April 2021 | Mitigated Negative Declaration

RICHMOND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL REPLACEMENT

Sierra Sands Unified School District

Prepared for:

Sierra Sands Unified School District
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PLACEWORKS

SIERRA SANDS
UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (California Public Resources Code (PRC) Sections 2100 et seq.) and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations (CCR) Sections 15000 et seq.), the Sierra Sands Unified School District has completed this Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the project described below based on the assessment presented in the attached Initial Study.

LEAD AGENCY: Sierra Sands Unified School District

PROJECT TITLE: Richmond Elementary School Replacement

BACKGROUND: Richmond Elementary School at 1206 Kearsarge Avenue, Ridgecrest, is owned and maintained by the SSUSD on property leased from the Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake (NAWSCL) inside the secure area. Built in 1953, the school buildings are 67 years old. During the earthquakes on July 4 to 5, 2019, the school sustained extensive damage, and the District made the decision to relocate the school. For school years 2019/20 through 2022/23, all operations have been temporarily relocated to the Vieweg Adult Education Center; however, students have not attended the school in person since the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were mandated in March 2020.

PROJECT LOCATION: The new school site is along the west side of Richmond Road between Ridgecrest Boulevard and Gold Canyon Street, City of Ridgecrest (Assessor's Parcel Number 033-050-09). The site is on federal land owned by the U.S. Navy at NAWSCL, outside the secure area.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The new school would accommodate existing and future growth for students in TK through 6th grade, with seats for up to 822 students. At full buildout, the campus would consist of a total of 99,850 square feet in five 1-story buildings. Additionally, the campus would include eight basketball courts, track and turf play fields, hardcourt play areas with covered shade areas, kindergarten playground, covered lunch shelter, and landscape and hardscape areas. Four retention basins would collect and hold stormwater runoff from impervious areas of the campus.

The campus would have a total of 172 parking spaces and 8 short-term visitor spaces. The student drop-off/pick-up zones would be accessed via the driveways off Richmond Road. Access to the campus for students that walk and bike would be via local roadways to internal walkways. Other roadway improvements would include:

» Widen Gateway Boulevard to the east to its full secondary street design standard, with curb, gutter, and six-foot-wide sidewalk from Richmond Road to the new crosswalk (about 800 linear feet).

» Widen Richmond Road to the west to its half-width collector road design standard, with deceleration and merge lanes for southbound traffic and designated turn lanes for northbound traffic, and curb and gutter from about 400 feet south of Gold Canyon to Ridgecrest Boulevard. Roadwork also includes a six-foot-wide sidewalk from the southernmost access driveway to Ridgecrest Boulevard (about 1,120 linear feet).

» Install school area warning signs on Ridgecrest Boulevard, Richmond Road, and Gold Canyon Street that state "School – Speed Limit 25 – When Children Are Present" and install a school zone sign on Gateway Boulevard.

» Repaint the crosswalks at the Ridgecrest Boulevard/Richmond Road intersection with yellow or thermoplastic paint.

Project construction is anticipated to start in Summer 2021 and take about 24 months to complete, with occupancy in Fall 2023.

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY: The MND is available for public review during regular business hours at the locations listed below.

» Sierra Sands Unified School District: 113 West Felspar Avenue, Ridgecrest
» Ridgecrest Public Library: 131 East Las Flores Avenue, Ridgecrest
» The District's website: http://ssusd.org/

SUMMARY OF IMPACTS: The attached Initial Study was prepared to identify the potential project-related effects on the environment and to evaluate the significance of those effects. Based on the environmental analysis, the proposed project would have no impacts or less-than-significant environmental impacts related to the following topics:

- Aesthetics
- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Land Use and Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Public Services
- Population and Housing
- Recreation
- Tribal Cultural Resources
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

FINDINGS. It is hereby determined that, based on the information in the attached Initial Study, the proposed project, with mitigation measures for Biological Resources, Cultural Resources, and Geology and Soils, would not have a significant environment impact.

April 2021 | Initial Study

RICHMOND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL REPLACEMENT

Sierra Sands Unified School District

Prepared for:

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PLACEWORKS

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AAQS	ambient air quality standards
AB	Assembly Bill
ADT	average daily traffic
AQMP	air quality management plan
bgs	below ground surface
BMP	best management practices
CAA	Clean Air Act
CAFE	corporate average fuel economy
Cal/EPA	California Environmental Protection Agency
CALGreen	California Green Building Standards Code
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CARB	California Air Resources Board
CBC	California Building Code
CCR	California Code of Regulations
CDE	California Department of Education
CDFW	California Department of Fish and Wildlife
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
CLFD	China Lake Fire Department
CLPD	China Lake Police Department
CNDDB	California Natural Diversity Database
CNEL	community noise equivalent level
CO	carbon monoxide
CO_2e	carbon dioxide equivalent
dB	decibel
dBA	A-weighted decibel
DOD	US Department of Defense
DPM	diesel particulate matter
DTSC	Department of Toxic Substances Control
EIR	environmental impact report
EKAPCD	Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
FHSZ	fire hazard severity zone
FTA	Federal Transit Administration

Abbreviations and Acronyms

GHG	greenhouse gases
GWP	global warming potential
HVAC	heating, ventilating, and air conditioning system
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IWVGB	Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin
IWVWD	Indian Wells Valley Water District
KCFD	Kern County Fire Department
KCOG	Kern Council of Governments
L_{dn}	day-night noise level
L_{eq}	equivalent continuous noise level
LCFS	low-carbon fuel standard
LOS	level of service
LRA	local responsibility area
LST	localized significance thresholds
M_W	moment magnitude
MCL	maximum contaminant level
MDAB	Mojave Desert Air Basin
MEP	maximum extent practicable
mgd	million gallons per day
MIA	Military Influence Area
MMT	million metric tons
MND	mitigated negative declaration
MT	metric ton
NAWSCL	Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake
ND	negative declaration
NO_X	nitrogen oxides
O_3	ozone
PG&E	Pacific Gas and Electric
PM	particulate matter
ppm	parts per million
PPV	peak particle velocity
RCNM	Roadway Construction Noise Model
RMS	root mean square

Abbreviations and Acronyms

RPD	Ridgecrest Police Department
RPS	renewable portfolio standard
RTP/SCS	regional transportation plan / sustainable communities strategy
RWQCB	Regional Water Quality Control Board
SB	Senate Bill
SCAG	Southern California Association of Governments
SCE	Southern California Edison
SIP	state implementation plan
SO_X	sulfur oxides
SRA	state responsibility area
SSUSD	Sierra Sands Unified School District
TAC	toxic air contaminants
TNM	transportation noise model
USFWS	United States Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	United States Geological Survey
VdB	velocity decibels
VMT	vehicle miles traveled
VOC	volatile organic compound
WWTF	wastewater treatment facility

Abbreviations and Acronyms

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1. Introduction

Sierra Sands Unified School District (SSUSD or District) proposes to replace the earthquake-damaged Richmond Elementary School, which is inside the secured area of the California Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake (NAWSCL), with a new school on a 40-acre portion of a 77-acre parcel at the southwest corner of Richmond Road and North Gold Canyon Street (outside the secured area).

1.1 CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

The environmental compliance process is governed by CEQA[1] and the State CEQA Guidelines.[2] CEQA was enacted in 1970 by the California Legislature to disclose to decision-makers and the public the significant environmental effects of projects and to identify ways to avoid or reduce the environmental effects through feasible alternatives or mitigation measures. Compliance with CEQA applies to California government agencies at all levels: local, regional, and state agencies, boards, commissions, and special districts (such as school districts and water districts).

SSUSD is the lead agency for this proposed project and is therefore required to conduct an environmental review to analyze the potential environmental effects associated with the proposed project.

California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21080(a) states that analysis of a project's environmental impact is required for any "discretionary projects proposed to be carried out or approved by public agencies…" In this case, SSUSD has determined that an initial study is required to determine whether there is substantial evidence that construction and operation of the proposed project would result in environmental impacts. An initial study is a preliminary environmental analysis to determine whether an environmental impact report (EIR), a mitigated negative declaration (MND), or a negative declaration (ND) is required for a project.[3]

When an initial study identifies the potential for significant environmental impacts, the lead agency must prepare an EIR,[4] however, if all impacts are found to be less than significant or can be mitigated to a less-than-significant level, the lead agency can prepare an ND or an MND that incorporates mitigation measures into the project.[5]

1.1.1 Environmental Process

A "project" means the whole of an action that has a potential for resulting in either a direct physical change in the environment, or a reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment, and that is any of the following:

1 California Public Resources Code, § 21000 et seq (1970).
2 California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, § 15000 et seq.
3 California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, § 15063.
4 California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, § 15064.
5 California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Division 6, Chapter 3, § 15070.

1. Introduction

1. An activity directly undertaken by any public agency, including but not limited to public works construction and related activities, clearing or grading of land, improvements to existing public structures, enactment and amendment of zoning ordinances, and the adoption and amendment of local General Plans or elements thereof pursuant to Government Code §§ 65100 to 65700.

2. An activity undertaken by a person which is supported in whole or in part through public agency contacts, grants, subsidies, loans, or other forms of assistance from one or more public agencies.

3. An activity involving the issuance to a person of a lease, permit, license, certificate, or other entitlement for use by one or more public agencies. (California Code of Regulations [CCR] § 15378[a])

The proposed actions by SSUSD constitute a "project" because the activity would result in a direct physical change in the environment and would be undertaken by a public agency. All "projects" in the State of California are required to undergo an environmental review to determine the environmental impacts associated with implementation of the project.

1.1.2 Initial Study

This Initial Study was prepared in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, as amended, to determine if the project could have a significant impact on the environment. The purpose of the Initial Study is to 1) provide the lead agency with information to use as the basis for deciding the proper type of CEQA document to prepare; 2) enable the lead agency to modify a project, mitigating adverse impacts before an EIR is prepared, thereby enabling the project to qualify for a negative declaration; 3) assist in the preparation of an EIR, if one is required; 4) facilitate environmental assessment early in the design of a project; 5) provide documentation of the factual basis for the findings in an MND or ND; 6) eliminate unnecessary EIRs; and 7) determine if the project is covered under a previously prepared EIR.[6] When an Initial Study identifies the potential for immitigable significant environmental impacts, the lead agency must prepare an EIR;[7] however, if all impacts are found to be less than significant or can be mitigated to less than significant, the lead agency can prepare an ND or an MND that incorporates mitigation measures into the project.[8] The findings in this Initial Study have determined that an MND is the appropriate level of environmental documentation for this project.

1.1.3 Mitigated Negative Declaration

The MND includes information and environmental analysis necessary for agencies to meet statutory responsibilities related to the proposed project. State and local agencies would use the MND when considering any permit or other approvals necessary to implement the project. A list of the 20 environmental topics are provided in the Initial Study Checklist in Chapter 2.

One of the primary objectives of CEQA is to enhance public participation in the planning process; public involvement is an essential feature of CEQA. Community members are encouraged to participate in the

6 14 CCR § 15063.
7 14 CCR § 15064.
8 14 CCR § 15070.

environmental review process, request to be notified, monitor newspapers for formal announcements, and submit substantive comments at every opportunity afforded by the SSUSD. The environmental review process provides several opportunities for the public to participate through public notice and public review of CEQA documents and public meetings.

1.2 PROJECT LOCATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The damaged school, the temporary school, and the proposed new school site are in the City of Ridgecrest in the northeast corner of Kern County. Ridgecrest is in the western part of the Mojave Desert in the Indian Wells Valley, which is surrounded by mountains: the Coso Range on the north, El Paso Mountains on the south, the Argus Range on the east, and the Sierra Nevada on the west. Adjacent unincorporated (designated place) communities are China Lake Acres and Inyokern to the west, Skytop and Searles Valley to the east, and Searles to the south (see Figure 1, *Regional Location*). The damaged school and the new school site are on federal land owned by the United States Department of the Navy (US Navy) under the Department of Defense of the United States of America (DOD).

1.2.1 Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake

NAWSCL is a large military installation whose mission is to support armaments research, development, acquisition, testing, and evaluation programs of the Navy.[9] NAWSCL is the Navy's largest single landholding, occupying land in three counties—Kern, San Bernardino, and Inyo. Its North and South Ranges and main site cover more than 1,100,000 acres. In the early 1930s, an emergency landing field was built by the Works Progress Administration. Opened in 1935, the field was acquired by the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) in 1942. In November 1943 it was transferred to the Navy, which established China Lake as the Naval Ordnance Test Station (NOTS). The station has thousands of buildings and three runways at Armitage Field. In 1982 the community of China Lake, including most of base housing, was annexed into the City of Ridgecrest.

1.2.2 Sierra Sands Unified School District

The SSUSD operates 11 schools within its 970-square-mile attendance boundary:

- Vieweg Adult Education Center
- Burroughs High School
- Mesquite Continuation High School
- James Monroe Middle School
- Murray Middle School
- Faller Elementary School
- Gateway Elementary School
- Inyokern Elementary School

[9] The DOD is an executive branch department of the federal government charged with coordinating and supervising all agencies and functions of the government directly related to national security and the United States Armed Forces. DOD has three subordinate military departments: the Department of the Army, the Department of the Navy, and the Department of the Air Force.

- Las Flores Elementary School
- Pierce Elementary School
- Richmond Elementary School (damaged campus)

1.2.3 Damaged School Campus

Richmond Elementary School at 1206 Kearsarge Avenue is in the north part of the City of Ridgecrest, within the NAWSCL secured area (see Figure 2, *Local Vicinity*).

Surrounding Land Use. The campus is bordered by Ticonderoga Avenue, China Lake golf course, and recreational vehicle storage to the north; Kearsarge Avenue and scattered residential to the south; residential development along Midway Road to the east; and Halsey Avenue and scattered military buildings to the west (see Figure 3, *Aerial Photograph - Damaged School*). The campus is just outside the two-nautical-mile radius of the Armitage Field runways.

Richmond Elementary School is owned and maintained by the SSUSD on property leased from the NAWSCL. Built in 1953, the school buildings were constructed as part of the local school system and are now 67 years old.[10] During the earthquakes on July 4 and 5, 2019, the school sustained extensive damage, and the District made the decision to relocate the school. For school years 2019/20 through 2022/23 all operations have been temporarily relocated to the Vieweg Adult Education Center; however, students have not attended the school in person since the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions began in March 2020.

Richmond Elementary School follows an inclusionary model while serving both the general education and special education needs of the community. In 2019, the 16.7-acre, 67,626-square-foot K-5 elementary school had 10 permanent buildings (administration building; multipurpose and food service building; 7 classroom buildings; and library building) and 3 portable classroom buildings. There were also 3 hardcourt play areas, play equipment, 2 lunch shelters, a turf field surrounded by trees and a dirt running track, multiple bus drop-off/pick-up locations, and 50 parking spaces. During the 2018/19 year, the K-5 school had an enrollment of 448 students (325 general education students, 123 special education students, and 87 teachers, administrators, and paraprofessional educators).

Operation

The school operated on a traditional two-semester academic calendar, with students in session from August through June. School hours were:

- 8:45 am to 3:15 pm Regular Day
- 9:15 am to 3:15 pm Late Start Wednesdays
- 8:45 am to 1:15 pm Minimum Day[11]

[10] Sierra Sands Unified School District. Richmond Elementary School 2018-19 School Accountability Report Card. http://richmond.ssusd.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_118856/File/Parent%20Section/2019_School_Accountability_Report_Card_Richmond_Elementary_School_20200124.pdf

[11] Richmond Elementary School 2019-2020 Daily Schedule. http://richmond.ssusd.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_118856/File/Daily%20Schedule%20for%20Parents%2019-20.pdf

Teachers arrived on campus at 8:00 am and departed at 3:30 pm, and some students may have been on campus before and/or after school hours. Approximately 240 students arrived on 11 buses between 8:45 and 8:55 am and left on buses between 3:15 and 3:40 pm.

Because of the NAWSCL security protocols, certain people did not have clearance to access the school.

- If a parent/guardian had any criminal conviction in their past they could never get on base.
- If a student got sick while at school, the principal had to leave school and drive them off base to meet someone to take the student home.
- If a parent/guardian was a foreign national, they were never allowed access to the base.
- Only parents/guardians of students could get a school-sponsored base pass.
- Extended family and friends did not have access to the school to help pick up or drop off student for regular school or before/afterschool programs.
- Parents new to the area could not get on base to register their children for school. The district would not sponsor them for a base pass until they were registered in school but the base would not let them on base to register for school until the district sponsored them for a base pass.
- There was a chronic issue with tardy students because the traffic getting onto the base would back up for extended times when base security personnel did not arrive at the gates or when unannounced base security exercises occurred.
- Several times each year the base would close all gates without notice, preventing all parents/guardians access for an indeterminate time.
- Vendors for assemblies and trainings had to plan ahead at least two weeks to obtain a base pass to get to the school. If they were not aware of the base pass requirement they would have to cancel or reschedule because they could not get on base that day.

School-Related Events. The school had after-school programs for the students, such as special-interest clubs, and extracurricular activities, that ended later than 3:15 pm. There were also occasional nighttime and weekend events during the school year. Some of these events were campus wide, such as school plays and winter programs, while others are grade specific, such as commencement. Not all parents/guardians could attend, and no extended family was permitted on base.

Community Use. The school was not open to general community use, except the DOD.

1.2.4 Temporary School

After the earthquakes in July 2019, the District made the decision to relocate the school. For school years 2019/20 through 2022/23 Richmond Elementary School students and all operations have been temporarily

relocated to the Vieweg Adult Education Center at 348 Rowe Street until a new school can be constructed.[12] However, students have not attended the school in person since the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions were mandated in March 2020. Vieweg Adult Education Center is on land leased from the DOD and is outside the security fence.

1.2.5 New School Site

The project site is along the west side of Richmond Road, north of Ridgecrest Boulevard, City of Ridgecrest. The site is outside of the NAWSCL secured area (see Figure 4, *Aerial Photograph-New School Site* and Figures 5 and 6, *Site Photographs).*

Surrounding Land Use. The project site is bordered by Gold Canyon Street and vacant land and the 118-acre, 13.78-megawatt NAWSCL solar farm to the north; Ridgecrest Boulevard (State Route 178), Gateway Center (office and retail), and single-family residences to the south; Richmond Road, a NAWSCL Park and Ride lot, and vacant land to the east; and single- and multifamily development and vacant land to the west.

The project site consists of vacant land; there are no buildings, structures, or improvements. The project site is relatively flat with a slight slope across the site, with elevations from 2,266 feet above mean sea level in the southwest to 2,259 feet in the northeast.[13] Desert vegetation on-site consists mostly of disturbed white bursage scrub and creosote bush scrub.

1.3 EXISTING ZONING AND GENERAL PLAN

Under the City of Ridgecrest General Plan, the project site is designated Military (ML) and is almost entirely within the Military Influence Area (MIA) (see Figure 7, *General Plan Land Use Designation*).[14] Portions of the southwestern corner of the project site are in the MIA. Under the Ridgecrest Zoning, the project site is zoned Urban Reserve (UR) (see Figure 8, *Zoning Designation*).[15]

The existing school and proposed school site are in the North Range of NAWSCL. The commanding officer of NAWSCL has authority over land use decisions on the base property. The land use plan is the comprehensive land use management plan.

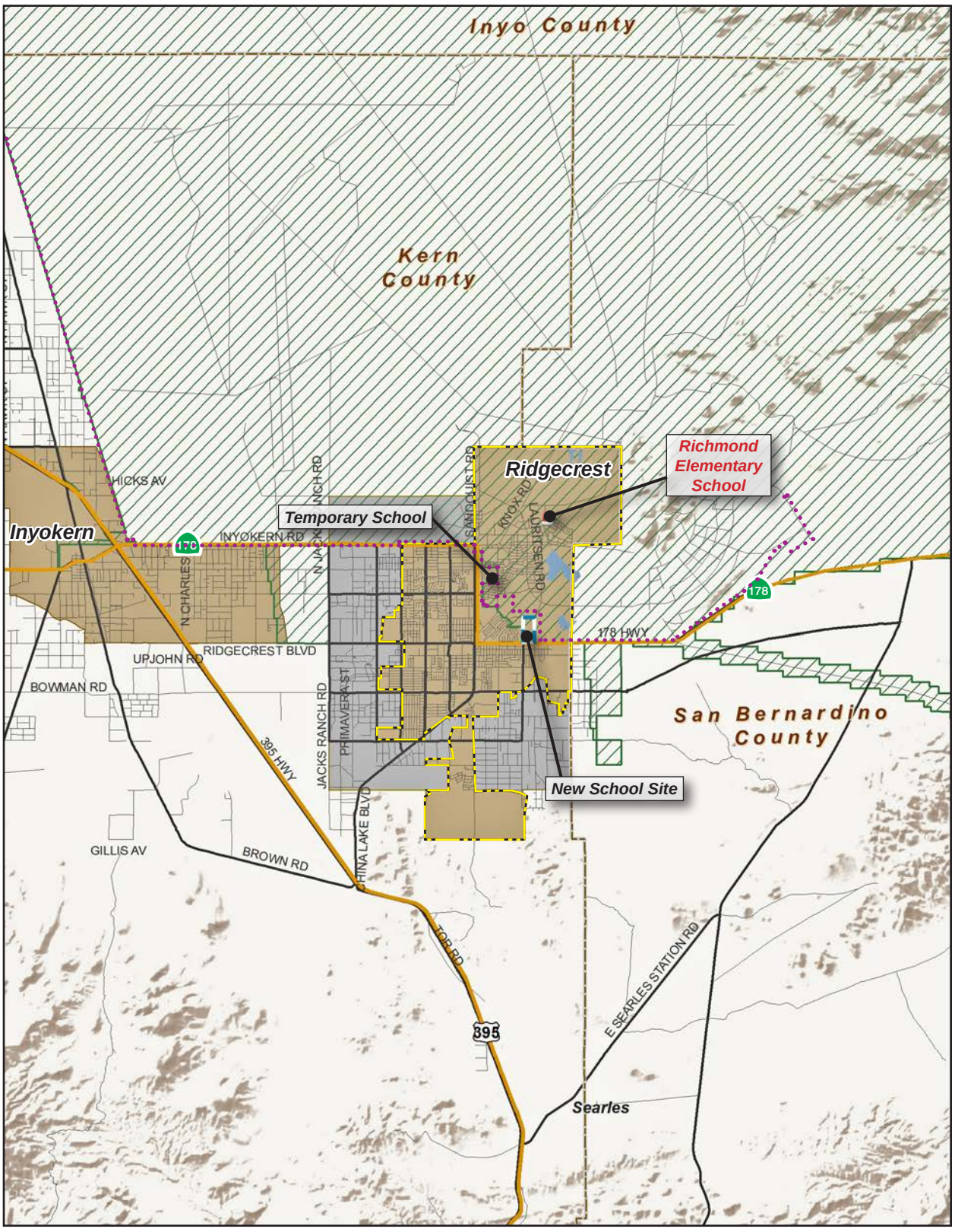
[12] Sierra Sands Unified School District. 2019, July 23. Community Update 7-23-2019. http://ssusd.org/news/whats_new/community_update_7-23-2019

[13] ASM Affiliates. 2020, June. Phase I Survey/Class III Inventory, Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project, Kern County, California.

[14] Ridgecrest, City of. 2009, December 2. City of Ridgecrest General Plan Land Use Diagram. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/164/General-Plan-Map-PDF.

[15] Ridgecrest, City of. 2010, February 22. 2009 Current Zoning. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/174/Zoning-Map-PDF.

