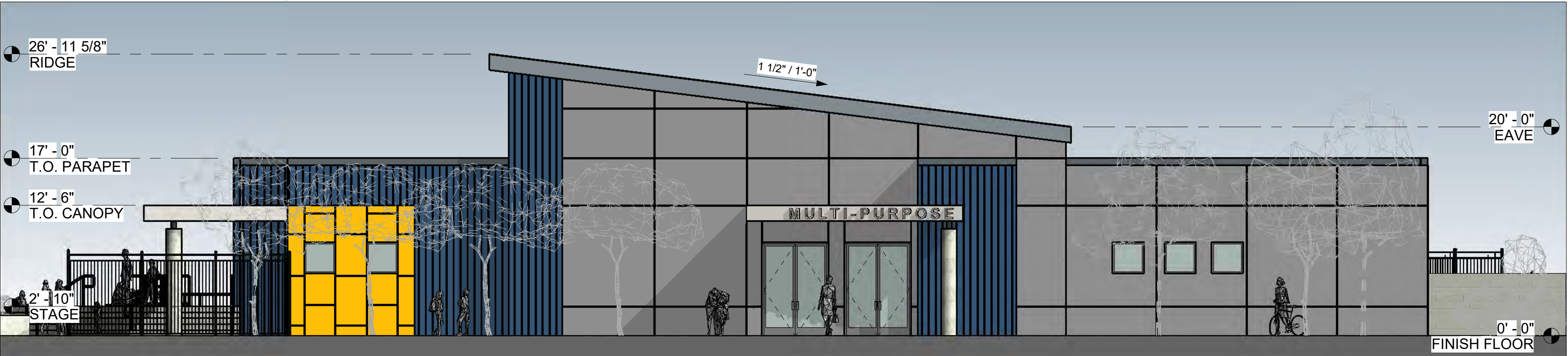
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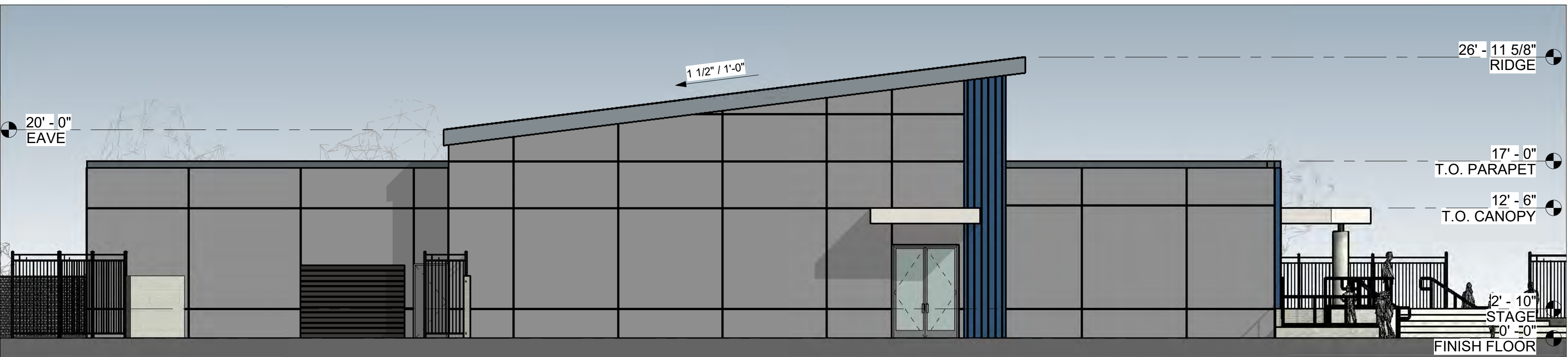
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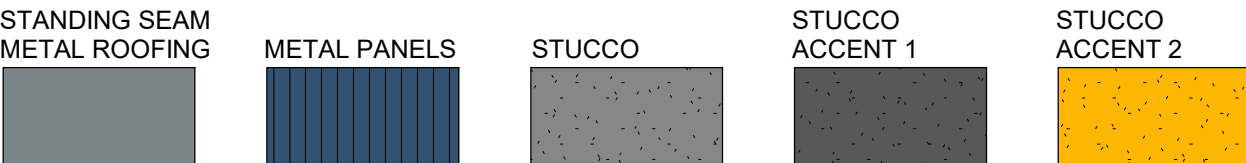
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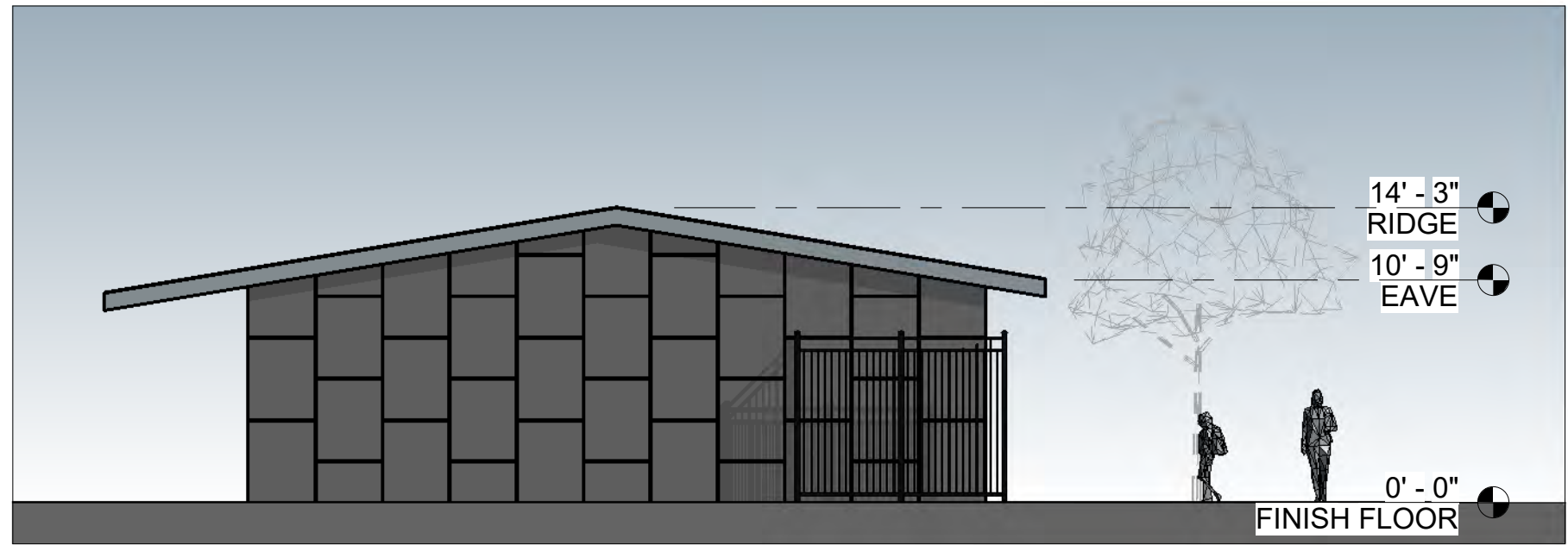