Figure 1 - Regional Location
1. Introduction



Source: ESRI, 2020

1. Introduction

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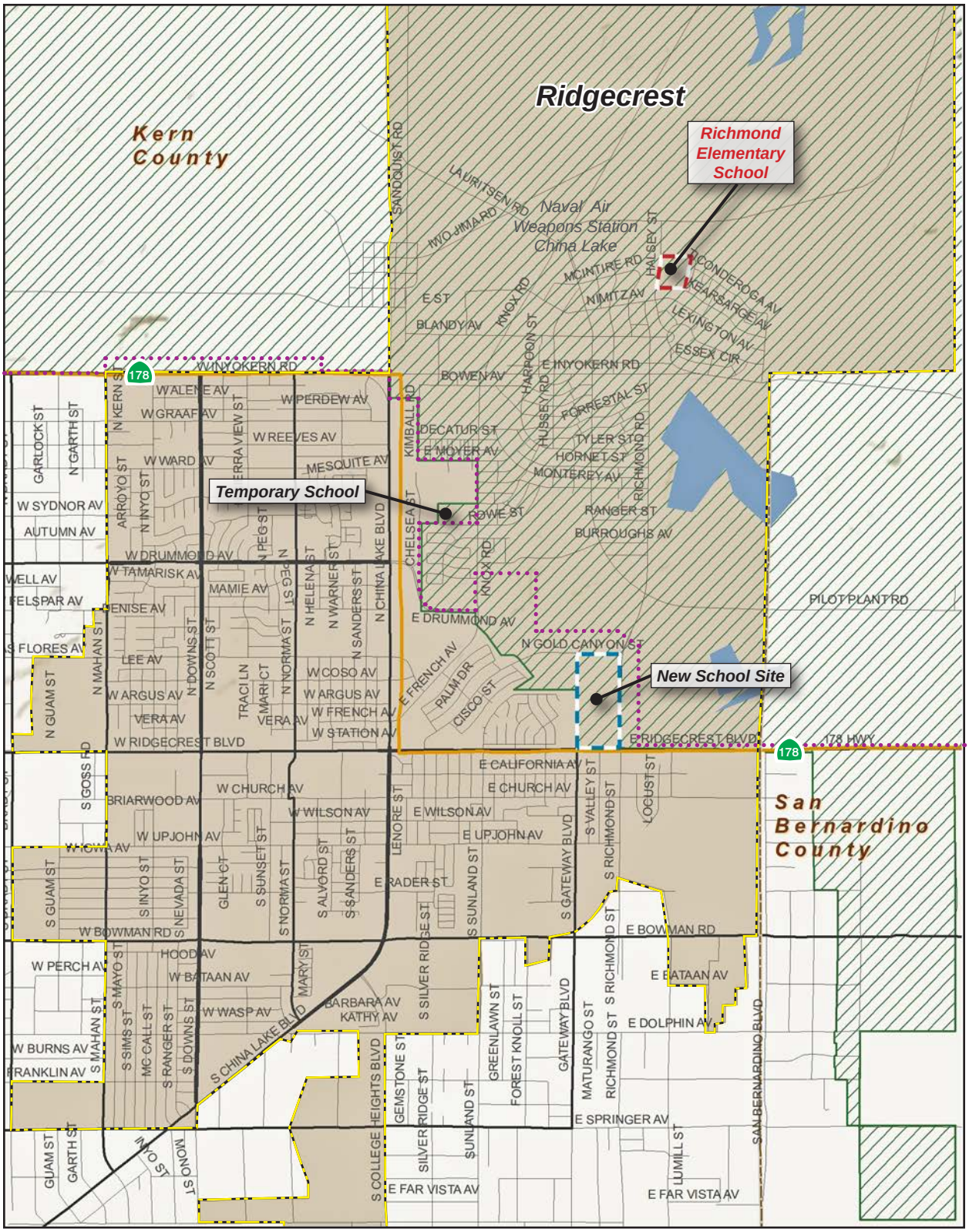
Figure 2 - Local Vicinity
1. Introduction



City Boundary
State Route
Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake
Secured Boundary

0 1
Scale (Miles)

Source: ESRI, 2020

1. Introduction

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Figure 3 - Aerial Photograph - Damaged School

1. Introduction

Damaged School Site

Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake

0 250

Scale (Feet)

Source: ESRI, 2020

1. Introduction

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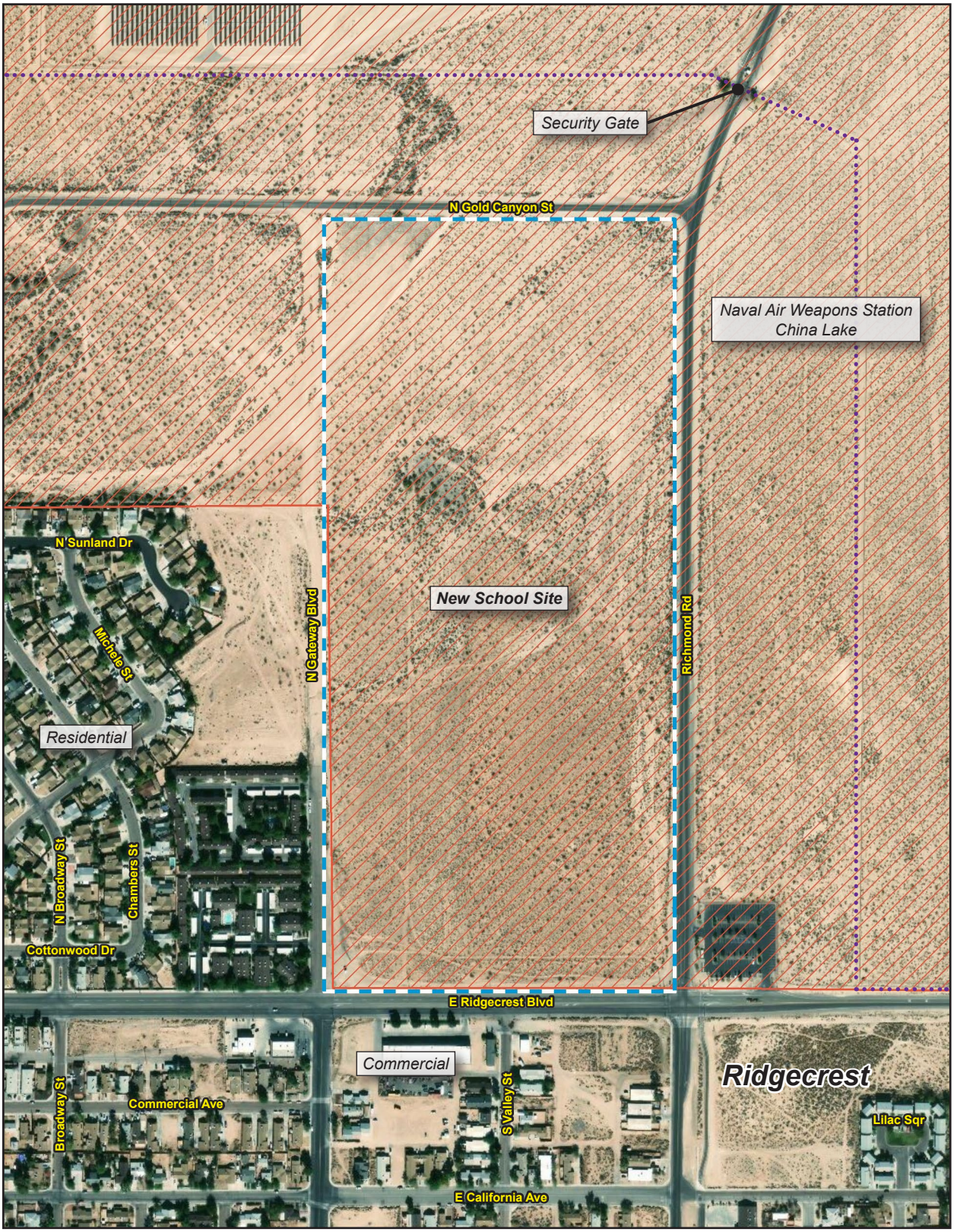
Figure 4 - Aerial Photograph - New School Site

1. Introduction



Source: ESRI, 2020

1. Introduction

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Figure 5 - Site Photographs
1. Introduction

Photo 1. View looking northeast from Gateway Boulevard toward Lone Butte.

Photo 2. View looking west from project site toward Gateway Boulevard and single-family residental development beyond. The southern end of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range is in the background.

1. Introduction

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Figure 6 - Site Photographs
1. Introduction

Photo 3. View looking northwest from the project site toward Burroughs High School.

Photo 4. View looking south from project site toward Ridgecrest Boulevard. Commercial development south of street in background.

1. Introduction

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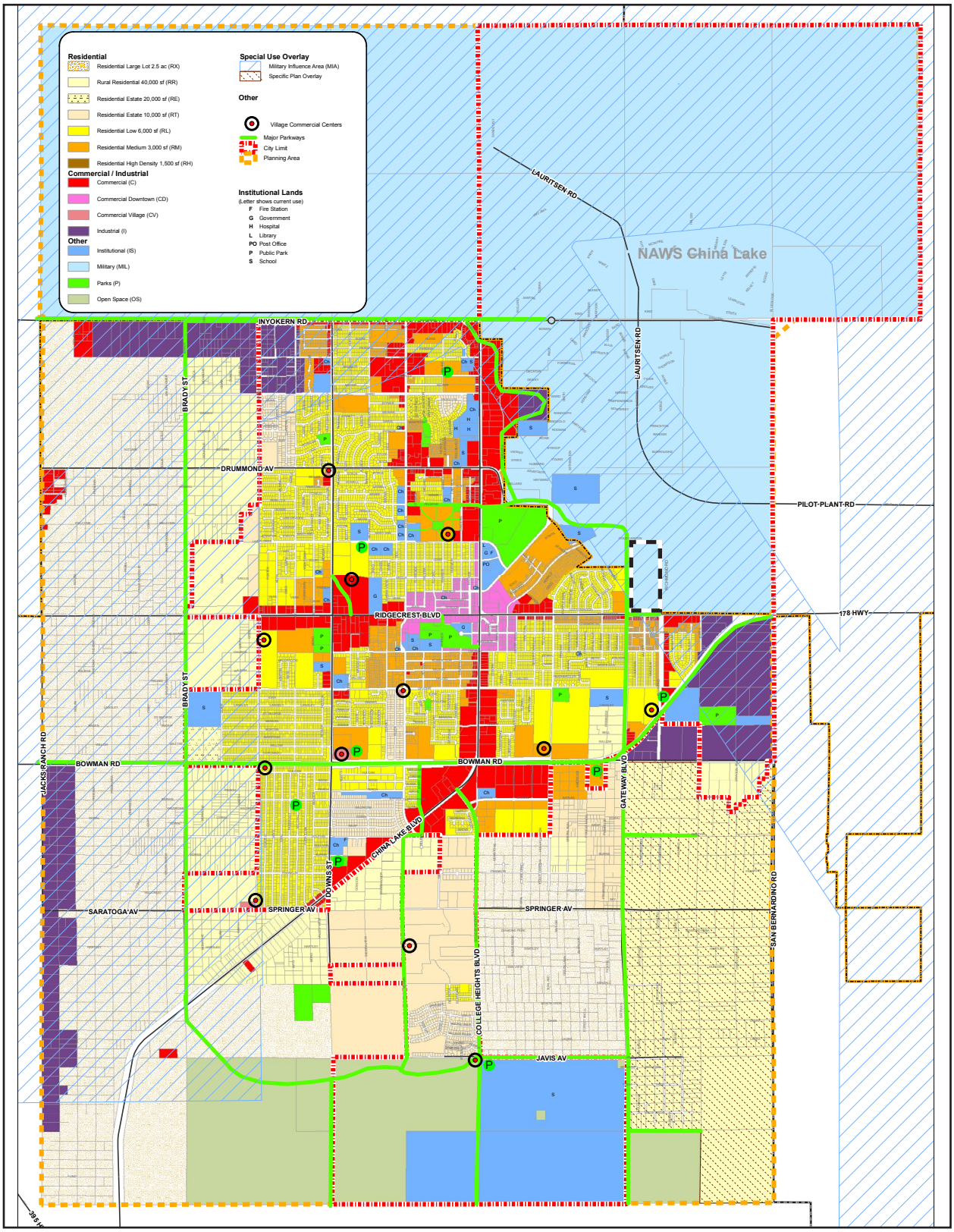
Figure 7 - General Plan Land Use Designations

1. Introduction



New School Site

0 1
Scale (Mile)

Source: City of Ridgecrest

1. Introduction

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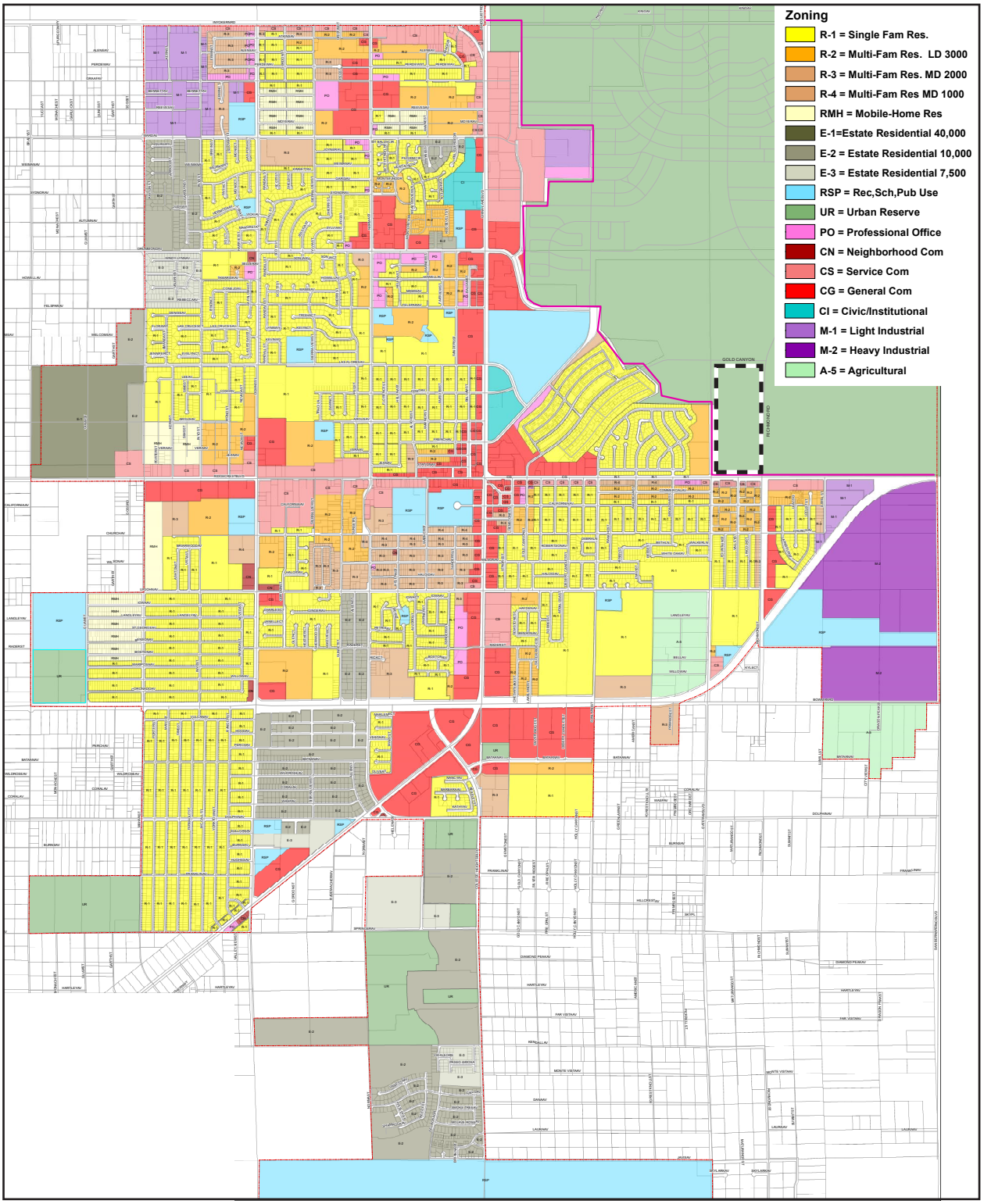
Figure 8 - Zoning Designations
1. Introduction



New School Site

0 3,500
Scale (Feet)

Source: City of Ridgecrest, 2009

1. Introduction

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1.4 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1.4.1 Background

Richmond Elementary School at 1206 Kearsarge Avenue, Ridgecrest, is owned and maintained by the SSUSD on property leased from the NAWSCL. Built in 1953, the school buildings are 67 years old. During the July 2019 earthquakes, the school sustained extensive damage.

The SSUSD carefully reviewed all required repairs at Richmond and analyzed all options along with all sources of funding and other resources and determined that, although funding and resources would substantially assist with structural repairs, funding is not available to repair significant cosmetic damage to the site. It would be exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, to eliminate all cosmetic damage, and the remaining cosmetic issues would substantially affect any visitor's sense of safety while visiting Richmond. Therefore, the SSUSD determined that the required repairs and other logistical issues would substantially increase the cost to return the school to a safe, comfortable learning and working environment for students, staff, and community. Additionally, it was determined that the preferred solution was to construct a new elementary school outside the NAWSCL secure fence line.

Richmond Elementary students and all operations were temporarily relocated to the Vieweg Adult Education Center at 348 Rowe Street until a new school is constructed. The new school project would be financed with a grant from the DOD Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation, and the SSUSD would lease approximately 40 acres of the 77-acre property from the Navy.

The proposed project involves the construction of a new elementary school on a vacant site approximately two miles southwest of the existing Richmond Elementary School and one mile southeast of the temporary school.

It is anticipated that the Navy could make the damaged school structurally sound and reuse it or demolish it at some point in the future. The possible demolition is not part of this project.

1.4.2 Proposed Facilities

The students at the temporary elementary school would transfer to the new elementary school. The new school would accommodate existing and future growth for students in TK through 6th grade, with seats for up to 822 students.[16] As shown in Table 1, at full buildout the campus would consist of 99,850 building square feet in five 1-story buildings (see Figure 9, *Conceptual Site Plan*).

[16] The total student population of the new campus is based on the student number from the 2019 Richmond ES campus plus an increase from the possible closure of a charter school campus. Other District schools would also increase student numbers to accommodate displaced students from the charter school, including Vieweg ES. Richmond ES classrooms are provided per the CDE loading requirements.

1. Introduction

Table 1 Proposed Buildings

Building	Square Feet
Building A: Administration, Multipurpose, Kitchen, Cafeteria, Medically Fragile/Life Skills/Physical Therapy/Adaptive Physical Education	29,563
Building B: Information Center (Media/Library), Computer Lab, Counseling, 8 Kindergarten Classrooms	22,748
Building C: 12 Primary (1–3) Classrooms	18,814
Building D: 8 Intermediate (4–5) Classrooms	23,661
Building E: STEAM classroom (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics), 2 Intermediate (4–5) Classrooms)	5,067
Total	**99,853**

Additionally, the campus would include:

- 8 basketball courts
- Track and turf play fields
- Hardcourt play areas with covered shade areas
- Kindergarten playground
- Covered lunch shelter
- Landscape (turf, trees, shrubs, etc.)
- Sensory and participatory gardens
- Vehicle circulation and parking

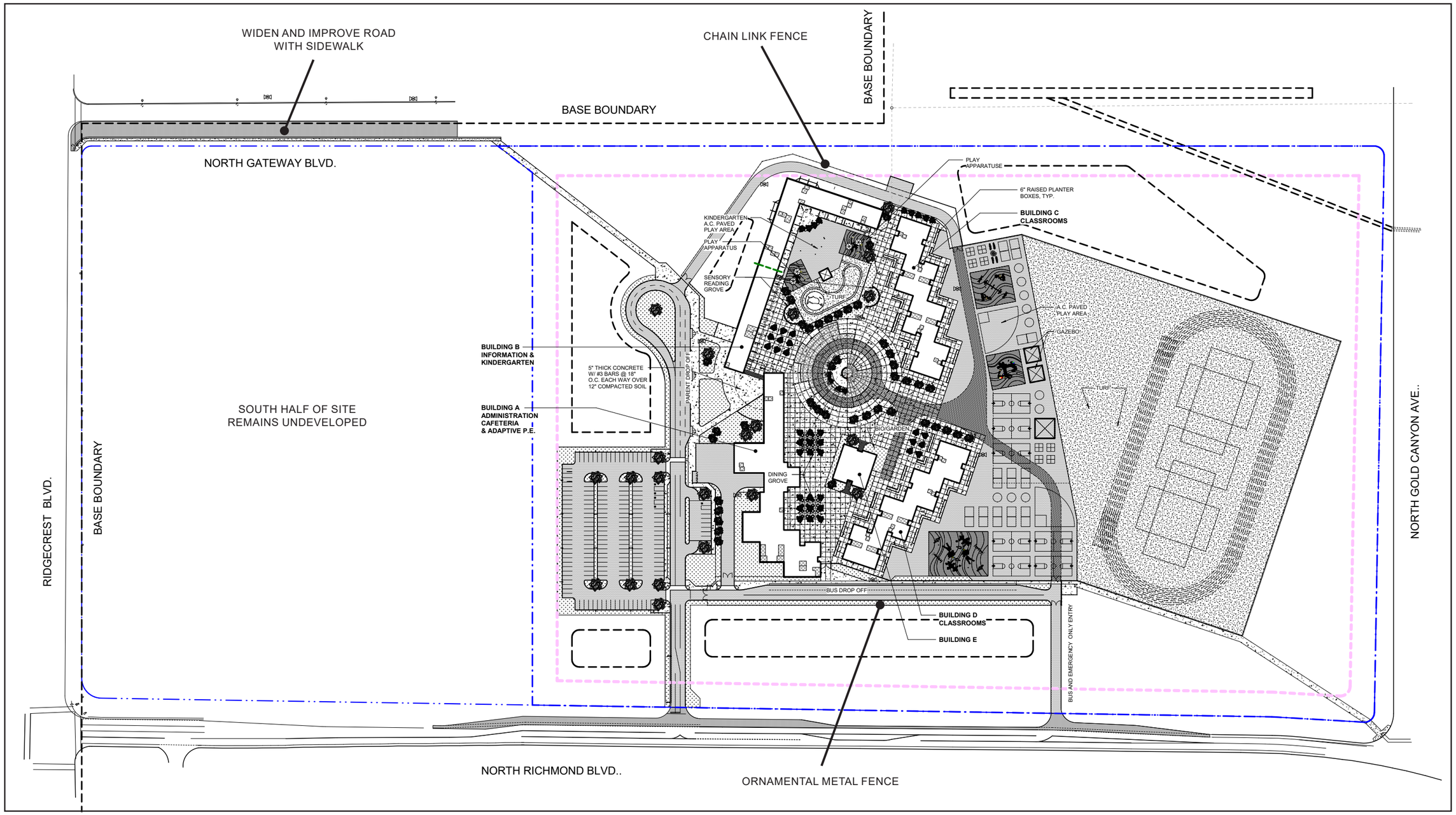
1.4.2.1 UTILITIES

The parking lots, walkways, and buildings would have security lights. All lights would be shielded to avoid light spill onto adjacent properties. The play fields would not have nighttime lighting.

Underground utilities would be brought to the site from available connection points of the utility companies from adjacent streets. All fire hydrant location would be coordinated with the Kern County Fire Department.

Future on-campus solar electrical generation adequate to provide power for this campus through a power purchase agreement is accommodated and would provide shading of the main parking area.

Figure 9 - Conceptual Site Plan



Source: IBI, 2020

1. Introduction

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1.4.2.2 ATTENDANCE BOUNDRY CHANGE

The proposed project would also result in a change in the attendance boundary for Pierce Elementary School and Richmond Elementary School. Currently, the elementary students north of Ridgecrest Boulevard attend Pierce Elementary School at 674 Gold Canyon Street (in Ridgecrest Landing Apartments and Gateway Villa Apartments; west of Gateway Boulevard; and the single-family neighborhoods with access from Sunland Drive, American Street, and Broadway Street). These students would attend Richmond ES after the school is operational. The remaining attendance boundary would stay the same. Students that walk and bike to Pierce ES would likely do the same for the new Richmond ES. Other students in the Richmond ES attendance boundary would continue traveling by bus, car or bike.

1.4.2.3 SITE ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

The student drop-off/pick-up zone would be accessed via the southern driveway off Richmond Road. After drop-off/pick-up, vehicles would use the loop road, then exit via the same southern driveway. Unloading and loading would be directly from the passenger side and there would be a passing lane to the left so traffic circulation would not be obstructed. Bus access (including for special education and medically fragile students) would be via the northern driveway with a designated drop-off/pick-up zone on the east side of the campus. Buses would exit via the southern driveway. Unloading and loading would be directly from the passenger side and there would be a passing lane to the left so bus circulation would not be obstructed. The northern driveway would also be for buses only.

The new school is outside the NAWSCL secure area, and base traffic would use the Richmond Gate.

Access to the campus for students that walk and bike would be via open space trails and local roadways to internal walkways. A six-foot-wide, on-campus walkway would run from Gateway Boulevard diagonally northeast to the campus drop-off/pick-up area. Additionally, a six-foot-wide, on-campus walkway would run from the Gold Canyon Street/Richmond Road intersection diagonally southwest to the bus area. Subject to approval by the City of Ridgecrest (Gateway Boulevard), Caltrans (Ridgecrest Boulevard), and NAWSCL (Richmond Road), other roadway improvements would include:

- Widen Gateway Boulevard to the east to its full secondary street design standard, with curb, gutter, and six-foot-wide sidewalk from Richmond Road to the new crosswalk (about 800 linear feet).
- Widen Richmond Road to the west to its half-width collector road design standard,[17] with deceleration and merge lanes for southbound traffic and designated turn lanes for northbound traffic, and curb and gutter from about 400 feet south of Gold Canyon to Ridgecrest Boulevard. Roadwork also includes a six-foot-wide sidewalk from the southernmost access driveway to Ridgecrest Boulevard (about 1,120 linear feet).

[17] Department of Public Works. 1986, December 3. Engineering Design Standards and Details. City of Ridgecrest. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/203/Engineer-Design-Standards-PDF?bidId=

- Install school area warning signs on Ridgecrest Boulevard, Richmond Road, and Gold Canyon Street that state "School – Speed Limit 25 – When Children Are Present" and install a school zone sign on Gateway Boulevard.

- Repaint the crosswalks at the Ridgecrest Boulevard/Richmond Road intersection with yellow or thermoplastic paint.

Because of the lack of students and pedestrians, no street-adjacent sidewalks would be constructed on Ridgecrest Boulevard, Gold Canyon Street, or on Richmond Road north of the southern driveway, and Gateway Boulevard would not be extended north to Gold Canyon Street.

School access for parents/guardians and vendors would be less complicated than the damaged school inside the security fence on the base. Access to the driveway and parking lot would be open. However, there would be a security procedure for access inside the campus. Parents/guardians and vendors entering the campus while school was in session would be required to check in at the administrative office and receive a pass. Before- and after-school programs would be open to all student parents/guardians, extended family, and friends.

1.4.2.4 PARKING

Parking for school staff would be south of the main campus and south of the drop-off/pick-up lanes. This lot would have a total of 172 parking spaces. In addition, 8 short-term visitor spaces would be on the north side of the drop-off/pick-up lanes.

1.4.2.5 STORMWATER DRAINAGE

The project would not change or obstruct the historical drainage, coming from the west and continuing across the northwest corner of the site and under Gold Canyon Street. No school campus construction would occur on or near this drainage feature. The campus would have four retention basins to collect and hold stormwater runoff from impervious areas of the campus. The retention basins would hold a 10-year, 5-day storm event. The site would not generate additional off-site runoff to the surrounding streets or drainage system compared to existing conditions.

1.4.2.6 OPERATION

When the new school is completed, students would transfer to the new location from the temporary location at the Vieweg Adult Education Center. The new elementary school would initially have the same number of students as the existing school (460 students) plus an additional 109 special education and medically fragile students. The total capacity of the school, however, would be 822 students to accommodate future growth.

Under normal (i.e., non-Covid-19) conditions, the new school would operate on the same schedule as the damaged school: a traditional, two-semester academic calendar, with students in session from August through June. School hours would be 8:45 am to 3:15 pm; teachers arrive on campus at 8:00 am and depart at 3:30 pm; some students may be on campus before and/or after school hours. Approximately 240 students arrive on 11 buses between 8:45 and 8:55 am; approximately the same number of students depart on 11 buses between 3:15 and 3:40 pm.

School-Related Events. The new school would have after-school programs for the students, such as special-interest clubs and extracurricular activities, that end later than 3:15 pm. There would also be occasional nighttime and weekend events during the school year. Some of these events would be campus wide, such as school plays and winter programs, and others would be grade specific, such as commencement.

Community Use. In compliance with the Civic Center Act, the campus would be available for community and DOD use at selected times when not in use by SSUSD.[18]

1.4.2.7 CONSTRUCTION

Project construction is anticipated to start in Summer 2021 and take about 24 months to complete, with occupancy in Fall 2023. Construction activities would include vegetation removal, excavation, site preparation and rough grading, utility trenching, fine grading, building construction, architectural coating, asphalt paving, finishing, and landscaping. The project would require earthwork on about 40 acres of the 77-acre parcel.[19]

- Demolition. The site vegetation would be removed and cleared.
- Site grading and excavation. Rough grading and fine grading would involve approximately 30,000 cubic yards of earth movement and would be balanced with no export or imported of soil or fill material.
- Utility Trenching. Utility trenches would be excavated, and utility pipes and cables would be laid in trenches and connected to existing lines. Maximum depth of trenching for storm drains and sewers would be about 8 feet.
- Construction. Five one-story permanent custom modular buildings (built in a factory, transported, and assembled on-site).
- Asphalt and Concrete. Paving and off-site street work for parking lots, hardcourts, walkways, road widening, and curb and gutter. Total surface parking lot to be paved = 60,820 square feet; non-parking asphalt (e.g., internal circulation; hardcourts) = 240,430 square feet; hardscape (e.g., concrete curb, walkways) = 174,800 square feet.
- Architectural Coating. Inside and outside building painting.
- Finishing and Landscaping. Indoor finishing work such as installing of carpet, utility and telecommunications, furniture; outdoor installation of landscaping and field. Total landscaped areas = 94,500; total turf play fields = 329,000 square feet.

Construction Best Management Practices. The SSUSD requires its construction contractors to comply with all applicable rules and regulations in carrying out the construction of the proposed project. Project implementation would also comply with the SSUSD construction best management practices (BMP), which are established and refined as part of the SSUSD's current building efforts.

[18] California Education Code §§ 38130–38139.
[19] All measurements are approximate and subject to minor change during refinement of site plan and engineering.

The SSUSD requires its contractors to submit a worksite traffic control plan to the City of Ridgecrest Public Works Department and Caltrans District 9 for review prior to construction. The plan would show the location of haul routes, construction hours, protective devices, warning signs, and access to abutting properties.

1.1 LEAD AGENCY

SSUSD is the lead agency under CEQA for the proposed project. As part of the project approval process, the Board of Education must adopt the MND as adequate in complying with the requirements of CEQA before taking any action on the proposed project. The board is required to consider the information in the MND while making the decision to approve or deny the proposed project. In accordance with CEQA requirements, the analysis in the MND provides environmental review for the whole of the proposed project, including the planning, construction, and ongoing operation.

1.2 ANTICIPATED AGENCY ACTIONS

It is the intent of this CEQA document to enable the SSUSD and responsible agencies to evaluate the environmental impacts of the proposed project, thereby enabling them to make informed decisions with respect to the requested entitlements, permits, or approvals. Agency actions are identified in Table 2.

Table 2 Anticipated Agency Actions

Lead Agency	Discretionary Action
Sierra Sands Unified School District	Adopt Mitigated Negative Declaration and Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program
	Approve Project
Responsible Agency	**Action**
United States Department of Navy	Authority for all land use decisions on NAWSCL, including approval of lease agreement and Facilities Alteration Request
Reviewing Agency[20]	**Action**
Kern County Fire Department	Review of plans for emergency access and emergency evacuation. DSA approval of the fire/life safety portion of a project requires local fire authority review of: access roads, fire lane markings, pavers, and gate entrances; fire hydrant location and distribution; and fire flow (location of post indicator valve, fire department connection, and detector check valve assembly).
City of Ridgecrest Public Works	Approval of off-site improvements permit for driveways, curb, gutter, any other off-site work (sewer, water, stormwater lines, etc.), and school signage along Ridgecrest Boulevard and Gateway Boulevard outside NAWSCL. Review of worksite traffic control plan.
Caltrans District 9	Review of worksite traffic control plan. Caltrans encroachment permit for ADA-compliant curb ramp at northwest corner of Richmond Road & Ridgecrest Boulevard (State Route 178), and any work along Ridgecrest Boulevard.
Indian Wells Valley Water District (IWVWD)	Obtain a "Will Serve Letter"

[20] 14 CCR § 15381. "Responsible Agency" means a public agency which proposes to carry out or approve a project, for which a Lead Agency is preparing or has prepared an EIR or Negative Declaration. For the purposes of CEQA, the term "Responsible Agency" includes all public agencies other than the Lead Agency which have discretionary approval power over the project. "Reviewing Agencies" include those agencies that do not have discretionary powers over the proposed project, but that may: 1) review the EIR for adequacy and accuracy; 2) issue ministerial approvals or permits.

Table 2 Anticipated Agency Actions

California Department of General Services, Division of State Architect (DSA)	Plan review and construction oversight, including structural safety, fire and life safety, and access compliance.
California Department of Education, School Facilities Planning Division (CDE)	If SSUSD is requesting funds from the State Allocation Board, it must have the plans reviewed and approved by the CDE (Education Code § 17070.50) prior to submitting a funding request. Approval of design for educational appropriateness.
Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District (EKAPCD)	Review and file submittals for Rule 403, Fugitive Dust.
California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC)	Approval of Phase I Environmental Site Assessment; issuance of a "No Further Action" determination

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2. Environmental Checklist

2.1 PROJECT INFORMATION

1. **Project Title:** Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project

2. **Lead Agency Name and Address:**
   Sierra Sands Unified School District
   113 West Feldspar Avenue
   Ridgecrest, CA 93555

3. **Contact Person and Phone Number:**
   Pamela P. Smith
   Assistant Superintendent, Business & Support Services
   760-499-1604

4. **Project Location:** West side of Richmond Road between Ridgecrest Boulevard and Gold Canyon Street, City of Ridgecrest, Kern County. Assessor's Parcel Number 033-050-09.

5. **Project Sponsor's Name and Address:**
   Sierra Sands Unified School District
   113 West Feldspar Avenue
   Ridgecrest, CA 93555

6. **General Plan Designation:** Military (ML)

7. **Zoning:** Urban Reserve (UR)

8. **Description of Project:**
   At full buildout, the new school would accommodate existing and future growth for students in TK through 5th grade with seats for up to 822 students. The campus would consist of a total of 99,850 square feet in five 1-story buildings: A – Administration, Multipurpose, Kitchen, Cafeteria, Medically Fragile/Life Skills/Physical Therapy/Adaptive Physical Education; B - Information, Library, Kindergarten; Building C & D – Classrooms; Building E - STEAM Classroom Building. Also, track and turf play fields, 8 basketball courts and other hardcourt play areas with covered shade areas, kindergarten playground, covered lunch shelter, landscape and hardscape areas, roadways for traffic circulation, and 180 parking spaces.

9. **Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:**
   The project site is bordered by Gold Canyon Street and vacant land and NAWSCL Solar Farm to the north; Ridgecrest Boulevard, Gateway Center (office and retail), and single-family residences to the south;

2. Environmental Checklist

Richmond Road, NAWSCL Park and Ride lot, and vacant land to the east; and single- and multifamily development and vacant land to the west.

10. Other Public Agencies Whose Approval Is Required (e.g., permits, financing approval, or participating agreement):

- United States Department of Navy
- Department of Toxic Substances Control
- Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board
- City of Ridgecrest Public Works
- City of Ridgecrest Police Department
- Kern County Fire Department

11. Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1? If so, is there a plan for consultation that includes, for example, the determination of significance of impacts to tribal cultural resources, procedures regarding confidentiality, etc.?

Note: Conducting consultation early in the CEQA process allows tribal governments, lead agencies, and project proponents to discuss the level of environmental review, identify and address potential adverse impacts to tribal cultural resources, and reduce the potential for delay and conflict in the environmental review process. (See Public Resources Code section 21080.3.2.) Information may also be available from the California Native American Heritage Commission's Sacred Lands File per Public Resources Code section 5097.94 and the California Historical Resources Information System administered by the California Office of Historic Preservation. Please also note that Public Resources Code section 21082.3(c) contains provisions specific to confidentiality.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1, the District received a request for notification of projects from the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians dated May 5, 2016, from Michael Mirelez, Cultural Resource Coordinator. The District notified the tribe in a written letter dated October 1, 2020 and delivered via U.S. Post and email.

2.2 ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS POTENTIALLY AFFECTED

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact," as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

☐ Aesthetics	☐ Agriculture / Forestry Resources	☐ Air Quality
☐ Biological Resources	☐ Cultural Resources	☐ Energy
☐ Geology/Soils	☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
☐ Hydrology/Water Quality	☐ Land Use / Planning	☐ Mineral Resources
☐ Noise	☐ Population / Housing	☐ Public Services
☐ Recreation	☐ Transportation	☐ Tribal Cultural Resources
☐ Utilities / Service Systems	☐ Wildfire	☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance

2.3 DETERMINATION (TO BE COMPLETED BY THE LEAD AGENCY)

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

☐ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☒ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.

☐ I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or "potentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION pursuant to applicable standards, and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier EIR or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project, nothing further is required.

Pamela P. Smith Digitally signed by Pamela P. Smith
Date: 2021.04.05 09:31:07 -07'00'

Signature *Date*

2.4 EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

1. A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parentheses following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to projects like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors, as well as general standards (e.g., the project would not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).

2. All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.

3. Once the lead agency has determined that a particular physical impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is appropriate if there is substantial evidence that an effect may be significant. If there are one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries when the determination is made, an EIR is required.

4. "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less Than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level.

5. Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration. Section 15063(c)(3)(D). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:

   a) **Earlier Analyses Used.** Identify and state where they are available for review.

   b) I**mpacts Adequately Addressed.** Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.

   c) **Mitigation Measures.** For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.

6. Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.

7. Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.

8. This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.

9. The explanation of each issue should identify:

   a) the significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
   b) the mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance.

2.5 SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS UNDER THE STATE SCHOOL FACILITY PROGRAM

The State of California's standards for school site selection are in Title 5 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR) § 14010. Additional regulations applicable to school facilities are in the Education, Government, and Public Resources Codes. These criteria and requirements are addressed in other documents because they are not within the purview of CEQA. Generally, CEQA is limited to the assessment of a project's potential impacts on the environment and not the environment's impacts on a project. However, CEQA requires that no EIR or Negative Declaration be approved without making findings relative to certain health and safety factors in the lead agency's assessment of a new school site or addition to an existing school site. These are outlined in PRC § 21151.8.

> **§ 21151.8. SCHOOLSITE ACQUISITION OR CONSTRUCTION; APPROVAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT OR NEGATIVE DECLARATION; CONDITIONS**
>
> (a) An environmental impact report shall not be certified or a negative declaration shall not be approved for a project involving the purchase of a school site or the construction of a new elementary or secondary school by a school district unless all of the following occur:
>
> (1) The environmental impact report or negative declaration includes information that is needed to determine if the property proposed to be purchased, or to be constructed upon, is any of the following:
>
> (A) The site of a current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site and, if so, whether the wastes have been removed.
>
> (B) A hazardous substance release site identified by the Department of Toxic Substances Control in a current list adopted pursuant to § 25356 of the Health and Safety Code for removal or remedial action pursuant to Chapter 6.8 (commencing with § 25300) of Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code.
>
> (C) A site that contains one or more pipelines, situated underground or aboveground, that carries hazardous substances, extremely hazardous substances, or hazardous wastes, unless the pipeline is a natural gas line that is used only to supply natural gas to that school or neighborhood, or other nearby schools.
>
> (D) A site that is within 500 feet of the edge of the closest traffic lane of a freeway or other busy traffic corridor.

2. Environmental Checklist

(2) (A) The school district, as the lead agency, in preparing the environmental impact report or negative declaration has notified in writing and consulted with the administering agency in which the proposed schoolsite is located, pursuant to § 2735.3 of Title 19 of the California Code of Regulations, and with any air pollution control district or air quality management district having jurisdiction in the area, to identify both permitted and nonpermitted facilities within that district's authority, including, but not limited to, freeways and busy traffic corridors, large agricultural operations, and railyards, within one-fourth of a mile of the proposed schoolsite, that might reasonably be anticipated to emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or extremely hazardous substances or waste. The notification by the school district, as the lead agency, shall include a list of the locations for which information is sought.

(B) Each administering agency, air pollution control district, or air quality management district receiving written notification from a lead agency to identify facilities pursuant to subparagraph (A) shall provide the requested information and provide a written response to the lead agency within 30 days of receiving the notification. The environmental impact report or negative declaration shall be conclusively presumed to comply with subparagraph (A) as to the area of responsibility of an agency that does not respond within 30 days.

(C) If the school district, as a lead agency, has carried out the consultation required by subparagraph (A), the environmental impact report or the negative declaration shall be conclusively presumed to comply with subparagraph (A), notwithstanding any failure of the consultation to identify an existing facility or other pollution source specified in subparagraph (A).

(3) The governing board of the school district makes one of the following written findings:

(A) Consultation identified no facilities of this type or other significant pollution sources specified in paragraph (2).

(B) The facilities or other pollution sources specified in paragraph (2) exist, but one of the following conditions applies:

(i) The health risks from the facilities or other pollution sources do not and will not constitute an actual or potential endangerment of public health to persons who would attend or be employed at the proposed school.

(ii) Corrective measures required under an existing order by another agency having jurisdiction over the facilities or other pollution sources will, before the school is occupied, result in the mitigation of all chronic or accidental hazardous air emissions to levels that do not constitute an actual or potential endangerment of public health to persons who would attend or be employed at the proposed school. If the governing board makes a finding pursuant to this clause, it shall also make a subsequent finding, prior to occupancy of the school, that the emissions have been so mitigated.

(iii) For a schoolsite with a boundary that is within 500 feet of the edge of the closest traffic lane of a freeway or other busy traffic corridor, the governing board of the school district determines, through analysis pursuant to paragraph (2) of subdivision (b) of § 44360 of the Health and Safety Code, based on appropriate air dispersion modeling, and after considering any potential mitigation measures,

that the air quality at the proposed site is such that neither short-term nor long-term exposure poses significant health risks to pupils.

(C) The facilities or other pollution sources specified in paragraph (2) exist, but conditions in clause (i), (ii) or (iii) of subparagraph (B) cannot be met, and the school district is unable to locate an alternative site that is suitable due to a severe shortage of sites that meet the requirements in subdivision (a) of § 17213 of the Education Code. If the governing board makes this finding, the governing board shall adopt a statement of Overriding Considerations pursuant to § 15093 of Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations.

These air quality and hazards topics are additional to the standard CEQA checklist. The following matrix identifies the specific questions related to the required findings and where in the CEQA checklist these are addressed. The assessment may be used to make the written findings required in PRC § 21151.8(a)(3).

SPECIAL CEQA REQUIREMENTS FOR A NEW SCHOOL SITE OR ADDITION TO EXISTING SCHOOL

Topic	Applicable Code	Environmental Checklist
Air Quality		
Is the boundary of the proposed school site within 500 feet of the edge of the closest traffic lane of a freeway or busy traffic corridor? If yes, would the project create an air quality health risk due to the placement of the school?	PRC § 21151.8(a)(1)(D)	Section III, Air Quality, Question (e)
Would the project create an air quality hazard due to the placement of a school within one-quarter mile of: (a) permitted and nonpermitted facilities identified by the jurisdictional air quality control board or air pollution control district; (b) freeways and other busy traffic corridors; (c) large agricultural operations; and/or (d) a rail yard, which might reasonably be anticipated to emit hazardous air emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous material, substances, or waste?	PRC § 21151.8 (a)(2)	Section III, Air Quality, Question (f)
Hazards and Hazardous Materials		
Does the proposed school site contain one or more pipelines, situated underground or aboveground, which carry hazardous substances, acutely hazardous materials, or hazardous wastes, unless the pipeline is a natural gas line that is used only to supply natural gas to that school or neighborhood?	PRC § 21151.8 (a)(1)(C)	Section IX, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Question (h)
Does the project site contain a current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site and, if so, have the wastes been removed?	PRC § 21151.8 (a)(1)(A)	Section IX, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Question (i)
Is the project site a hazardous substance release site identified by the state Department of Health Services in a current list adopted pursuant to § 25356 for removal or remedial action pursuant to Chapter 6.8 of Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code?	PRC § 21151.8 (a)(1)(B)	Section IX, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Question (j)

2. Environmental Checklist

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
I. AESTHETICS. Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?			X	
b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?				X
c) In nonurbanized areas, 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?			X	
d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?			X	
II. AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES. In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:				
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?				X
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?				X
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?				X
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?				X
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 forest land to non-forest use?				X
III. AIR QUALITY. Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?			X	
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?			X	

2. Environmental Checklist

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?			X	
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?			X	
e) Is the boundary of the proposed school site within 500 feet of the edge of the closest traffic lane of a freeway or busy traffic corridor? If yes, would the project create an air quality health risk due to the placement of the school?			X	
f) Create an air quality hazard due to the placement of a school within one-quarter mile of: (a) permitted and nonpermitted facilities identified by the jurisdictional air quality control board or air pollution control district; (b) freeways and other busy traffic corridors; (c) large agricultural operations; and/or (d) a rail yard, which might reasonably be anticipated to emit hazardous air emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous material, substances, or waste?			X	
IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES. Would the project:				
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?		X		
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?			X	
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?			X	
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?		X		
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?			X	
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?			X	
V. CULTURAL RESOURCES. Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?				X
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?		X		
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?			X	

2. Environmental Checklist

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
VI. ENERGY. Would the project:				
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?			X	
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?				X
VII. GEOLOGY AND SOILS. Would the project:				
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.			X	
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?			X	
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?			X	
iv) Landslides?			X	
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?				X
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?			X	
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?			X	
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?				X
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?		X		
VIII. GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS. Would the project:				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?			X	
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?			X	
IX. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS. Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?			X	
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?			X	

2. Environmental Checklist

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?			X	
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code § 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?			X	
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 or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?			X	
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				X
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?			X	
h) Does the proposed school site contain one or more pipelines, situated underground or aboveground, which carry hazardous substances, acutely hazardous materials, or hazardous wastes, unless the pipeline is a natural gas line that is used only to supply natural gas to that school or neighborhood?				X
i) Does the project site contain a current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site and, if so, have the wastes been removed?				X
j) Is the project site a hazardous substance release site identified by the state Department of Health Services in a current list adopted pursuant to § 25356 for removal or remedial action pursuant to Chapter 6.8 of Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code?				X
X. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY. Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?			X	
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?			X	
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 which would:				
i) result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;			X	
ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;			X	

2. Environmental Checklist

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or			X	
iv) impede or redirect flood flows?			X	
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?				X
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?			X	
XI. LAND USE AND PLANNING. Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?				X
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?			X	
XII. MINERAL RESOURCES. Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be a value to the region and the residents of the state?				X
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?				X
XIII. NOISE. Would the project result in:				
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?			X	
b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?			X	
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or 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 expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?				X
XIV. POPULATION AND HOUSING. Would the project:				
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?				X
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?				X

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XV. PUBLIC SERVICES. Would the project:				
a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental 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:				
Fire protection?			X	
Police protection?			X	
Schools?				X
Parks?				X
Other public facilities?				X
XVI. RECREATION.				
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?				X
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?			X	
XVII. TRANSPORTATION. Would the project:				
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?			X	
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?			X	
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?			X	
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?			X	
XVIII. TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES.				
a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources 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 Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or				X

2. Environmental Checklist

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
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 Resource Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.			X	
XIX. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS. Would the project:				
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 or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?			X	
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?			X	
c) Result in a determination by the waste water 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?			X	
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?			X	
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?			X	
XX. WILDFIRE. If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, would the project:				
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				X
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?				X
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 temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?				X
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?				X

Issues	Potentially Significant Impact	Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
XXI. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE.				
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially 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?		**X**		
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that 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.)		**X**		
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?		**X**		

2. Environmental Checklist

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3. Environmental Analysis

Section 2.4 provided a checklist of environmental impacts. This section provides an evaluation of the impact categories and questions in the CEQA checklist and identifies mitigation measures to reduce significant impacts.

3.1 AESTHETICS

Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Less Than Significant Impact. Vistas provide visual access or panoramic views to a large geographic area. The field of view from a vista location can be wide and extend into the distance. Panoramic views are usually associated with vantage points looking out over a section of urban or natural area that provides a geographic orientation not commonly available. Examples of panoramic views include an urban skyline, valley, mountain range, the ocean, or other water bodies.[21]

The City is in the Upper Mojave Desert surrounded by mountain ranges, and scenic corridors generally allow for views of these features: the Coso Range on the north, El Paso Mountains on the south, the Argus Range on the east, and the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range on the west.

The Ridgecrest General Plan does not identify any designated scenic vistas in the city, but states, "Ridgecrest's Scenic Corridor Plan identifies several scenic corridors in the Planning Area. These corridors include West Inyokern Road, North and South China Lake Boulevard, East and West Ridgecrest Boulevard, West Bowman Road, College Heights Boulevard, West Drummond Avenue and Jacks Ranch Road and have been identified so because of their scenic qualities and their existing or potential function as gateways into the City."[22]

The project site is along East Ridgecrest Boulevard, which provides views of the Argus Range on the east. The most prominent feature as viewed from the project site is Lone Butte, approximately four miles northeast. At this distance the butte appears low against the horizon. Other topographic features are farther away and lower on the horizon.

The one-story school buildings would be approximately 0.25 mile north of East Ridgecrest Boulevard. The school buildings would be similar in height to surrounding one-story commercial and residential developments. Additionally, the project site is zoned Urban Reserve (UR), which is land held in reserve for future urban expansion.[23] Therefore the City's designation of East Ridgecrest Boulevard as a scenic corridor anticipated

[21] Los Angeles, City of. 2006. L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide, Chapter A. https://planning.lacity.org/eir/CrossroadsHwd/deir/files/references/A07.pdf.

[22] Ridgecrest, City of. 2009, December 2. City of Ridgecrest General Plan. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/166/General-Plan-PDF

[23] Ridgecrest, City of. as of December 2, 2009. Current Zoning. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/174/Zoning-Map-PDF.

development on the project site. There are no protected or designated scenic vistas in the project vicinity. Therefore, scenic vista impacts would be less than significant.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

No Impact. A highway is designated as scenic by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon a traveler's enjoyment of the view.[24]

There are no designated state scenic highways in or near the City of Ridgecrest or in Kern County. The closest officially designated state scenic highway is US Highway 395 (US 395) from Fort Independence to Fish Springs Road and the closest point is approximately 103 miles northeast of the project site.[25] US 395 from State Route 14 (SR 14) to SR 89 is designated as an eligible state scenic highway in Kern County; this portion is approximately 7 miles west of the project site. Other eligible state scenic highways are SR 14, SR 58, and SR 41. The new school would not be visible from the designated state scenic highways or the four eligible state scenic highways in Kern County.[26] Because of distance, the project would not result in impacts to scenic resources within a designated state scenic highway; therefore, no impact would occur.

c) In nonurbanized areas, 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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project site is on the eastern edge of a suburban area and is considered a "nonurbanized area."[27] The project site is vacant and is bordered by Gold Canyon Street, vacant land, and NAWSCL Solar Farm to the north; Ridgecrest Boulevard, Gateway Center (office and retail), and single-family residences to the south; Richmond Road, a NAWSCL Park and Ride lot, and vacant land to the east; and single- and multifamily development and vacant land to the west. The new school would be developed on the northern half of the project site, and the southern half would remain vacant desert land. Although the proposed project would change the character of the site from vacant land to a school campus, it would not degrade the visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. Schools are typically located in residential areas because they serve the students that live in those areas. The school would be visually compatible with the

[24] California Department of Transportation. 2020, July 22 (accessed). Scenic Highways - Frequently Asked Questions. https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways-faq2.

[25] California Department of Transportation. 2020, July 22 (accessed). California Highway System. https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=026e830c914c495797c969a3e5668538

[26] California Department of Transportation. 2020, July 22 (accessed). Scenic Highways - Scenic Highway System Lists. https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways

[27] PRC § 21071/CEQA Guidelines § 15191(m)(1). For an incorporated city, "urbanized area" means a city that either by itself or in combination with two contiguous incorporated cities has a population of at least 100,000 persons. There are no contiguous incorporated cities adjacent to the City of Ridgecrest which is estimated to have a population of about 28,973 in 2019 (based on U.S. Census Bureau. QuickFacts. July 1, 2019. https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/ridgecrestcitycalifornia,US/PST045219?). Ridgecrest does not qualify as an "urbanized area."

surrounding development. Impacts to the visual character and quality of public views of the project site and surrounding uses would be less than significant.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Less Than Significant Impact. The two major causes of light pollution are glare and spill light. Spill light is caused by misdirected light that illuminates areas outside the area intended to be lit. Glare occurs when a bright object appears against a dark background, such as oncoming vehicle headlights or an unshielded light bulb.

No source of lighting or glare currently occur on the project site. The project vicinity has streetlights, vehicle lights, parking lot lights, and building and security lights. The new campus would have nighttime lights for the safety of people and the security of property. The project would not include any high-intensity lighting such as those used for athletic fields or stadiums. The closest residence to the school buildings would be approximately 470 feet to the west. All campus lights would be shielded to avoid light spill and glare onto adjacent properties. Because of the distance and type of campus lighting, no spill light would occur at residential properties. The campus would not have uplighting, and nighttime views would not be significantly affected. Light and glare impacts would be less than significant.

3.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. Would the project:

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?

No Impact. The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program produces maps and statistical data for analyzing impacts on California's agricultural resources. Agricultural land is rated according to soil quality and irrigation status and is divided into five categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Farmland of Local Importance, Unique Farmland, and Grazing Land. The best quality land is Prime Farmland.[25] Farmland of Statewide Importance is similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Unique Farmland is farmland of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops.

3. Environmental Analysis

According to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program, the project site is mapped as 'Nonagricultural or Natural Vegetation.'[28] There is no agricultural or farm use on or in the vicinity of the project site. The project site is vacant and no farmland would be converted to nonagricultural use as a result of the proposed project. Therefore, no impact would occur.

b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?