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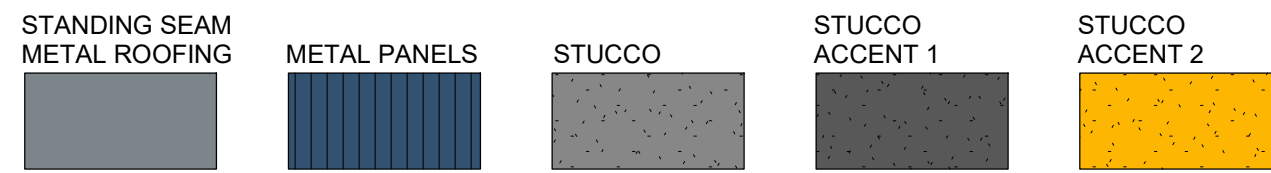
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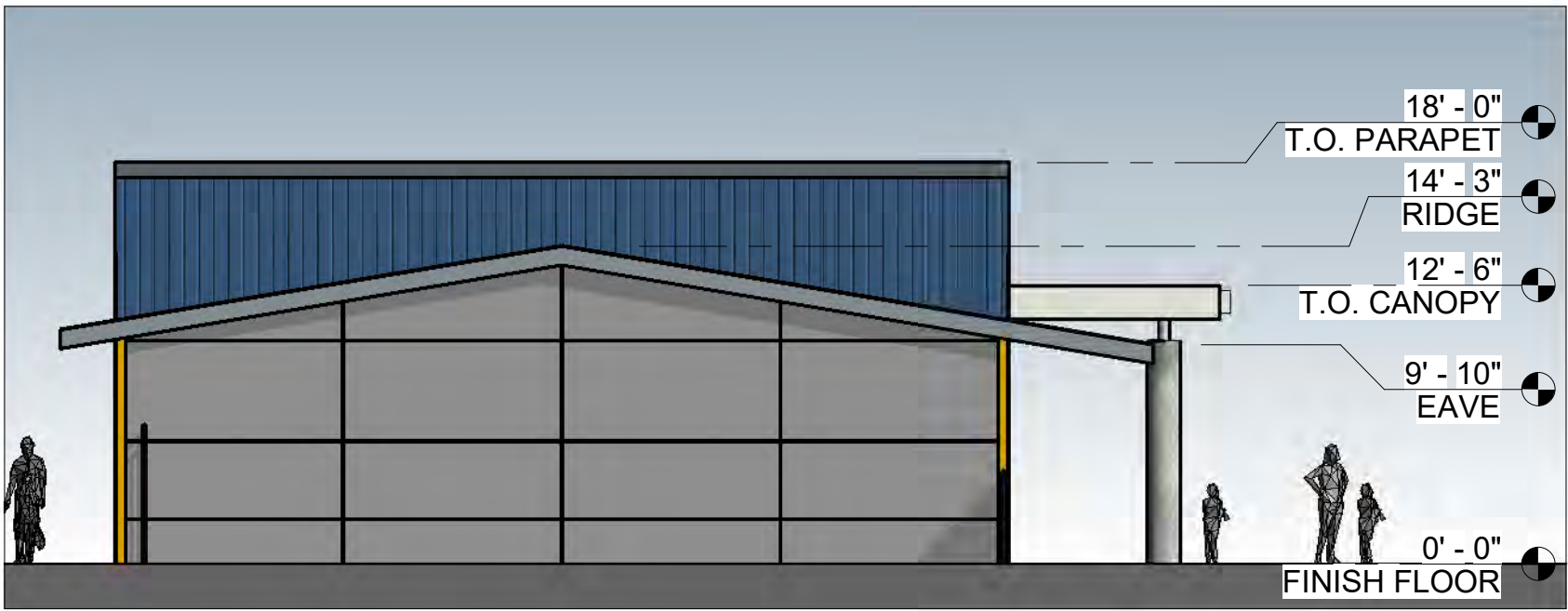


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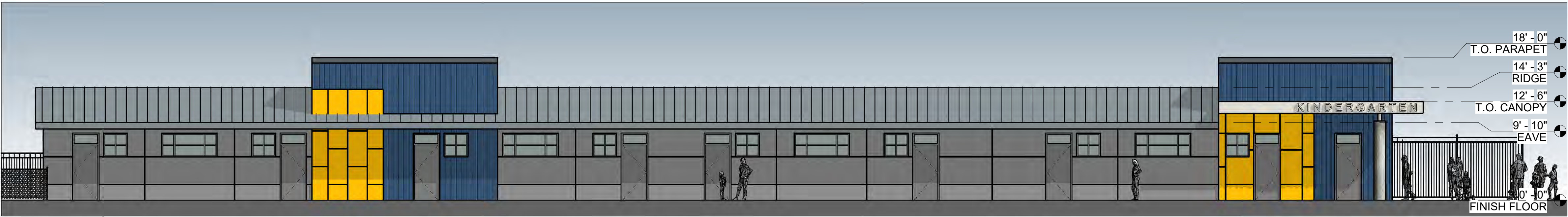
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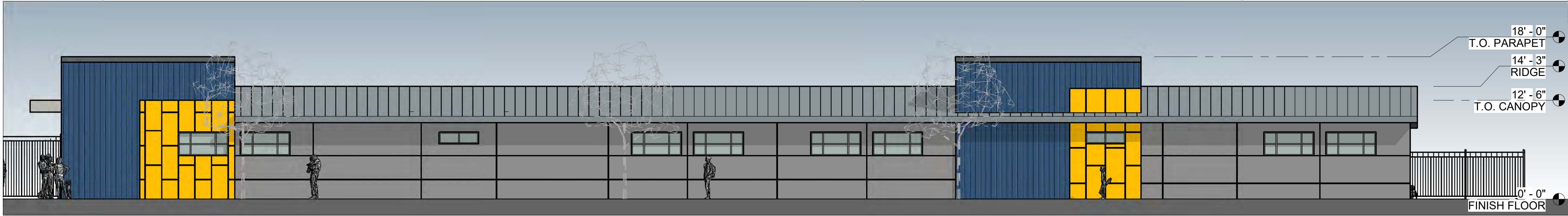
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SOUTH

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



EAST

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EXTERIOR FINISHES