No Impact. The project site is zoned as Urban Reserve (UR), which is land in reserve for future urban expansion.[29] Limited animal keeping is permitted in this zone, but crops and orchards are not permitted. The elementary school project would not conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use.

Williamson Act contracts restrict the use of privately owned land to agriculture and compatible open-space uses under contract with local governments; in exchange, the land is taxed based on actual use rather than potential market value. There is no Williamson Act contract in effect on the project site.[30] Therefore, the project would not conflict with an existing Williamson Act contract. No impact would occur.

c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?

No Impact. Forest land is defined as "land that can support 10-percent native tree cover of any species, including hardwoods, under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources, including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation, and other public benefits."[31] Timberland is defined as "land…which is available for, and capable of, growing a crop of trees of any commercial species used to produce lumber and other forest products, including Christmas trees"[32].

The project site is zoned Urban Reserve (UR)[33] (land in reserve for future urban expansion) and is not zoned for forest, timberland, or timberland production. No impact would occur.

d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact. The project site does not contain forest land, and no vegetation on-site is cultivated for forest resources. The project would not result in the loss or conversion of forest land. No impact would occur.

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28 California Department of Conservation. 2016. Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/fmmp.

29 Ridgecrest, City of. as of December 2, 2009. Current Zoning. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/174/Zoning-Map-PDF.

30 Databasin. 2010. Kern County Williamson Act Parcels and Non-Renewals, California, 2010. https://databasin.org/maps/new#datasets=b4b2b8e824114b32b1005c74663237fd

31 California Public Resources Code § 12220[g]

32 California Public Resources Code § 4526

33 Ridgecrest, City of. as of December 2, 2009. Current Zoning. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/174/Zoning-Map-PDF.

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 forest land to non-forest use?

No Impact. There is no mapped farmland or forest land on or near the project site, and project development would not indirectly cause conversion of such land to non-agricultural or non-forest use. No impact would occur.

3.3 AIR QUALITY

A background discussion on the air quality regulatory setting, meteorological conditions, existing ambient air quality in the vicinity of the project site, and air quality modeling can be found in Appendix A. Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:

a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?

Less Than Significant Impact. The primary air pollutants of concern for which ambient air quality standards (AAQS) have been established are ozone (O_3), carbon monoxide (CO), coarse inhalable particulate matter (PM_{10}), fine inhalable particulate matter ($PM_{2.5}$), sulfur dioxide (SO_2), nitrogen dioxide (NO_2), and lead (Pb). Areas are classified under the federal and California Clean Air Act as either in attainment or nonattainment for each criteria pollutant based on whether the AAQS have been achieved. The Mojave Desert Air Basin (MDAB), which is managed by the Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District (EKAPCD), is designated as nonattainment for O_3 and PM_{10} under the California and National AAQS and nonattainment for $PM_{2.5}$ under the California AAQS.[34]

Furthermore, the EKAPCD has identified regional thresholds of significance for criteria pollutant emissions and criteria air pollutant precursors, including VOC, CO, NO_X, SO_X, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$. Projects below the regional significance thresholds are small enough that their impact on regional ambient ozone levels may not be detected in the current regional air quality models. Development projects below the regional significance thresholds are not expected to generate sufficient criteria pollutant emissions to violate any air quality standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation, and therefore would not result in significant health-based air quality impacts.

The EKAPCD is responsible for preparing the air quality management plan (AQMP) for the eastern Kern County portion of the MDAB in coordination with the Kern Council of Governments (KCOG).[35,36] Because these AQMPs take into account growth in eastern Kern County based on regional projections from KCOG,

[34] California Air Resources Board (CARB). 2017, October 18. Area Designations Maps/State and National. http://www.arb.ca.gov/desig/desig.htm.

[35] Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District (EKAPCD). 2017, July 27. 2017 Ozone Attainment Planhttp://www.kernair.org/Documents/Announcements/Attainment/2017%20Ozone%20Plan_EKAPCD_Adopted_7-27-17.pdf

[36] Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District (EKAPCD). 2020, May 7. Indian Wells Valley Second 10-Year Pm10 Maintenance Plan. http://www.kernair.org/Documents/Announcements/Attainment/IWV%20PM-10%202nd%20Maintenance%20Plan%20Adopted%205-7-20.pdf

only large projects that exceed regional employment, population, and housing planning projections have the potential to be inconsistent with the regional inventory compiled as part of EKAPCD's AQMPs.

The existing student population of Richmond Elementary School and students of other schools within the District would be transferred to the new campus upon completion of the project. Thus, the project is not considered a project of statewide, regional, or areawide significance that would require intergovernmental review by the KCOG under Section 15206(b) of the CEQA Guidelines. The project also would not have the potential to substantially affect housing, employment, and population projections in the region, which are the bases of the AQMP projections. Furthermore, the net increase in regional emissions for which the MDAB is in nonattainment and that are generated by the proposed project would be less than the EKAPCD's emissions thresholds (see criterion (b), below). These thresholds are established to identify projects that have the potential to generate a substantial amount of criteria air pollutants. Because the proposed project would not exceed these thresholds, it would not be considered by the EKAPCD to be a substantial emitter of criteria air pollutants. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with or obstruct implementation of EKAPCD's AQMP, and impacts would be less than significant.

b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?

Less Than Significant Impact. The following describes project-related impacts from regional short-term construction activities and regional long-term operation of the school project.

Regional Short-Term Construction Impacts

Construction activities would result in the generation of air pollutants. These emissions would primarily be 1) exhaust from off-road diesel-powered construction equipment; 2) dust generated by construction activities; 3) exhaust from on-road vehicles; and 4) off-gassing of volatile organic compounds (VOCs) from paints and asphalt.

Construction activities to develop the elementary school are anticipated to disturb about 40 acres. The project would involve site preparation, grading, building construction, architectural coating, and paving and is anticipated to be constructed over 24 months, starting in Summer 2021 and finishing by Fall 2023. Construction emissions were estimated using the California Emissions Estimator Model (CalEEMod), version 2016.3.2.25, and are based on the project's preliminary construction duration and CalEEMod default phasing and equipment mix. As seen in Table 3, maximum daily emissions for VOC, NO_X, CO, SO_2, PM_{10}, and $PM_{2.5}$ from construction-related activities would be less than their respective EKAPCD regional significance threshold values. In addition, as seen in Table 4, annual construction emissions for these pollutants would be less than their respective EKAPCD regional significance threshold values.

Table 3 Maximum Daily Regional Construction Emissions

Construction Phase	Pollutants (lb/day)[1, 2]					
	VOC	NO_X	CO	SO_2	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$
Year 2021						
Site Preparation	4	41	22	<1	10	6
Grading	4	47	32	<1	6	3
Building Construction 2021	3	28	25	<1	3	2
Year 2022						
Building Construction 2022	3	26	24	<1	3	1
Year 2022						
Building Construction 2023	3	22	23	<1	3	1
Building Construction 2023, Paving, and Architectural Coating	86	34	41	<1	4	2
Maximum Daily Construction Emissions						
Maximum Daily Emissions	86	47	41	<1	10	6
EKAPCD Regional Threshold (lb/day)	137	137	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Exceeds Threshold?	No	No	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: CalEEMod Version 2016.3.2.25.

Notes: lbs: pounds; N/A: not applicable.

[1] Based on the preliminary information provided by the District. Where specific information regarding project-related construction activities was not available, construction assumptions were based on CalEEMod defaults, which are based on surveys of construction equipment by South Coast Air Quality Management District.

[2] Includes implementation of fugitive dust control measures required by EKAPCD under Rule 402, including watering disturbed areas a minimum of two times per day, reducing speed limit to 15 miles per hour on unpaved surfaces, replacing ground cover quickly, and street sweeping.

Table 4 Annual Regional Construction Emissions

Source	Annual Emissions (Tons/Year)[1]					
	VOC	NO_x	CO	SO_2	PM_{10} Total[2]	$PM_{2.5}$ Total[2]
Year 2021	<1	3	2	<1	<1	<1
Year 2022	<1	3	3	<1	<1	<1
Year 2023	2	1	2	<1	<1	<1
EKAPCD Regional Threshold (tons/year)	25	25	N/A	27	15	N/A
Exceeds Threshold?	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A

Source: CalEEMod Version 2016.3.2.25.

Notes: lbs: pounds;; N/A: not applicable.

[1] Based on the preliminary information provided by the District. Where specific information regarding project-related construction activities was not available, construction assumptions were based on CalEEMod defaults, which are based on surveys of construction equipment by South Coast Air Quality Management District.

[2] Includes implementation of fugitive dust control measures required by EKAPCD under Rule 402, including watering disturbed areas a minimum of two times per day, reducing speed limit to 15 miles per hour on unpaved surfaces, replacing ground cover quickly, and street sweeping.

In addition, EKAPCD Rule 402, Fugitive Dust, requires fugitive dust control measures—such as improve road surface, control vehicular traffic speed, and apply dust suppressants—to reduce the amount of suspended particulate matter emitted from fugitive dust sources.[37] By complying with EKAPCD Rule 402, not only would

[37] Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District (EKAPCD). 2011. Rule 402 Fugitive Dust. http://www.kernair.org/Rule%20Book/4%20Prohibitions/402_Fugitive_Dust.pdf.

the regional and localized concentration of PM_{10} and $PM_{2.5}$ be reduced, but the potential risk of exposing sensitive receptors and on-site workers to Valley Fever would also be minimized. Short-term air quality impacts from project-related construction activities would be less than significant.

Long-Term Operation-Related Air Quality Impact

Typical long-term air pollutant emissions are generated by area sources (e.g., landscape fuel use, aerosols, architectural coatings, and asphalt pavement), energy use (natural gas), and mobile sources (i.e., on-road vehicles). The new school is about two miles south of the damaged school and about one mile southeast of the temporary school. As described in Section 3.17(b), vehicle miles traveled (VMT) generated by the project would be similar to that generated by the existing temporary school (during non-COVID operation). Student VMT is also lessened through use of District buses to transport students to and from school. Furthermore, the school buildings would, at a minimum, be designed and built to meet the 2019 Building Energy Efficiency Standards and the 2019 California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen) and would be substantially more energy efficient than the 1950s-era building that is being replaced. During project operation, renewable energy from parking lot solar panels would offset electricity use. As shown in Table 5 and Table 6, operation of the school would result in minimal emissions and would not exceed the EKAPCD regional operation-phase significance thresholds. The reduction in building energy use from replacement of the existing structures and use of solar panels is not included in the modeling; therefore, the maximum daily emissions are conservative. Impacts to the regional air quality associated with operation of the project would be less than significant.

Table 5 Maximum Daily Regional Operational Emissions

Source	Maximum Daily Emissions (lbs/Day)					
	VOC	NO_x	CO	SO_2	PM_{10}	$PM_{2.5}$
Max Daily Emissions						
Area	3	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Energy	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Total	**4**	**<1**	**<1**	**<1**	**<1**	**<1**
EKAPCD Regional Threshold (lb/day)	137	137	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Exceeds Threshold?	No	No	No	No	No	No

Source: CalEEMod Version 2016.3.2.25.
Notes: lbs: Pounds. N/A: not applicable. Highest winter or summer emissions are reported.

Table 6 Annual Regional Operational Emissions

Source	Annual Emissions (Tons/Year)					
	VOC	NO_x	CO	SO_2	PM_{10} Total	$PM_{2.5}$ Total
Area	1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Energy	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1	<1
Total	**1**	**<1**	**<1**	**<1**	**<1**	**<1**
EKAPCD Regional Threshold (tons/year)	25	25	N/A	27	15	N/A
Exceeds Threshold?	No	No	No	No	No	N/A

Source: CalEEMod Version 2016.3.2.25.
Notes: lbs: pounds; N/A: not applicable.

c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?

Less Than Significant Impact.

Localized Impacts

A development project could expose sensitive receptors to elevated pollutant concentrations if it caused or contributed significantly to elevated pollutant concentration levels. Localized concentrations refer to the amount of pollutant in a volume of air (ppm or $\mu g/m^3$) and can be correlated to potential health effects in sensitive populations. Emissions that do not exceed the daily or annual EKAPCD emissions thresholds are considered to result in less than significant localized impacts. As identified above in criterion (b), the project would not result in regional emissions in excess of the EKAPCD's significance threshold values. Therefore, localized air quality impacts from the project would be less than significant.

Carbon Monoxide Hotspots

Vehicle congestion has the potential to create pockets of CO called hotspots. Hotspots are typically produced at intersections, where traffic congestion is highest because vehicles are backed up and idle for longer periods and are subject to reduced speeds. These pockets could exceed the state one-hour standard of 20 parts per million (ppm) or the eight-hour standard of 9.0 ppm. Because CO is produced in greatest quantities from vehicle combustion and does not readily disperse into the atmosphere, adherence to AAQS is typically demonstrated through an analysis of localized CO concentrations. The MDAB has been designated in attainment for CO under both the California and National AAQS. Under existing and future vehicle emission rates, a project would have to increase traffic volumes at a single intersection by more than 44,000 vehicles per hour—or 24,000 vehicles per hour where vertical and/or horizontal mixing is substantially limited—in order to generate a significant CO impact.[38] The project-related 551 AM peak hour vehicle trips would be minimal compared to the AAQS screening levels. The project would not substantially increase CO hotspots at intersections, and impacts would be less than significant.

d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?

Less Than Significant Impact. The school project would not result in objectionable odors. The threshold for odor is if a project creates an odor nuisance pursuant to EKAPCD Rule 419, Nuisance, which states:

> A person shall not discharge from any source whatsoever such quantities of air contaminants or other material which cause injury, detriment, nuisance, or annoyance to any considerable number of persons or to the public or which endanger the comfort, repose, health or safety of any such persons or the public or which cause or have a natural tendency to cause injury or damage to business or property.

[38] Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD). 2017, May. California Environmental Quality Act Air Quality Guidelines. http://www.baaqmd.gov/~/media/files/planning-and-research/ceqa/ceqa_guidelines_may2017-pdf.pdf?la=en.

3. Environmental Analysis

The type of facilities that are considered to have objectionable odors include wastewater treatments plants, compost facilities, landfills, solid waste transfer stations, fiberglass manufacturing facilities, paint/coating operations (e.g., auto body shops), dairy farms, petroleum refineries, asphalt batch plants, chemical manufacturing, and food manufacturing facilities. The proposed project involves replacement of an elementary school campus and schools do not fall within the objectionable odors land uses. Emissions from construction equipment, such as diesel exhaust and volatile organic compounds from architectural coatings and paving activities may generate odors. However, these odors would be low in concentration, temporary, and would not affect a substantial number of people. Odor impacts would be less than significant.

e) Is the boundary of the proposed school site within 500 feet of the edge of the closest traffic lane of a freeway or busy traffic corridor? If yes, would the project create an air quality health risk due to the placement of the school?

Less Than Significant Impact. Public Resources Code Section 21151.8(b)(9) and Education Code Section 17213(d)(9) define a "freeway or other busy traffic corridors" as roadways that on an average day have traffic in excess of 50,000 vehicles in a rural area or 100,000 vehicles in an urban area. There are no freeways or busy traffic corridors within 500 feet of the site. The traffic count of Ridgecrest Boulevard (State Route 178) at the intersection with Richmond Road was 9,650 trips in 2017, which would not be considered a busy traffic corridor.[39] Therefore, potential air quality risks due to the school's proximity to a freeway or busy traffic corridor is not a hazard, and the project would not create any significant hazards. Impacts would be less than significant.

f) Create an air quality hazard due to the placement of a school within one-quarter mile of: (a) permitted and nonpermitted facilities identified by the jurisdictional air quality control board or air pollution control district; (b) freeways and other busy traffic corridors; (c) large agricultural operations; and/or (d) a rail yard, which might reasonably be anticipated to emit hazardous air emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous material, substances, or waste?

Less Than Significant Impact. Based on the Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project Geological and Environmental Hazards Assessment Report in Appendix E, the EKAPCD recorded NAWSCL as a permitted facility. Therefore, even though the project site is vacant, it is technically considered a permitted facility since it is within the boundaries of NAWSCL. However, the project site is also within a quarter mile of a gasoline station at the southwest corner of Ridgecrest Boulevard and Gateway Boulevard, which has the potential to emit toxic air contaminants. Based on the Health Risk Assessment in Appendix F, this facility would not generate significant levels of emissions that contribute to carcinogenic risks and chronic, acute (1-hour and 8-hour) noncarcinogenic hazards. In addition, no nonpermitted sources were identified within a quarter mile of the site, and there are no busy traffic corridors, large agricultural operations, or rail yards within a quarter mile of the project site. Impacts would be less than significant.

[39] California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2020. 2017 Traffic Volumes: Route 164-178. https://dot.ca.gov/programs/traffic-operations/census/traffic-volumes/2017/route-164-178.

3.4 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical study:

- Biological Technical Report for the Sierra Sands Unified School District Richmond Elementary School, Alden Environmental, Inc., November 5, 2020.

A complete copy of this study is in the technical appendices of this Initial Study as Appendix B.

Would the project:

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?

Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated. Biological surveys performed for the on the project site included vegetation mapping, sensitive plant surveys, burrowing owl surveys (*Athene cunicularia*), riparian/riverine habitat assessment, Mohave ground squirrel (*Xerospermophilus mohavensis*) and desert tortoise (*Gopherus agassizii*) habitat assessment, and a jurisdictional wetland and waters assessment.

Plant Species

Sensitive plant species include those that are (1) listed or proposed for listing by state or federal agencies as threatened or endangered; (2) on List 1B (considered endangered throughout its range) or List 2 (considered endangered in California but more common elsewhere) of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California; or (3) considered rare, endangered, or threatened by the California Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) or other local conservation organizations or specialists. Noteworthy plant species are considered to be those on List 3 (more information about the plant distribution and rarity needed) and List 4 (plants of limited distribution) of the CNPS Inventory. The CNPS is a statewide resource conservation organization that has developed an inventory of California's sensitive plant species. The CNPS listing is sanctioned by the CDFW and essentially serves as an early warning list of potential candidate species for threatened or endangered status.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), a federally endangered species is defined as a species facing extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its geographic range, and a federally threatened species is defined as a species that is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant part of its range. The CDFW defines an endangered species as one whose prospects of survival and reproduction are in immediate jeopardy, a threatened species as one present in such small numbers throughout its range that it is likely to become an endangered species in the near future in the absence of special protection or management, and a rare species as one present in such small numbers throughout its range that it may become endangered if its present environment worsens.

Species that are federally or state-listed threatened or endangered species and/or are designated as CNPS List 1B or 2 species are afforded a degree of protection that entails a permitting process, including specific mitigation measures to compensate for impacts to the species. Species that are proposed to be listed by the

3. Environmental Analysis

USFWS are treated similarly to listed species by that agency. Recommendations of the USFWS, however, are advisory rather than mandatory in the case of proposed species. Although plant species that are classified as List 3 or 4 species by CNPS are not provided legal protection, this designation is used to identify declining plant species that are considered sensitive by the CNPS but not considered threatened or endangered.

The site has several upland vegetation communities and land cover types.

- Disturbed white bursage scrub habitat (native vegetation community) (28.5 acres total; 18.5 acres would be removed) dominated by white bursage (*Ambrosia dumosa*) and also supports scattered creosote bush (*Larrea tridentata*) and brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*) individuals. Overall, this habitat is sparse and heavily disturbed by pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

- Disturbed creosote bush scrub habitat (native vegetation community) (38.8 acres; 16.5 acres would be removed) dominated by creosote bush and also supports white bursage and brittlebush as sub-dominant species. This habitat occurs in the central portion of the site and is heavily disturbed by pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

- Two other land cover types, disturbed habitat (1.1 acres would be removed) and developed land (0.2 acres would be removed), occur within the proposed project area. Disturbed habitat on site consists of dirt roads and bare, mostly unvegetated areas where previous development occurred. Developed areas include sidewalks, curbs, and paved roads. Approximately 0.2 of disturbed habitat and 1.1 acre of developed areas occur on site. These areas are not considered to be sensitive habitat.

No sensitive vegetation communities are present; therefore, no permanent or temporary direct impacts to sensitive vegetation communities are anticipated. As such, vegetation community impacts would not be considered significant. No sensitive plant species were observed on site and none are anticipated to occur; therefore, no significant impacts to sensitive plant species are expected.

Animal Species

Sensitive wildlife species include those that are (1) listed or proposed for listing as threatened or endangered by USFWS or CDFW; and/or (2) designated as California Fully Protected by the CDFW. In addition, raptors (birds of prey) and active raptor nests are protected by the California Fish and Game Code 3503.5, which states that it is "unlawful to take, possess, or destroy any birds of prey or to take, possess, or destroy the nest or eggs of any such bird" unless authorized. The federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA), which restricts the killing, taking, collecting, selling, or purchasing of native bird species or their parts, nests, or eggs, also provides legal protection for almost all breeding bird species occurring in the United States. Noteworthy wildlife species are those given the informal designation of California Species of Concern by the CDFW. This designation applies to animals not listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) or the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) but which nonetheless (1) are declining at a rate that could result in listing, or (2) historically occurred in low numbers and known threats to their persistence currently exist.

A federally endangered species is defined as a species facing extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its geographic range, and a federally threatened species is a species that is likely to become endangered within

the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant part of its range. The CDFW defines an endangered species as one whose prospects of survival and reproduction are in immediate jeopardy, a threatened species as one present in such small numbers throughout its range that it is likely to become an endangered species in the near future in the absence of special protection or management, a fully protected species as one that is rare or faces possible extinction.

Species that are federally or state-listed threatened or endangered species are afforded a degree of protection that entails a permitting process, including specific mitigation measures to compensate for impacts to the species. Species that are proposed to be listed by the USFWS are treated similarly to listed species by that agency. Recommendations of the USFWS, however, are advisory rather than mandatory in the case of proposed species. As regulated by the CDFW, fully protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time and no licenses or permits may be issued for their take except for collecting these species for necessary scientific research and relocation of the bird species for the protection of livestock. Wildlife species classified as California Species of Concern by the CDFW are not typically provided legal protection; however, there are exceptions for some species such as the burrowing owl.

The site has several animal species. There are 3 species of concern that have some potential to occur in the project vicinity: desert tortoise, burrowing owl, and the Mohave ground squirrel. No sensitive animal species were observed on site and none are anticipated to occur; however, the habitat assessment did note that the habitat on site could support the Mohave ground squirrel. No Mohave ground squirrel sign has been observed on site and the potential for this species to occur is considered to be low. If the species were present during construction then there could be significant impacts to this state listed species (the species is not federally listed). Mitigation Measure BIO-1 would reduce impacts to less than significant. No other permanent or temporary direct impacts to wildlife species are expected.

BIO-1 Prior to construction, the SSSD shall retain a qualified biologist to prepare and present a desert tortoise and Mohave ground squirrel protection education program.

The desert tortoise and Mohave ground squirrel protection education program shall be presented to all construction personnel to ensure that they are aware of the significance to the project should this species occur on site during construction. The education program shall include the following:

- Legal and sensitive status of the species
- Brief discussion of the species life history and ecology
- Measures designed to reduce adverse effects
- Protocols to follow if either species is encountered, including appropriate contact point(s).

A final site clearance survey shall be conducted within 7 days of the start of construction to confirm that no tortoises or Mohave ground squirrel are present on site. The clearance survey will be conducted by a USFWS approved biologist in accordance with the current USFWS protocols. If either species is found within the project area, activities shall be modified to avoid

injuring or harming species. If activities cannot be modified, then construction will be postponed until a relocation/avoidance procedure can be implemented, in conjunction with the U.S. Navy's Environmental Management Division, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and the USFWS.

b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

Less Than Significant Impact. Sensitive natural communities are communities that are considered rare in the region by regulatory agencies; known to provide habitat for sensitive animal or plant species; or known to be important wildlife corridors. Riparian habitats occur along the banks of rivers and streams. No sensitive natural community or riparian habitat was observed onsite, and no impact would occur.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. Wetlands are defined under the federal Clean Water Act as land that is flooded or saturated by surface water or groundwater at a frequency and duration sufficient to support, and that normally does support, a prevalence of vegetation adapted to life in saturated soils. Wetlands include areas such as swamps, marshes, and bogs.

Jurisdictional Areas

There is an existing drainage channel that conveys flows from the southwest to the northeast across the north western corner of the site (Figure 3). While a formal jurisdictional delineation was not conducted, this channel is not anticipated to be considered jurisdictional by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) as it is isolated and does not connect to a Corps jurisdictional Waters of the U.S. (WUS). Additionally, the channel located on Federal land and is not anticipated to be under the jurisdiction of California State Water Quality Control Board (SWQCB) and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW). The China Lake Environmental Management Office enforces federal, state, and local environmental regulations on the Base. The drainage would be avoided and no impact would occur.

d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?

Less Than Significant Impact. Wildlife corridors link areas of natural habitats separated by rugged terrain, changes in vegetation, or human disturbance. Corridors accommodate animal movement to enhance genetic interchange and re-colonization of the species and provide buffers for species populations to use in response to environmental changes and natural disasters. Large corridors (often referred to as habitat or landscape linkages) can provide both transitory and resident habitat for a variety of species.

Although wildlife may cross it, the site does not function as a wildlife movement corridor and does not support native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species. It does not have any watercourse or water body, greenbelt, or native habitat for fish or wildlife. No local or regional wildlife corridors are present within or adjacent to site; therefore, no permanent or temporary direct impacts to wildlife corridors are anticipated.

Birds may use the shrubs as nesting or nursery sites, and project construction would require the removal of all vegetation on the 40-acre school site. Migratory nongame native bird species are protected by the California Fish and Game Code, §§ 3503, 3503.5, and 3513, which prohibit the take of all birds and their active nests. Impacts may occur if vegetation with the potential to support nesting migratory birds if removed during the avian nesting season (February 1 through September 1). Impacts to such species are prohibited under the MBTA and would be considered significant. Mitigation Measure BIO-2 would reduce impacts to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure

BIO-2 If site clearing occurs during the bird breeding season, February 1 to September 1, a preconstruction survey shall be conducted three days prior to clearing or grading activities to determine if breeding or nesting avian species are in the impact area. If no nesting birds (or birds displaying breeding or nesting behavior) are present, then clearing may proceed. If nesting birds are present, a no construction buffer will be placed around the active nest(s). The size of the buffer will depend on the species present and will be determined in conjunction with the Naval Air Weapons Station, China Lake Environmental Management Division. Construction in these areas shall not be resumed until the biologist has confirmed that the birds are no longer nesting. In the case of burrow nesting species like the burrowing owl, the biologist shall confirm that the burrow is empty prior to being destroyed by construction activities.

e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project site is on federal land, and no local policies are applicable to the site. The site has no trees or habitat that would require preservation. The Biological Resources Technical Report prepared for the project site was conducted in compliance with state and federal requirements, and as appropriate, applicable regulatory requirements. There are no local policies or ordinances that apply to the site. Impact would be less than significant.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project site is in the plan area of regional conservation plans adopted by the US Bureau of Land Management (BLM).

3. Environmental Analysis

The California Desert Conservation Area Plan

In 1976, Congress designated a 25-million acre expanse of resource-rich desert lands in southern California as the California Desert Conservation Area (CDCA) through the Federal Land Policy and Management Act. In 2009, Congress, passed the Omnibus Public Land Management Act, which directed the BLM to include lands managed for conservation purposes within the CDCA as part of the National Conservation Lands. To protect this area's natural resources and facilitate development of its energy resources, the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan was undertaken in 2013. This collaborative, multi-stakeholder, landscape-scale planning effort comprises 22.5 million acres in the desert regions of seven California counties, 10.8 million acres of which are BLM lands.

The California Desert Conservation Area Plan (1980 as amended) designated 4.2 million acres as part of the National Conservation Lands of the California Desert. Much of this land was already a part of the National Conservation Lands (in particular, large portions of the Mojave Trails and Sand to Snow National Monuments), but 2.89 million acres were a new addition to the system. National Conservation Lands of the California Desert are closed to all energy development.[40]

The project site is in the West Desert and Eastern Slopes area of the California Desert National Conservation Lands (CDNCL)[41] the site is not biologically protected and the project would not include public renewable energy projects. No impact would occur.

West Mojave Plan

The West Mojave Plan (WMP), adopted by BLM in 2006, covers 9.4 million acres of the western portion of the Mojave Desert in California, including parts of Inyo, Los Angeles, Kern, San Bernardino, and Riverside counties.[42] The WMP is an interagency habitat conservation plan (HCP) that was prepared by the BLM in collaboration with federal and state agencies, and NAWSCL is a participating agency.

The purpose of the WMP is to conserve and protect the desert tortoise (Gopherus agassizii) and nearly 100 other sensitive plant and wildlife species, as well as the habitats on which these species depend, and provide developers of public and private projects with a streamlined program for compliance with FESA and CESA by reducing delays and expenses, eliminating uncertainty, and applying the costs of compensation and mitigation equitably to all agencies and parties. The WMP allows incidental take of covered species and is consistent with the resource management plans adopted by each of the region's five military bases as well as with the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. The term of the WMP is 30 years.

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40 U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. California Desert. Conservation Area Plan 1980 https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/lup/66949/82080/96344/CDCA_Plan.pdf; and https://www.blm.gov/programs/national-conservation-lands/national-conservation-lands-of-the-california-desert

41 U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. California Desert National Conservation Lands (CDNCL) Ecoregion Boundaries. West Desert and Eastern Slopes. https://eplanning.blm.gov/public_projects/lup/66459/133476/163156/West_Desert_and_Eastern_Slopes_Subregion_AppB.pdf

42 U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. West Mojave Route Network Project SEIS. October 3, 2019. https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/93521/510

The WMP allows incidental take of covered species and is consistent with the resource management plans adopted by each of the region's five military bases as well as with the Desert Tortoise Recovery Plan. As such, the project would not conflict with the WMP.

Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan

The Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) covers 22.6 million acres of federal and nonfederal lands in the California deserts and adjacent lands in Imperial, Inyo, Kern, Los Angeles, Riverside, San Bernardino, and San Diego counties. It is a collaboration between state (e.g., California Energy Commission, CDFW) and federal (e.g., BLM, USFWS) agencies, with input from local governments, environmental organizations, industry, and other interested parties to provide effective protection, conservation, and management of desert ecosystems while allowing for appropriate development and timely permitting of renewable energy projects. Portions of China Lake, including the project site, are in the DRECP area.[43]

The DRECP has a biological mitigation and conservation program, providing renewable energy project developers with binding, long-term endangered species permit assurances and facilitating the review and approval of renewable energy and associated infrastructure, such as electric transmission lines necessary for renewable energy development within the Mojave and Colorado desert regions of California.[44] In 2016, BLM approved the DRECP Land Use Plan Amendment, which covers a 10 million acre portion of BLM-managed lands in the DRECP Plan Area.[45]

The site would be leased from the U.S. Navy by the Sierra Sands Unified School District for a new school. No public renewable energy projects are proposed onsite, and the project would not conflict with the DRECP. No impact would occur.

3.5 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical study:

- *Phase I Survey/Class III Inventory, Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project, Kern County, California*, ASM Affiliates, June 2020

A complete copy of this study is in the technical appendices of this Initial Study as Appendix C.

Would the project:

[43] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). Land Use Plan Amendment (LUPA) https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/66459/570

[44] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP). Fact Sheet. https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2019-12/DRECP_Conservation_Fact_Sheet_ada.pdf

[45] U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan (DRECP) https://www.energy.ca.gov/programs-and-topics/programs/desert-renewable-energy-conservation-plan

3. Environmental Analysis

a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?

No Impact. Section 15064.5 defines historic resources as resources listed or determined to be eligible for listing by the State Historical Resources Commission, a local register of historical resources, or the lead agency. Generally, a resource is considered "historically significant" if it meets one of the following criteria:

i) Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;

ii) Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;

iii) Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values;

iv) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

The historic/ethnographic period in the region is generally taken to begin about A.D. 1850. At that time the Ridgecrest region fell near to the boundary between two Uto-Aztecan language branches (Numic[46] and Tubatulabic[47]), three of the Numic languages (Shoshone and Northern and Southern Paiute), and for the Shoshone, between two distinct bands.

The City of Ridgecrest's origins extend back to 1912, when it was the small farming village Crumville, named after a local dairy farmer. The town grew slowly with the first post office not opening until 1941, and with the population still under 200 residents. The Naval Ordnance Test Station (NOTS, precursor to NAWS), opened in 1943, during World War II, and the town has been closely allied with the U.S. Navy specifically and the defense industry generally, since that time. Ridgecrest was incorporated in 1963, and it currently has approximately 27,000 residents.[48]

A cultural resource evaluation was prepared, including an extensive pedestrian survey, site-specific research, and analysis of relevant state and federal regulations. The project site consists of vacant land; there are no buildings, structures, or infrastructure improvements; no historical resources were identified on the project site during intensive field surveys.[49]

[46] Numic is a branch of the Uto-Aztecan language family. It includes seven languages spoken by Native American peoples traditionally living in the Great Basin, Colorado River basin, Snake River basin, and southern Great Plains.
[47] Tübatulabal is an extinct Uto-Aztecan language, traditionally spoken in Kern County, California, United States.
[48] ASM Affiliates. June 2020. Phase I Survey/Class III Inventory, Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project, Kern County, California.
[49] ASM Affiliates. June 2020. Phase I Survey/Class III Inventory, Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project, Kern County, California.

Additionally, the project site is not identified on any federal, state, or local historic registers—National Register of Historic Places;[50] California State Historical Landmarks and Points of Historical Interest;[51] or in the City's General Plan Conservation Element.[52] No impact to historical resources would occur.

b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?

Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. Archaeological resources are cultural resources of prehistoric or historic origin that reflect human activity. Archaeological resources include both structural ruins and buried resource (buildings, structures, objects, and sites of the built environment). The term "unique archaeological resources" is defined in PRC § 21083.2(g) as:

> … 'unique archaeological resources' means an archaeological artifact, object, or site about which it can be clearly demonstrated that, without merely adding to the current body of knowledge, there is a high probability that it meets any of the following criteria:
>
> (1) Has information needed to answer important scientific research questions and there is a demonstrable public interest in that information.
>
> (2) Has a special and particular quality such as being the oldest of its type or the best available example of its type.
>
> (3) Is directly associated with a scientifically recognized important prehistoric or historic event or person.

A records search of site files and maps was completed at the Southern San Joaquin Valley Archaeological Information Center, California State University, Bakersfield and a search of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) Sacred Lands File was also conducted. No Native American sacred sites or cultural landscapes had been identified within or immediately adjacent to the study area. No archaeological resources were discovered within the study area. Based on the record searches, the study area appears to have a low archaeological sensitivity. However, there are abundant Native American resources in China Lake listed on the National Register of Historic Places—for instance, the Coso Rock Art District, a National Historic Landmark, and Coso Hot Springs. Both areas are in the northern part of the NAWSCL North Range; the project site is in the southern part of the North Range. Within and around the base, lake sediments of late Pleistocene age have yielded abundant but fragmentary and wind-blasted remains of extinct Ice Age animals as well as lithics and tools left behind by early human inhabitants. Although the project is not likely to have significant archaeological

[50] National Park Service. 2020, July 15 (accessed). National Register of Historic Places. https://www.nps.gov/maps/full.html?mapId=7ad17cc9-b808-4ff8-a2f9-a99909164466

[51] Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). 2020, July 15 (accessed). California Historical Resources. https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/?view=county&criteria=15

[52] Ridgecrest, City of. 2009, December 2. City of Ridgecrest General Plan. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/166/General-Plan-PDF

resources, Mitigation Measure CUL-1 shall be incorporated to avoid destruction of previously undiscovered resources.[53] Impacts to archaeological resources would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Mitigation Measure

CUL-1 The Sierra Sands Unified School District (SSUSD) shall retain a qualified archaeologist that meets the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards (48 Federal Register 44738-39). The archaeologist shall have knowledge of both prehistoric and historical archaeology.

Archaeological Monitor

- Prior to the start of any ground disturbing activities, a qualified archaeologist shall be retained to monitor ground-disturbing activity.
- The duration and timing of monitoring shall be determined by the qualified archaeologist in consultation with the SSUSD and Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake (NAWSCL) Cultural Staff and shall be based on a review of grading plans.
- If the archaeologist demonstrates based on observations of site conditions and grading plans that the level of monitoring should be less than full-time or eliminated, the archaeologist, in consultation with the SSUSD and NAWSCL Cultural Staff, may adjust the level of monitoring to circumstances, as warranted.

Archaeological Resources Awareness Training

- If monitoring is required, then prior to the start of any ground disturbing activities, the qualified archaeologist shall conduct an Archaeological Resources Awareness Training program for all construction personnel working on the project earthwork activities; construction personnel shall be provided the Archaeological Resources Training guide approved by the qualified archaeologist.
- A copy of the Archaeological Resources Awareness Training guide shall be submitted to the SSUSD and the NAWSCL Cultural Staff.
- Archaeological Resources Awareness Training shall include an overview of potential archaeological resources that could be encountered during ground disturbing activities to facilitate worker recognition, avoidance, and subsequent immediate notification to the qualified archaeologist for further evaluation and action, as appropriate; and penalties for unauthorized artifact collecting or intentional disturbance of archaeological resources.
- The construction contractor shall ensure new employees or on-site workers who have not participated in earlier Archaeological Resources Awareness Trainings shall participate in

[53] ASM Affiliates. June 2020. Phase I Survey/Class III Inventory, Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project, Kern County, California.

training as described above and shall be provided the Archaeological Resources Awareness Training guide.

- The Archaeological Resources Awareness Training guide shall be kept available on-site for all personnel to review.

Resource Discovery

- If an archaeological resource is found, the construction contractor shall cease ground-disturbing activities within 50 feet of the find. The qualified archaeologist shall evaluate the significance of the resources and recommend appropriate treatment measures. Significant resources encountered and recovered shall be catalogued and presented to an appropriate repository such as the NAWSCL curation facility or Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Final Report

- Following the completion of monitoring, the archaeologist shall prepare a report documenting the absence or discovery of fossil resources on-site. If resources are found, the report shall summarize the results of the inspection program, identify those resources encountered, recovery and curation efforts, the methods used in these efforts, and describe their significance. A copy of the report shall be provided to the City of Ridgecrest Planning Department, Kern County Planning and Natural Resources Department, SSUSD and NAWSCL Cultural Staff, and to an appropriate repository such as the NAWSCL curation facility and/or Southern San Joaquin Valley Information Center.

c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?

Less Than Significant Impact. There are no known human remains or cemeteries on the project site. The project site is bisected by multiple dirt roads and has been previously disturbed by off-highway vehicle traffic and illegal trash dumping. No cultural resources of any kind were identified during the intensive field survey. The likelihood that human remains being discovered during site clearing and grading activities is considered low. [54] However, in the unlikely event that human remains are uncovered, Government Code §§ 27460 et seq. mandate that there shall be no further excavation or disturbance until the Sheriff-Coroner-Public Administrator has determined that the remains are not subject to the provisions of § 27491 of the Government Code or any other related provisions of law concerning investigation of the circumstances, manner, and cause of death; and the required recommendations concerning the treatment and disposition of the human remains have been made to the person responsible for the excavation, or to his or her authorized representative, in the manner provided in § 5097.98 of the PRC.

Pursuant to California Health and Safety Code § 7050.5, the coroner shall make a determination within two working days of notification of the discovery of the human remains. If the coroner determines that the remains are not subject to their authority and recognizes or has reason to believe that they are those of a Native

[54] ASM Affiliates. June 2020. Phase I Survey/Class III Inventory, Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project, Kern County, California.

American, the coroner shall contact the Native American Heritage Commission by telephone within 24 hours. Human remain impacts would be less than significant.

3.6 ENERGY

Would the project:

a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?

Less Than Significant Impact. Project would result in short-term construction and long-term operational energy consumption.

Short-Term Construction

Construction of the project would require energy use to power the construction equipment. The energy use would vary during different phases of construction—the majority of construction equipment during demolition and grading would be gas or diesel powered, and the later construction phases would require electricity-powered equipment for interior construction and architectural coatings. Construction activities would be subject to applicable regulations such as anti-idling measures and the use of alternative fuels if possible (Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District), thereby reducing energy consumption.

Transportation energy use depends on the type and number of trips, vehicle miles traveled, fuel efficiency of vehicles, and travel mode. Transportation energy use during construction would come from the transport and use of construction equipment, delivery vehicles and haul trucks, and construction worker vehicles that would use diesel fuel and gasoline. Impacts related to transportation energy use during construction would be temporary and would not require expanded energy supplies or the construction of new infrastructure. Project construction would not result in a significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. For example, there are no unusual characteristics that would directly or indirectly cause construction activities to be any less efficient than would occur elsewhere (restrictions on equipment, labor, types of activities, etc.).

Long-Term Operation

The new school would consume electricity for various purposes—heating, cooling, and ventilation of buildings; water heating; operation of electrical systems; lighting; use of on-site equipment and appliances, etc. SCE provides electric service and PG&E provides gas service in the city. There is extensive and reliable infrastructure for electricity and gas services in the area.

At some time during project operation, the school would generate renewable energy from parking lot solar panels. Power for operations would be brought to the site through a new SCE retail electric service connection along with on-site generation.

California's Building Energy Efficiency Standards are updated on a three-year cycle to incorporate new energy efficiency technologies.[55] The 2019 Building Energy Efficiency Standards were adopted on May 9, 2018 and went into effect for new construction January 1, 2020. The 2019 standards focus on four key areas: 1) smart residential photovoltaic systems; 2) updated thermal envelope standards (preventing heat transfer from the interior to exterior and vice versa); 3) residential and nonresidential ventilation requirements; 4) and nonresidential lighting requirements.[56] Under the 2019 standards, nonresidential buildings (which include school buildings) are 30 percent more energy efficient compared to the 2016 standards.[57] However, based on a study of the statewide impacts of the 2019 changes to the California Energy Efficiency Standards, the reductions for newly constructed nonresidential buildings are estimated to total 10.7 percent for electricity and 1 percent for natural gas.[58] Compared to the damaged school built in 1953 and other older District schools, the new school buildings would be significantly more energy efficient.

The new school would serve students currently living in the region and would not generate an increase in the District-wide student population. The project would not result in a significant increase in motor vehicle transportation energy during school operation over what was used for the damaged school or for the temporary school because VMT would be similar.

There are no aspects of the project that would foreseeably result in the inefficient, wasteful, or unnecessary consumption of energy during operation.

b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?

No Impact. The State's electricity grid is transitioning to renewable energy under California's Renewable Energy Program. Renewable sources of electricity include wind, small hydropower, solar, geothermal, biomass, and biogas. Electricity production from renewable sources is generally considered carbon neutral. Executive Order S-14-08, signed in November 2008, expanded the state's renewable portfolios standard (RPS) to 33 percent renewable power by 2020. This standard was adopted by the legislature in 2011 (SB X1-2). Senate Bill 350 (de Leon) was signed into law September 2015 and establishes tiered increases to the RPS—40 percent by 2024, 45 percent by 2027, and 50 percent by 2030. Senate Bill 350 also set a new goal to double the energy-efficiency savings in electricity and natural gas through energy efficiency and conservation measures. On September 10, 2018, Governor Brown signed Senate Bill 100 (SB 100), which raises California's RPS requirements to 60 percent by 2030, with interim targets, and 100 percent by 2045. The bill also establishes a state policy that eligible renewable energy resources and zero-carbon resources supply 100 percent of all retail sales of electricity to California end-use customers and 100 percent of electricity procured to serve all state

[55] The California Energy Code, part 6 of the California Building Standards Code which is title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, also titled The Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings.

[56] California Energy Commission (CEC). 2018. News Release: Energy Commission Adopts Standards Requiring Solar Systems for New Homes, First in Nation. http://www.energy.ca.gov/releases/2018_releases/2018-05-09_building_standards_adopted_nr.html.

[57] California Energy Commission (CEC). 2018. 2019 Building Energy and Efficiency Standards Frequently Asked Questions. http://www.energy.ca.gov/title24/2019standards/documents/2018_Title_24_2019_Building_Standards_FAQ.pdf.

[58] NORESCO. 2018, June 29. 2019 Update to the California Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Non-Residential Buildings.

agencies by December 31, 2045. Under SB 100 the state cannot increase carbon emissions elsewhere in the western grid or allow resource shuffling to achieve the 100 percent carbon-free electricity target.

Also, in compliance with the Building Energy Efficiency Standards and CALGreen, the new campus would be significantly more energy efficient than other schools in the District. The project would be reviewed by DSA for compliance with design and construction and energy compliance. The project would not conflict with state or local plans for renewable energy or energy efficiency. No impacts would occur.

3.7 GEOLOGY AND SOILS

The analysis is in this section is based in part of the following technical studies:

- *Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Richmond Elementary School Relocation Project Ridgecrest, California*, BSK Associates, April 28, 2020. (Appendix D)
- *Geologic and Environmental Hazards Assessment Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project*, PlaceWorks, September 2020. (Appendix E)

Would the project:

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.

Less Than Significant Impact. The Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Act was signed into California law on December 22, 1972. The intent of the Act is to reduce losses from surface fault rupture. California created this law following the destructive 1971 San Fernando earthquake (magnitude 6.6), which was associated with extensive surface fault ruptures that damaged numerous structures.

Alquist-Priolo earthquake fault zones are regulatory zones surrounding the surface traces of active faults in California.[59] Wherever an active fault exists, if it has the potential for surface rupture, a structure for human occupancy cannot be placed over the fault and must be a minimum distance from the fault (generally 50 feet). An active fault, for the purposes of the Alquist-Priolo Act, is one that has ruptured in the last 11,000 years.[60]

[59] A trace is a line on the earth's surface defining a fault.
[60] California Department of Conservation. Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones. https://www.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/alquist-priolo

The project site is not within or adjacent to an Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone.[61] The closest Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone is associated with the Little Lake fault zone, approximately 3,500 feet southwest of the site.[62] Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone impacts would be less than significant.

ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?

Less Than Significant Impact. Southern California is a seismically active region. Impacts from ground shaking could occur many miles from an earthquake epicenter. The potential severity of ground shaking depends on many factors, including the distance from the originating fault, the earthquake magnitude, and the nature of the earth materials beneath a given site.

On July 4, 2019, a magnitude 6.4 earthquake struck (epicenter east of Ridgecrest) followed on July 5 by a magnitude 7.1 earthquake (epicenter northeast of Ridgecrest).[63] The earthquakes resulted in structural and infrastructure damage in the City of Ridgecrest, including Richmond Elementary School. There are five main fault zones in the vicinity of the Ridgecrest earthquake sequence (July 4 to August 15): Owens Valley, Panamint Valley, Garlock, Blackwater, and San Andreas.[64] The July 4th quake was three distinct earthquakes—magnitudes 6.1, 6.2, and 6.2—on several main faults; in that same event, at least 20 smaller faults that intersected the main faults also ruptured. Added together, they produced enough energy to create a magnitude 6.4 quake on July 4th. The July 5th quake was made up of four smaller events that ruptured, producing a magnitude 7.1 event, the most powerful in California in the last 20 years. Numerous splays of the Little Lake Fault Zone (shown in orange in the figure below)[65]—many of them classified as active—have been mapped in the Indian Wells Valley.

[61] PlaceWorks, 2020, September. Geologic and Environmental Hazards Assessment. Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project.

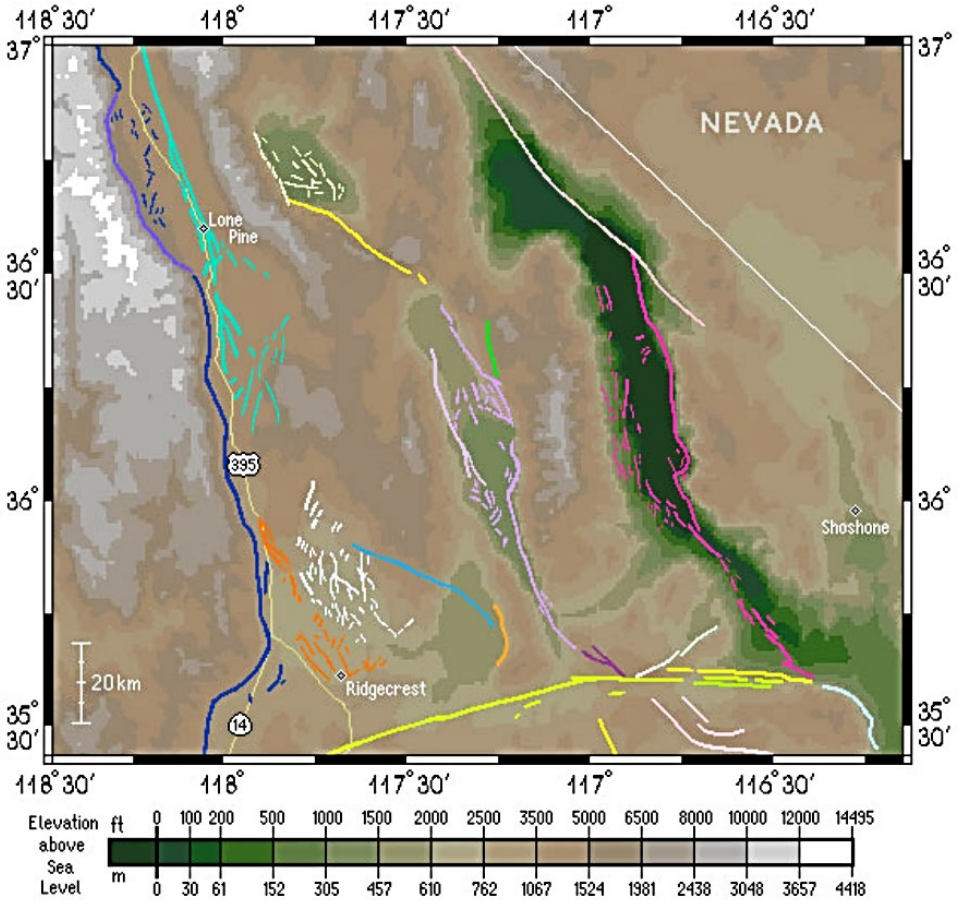
[62] BSK Associates. 2020, April. Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Richmond Elementary School Relocation Project Ridgecrest, California.

[63] United States Geological Survey. 2020 August 19 (accessed). M 7.1 - 2019 Ridgecrest Earthquake Sequence. https://www.usgs.gov/news/update-magnitude-71-earthquake-southern-california?qt-news_science_products=7#qt-news_science_products

[64] USGS. Fault zones near the 2019 Ridgecrest Earthquake Sequence. https://www.usgs.gov/media/images/five-fault-zones-near-2019-ridgecrest-earthquake-sequence#:~:text=The%20five%20fault%20zones%20in,are%20shown%20as%20black%20circles.

[65] Southern California Earthquake Data Center. https://scedc.caltech.edu/significant/basin.html

3. Environmental Analysis

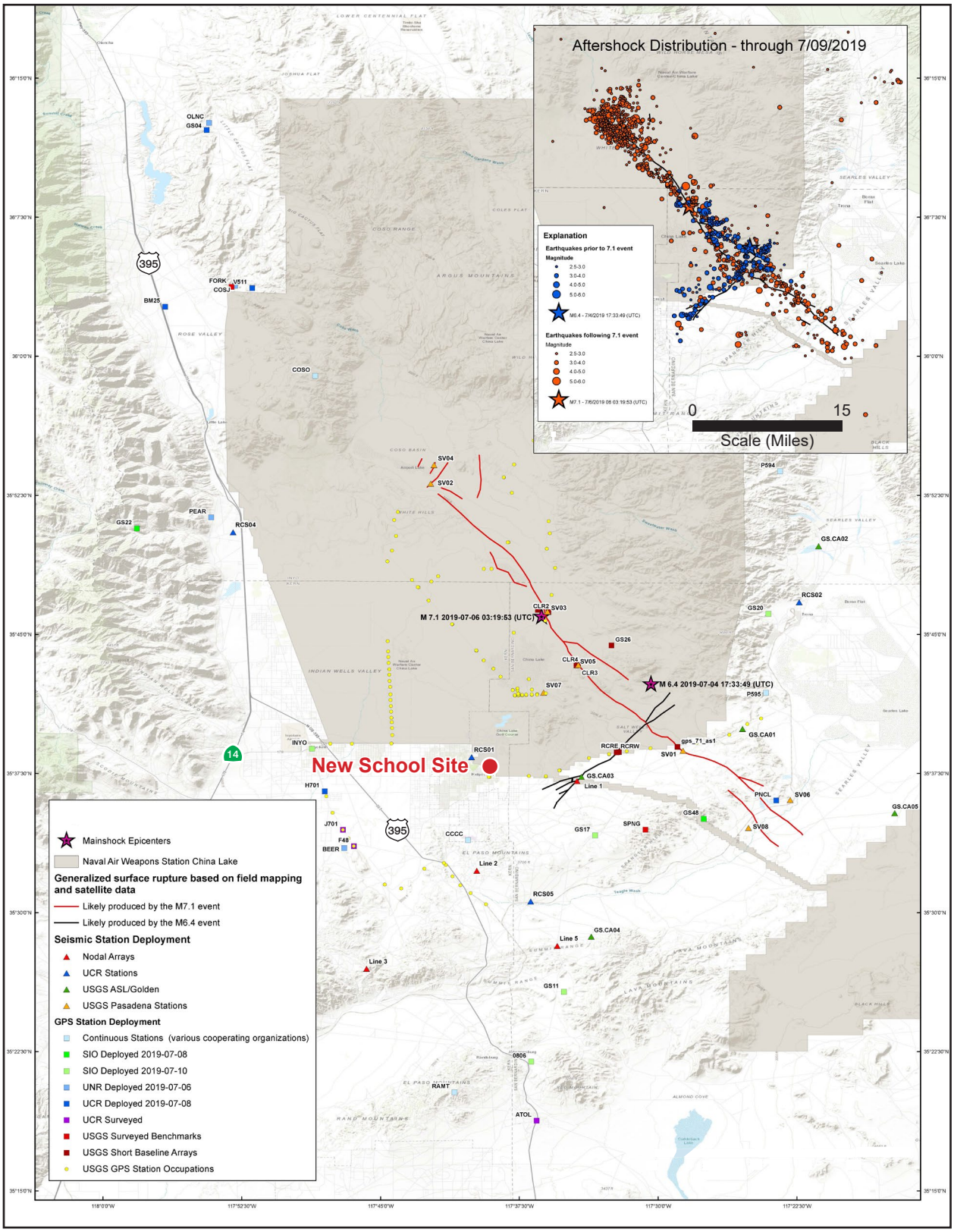


Seismologists tracked thousands of aftershocks—the most recent was a 5.5 magnitude on June 4, 2020 (see Figure 10, *2019 Ridgecrest Earthquake*). Because of the proximity to known faults and past earthquake activity in the area, there is a high probability that people and structures would experience strong ground shaking in the future.

The closest known active fault to the project site is a small strand of the Little Lake fault[66] that either crosses or is adjacent to the southeast corner of the site.[67] The closest school building would be about 1,350 feet north of this spur fault (see Figure 11, Site Hazards). Strong ground shaking is very likely to occur on campus during the design lifetime of the new school.

[66] One of two complex fault zones in the Indian Wells Valley area. The other is the Airport Lake fault zone.
[67] BSK Associates. 2020, April. Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Richmond Elementary School Relocation Project Ridgecrest, California.

Figure 10 - 2019 Ridgecrest Earthquake
3. Environmental Analysis



Source: United States Geological Survey (USGS), 2019

3. Environmental Analysis

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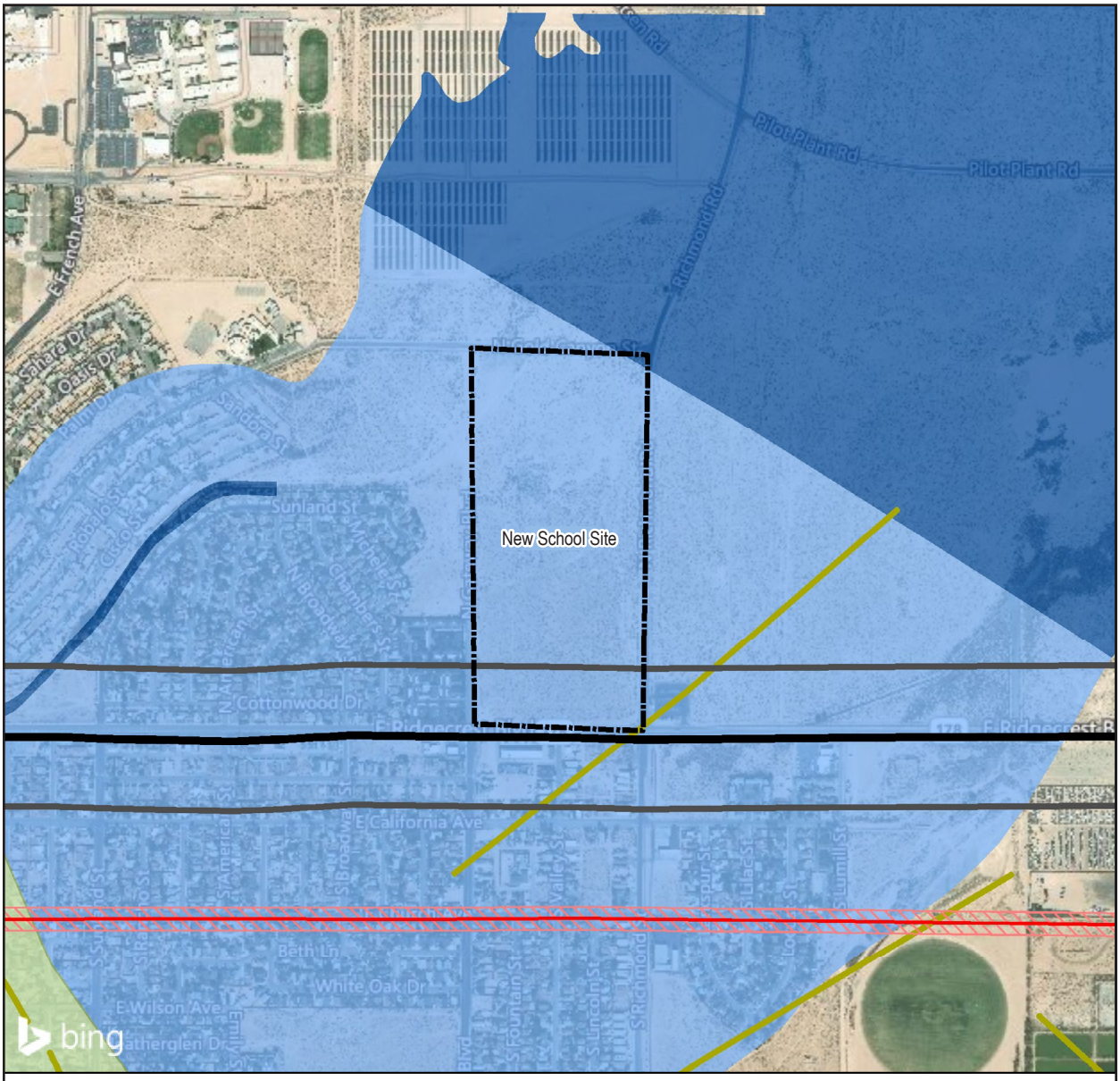
Figure 11 - Site Hazards
3. Environmental Analysis



Flood Hazards
- 100-Year Flood Zone
- 500-Year Flood Zone

Natural Gas Pipelines
- Natural Gas Pipelines
- Natural Gas Pipelines 1,500' Buffer

Electrical Transmission Lines
- Electrical Transmission Lines
- Electrical Transmission Line Buffer

Faults
- Fault Line
- Alquist-Priolo Fault Hazard Zones

Highways
- Highway
- Highway 500' Buffer

Airport Runways
- 2 Nautical Mile Buffer

- KernBoundary
- City Limits

0 1,500
Scale (Feet)

Source: ESRI, 2019

3. Environmental Analysis

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Schools are considered essential buildings[68] and function as emergency shelters during disasters. California has strict code requirements for protecting the lives of building occupants and maintaining structural functionality after disasters. Buildings for schools and essential services (like hospitals, police stations, and emergency buildings) are an example of where these codes are strictly enforced. School buildings must be able to withstand all types of natural forces while protecting occupants and retaining structural integrity throughout a disaster. Each building must meet unique life and safety code requirements related to structural and seismic design specifications. Increased safety features (like multiple exits, smoke alarms, and fire barriers) are required in public use buildings. The buildings at the damaged school were built in 1953, prior to current earthquake standards. Seismic design criteria for the new school buildings are included in the Geotechnical Engineering Investigation, and compliance is mandatory. California Department of General Services, Division of the State Architect (DSA) approval is required for this new school. When DSA review is required, additional life/safety equipment is required. The school would be designed and constructed in compliance with the most current California Building Code, the California Geological Survey's "Guidelines for Evaluating and Mitigating Seismic Hazards in California" and "Checklist for the Review of Geologic/Seismic Reports for California Schools, Hospitals, and Essential Services Buildings," and DSA requirements. Seismic ground shaking impacts would be less than significant.

iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?

Less Than Significant Impact. The Seismic Hazards Mapping Act (1990) directed the State Geologist to delineate regulatory "zones of required investigation" to reduce the threat to public health and safety and to minimize the loss of life and property posed by earthquake-triggered ground failures. Zones of required investigation, referred to as "Seismic Hazard Zones" in CCR Article 10, § 3722, are areas shown on Seismic Hazard Zone Maps where site investigations are required to determine the need for mitigation of potential liquefaction and/or earthquake-induced landslide ground displacements. The site is within the Ridgecrest North 7.5 Minute Quadrangle and there are no mapped areas that have Seismic Hazard Zone-related "zones of required investigation" in the project area.

Liquefaction refers to loose, saturated sand or gravel deposits that lose their load-supporting capability when subjected to intense shaking. Liquefaction potential varies based upon three main contributing factors: 1) cohesionless, granular soils having relatively low densities (usually of Holocene age);[69] 2) shallow groundwater (generally less than 50 feet); and 3) moderate to high seismic ground shaking.

Cohesionless and granular soils are sand or gravel, typically with little or no clay content. The soils underlying the site were explored through test borings to a maximum depth of 51.1 feet below ground surface (bgs). In general, the upper 3 feet of soil consists of loose to clayey sand and clay with sand. Below 3 feet is medium dense to dense silty sand with silt and clayey sand to 25 feet bgs. From 25 feet bgs to the end of the borehole is dense to very dense sand with silt.[70] Therefore, soils are not cohesionless or low

[68] Essential service buildings, or "critical facilities," are buildings that would substantially impact the community if they became unusable, especially after a disaster.

[69] The Holocene epoch began 12,000 to 11,500 years ago.

[70] BSK Associates. 2020, April. Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Richmond Elementary School Relocation Project Ridgecrest, California.

density. Groundwater has historically been at a depth greater than 50 feet below existing grade.[71] Although high seismic ground shaking is probable, because of soil and groundwater conditions the liquefaction potential for the project site is low.[72] The project would not subject people or structures to substantial liquefaction hazards, and impacts would be less than significant.

iv) Landslides?

No Impact. Landslides are a type of erosion in which masses of earth and rock move down slope as a single unit. Susceptibility of slopes to landslides and lurching (earth movement at right angles to a cliff or steep slope during ground shaking) depend on several factors that are usually present in combination—steep slopes, condition of rock and soil materials, presence of water, formational contacts, geologic shear zones, and seismic activity.

Ridgecrest is in the western portion of the Mojave Desert in the Indian Wells Valley, which is surrounded by mountains: the Coso Range on the north, El Paso Mountains on the south, the Argus Range on the east, and the Sierra Nevada on the west. Indian Wells Valley is fairly flat. The project site and vicinity are flat and exhibit no substantial elevation changes or unusual geographic features.[73] The flat topography at the site precludes both landslides and the potential for lurching. The project would not expose people or the new school buildings to adverse effects from landslides. No impact would occur.

b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?

Less Than Significant Impact. Topsoil is the thin, rich layer of soil where most nutrients for plants are found and where most land-based biological activity takes place. The loss of topsoil through erosion is a major agricultural problem. Erosion is a normal and inevitable geologic process whereby earthen materials are loosened, worn away, decomposed, or dissolved; removed from one place; and transported to another. Precipitation, running water, and wind are all agents of erosion. Ordinarily, erosion proceeds imperceptibly, but when the natural equilibrium of the environment is changed, the rate of erosion can be greatly accelerated. Accelerated erosion in a developed area can cause damage by undermining structures; blocking storm drains; and depositing silt, sand, or mud on roads and in tunnels. Eroded materials can eventually be deposited in local waters, where the carried silt remains suspended in the water for some time, constituting a pollutant and altering the normal balance of plant and animal life.

The project site currently has soil that is exposed to weather; however, vegetation and plant roots act to hold soil and prevent significant erosion during wind and rainstorms.

[71] BSK Associates. 2020, April. Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Richmond Elementary School Relocation Project Ridgecrest, California.

[72] PlaceWorks, 2020, September. Geologic and Environmental Hazards Assessment. Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project.

[73] PlaceWorks, 2020, September. Geologic and Environmental Hazards Assessment. Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project.

Construction Phase

Construction activities would disturb about 40 acres of the 77-acre site and would remove vegetation and expose soil to erosion during heavy winds or rainstorms. As part of the project, an erosion control plan would be prepared and implemented. The SSUSD would incorporate best management practices (BMP) to control sediment, erosion, and hazardous materials contamination of runoff during construction and prevent contaminants from draining off-site. Categories of potential BMPs are described in Table 7.

Table 7 Construction BMPs

Category	Purpose	Examples
Erosion Controls and Wind Erosion Controls	Cover and/or bind soil surface, to prevent soil particles from being detached and transported by water or wind.	Mulch, geotextiles, mats, hydroseeding, earth dikes, swales.
Sediment Controls	Filter out soil particles that have been detached and transported in water.	Barriers such as straw bales, sandbags, fiber rolls, and gravel bag berms; desilting basin; cleaning measures such as street sweeping.
Tracking Controls	Minimize the tracking of soil off-site by vehicles.	Stabilized construction roadways and construction entrances/exits; entrance/outlet tire wash.
Non-storm Water Management Controls	Prohibit discharge of materials other than stormwater, such as discharges from the cleaning, maintenance, and fueling of vehicles and equipment. Conduct various construction operations, including paving, grinding, and concrete curing and finishing, in ways that minimize non-stormwater discharges and contamination of any such discharges.	BMPs specifying methods for: paving and grinding operations; cleaning, fueling, and maintenance of vehicles and equipment; concrete curing; concrete finishing.
Waste Management and Controls (i.e., good housekeeping practices)	Management of materials and wastes to avoid contamination of stormwater.	Spill prevention and control, stockpile management, and management of solid wastes and hazardous wastes.

Source: California Stormwater Quality Association (CASQA), California Construction Best Management Practices Handbook, January 2015.

The SSUSD would comply with East Kern Air Pollution Control District rules that prohibit earthwork during high wind events. Construction-related erosion impacts would be less than significant.

Operational Phase

Because of the vegetation and the flat topography, the existing site does not generate significant wind- or stormwater-related soil erosion. After completion of the project, ground surfaces on the campus would be either buildings, hardscaped or paved, or maintained landscaping and turf; however, about 30-acres of the 77-acre site would remain in its existing, undeveloped condition. In addition, the project includes hydrologic features designed to slow, filter, and retain stormwater on-site within landscaping and the four detention basins. Operational phase soil erosion impacts would be less than significant.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. Hazards arising from liquefaction and landslides would be less than significant, as discussed above in Sections 5.7.a (iii) and (iv).

The soils underlying the site were explored through test borings to a maximum depth of 51.1 feet bgs. In general, the upper 3 feet of soil consists of loose to clayey sand and clay with sand; 3 to 25 feet bgs is medium dense to dense silty sand with silt and clayey sand; and 25 feet bgs to the end of the borehole is dense to very dense sand with silt.[74]

Lateral spreading. Lateral spreading is the downslope movement of surface sediment due to liquefaction in a subsurface layer. The project site is not prone to lateral spreading because soils are not prone to liquefaction.

Subsidence. The major cause of ground subsidence is withdrawal of groundwater. Soils that are particularly subject to subsidence include those with high silt or clay content. The project would not withdraw groundwater. The project site is not in an area of known subsidence. Project implementation would not pose substantial hazards to people or structures due to ground subsidence, and impacts would be less than significant.

Seismically Induced Settlement. Seismically induced settlement occurs in dry sands—in contrast to liquefaction, which occurs in saturated sand or gravel—and is often caused by loose to medium-dense granular soils densified during ground shaking. Seismically induced settlement is estimated to be on the order of ½ inch or less in the event of a maximum earthquake. Differential seismically induced settlement is estimated to be about ¼ inch or less. The SSUSD would incorporate geotechnical investigation report recommendations for proper engineering design, and construction in conformance with current building codes and engineering practices to minimize hazards to people and structures arising from seismically induced settlement. The project would not pose substantial hazards to people or structures, and impacts would be less than significant.

Collapsible Soils. Collapsible soils are typically geologically young, unconsolidated sediments of low density that may compress under the weight of structures. Consolidation is a condition that occurs when the load increases on soil with a low relative density, causing pore spaces to become smaller, and where saturated forcing water to be squeezed out. Hydrocollapse happens when a dry soil that is able to withstand increased load collapses upon saturation. An increase in surface water infiltration, such as from irrigation, or a rise in the groundwater table, combined with the weight of a building or structure, can initiate rapid settlement and cause foundations and walls to crack.

During construction, grading operations would excavate and recompact site soils. At project completion, well-compacted earth would underlie the project. The Architect of Record would ensure compliance with applicable laws pertaining to school construction, including the California Building Code. Additionally, as part of the DSA review process, SSUSD is required to comply with the final engineering-level geotechnical report. This report includes, but is not limited to: identification of site preparation, fill placement, temporary shoring, groundwater

[74] BSK Associates. 2020, April. Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Richmond Elementary School Relocation Project Ridgecrest, California.

seismic design features, excavation stability, foundations, soil stabilization, establishment of foundations, concrete slabs and pavements, surface drainage, cement type and corrosion measures, erosion control, shoring and internal bracing, and plan review.

The project design and development would incorporate all recommended measures outlined in the final engineering-level geotechnical report. The project would not pose substantial hazards to people or structures due to collapsible soils, and impacts would be less than significant.

d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?

Less Than Significant Impact. Expansive soils possess clay particles that react to moisture changes by shrinking when dry and swelling when wet. These soils have the potential to crack building foundations and, in some cases, structurally distress the buildings themselves. Soils at the project site are considered to have a very low expansion potential.[75] Therefore, the project would not expose people or the new school buildings to adverse effects associated with expansive soils. Impacts would be less than significant.

e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of waste water?

No Impact. The project site would be served by sewer mains in adjacent roadways. Project development would not use septic tanks or other alternative wastewater disposal systems. No impact would occur.

f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?

Less Than Significant Impact. A paleontological resource is a natural resource characterized as faunal or floral fossilized remains but may also include specimens of nonfossil material dating to any period preceding human occupation. These resources are valued for the information they yield about the history of the earth and its past ecological settings. The resources are found in geologic strata conducive to their preservation, typically sedimentary formations. Often, they appear as simply small outcroppings visible on the surface; other times they are below the ground surface and may be encountered during grading.

The Indian Wells Valley is a topographic basin with infilling from surrounding alluvial fans. During wet periods of the Pleistocene, the area was submerged by the ancestral China Lake. China Lake joined into a series of massive lakes that included Owens Lake, China Lake, Searles Lake, Panamint Lake, and ultimately Manly Lake in Death Valley. Toward the end of the Pleistocene, the lakes receded to isolated lakes that formed saline lakes and playas in the Holocene. The Holocene China Lake shoreline is estimated to have been at an elevation of

[75] BSK Associates. 2020, April. Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Richmond Elementary School Relocation Project Ridgecrest, California.

approximately 2,180 feet.[76] A 2008 study identified the site area as located on older Lacustrine deposits[77] and alluvial gravel and sand. As identified in soil testing, the site consists of clay, silt, and sand.

The NAWSCL is in the northern Mojave Desert, west of Death Valley at the southern end of the Owens River. Within and around the base, lake sediments of late Pleistocene age have yielded abundant but fragmentary and wind-blasted remains of extinct Ice Age animals as well as lithics and tools left behind by early human inhabitants. There are abundant fossil records of Owens Lake and areas typically associated with lacustrine settings that have a large seasonal fluctuation in size and hydrochemistry due to changes in surface water and/or groundwater input.[78]

Project-related site preparation would include excavation of soil for building foundations to a maximum depth of about 5 feet, and approximately 8 feet for storm drain and sewer trenching. Paleontological resource impacts may occur where excavation is more than 5 feet or into older soils of medium dense to dense silty sand with silt and clayey sand. Implementation of Mitigation Measure GEO-1 would reduce paleontological resource impacts to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure

GEO-1 Prior to the issuance of grading permits, the project proponent shall retain a qualified paleontologist to carry out all mitigation measures related to paleontological resources.

Paleontological Monitor

- Prior to the start of any ground disturbing activities, a qualified paleontologist shall be retained to monitor ground-disturbing activity that occurs at a depth of 5 feet or more below ground surface. The use of post driving or rotary drilling does not require monitoring.
- The duration and timing of monitoring shall be determined by the qualified paleontologist in consultation with the Sierra Sands Unified School District (SSUSD) and Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake (NAWSCL) Cultural Staff, and shall be based on a review of geologic maps and grading plans.
- During the course of monitoring, if the paleontologist can demonstrate, based on observations of subsurface conditions, that the level of monitoring should be reduced,

[76] BSK Associates. 2020, April. Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Richmond Elementary School Relocation Project Ridgecrest, California.

[77] Still water in lakes permits very fine particles (fine sand, silt, and clay) to settle out and to form lacustrine deposits. These deposits get exposed by elevation of old lakebeds. **Lacustrine deposits** are very well sorted, devoid of coarse particles such as coarse sand or gravels, and are characterized by thin layers that reflect annual deposition of sediments. https://landscape.soilweb.ca/lacustrine-environment/

[78] San Bernardino County Museum. http://www.sbcounty.gov/Museum/media/2007/05-13-07.html; and Thomas Bullard, Steven Bacon, Kenneth Adams, and David Decker. 2019. Naval Earth Sciences and Engineering Program. Desert Research Institute, Nevada System of Higher Education, Division of Hydrological Science, Reno, Nevada. *Geomorphic Map of the China Lake Basin Below 700 m. in Support of Cultural Resource Management at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake.* https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1077596.pdf; and US Department of the Interior, US Geological Survey. 1998.*The last interglaciation at Owens Lake, California; Core OL-92.*

the paleontologist, in consultation with the SSUSD and NAWSCL Cultural Staff, may adjust the level of monitoring to circumstances, as warranted.

- Paleontological monitoring shall include inspection of exposed rock units during active excavations within sensitive geologic sediments deeper than 5 feet. The qualified paleontologist shall have authority to temporarily divert excavation operations away from exposed fossils to collect associated data and recover the fossil specimens if deemed necessary.

Paleontological Resources Awareness Training

- Prior to the start of any ground disturbing activities, the qualified paleontologist shall conduct a Paleontological Resources Awareness Training program for all construction personnel working on the project earthwork activities, and construction personnel shall be provided the Paleontological Resources Training guide approved by the qualified paleontologist.
- A copy of the Paleontological Resources Awareness Training guide shall be submitted to the SSUSD and the NAWSCL Cultural Staff.
- Paleontological Resources Awareness Training shall include an overview of potential paleontological resources that could be encountered during ground disturbing activities to facilitate worker recognition, avoidance, and subsequent immediate notification to the qualified paleontologist for further evaluation and action, as appropriate; and penalties for unauthorized artifact collecting or intentional disturbance of paleontological resources.
- The construction contractor shall ensure new employees or on-site workers who have not participated in earlier Paleontological Resources Awareness Trainings shall participate in training as described above, and shall be given the Paleontological Resources Awareness Training guide.
- The Paleontological Resources Awareness Training guide shall be kept available on-site for all personnel to review.

Resource Discovery

- If a paleontological resource is found, the construction contractor shall cease ground-disturbing activities within 50 feet of the find. The qualified paleontologist shall evaluate the significance of the resources and recommend appropriate treatment measures. At each fossil locality, field data forms shall be used to record pertinent geologic data, stratigraphic sections shall be measured, and appropriate sediment samples shall be collected and submitted for analysis. Any fossils encountered and recovered shall be catalogued and presented to an appropriate repository such as the NAWSCL curation facility and/or Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

Final Report

- Following the completion of monitoring, the paleontologist shall prepare a report documenting the absence or discovery of fossil resources on-site. If fossils are found, the report shall summarize the results of the inspection program; identify the fossils encountered, recovery and curation efforts, and the methods used in these efforts; and describe the fossils collected and their significance. A copy of the report shall be provided to the City of Ridgecrest Planning Department, Kern County Planning and Natural Resources Department, SSUSD and NAWSCL Cultural Staff, and to an appropriate repository such as the NAWSCL curation facility and/or Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County.

3.8 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

A background discussion on the GHG regulatory setting and GHG modeling can be found in Appendix A.

Would the project:

a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?

Less Than Significant Impact. Scientists have concluded that human activities are contributing to global climate change by adding large amounts of heat-trapping gases, known as greenhouse gases (GHGs), into the atmosphere. The primary source of these GHG is fossil fuel use. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has identified four major GHGs—water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO_2), methane (CH_4), and ozone (O_3)—that are the likely cause of an increase in global average temperatures observed within the 20th and 21st centuries. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change identified other GHGs that contribute to global warming to a lesser extent—nitrous oxide (N_2O), sulfur hexafluoride (SF_6), hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and chlorofluorocarbons.[79]

Information on manufacture of cement, steel, and other "life cycle" emissions that would occur as a result of the project are not applicable and are not included in the analysis.[80] Black carbon emissions are not included in

[79] Water vapor (H2O) is the strongest GHG and the most variable in its phases (vapor, cloud droplets, ice crystals). However, water vapor is not considered a pollutant, but part of the feedback loop rather than a primary cause of change.

[80] Life cycle emissions include indirect emissions associated with materials manufacture. However, these indirect emissions involve numerous parties, each of which is responsible for GHG emissions of their particular activity. The California Resources Agency, in adopting the CEQA Guidelines Amendments on GHG emissions found that lifecycle analyses was not warranted for project-specific CEQA analysis in most situations, for a variety of reasons, including lack of control over some sources, and the possibility of double-counting emissions (see California Natural Resources Agency. 2018, November. Final Statement of Reasons for Regulatory Action http://resources.ca.gov/ceqa/docs/2018_CEQA_Final_Statement_of%20Reasons_111218.pdf.). Because the amount of materials consumed during the operation or construction of the school project is not known, the origin of the raw materials purchased is not known, and manufacturing information for those raw materials are also not known, calculation of life cycle emissions would be speculative. A life-cycle analysis is not warranted (See Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR). 2008, June. CEQA and Climate Change: Addressing Climate Change through CEQA Review. Technical Advisory. http://opr.ca.gov/docs/june08-ceqa.pdf.).

the GHG analysis because the California Air Resources Board (CARB) does not include this pollutant in the state's Assembly Bill 32 or Senate Bill 32 inventory and treats this short-lived climate pollutant separately.[81]

Global climate change is not confined to a particular project area and is generally accepted as the consequence of global industrialization over the last 200 years. A typical project, even a very large one, does not generate enough greenhouse gas emissions on its own to influence global climate change significantly; hence, the issue of global climate change is, by definition, a cumulative environmental impact.

As shown in the Table 8, the project would generate GHG emissions from energy use (indirectly from purchased electricity use and directly through fuel consumed for building heating) and area sources (e.g., landscaping equipment used on-site, consumer products, coatings), and outdoor water use. The new school is about two miles south of the damaged school and about one mile southeast of the temporary school. As described in Section 3.17(b), project-related VMT would be similar to that generated by the existing temporary school (during non-COVID operations). Student VMT is also lessened through use of District buses to transport students to and from school. Furthermore, the buildings would, at minimum, be designed and built to meet the 2019 Building Energy Efficiency Standards and the 2019 CALGreen and would be substantially more energy efficient than the damaged school, which was built in 1953. During project operation, renewable energy from parking lot solar panels would offset electricity use. Annual average construction emissions were amortized over 30 years and included in the emissions inventory to account for one-time GHG emissions from the construction phase of the project.[82] Overall, development and operation of the school would not generate annual emissions that exceed the EKAPCD bright-line threshold of 22,680 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent ($MTCO_2e$) per year.[83] Therefore, the new school's cumulative contribution to GHG emissions would be less than significant.

[81] Particulate matter emissions, which include black carbon, are analyzed in Section 3.3, Air Quality. Black carbon emissions have sharply declined due to efforts to reduce on-road and off-road vehicle emissions, especially diesel particulate matter. The state's existing air quality policies will virtually eliminate black carbon emissions from on-road diesel engines within 10 years (See California Air Resources Board. 2017, March 14. Final Proposed Short-Lived Climate Pollutant Reduction Strategy. https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/shortlived/shortlived.htm.).

[82] International Energy Agency, 2008, *Energy Efficiency Requirements in Building Codes, Energy Efficiency Policies for New Buildings,* March. While the BAAQMD CEQA Guidelines do not provide specific criteria in evaluating construction-related GHG emissions impacts, this methodology is consistent with the methodology utilized by the South Coast Air Quality Management District.

[83] Eastern Kern Air Pollution Control District (EKAPCD). 2012, March 8. Addendum to CEQA Guidelines Addressing GHG Emission Impacts for Stationary Source Projects. http://www.kernair.org/Documents/CEQA/EKAPCD%20CEQA%20GHG%20Policy%20Adopted%203-8-12.pdf

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Table 8 Project-Related Operation GHG Emissions

Source	GHG ($MTCO_2e$/Year)
Area	<1
Energy	234
Water	18
Amortized Construction Emissions[1]	44
Total	**296**
EKAPCD Bright-Line Threshold	22,680 $MTCO_2e$/Yr
Exceeds Bright-Line Threshold?	**No**

Source: CalEEMod, Version 2016.3.2.25.
Notes: MTons = metric tons; $MTCO_2e$ = metric ton of carbon dioxide equivalent
[1] Total construction emission are amortized over 30 years per EKAPCD methodology.

b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?

No Impact. Applicable plans adopted for the purpose of reducing GHG emissions include CARB's Scoping Plan and the KCOG Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Communities Strategy (RTP/SCS). A consistency analysis with these plans is presented below.

CARB Scoping Plan

CARB's Scoping Plan is California's GHG reduction strategy to achieve the state's GHG emissions reduction target established by AB 32, which is to return to 1990 emission levels by year 2020. The CARB Scoping Plan is applicable to state agencies and is not directly applicable to cities/counties and individual projects. Nonetheless, the Scoping Plan has been the primary tool used to develop performance-based and efficiency-based CEQA criteria and GHG reduction targets for climate action planning efforts.

Since adoption of the 2008 Scoping Plan, state agencies have adopted programs identified in the plan, and the legislature has passed additional legislation to achieve the GHG reduction targets. Statewide strategies to reduce GHG emissions include the Low Carbon Fuel Standard, California Appliance Energy Efficiency regulations, California Renewable Energy Portfolio standard, changes in the Corporate Average Fuel Economy standards, and other early action measures as necessary to ensure the state is on target to achieve the GHG emissions reduction goals of AB 32. Also, new buildings are required to comply with the latest applicable Building Energy Efficiency Standards and CALGreen. On December 24, 2017, CARB adopted the Final 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan Update to address the new 2030 interim target to achieve a 40 percent reduction below 1990 levels by 2030, established by SB 32.[84] While measures in the Scoping Plan apply to state agencies and not the new school, GHG emissions would be reduced by statewide compliance with measures that have been adopted

[84] California Air Resources Board. 2017, November. California's 2017 Climate Change Scoping Plan: The Strategy for Achieving California's 2030 Greenhouse Gas Target. https://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/scopingplan/scoping_plan_2017.pdf.

since AB 32 and SB 32 were adopted. Therefore, the new school would not obstruct implementation of the CARB Scoping Plan, and impacts would be less than significant.

KCOG 2018 RTP/SCS

KCOG's 2018 RTP/SCS was adopted August 16, 2018. It identifies a forecast development pattern to accommodate the region's future transportation, employment, and housing needs, while promoting conservation of natural resources and open space areas. The 2018 RTP/SCS also identifies multimodal transportation investments, including active transportation strategies (e.g., bikeways and sidewalks), transportation demand management, transportation systems management, and operations and maintenance to the existing multimodal transportation system.[85] The 2018 RTP/SCS incorporates local land use projections and circulation networks from the cities' and counties' general plans. The projected regional development pattern, including location of land uses and residential densities in local general plans, when integrated with the regional transportation network identified in the 2018 RTP/SCS, would reduce per capita vehicular travel-related GHG emissions and achieve the GHG reduction per capita targets for the KCOG region. The SCS does not require that local general plans, specific plans, or zoning be consistent with the SCS, but provides incentives for consistency to governments and developers.

The project would replace existing school facilities for students of Richmond Elementary School. As described in Section 3.17(b), project-related VMT would be similar to that generated by the existing temporary school (during non-COVID operation). The new school would serve the local population residing within the school district; therefore, it would not interfere with KCOG's ability to implement the regional strategies outlined in the 2018 RTP/SCS to achieve the GHG reduction goals and strategies.

3.9 HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

The information in this Section is based in part on the following technical studies:

- *Geologic and Environmental Hazards Assessment. Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project.* PlaceWorks, 2020, September. (Appendix E)
- *Phase I Environmental Site Assessment.* PlaceWorks, September 2020. (Appendix G)

Would the project:

a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials?

Less Than Significant Impact. The term "hazardous material" is defined in different ways by different regulatory programs. For purposes of this environmental document, the definition of "hazardous material" is similar to that in the California Health and Safety Code § 25501:

[85] Kern Council of Governments. 2018, August 16. 2018 Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy. https://www.kerncog.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/2018_RTP.pdf

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> Hazardous materials that, because of their quantity, concentration, or physical or chemical characteristics, pose a significant present or potential hazard to human health and safety or to the environment if released into the workplace or the environment.

"Hazardous waste" is a subset of hazardous materials, and the definition is essentially the same as in California Health and Safety Code § 25517 and 22 CCR § 66261.2:

> Hazardous wastes are those that, because of their quantity, concentration, or physical, chemical, or infectious characteristics, may either cause, or significantly contribute to an increase in mortality or an increase in serious illness, or pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human health or the environment when improperly treated, stored, transported, disposed of, or otherwise managed.

Construction of the new school would not require extensive or ongoing use of acutely hazardous materials or substances. While grading and construction may involve activities requiring the transport, storage, use, or disposal of some hazardous materials, such as onsite fueling or servicing of construction equipment, the activities would be short term and would be subject to federal, state, and local health and safety requirements.

The types of hazardous materials associated with operation of an elementary school campus would be similar to those at other elementary schools in the SSUSD, and be limited to chemicals associated with school labs, maintenance, janitorial, and repair products, such as commercial cleansers, lubricants, paints, etc. All hazardous materials would be in small qualities and stored, handled, and disposed of in accordance with county, state, and federal laws that protect public safety. Furthermore, the storage, handling, and disposal of hazardous materials are regulated by the EPA, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Kern County Environmental Health Services Department. The requirements of these agencies would be incorporated into the design and operation of the school. This would include providing for and maintaining appropriate storage areas for hazardous materials and installing or affixing appropriate warning signs and labels.

Compliance with applicable health and safety requirements would ensure that hazards to the public, the students, and the environment would not result through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Impacts would be less than significant.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. General construction activities would comply with federal, state, and local health and safety requirements, and these types of routine construction activities are not expected to result in the release of hazardous materials in the environment.

Operation of the new school would not result in a significant hazard or release hazardous materials into the environment. Storage, transport, and disposal of hazardous materials on-site would be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the agencies. Compliance with the previously discussed regulations is already standard practice at SSUSD schools, including training school staff to safely contain and clean up hazardous materials spills; maintaining hazardous materials spill containment and cleanup supplies on-site; implementing school evacuation procedures as needed; and contacting the appropriate hazardous materials emergency response

agency immediately pursuant to requirements of regulatory agencies. Impacts from reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions would be less than significant.

c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?

Less Than Significant Impact. There are two schools nearby: Burroughs High School at 500 French Ave, just outside the 0.25-mile radius, and Pierce Elementary School at 674 Gold Canyon Street, within the 0.25-mile radius. Project construction would emit diesel exhaust, which is considered hazardous. However, construction would be temporary. Exposure to diesel exhaust would not pose substantial hazards to persons near the site. Project construction would not expose persons on a school campus to substantial hazardous emissions, materials, substances, or waste.

Operation of the school would be similar to that of the existing SSUSD schools. The new school would not include any facilities that would emit hazardous emissions or require a permit from the East Kern Air Pollution Control District. Project-related impacts would be less than significant.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. California Government Code § 65962.5 requires that lists of hazardous materials sites be compiled and available to the public. These lists include:

- Hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action.
- Hazardous waste discharges for which the SWRCB has issued certain types of orders.
- Public drinking water wells containing detectable levels of organic contaminants.
- Underground storage tanks with reported unauthorized releases.
- Solid waste disposal facilities from which hazardous waste has migrated.

The project site is not included on any list compiled pursuant to California Government Code § 65962.5.

Recognized Environmental Conditions. A REC is "the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products in, on, or at a property: (1) due to any release to the environment; (2) under conditions indicative of a release to the environment; or (3) under conditions that pose a material threat of a future release to the environment."[86] RECs were not identified on the project site.

Historical Recognized Environmental Conditions. An HREC is "a past release of any hazardous substances or petroleum products that has occurred in connection with the property and has been addressed to the satisfaction of the applicable regulatory authority or meeting unrestricted use criteria established by a regulatory authority, without subjecting the property to any required controls (for example, property use

[86] ASTM International (ASTM). 2013. Standard E1527-13: Standard Practice for Environmental Site Assessments: Phase I Environmental Site Assessment Process.

restrictions, activity and use limitations, institutional controls, or engineering controls)." HRECs were not identified on the project site.

Controlled Recognized Environmental Conditions. A CREC is "a recognized environmental condition resulting from a past release of hazardous substances or petroleum products that has been addressed to the satisfaction of the applicable regulatory authority (for example, as evidenced by the issuance of a no further action letter or equivalent, or meeting risk-based criteria established by regulatory authority), with hazardous substances or petroleum products allowed to remain in place subject to the implementation of required controls (for example, property use restrictions, activity and use limitations, institutional controls, or engineering controls)." CRECs were not identified on the project site.

Soil sampling and analysis showed that organochlorine pesticides, polychlorinated biphenyls, total petroleum hydrocarbons, and asbestos were not detected.[87] The analysis also showed that lead was not elevated above background and health-based screening levels. No impacts would occur.

e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles or a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?

Less Than Significant Impact. The closest airport to the project site is Armitage Airfield at NAWSCL about 3.5 miles north. All buildings at the new school would be one story, and the highest building would be the gymnasium building at 30 feet. Buildings would be no higher than buildings at Burroughs High School which is closer to the airfield. Additionally, the site has been identified by the DOD as an acceptable site for the relocation for the Richmond Elementary School.

The nearest private heliport to the project site is the Ridgecrest Community Helicopter Heliport at 1081 North China Lake Boulevard in Ridgecrest, about 1.3 miles northwest; and a Southern California Edison Heliport at 510 South China Lake Boulevard about 1 mile southwest.[88] Over congested areas, helicopters must maintain an altitude of at least 1,000 feet above the highest obstacle, except as needed for takeoff and landing.[89] Helicopters operating to or from this heliport would comply with existing regulations regarding operating altitudes. The new school would not result in a safety hazard or excessive noise 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?

No Impact. Kern County Fire Department (KCFD) Emergency Operations Center provides emergency services to the City of Ridgecrest. NAWS Emergency Operations Center is responsible for emergency preparedness and response on the base.

87 PlaceWorks, September 2020. Phase I Environmental Site Assessment.
88 Airnav.com. 2020, October 21. Airport Information. http://www.airnav.com/airports/.
89 Code of Federal Regulations, Title 14, § 91.119

Schools are critical community facilities and are often used as evacuation centers during emergencies. The school would not interfere with implementation of emergency response plans. The SSUSD would prepare and implement an emergency evacuation plan for the school in accordance with their standard practice and CDE requirements. No impact would occur.

g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project site and NAWSCL lands are designated Federal Responsibility Areas (FRA).[90] Specifically, the site is designated "Other Unzoned" and "Other Moderate."[91] The project site is not designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The risk of wildland fires is low. Impacts would be less than significant.

h) Does the proposed school site contain one or more pipelines, situated underground or aboveground, which carry hazardous substances, acutely hazardous materials, or hazardous wastes, unless the pipeline is a natural gas line that is used only to supply natural gas to that school or neighborhood?

No Impact. No high-pressure natural gas pipelines were identified within 1,500 feet of the site. There are no chemical or petroleum pipelines within a 1,500-foot radius.[92] No hazardous pipeline impacts would occur.

i) Does the project site contain a current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site and, if so, have the wastes been removed?

No Impact. No current or former hazardous waste disposal site or solid waste disposal site was identified on the school site.[93] No waste disposal site impact would occur.

j) Is the project site a hazardous substance release site identified by the state Department of Health Services in a current list adopted pursuant to § 25356 for removal or remedial action pursuant to Chapter 6.8 of Division 20 of the Health and Safety Code?

No Impact. The Department of Toxic Substances Control maintains a list of Hazardous Waste and Substances Sites pursuant to Health and Safety Code § 25356 consisting of listed and delisted federal Superfund sites, State Response sites, and military investigation sites. The school site is not listed as any of the types of hazardous materials sites specified in Section 25356. No hazardous substance release impacts would occur.

90 CAL FIRE. 2007, November 7. Fire Hazard Severity Zones. https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/
91 CAL FIRE. 2007, September 24. Draft Fire Hazard Severity Zones in LRA. https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/media/6686/fhszl06_1_map15.pdf
92 PlaceWorks, 2020, September. Geologic and Environmental Hazards Assessment. Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project
93 PlaceWorks, 2020, September. Geologic and Environmental Hazards Assessment. Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project

3.10 HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY

Would the project:

a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?

Less Than Significant Impact. A significant impact would occur if the project discharges water that does not meet the quality standards of agencies that regulate surface water quality and discharges into stormwater drainage system.

New development projects may result in two types of water quality impacts: (1) short-term impacts from discharge of soil through erosion, sediments, and other pollutants during construction and (2) long-term impacts from impervious surfaces (buildings, roads, parking lots, and walkways) that prevent water from being absorbed or soaking into the ground, thereby increasing the pollutants in stormwater runoff. Impervious surfaces can increase the concentration of pollutants, such as oil, fertilizers, pesticides, trash, soil, and animal waste, in stormwater runoff. Runoff from short-term construction and long-term operation can flow directly into storm drains, channels, streams, and lakes.

The project would be constructed in an area with adjacent paved and unpaved streets; residential, commercial, and vacant desert land; and that currently generate nonpoint-source pollutants that are carried by storm and irrigation water into storm drains in the surrounding streets.

None of the adjacent streets have underground storm drains. An open wash in the northwest corner of the site carries stormwater from the surrounding community. Storm drain inlets along French Avenue and China Lake Boulevard direct stormwater flows under the intersection to an outlet at the southeast corner of the intersection. Flows then drain east along an open, vegetated gully to an open wash; under Gold Canyon Street bridge; northeast between residential developments to an open space area; across the dirt extension of Gateway Boulevard and then pool on the south side of Gold Canyon Boulevard before entering a culvert under the street. Stormwater continues north to the edge of the NAWSCL Solar Farm where it dissipates.

Construction Phase

Clearing, grading, excavation, and construction activities have the potential to impact water quality through soil erosion and silt and debris carried in runoff. Additionally, the use of construction materials, such as fuels, solvents, and paints, may present a risk to surface water quality. Finally, the refueling and parking of construction vehicles and other equipment on-site during construction may result in oil, grease, or related pollutant leaks and spills that may discharge in stormwater runoff. The SSUSD would incorporate BMPs to control sediment, erosion, and hazardous materials contamination of runoff during construction and prevent contaminants from draining off-site. Additionally, the project does not include any construction in the northwest corner of the site and would not direct any additional stormwater to the existing culvert.

The project site is within the Lahontan Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB). There are no navigable waters of the US near the site; therefore, the project would not be subject to the National Pollutant

Discharge Elimination System permit program. Nonetheless, the SSUSD has committed to implementing construction-related BMPs as listed in Table 7, to ensure that the project would not violate water quality or waste discharge requirements. Construction impacts to stormwater quality would be less than significant.

Operation Phase

Additionally, after completion of the project, ground surfaces on the campus would be buildings, hardscaped or paved, or maintained landscaping and turf; however, about 30-acres of the 77-acre site would remain in its existing undeveloped condition. Runoff from buildings and parking lots typically contains oils, grease, fuel, antifreeze, by-products of combustion (such as lead, cadmium, nickel, and other metals), fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, soil erosion, and other pollutants. Precipitation at the beginning of the rainy season may result in an initial stormwater runoff (first flush) with high pollutant concentrations.

The project includes hydrologic features designed to retain, filter, and infiltrate stormwater on-site within landscaping and the four retention basins. The basins would hold stormwater from a 10-year, 5-day storm. The project would not increase stormwater runoff from the site or carried pollutants compared to existing conditions. The project would not substantially degrade surface- or groundwater quality. Water quality impacts would be less than significant.

b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?

Less Than Significant Impact. The City of Ridgecrest is over the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin (IWVGB).[94] The IWVGB is managed by the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority and the basin spans 597 square miles or 38,200 acres, the vast majority of which is undeveloped, permeable desert land. However, the basin is in overdraft. The 77-acre school site is 100 percent permeable but is not used for intentional groundwater recharge. Additionally, groundwater was not encountered during test borings to a maximum depth of 51.1 feet bgs and has historically been at a depth greater than 50 feet bgs;[95] therefore, the site would not provide any recharge. Development of impermeable surfaces would not have a substantial adverse impact on groundwater recharge. The project would not involve groundwater wells and would not directly withdraw water from the IWVGB. The project would relocate the existing Richmond Elementary School program; the students attending the new school already attend the existing school. The project would not increase regional groundwater demand. The new school would not deplete groundwater supplies and would not interfere with groundwater recharge. Impacts to groundwater recharge and groundwater supply would be less than significant.

[94] Water Management Planning Tool. https://gis.water.ca.gov/app/boundaries/
[95] BSK Associates. 2020, April. Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation Richmond Elementary School Relocation Project Ridgecrest, California.

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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 which would:

i) Result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?

Less Than Significant Impact. Site preparation, grading, and construction activities on the school site would disturb and expose large quantities of soil. Disturbance and exposure of soil could increase soil erosion and sedimentation if effective control measures are not used. As described in Section 3.7(b), the SSUSD would include erosion and sediment control measures to minimize off-site impacts, such as mulch, geotextiles, mats, hydroseeding, earth dikes, swales, straw bales, sandbags, fiber rolls, gravel bag berms, desilting basins, and cleaning measures such as street sweeping (see Table 7). Erosion and siltation impacts would be less than significant.

ii) Substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite?

Less Than Significant Impact. Project development would include construction of four retention basins. The retention basins would hold stormwater from a 10-year, 5-day storm. The retention basins would not have outlets and would infiltrate stormwater into the ground. Drainage from the site at project completion would be no more than for existing, undeveloped conditions. The project would not result in flooding on- or off-site, and impacts would be less than significant.

iii) Create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?

Less Than Significant Impact. As described under item ii) stormwater on the campus would be directed to four retention basins. The project would not increase stormwater runoff from the site compared to existing conditions; therefore, it would not contribute runoff water that would exceed the stormwater drainage system. The new campus would not generate substantial additional sources of polluted runoff.

iv) Impede or redirect flood flows?

Less Than Significant Impact. The site is not within a dam inundation zone. The northeast corner of the site is within a 100-year flood zone, and the remainder of the site is within a 500-year flood zone (see Figure 11, *Site Hazards*). Because of the open expanse of land around the proposed campus, the new school would not impede or redirect flood flows.

d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?

No Impact. As described under item ii) the project would not result in a flood hazard. Tsunamis are a type of earthquake-induced flooding produced by large-scale sudden disturbances of the sea floor. The new school site is over 100 miles inland and separated from the Pacific Ocean by several mountain ranges; therefore, the site is outside the tsunami hazard zone and would not be affected by a tsunami.

A seiche is a surface wave created when a body of water is shaken, usually by earthquake activity. Seiches are of concern relative to water storage facilities because inundation from a seiche can occur if the wave overflows a containment wall, such as the wall of a reservoir, water storage tank, dam or other artificial body of water. There are no bodies of water in the area. There are no reservoirs or water storage tanks at or above ground level that would pose a flood hazard to the site due to a seiche. The proposed project would not release pollutants as the result of floods, tsunami, or seiche. No impact would occur.

e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?

Less Than Significant Impact. Similar to item 3.10(a), the project would not substantially degrade surface or groundwater quality; therefore, the project would not conflict or obstruct water quality and groundwater management plans; impacts would be less than significant.

3.11 LAND USE AND PLANNING

Would the project:

a) Physically divide an established community?

No Impact. The project site is surrounded by a mix of residential and commercial development and vacant land. Schools, unlike highways and other aboveground infrastructure, do not have a physical presence that would divide established communities. Schools serve as important places of community interaction. Neighborhood schools are an integral part of a community, and therefore do not create or constitute physical divisions. Additionally, the project site is on the east edge of Ridgecrest developments and would not divide an established community; no impact would occur.

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?

Less than Significant Impact. The project site is surrounded by commercial, residential, and vacant land, and the new school would serve the residential community. The project site is within the unsecured portion of the NAWSCL military base and has been identified as an acceptable location by the US Navy for the relocated Richmond Elementary School. The site has a City of Ridgecrest General Plan land use designation of Military (ML) and is almost entirely within the Military Influence Area (MIA), except a small part of southwestern corner.[96] The project site is zoned Urban Reserve (UR), which is land held in reserve for future urban expansion.[97] According to the city's municipal code, the proposed school use would be an acceptable, but conditioned use under the UR designation.

[96] Ridgecrest, City of. City of Ridgecrest General Plan Land Use Diagram. 2009, December 2. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/164/General-Plan-Map-PDF.

[97] Ridgecrest, City of. as of December 2, 2009. Current Zoning. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/174/Zoning-Map-PDF.

The project site is regulated by the US Navy. It is in the southwest corner of the "Mainsite" land management unit of the China Lake Comprehensive Land Use Management Plan.[98] The Mainsite land use management unit is on the southern part of the North Range and covers approximately eight square miles. Mainsite includes the headquarters, most administrative and support functions, principal laboratories (Michelson, Thompson, and Lauritsen) and Missile Engagement Simulation Arena, NAWSCL Solar Farm, and vacant land inside the secure area. While the new school site has not been designated for school use, it has been identified by the US Navy as an acceptable site for the relocation for the Richmond Elementary School.[99]

The school project does not conflict with the city's land use plan and zoning designation, and the US Navy has determined that the school is a compatible use. The new school would not conflict with existing plans, policies, or regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects, and impacts would be less than significant.

3.12 MINERAL RESOURCES

Would the project:

a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be a value to the region and the residents of the state?

No Impact. MRZ-2 designation is for areas with significant mineral deposits present and MRZ-3 is for areas with mineral occurrences of undetermined resource significance.[100] The nearest MRZ-2 and MRZ-3 sites are near the town of Johannesburg, about 16 miles south of the project site. The project site is not located within an area of known mineral resource (MRZ-2 and MRZ-3 zones). Additionally, no active mines or oil fields are mapped within the City.[101,102] Therefore, the project would not result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource valuable to the region and the state, and no impact would occur.

[98] Comprehensive Land Use Management Plan (CLUMP) for Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, California. NAWS AdPub 012. May 2005. Because of the acreage involved, NAWS land areas are subdivided into smaller management units to facilitate the planning and management of activities occurring on these lands. Land management units represent areas that are generally defined by their operational uses. These land use areas are generally separated into two principal categories, those within the developed portions of the Station (Mainsite, Armitage Airfield, Main Magazines, and Propulsion Laboratories) and those that make up the test and training areas of the North and South Ranges. These two main areas are further divided into 18 separate areas or land use management units reflecting the location of distinct operational area boundaries for day-to-day management of military operations.

[99] Draft Environmental Impact Statement For Proposed Military Operational Increases and Implementation of Associated Comprehensive Land Use and Integrated Natural Resources Management Plans. September 2001. https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/enviro/naws_chinalake_nov2002-vol-iii.pdf

[100] California Geological Survey (CGS).1999. Mineral Land Classification of Southeastern Kern County, California. ftp://ftp.consrv.ca.gov/pub/dmg/pubs/ofr/OFR_99-15/

[101] Office of Mine Reclamation (OMR). 2020, July 15 (accessed). Mines Online. http://maps.conservation.ca.gov/mol/index.html.

[102] Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources (DOGGR). 2020, July 15 (accessed). DOGGR Well Finder. https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/doggr/wellfinder/#/-117.66807/35.62250/13

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?

No Impact. The project site is not designated as an area which could potentially contain locally important mineral resource, such as petroleum fields, natural gas, and geothermal resources, and mineral deposits.[103] The project site is surrounded by residential, commercial uses and vacant desert land. There are no locally important mineral resources on or near the project site. Therefore, project development would not cause a loss of availability of a resource, and no impact would occur.

3.13 NOISE

A background discussion on the noise regulatory setting and noise modeling can be found in Appendix H.

Would the project result in:

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. Noise is defined as unwanted sound and is known to have several adverse effects on people, including hearing loss, speech and sleep interference, physiological responses, and annoyance.

Existing Noise Environment

Existing ambient noise baseline was determined using the Federal Highway Administration Traffic Noise Prediction Model (FHWA RD-77-108). Model inputs include existing average daily traffic (ADT) volumes provided by the traffic study, vehicle mix from Caltrans, and day, evening, and night splits, along with roadway speed limits and number of roadway lanes. Table 9 shows existing noise levels at 50 feet from the centerline of the travel lane.

Table 9 Existing Traffic Noise Levels

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	dBA CNEL at 50 feet
Richmond Rd – north of Gold Canyon St	500	56.9
Richmond Rd – Gold Canyon St to School Driveway	1,000	59.9
Richmond Rd – School Driveway to Ridgecrest Blvd	1,000	56.1
Richmond Rd – south of Ridgecrest Blvd	1,500	57.9
Ridgecrest Boulevard – west of China Lake Blvd	8,000	69.1
Ridgecrest Boulevard – China Lake Blvd to Sunland St	11,100	69.0
Ridgecrest Boulevard – Sunland St to Gateway Blvd	9,000	69.2
Ridgecrest Boulevard – Gateway Blvd to Richmond Rd	7,000	69.1
Gold Canyon St – west of Richmond St	900	55.7
China Lake Blvd/SR 178 – Drummond Ave to Las Flores Ave	13,400	68.9
China Lake Blvd/SR 178 – Las Flores Ave to French Ave	13,000	68.7
China Lake Blvd/SR 178 – French Ave to Ridgecrest Blvd	14,000	67.7

[103] Kern County. 1982, April 15. Land Use, Open Space & Conservation Element Kern County, Ridgecrest Priority Area. https://psbweb.co.kern.ca.us/planning/pdfs/kcgp/kc_gp_pa_ridgecrest.pdf

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Table 9 Existing Traffic Noise Levels

Roadway Segment	Existing ADT	dBA CNEL at 50 feet
China Lake Blvd/SR 178 – south of Ridgecrest Blvd	18,300	68.9
Drummond Ave – west of China Lake Blvd	15,000	68.0
Drummond Ave – east of China Lake Blvd	8,600	66.9
Las Flores Ave – west of China Lake Blvd	8,600	65.6
Las Flores Ave – east of China Lake Blvd	4,000	63.6
French Ave – west of China Lake Blvd	2,200	61.0
Sunland St – north of Ridgecrest Blvd	3,500	61.7
Sunland St – south of Ridgecrest Blvd	1,200	57.0
Gateway Blvd – north of Ridgecrest Blvd	3,000	61.0
Gateway Blvd – south of Ridgecrest Blvd	900	55.7

Source: Garland Associates. August 2020. *Traffic Impact Analysis For The Proposed Relocation Of Richmond Elementary School. West Side Of Richmond Road North Of Ridgecrest Boulevard, Ridgecrest* (see Appendix I of this Initial Study).
Note: Modeled using FHWA RD 77-108

Sensitive Receptors

Certain land uses are considered sensitive to noise and vibration: residences, schools, hospital facilities, houses of worship, and open space/recreation and where quiet environments are necessary for the enjoyment, public health, and safety of the community. The nearest sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project site are apartments and single-family homes to the west and south, and Pierce Elementary School to the northwest.

Noise Standards

Federal

There are no applicable federal regulations.

State Noise Regulations

The State of California regulates freeway noise, sets standards for sound transmission, provides occupational noise control criteria, identifies noise standards, and provides guidance for local land use compatibility. State law requires that each county and city adopt a general plan that includes a noise element which is to be prepared according to guidelines adopted by the Governor's Office of Planning and Research. The purpose of the noise element is to "limit the exposure of the community to excessive noise levels."

CALGreen has requirements for insulation that affect exterior-interior noise transmission for nonresidential structures. Pursuant to CALGreen Section 5.507.4.1, Exterior Noise Transmission, an architectural acoustics study may be required when a project site is within a 65 dBA CNEL or L_{dn} noise contour of an airport, freeway or expressway, railroad, industrial source, or fixed-guideway source. Where noise contours are not available, if buildings are exposed to a noise level of 65 dBA L_{eq} during any hour of operation, specific wall and ceiling assembly and sound-rated windows may be necessary to reduce interior noise to acceptable levels—such as specific composite sound transmission class or a composite outdoor-indoor transmission class—or the building must be constructed to provide an interior noise environment that does not exceed an hourly L_{eq} of 50 dBA.

Title 5 § 14040(q). Under CCR Title 5, CDE regulations require a school district to consider noise in the site selection process. As recommended by CDE guidance, if a school district is considering a potential school site near a freeway or other source of noise, it should hire an acoustical engineer to determine the level of sound that the site is exposed to and to assist in designing the school should that site be chosen.

Local Regulations

Kern County Municipal Code

Kern County Municipal Code, Chapter 8.36, Noise Control, does not provide quantified exterior noise standards. However, it does restrict construction noise to between the hours of 6:00 am and 9:00 pm on weekdays and between 9:00 am and 9:00 pm on weekends if audible at a distance of 150 feet from the construction site and the site is within 1,000 feet of a residence.[104]

Ridgecrest General Plan

The City of Ridgecrest General Plan Health and Safety Element provides noise and land use compatibility guidelines. New school uses are considered "normally acceptable" in ambient noise conditions of 60 dBA CNEL or less and "conditionally acceptable" in ambient noise conditions between 61 dBA CNEL and 70 dBA CNEL.[105]

The Ridgecrest General Plan also provides construction noise restrictions under Goal HS-8.12, Limiting Construction Activities. Under Goal HS-8.12, the City limits construction activities to the hours of 7:00 am to 7:00 pm Monday through Saturday. No construction is allowed on Sundays or national holidays without a written permit from the City.

Ridgecrest Municipal Code

The City of Ridgecrest Municipal Code does not provide quantified exterior noise standards. Under Section 11-1(8), Nuisance; general, loud or unusual noise or vibration unreasonably disturbing, offending, injuring, or annoying the normal sensibilities of neighboring properties is considered a general nuisance.[106] For the purpose of this analysis, criteria set by the Federal Transit Administration's Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual[107] are used to evaluate potential temporary construction noise and vibration impacts.

Construction Thresholds of Significance

Based on the FTA's assessment manual, the following noise and vibration thresholds are adopted for the proposed project. If exceeded, impacts would be potentially significant.

[104] Kern, County of. July 2020. Kern County Municipal Code. https://library.municode.com/ca/kern_county/codes/code_of_ordinances

[105] Conditionally Acceptable: New construction or development should be undertaken only after a detailed analysis of the noise reduction requirements is made and needed insulation features have been included in the design.

[106] Ridgecrest, City of. January 2020. City of Ridgecrest Municipal Code. https://library.municode.com/ca/ridgecrest/codes/code_of_ordinances

[107] FTA 2018.

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- Architectural Damage. Vibration levels of 0.20 in/sec peak particle velocity (in/sec PPV) for typical wood-framed buildings.
- Vibration Annoyance. Vibration levels of 72 VdB at receiving sensitive receptors property line.
- Construction Noise. Noise level of 80 dBA L_{eq} at the receiving sensitive receptor property line.

SSUSD, as the CEQA lead agency, does not have established noise regulations; therefore, it uses the noise standards of the municipality where a project is located for site-specific CEQA project analysis.

Construction Noise Impacts

The total duration for project construction is anticipated to be approximately 24 months. Construction equipment would include dozers, tractors, loaders, backhoes, excavators, graders, cranes, forklifts, pavers and paving equipment, rollers, air compressors, and trucks.

Two types of short-term noise impacts would occur during construction: (1) mobile-source noise from transport of workers, material deliveries, and debris and soil haul and (2) stationary-source noise from use of construction equipment.

Construction Vehicles

The transport of workers and materials to and from the construction site would incrementally increase noise levels along site access roadways. Individual construction vehicle pass-bys may create momentary noise levels of up to approximately 85 dBA L_{max} at 50 feet; however, these occurrences would generally be infrequent and short-lived. No soil import or export is anticipated, and earthwork would be balanced on-site. Therefore, noise impacts from construction haul trips would be less than significant.

Worker and vendor trips would total a maximum of 399 daily trips during overlapping construction phases. Site access would be via Ridgecrest Boulevard, Gateway Boulevard, and Richmond Road. Existing ADT along these roadways ranges between 1,000 to 11,000.[108] This would result in a temporary noise increase of up to 1.5 dBA CNEL. A 3 dB change in noise levels is considered the minimum that is detectable with human hearing in outside environments. Because this is a temporary noise increase and the increase is less than 3 dBA, impacts would be less than significant.

Construction Equipment

Noise generated by on-site construction equipment is based on the type of equipment used, its location relative to sensitive receptors, and the timing and duration of noise-generating activities. Each stage of construction involves different kinds of equipment and has distinct noise characteristics. Noise levels from construction activities are typically dominated by the loudest equipment.

[108] Garland Associates. August 2020. Traffic Impact Analysis for the Proposed Relocation of Richmond Elementary School. West Side of Richmond Road North of Ridgecrest Boulevard, Ridgecrest

The noise produced at each construction stage is determined by combining the L_{eq} contributions from each piece of equipment at a given time, while accounting for the ongoing time variations of noise emissions. Heavy equipment, such as a dozer or a loader, can have maximum, short-duration noise levels of up to 85 dBA at 50 feet. However, overall noise generation varies considerably depending on the specific activity performed at any given moment. Noise attenuation due to distance,[109] the number and type of equipment, and mobile construction equipment moving around the site with different loads and power requirements, all combine to generate different intermittent noise levels at each receptor.

Noise levels from project-related construction activities were calculated from the simultaneous use of the three loudest construction equipment per phase at spatially averaged distances (i.e., from the acoustical center of the general construction site) to the property line of the nearest receptors. Although construction may occur across the entire site, the center of construction activities best represents the potential average construction-related noise levels at sensitive receptors.

The expected construction equipment mix was categorized by construction activity using the FHWA Roadway Construction Noise Model (RCNM). The associated, aggregate sound levels—grouped by construction activity—at the nearest sensitive receptors are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10 Project-Related Construction Noise

Construction Activity Phase	Single-Family Homes to West 1,000 Feet (dBA Leq)
Site Preparation	57
Rough Grading	59
Building Construction	57
Paving	58
Architectural Coating	48

Notes: Calculations performed with the FHWA's RCNM software are included in Appendix H.

As shown in Table 10, construction-related noise levels would not exceed the FTA 80 dBA L_{eq} threshold at the nearest sensitive receptors (residences to the west). In addition, building construction would include five single-story custom modular building fabrication (prefabricated) buildings. Noise associated with the installation of buildings would be less than typical on-site building construction because most of the construction occurs off-site. The District would use the City of Ridgecrest construction hours of 7:00 am to 7:00 pm, Monday through Saturday. No construction would occur on Sundays or national holidays. Therefore, construction noise impacts would be less than significant.

Operational Noise

Mobile Noise

Noise can be divided into three categories: audible, potentially audible, and inaudible. "Audible" refers to increases in noise level that are perceptible to humans. Audible increases generally refer to a change of 3 dBA

[109] Noise diminishes at a rate of at least 6 dBA per doubling of distance (conservatively ignoring other attenuation effects from air absorption, ground effects, and shielding effects)

or more since this level has been found to be the threshold of perceptibility in exterior environments. "Potentially audible" refers to a change in noise level between 1 and 3 dBA. Changes in noise level of less than 1 dBA are typically "inaudible" to humans except under quiet conditions in controlled environments. For the purposes of this analysis, a traffic noise increase is considered a significant impact if sensitive receptors experience project-related traffic noise increases:

- Greater than 1.5 dBA increase for ambient noise environments of 65 dBA CNEL and higher.
- Greater than 3 dBA increase for ambient noise environments of 60 to 64 CNEL.
- Greater than 5 dBA increase for ambient noise environments of less than 60 dBA CNEL.

A cumulative traffic noise impact is considered significant if the above traffic noise increase would occur within the cumulative projects' respective ambient noise environments, and the proposed project would contribute more than 1 dBA to the cumulative increase.

The FHWA traffic noise prediction model and the daily traffic volumes were used to establish existing noise levels. To calculate the traffic noise increase, this analysis compares the existing plus project traffic condition to the existing traffic condition logarithmically to estimate the increase due to the project.[110] The same method is used to determine the cumulative traffic noise level increase (2022 With Project condition compared with Existing). Table 11 shows project-related and cumulative traffic noise increases and the project's contribution to the cumulative increase. Both project and cumulative traffic noise increases would be less than 5 dBA in ambient noise environments less than 60 dBA CNEL; less than 3 dBA CNEL in existing noise environments of 60 to 64 dBA CNEL; and less than 1.5 dBA CNEL in existing noise environments of 65 dBA CNEL or greater. Therefore, the project's traffic noise impacts would be less than significant.

Table 11 Project-Related Traffic Noise Increases

	Traffic Volumes (ADT)				Traffic Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)				
Roadway Segment	Existing	Existing Plus Project	2022 No Project	2022 With Project	Existing Ambient Noise Level	Project Noise Increase	Cumulative Noise Increase	Cumulative Noise Increase due to Project	Potentially Significant Impact?
Richmond Rd – north of Gold Canyon St	500	760	510	770	56.9	1.8	1.9	1.8	No
Richmond Rd – Gold Canyon St to School Driveways	1,000	1,510	1,020	1,530	59.9	1.8	1.8	1.8	No
Richmond Rd – School Driveways to Ridgecrest Blvd	1,000	2,040	1,020	2,060	56.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	No
Richmond Rd – south of Ridgecrest Blvd	1,500	1,520	1,530	1,550	57.9	0.1	0.1	0.1	No
Ridgecrest Boulevard – west of China Lake Blvd	8,000	8,030	8,200	8,230	69.1	0.0	0.1	0.0	No
Ridgecrest Boulevard – China Lake Blvd to Sunland St	11,100	11,890	11,300	12,090	69.0	0.3	0.4	0.3	No

[110] 10*Log (Existing ADT/existing plus project ADT)

Table 11 Project-Related Traffic Noise Increases

	Traffic Volumes (ADT)				Traffic Noise Increase (dBA CNEL)				
Roadway Segment	Existing	Existing Plus Project	2022 No Project	2022 With Project	Existing Ambient Noise Level	Project Noise Increase	Cumulative Noise Increase	Cumulative Noise Increase due to Project	Potentially Significant Impact?
Ridgecrest Boulevard – Sunland St to Gateway Blvd	9,000	9,990	9,200	10,190	69.2	0.5	0.5	0.4	No
Ridgecrest Boulevard – Gateway Blvd to Richmond Rd	7,000	8,020	7,100	8,120	69.1	0.6	0.6	0.6	No
Gold Canyon St – west of Richmond St	900	1,150	920	1,170	55.7	1.1	1.1	1.0	No
China Lake Blvd/SR 178 – north of Drummond Ave	13,400	13,870	13,700	14,170	68.9	0.1	0.2	0.1	No
China Lake Blvd/SR 178 – Drummond Ave to Las Flores Ave	13,000	13,710	13,300	14,010	68.7	0.2	0.3	0.2	No
China Lake Blvd/SR 178 – Las Flores Ave to French Ave	14,000	14,670	14,300	14,970	67.7	0.2	0.3	0.2	No
China Lake Blvd/SR 178 – French Ave to Ridgecrest Blvd	18,300	19,000	18,700	19,400	68.9	0.2	0.3	0.2	No
China Lake Blvd/SR 178 – south of Ridgecrest Blvd	15,000	15,060	15,300	15,360	68.0	0.0	0.1	0.0	No
Drummond Ave – west of China Lake Blvd	8,600	9,000	8,800	9,200	66.9	0.2	0.3	0.2	No
Drummond Ave – east of China Lake Blvd	8,600	8,760	8,800	8,960	65.6	0.1	0.2	0.1	No
Las Flores Ave – west of China Lake Blvd	4,000	4,030	4,100	4,130	63.6	0.0	0.1	0.0	No
Las Flores Ave – east of China Lake Blvd	2,200	2,280	2,250	2,330	61.0	0.2	0.2	0.2	No
French Ave – west of China Lake Blvd	3,500	3,530	3,600	3,630	61.7	0.0	0.2	0.0	No
Sunland St – north of Ridgecrest Blvd	1,200	1,390	1,220	1,410	57.0	0.6	0.7	0.6	No
Sunland St – south of Ridgecrest Blvd	3,000	3,020	3,100	3,120	61.0	0.0	0.2	0.0	No
Gateway Blvd – north of Ridgecrest Blvd	900	920	920	940	55.7	0.1	0.2	0.1	No
Gateway Blvd – south of Ridgecrest Blvd	1,500	1,520	1,530	1,550	57.9	0.1	0.1	0.1	No

Source: Traffic data provided by Garland Associates. August 2020. *Traffic Impact Analysis for the Proposed Relocation of Richmond Elementary School. West Side of Richmond Road North of Ridgecrest Boulevard, Ridgecrest* (see Appendix I of this Initial Study).

Mechanical Equipment

Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems will be installed at the new school buildings. The nearest sensitive receptor property line to the new buildings is approximately 550 feet west along Gateway Boulevard. Typical HVAC equipment generates noise levels ranging up to 72 dBA at distance of 3 feet. At a

distance of 550 feet, noise levels would attenuate to 27 dBA. Mechanical equipment noise would be below the existing noise environment; therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Student Recreational Noise

The outdoor recreational area (Kindergarten Play Area) is approximately 550 feet east of sensitive receptors. Other recreational facilities would include eight basketball courts, track, turf play fields, hardcourt play areas, kindergarten playground, and covered lunch shelter. The playfields would not have nighttime lighting. While recreational noise from students could periodically increase ambient noise levels in the project vicinity, recreational activities would be staggered so all students would not be outside at the same time. Impacts associated with outdoor recreational noise would be less than significant.

Noise and Land Use Compatibility

Existing traffic noise increases were determined by comparting existing with plus project and future conditions logarithmically. Table 12 compares future ambient noise levels (modeled at the four adjacent roadway segments bounding the project site) to the noise and land use compatibility standards in the City's General Plan. Traffic noise modeling shows that future ambient noise levels would be up to 69.7 dBA CNEL at 50 feet off Ridgecrest Boulevard from Gateway Boulevard to Richmond Road. Ridgecrest's Health and Safety Element states that new school uses are "Normally Acceptable" in exterior noise environments below 60 dBA CNEL. Future ambient noise levels would be less than 60 dBA CNEL at the nearest school building facade to the roadway. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Table 12 Traffic Noise Levels at Project Site from Adjacent Roadways

Roadway Segment	Future dBA CNEL at 50 feet (Existing plus Cumulative Increase)	Distance to Nearest Classroom Building Façade/Outdoor Area, ft.	Future dBA CNEL at Nearest Façade of Proposed Classroom Building	Normally Acceptable Environment?
Richmond Rd – Gold Canyon St to School Driveways	61.7	160	56.6	Yes
Richmond Rd – School Driveways to Ridgecrest Blvd	59.2	160	54.1	Yes
Ridgecrest Boulevard – Gateway Blvd to Richmond Rd	69.7	1350	55.4	Yes
Gold Canyon St – west of Richmond St	56.8	125	52.8	Yes
Gateway Blvd – north of Ridgecrest Blvd	61.2	140	56.7	Yes

Source: Garland Associates. August 2020. *Traffic Impact Analysis for the Proposed Relocation of Richmond Elementary School. West Side of Richmond Road North Of Ridgecrest Boulevard, Ridgecrest* (see Appendix I of this Initial Study).

b) Generation of excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels?

Less Than Significant Impact.

Construction Vibration

Construction operations can generate varying degrees of ground vibration, depending on the construction procedures and equipment that spread through the ground and diminish with distance from the source. The effect on buildings in close proximity to the construction site varies depending on equipment, soil type, ground strata, and receptor-building construction. The effects from vibration can range from no perceptible effects at the lowest vibration levels, to low rumbling sounds and perceptible vibrations at moderate levels, to slight structural damage at the highest levels. Vibration from construction activities rarely reaches the levels that can damage structures.

For reference, a vibration level of 0.2 inches per second PPV is used as the limit for nonengineered timber and masonry buildings (which would apply to the surrounding residential structures).[111] Table 13 summarizes vibration levels for typical construction equipment at the nearest sensitive receptors. As shown in Table 13, typical construction equipment can generate vibration levels ranging up to 0.21 in/sec at 25 feet. Vibration levels at 25 feet or greater for vibratory rollers would attenuate to less than the 0.2 in/sec PPV. The nearest structures to possible paving activities are residential homes to the west at approximately 400 feet, which would result in vibration levels less than 0.2 in/sec PPV. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Table 13 Vibration Levels for Typical Construction Equipment

Equipment	PPV (in/sec) at 25 feet	PPV (in/sec) at 400 feet
Vibratory Roller	0.21	0.003
Large Bulldozer	0.089	0.001
Loaded Trucks	0.079	0.001
Jackhammer	0.035	0.001
Small Bulldozer	0.003	<0.001

Source: Federal Transit Administration, *Transit Noise and Vibration Impact Assessment Manual,* September 2018.

Vibration Annoyance

The City of Ridgecrest and Kern County do not have specific vibration annoyance limits; therefore, FTA criteria are used. Table 14 shows VdB levels for typical construction equipment and estimated vibration levels at nearby sensitive receptors. Distances from the site to the nearest sensitive receptor, like in construction noise, are also estimated from the center of construction site. The nearest sensitive receptor is approximately 1,000 feet to the west. At that distance, vibration levels would attenuate to 46 dBA VdB or less. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

[111] FTA 2018.

Table 14 Vibration Annoyance Levels for Typical Construction Equipment

Equipment	VdB Levels	
	Reference levels at 25 feet	Residences 1000 feet west[1]
Vibratory Roller	94	46
Large Bulldozer	87	39
Caisson Drilling	87	39
Loaded Trucks	86	38
Jackhammer	79	31
Small Bulldozer	58	10

Source: FTA 2018.
[1] As measured from the center of construction site.

Operational Vibration

The operation of the new school would not include any long-term vibration sources. Thus, no significant vibration effects from operations sources would occur.

c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or 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 expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?

No Impact. The closest airport to the project site is Armitage Airfield at NAWSCL, about 3.5 miles north.[112] Aircraft overflights from Armitage Field are sporadically heard, but do not cause a substantial noise impact. The project would not expose people working in the project area to excessive noise levels. No impact would occur.

3.14 POPULATION AND HOUSING

Would the project:

a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?

No Impact. The project would be served by existing roads and other infrastructure. No new roads, expanded utility lines, or housing would be constructed or required as part of the project. The new school would serve students already living in the area and attending SSUSD schools. No impacts related to population growth would occur.

[112] Airnav, LLC. 2019. Airport Information. Accessed October 21, 2020. http://www.airnav.com/airports.

b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?

No Impact. The project site consists of vacant land; no housing exists on-site. Project development would not require relocation or construction of replacement housing; therefore, no impact would occur.

3.15 PUBLIC SERVICES

Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental 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:

a) Fire protection?

Less Than Significant Impact.

China Lake Federal Fire Department (CLFD) provides fire protection and services to the NAWSCL. Kern County Fire Department (KCFD) provides fire protection and emergency medical services to the City of Ridgecrest. The closest fire station to the project site is Station 74 at 139 East Las Flores Avenue, less than one mile northeast. The project involves transferring students from the existing Richmond Elementary School to the new school. Project development would not induce population growth in the area and would not require construction of new or expanded CLFD or KCFD fire stations. Impacts would be less than significant.

b) Police protection?

Less Than Significant Impact.

China Lake Police Department (CLPD) provides police protection to the NAWSCL and to the previous school. Ridgecrest Police Department (RPD) currently provides police protection and crime prevention services for the city. RPD is headquartered at 100 West California Avenue, approximately 1.2 miles southwest of the project site. The project may cause a very slight increase in demands for police services during construction due to possible trespass, theft, and/or vandalism. Active construction areas would be fenced, and any increase in demand for police would be temporary and would not require construction of new or expanded police facilities. The project would not increase student population in the SSUSD and would not result in new adverse impacts on existing CLPD or RPD service. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

c) Schools?

No Impact. School services are related to the size of the residential population, the geographic area served, and community characteristics. The school project would not increase the population in the attendance boundary or otherwise increase demand for school services. The new school would be a benefit to the existing and future students, staff, and community. Therefore, no impact would occur.

d) Parks?

No Impact. Impacts to public parks and recreational facilities are generally caused by population or employment growth. The project would not increase population or employment. Therefore, no physical impacts to parks and recreation would occur.

e) Other public facilities?

No Impact. The project would not result in impacts associated with the provision of other new or physically altered public facilities (e.g., libraries, hospitals, childcare, teen or senior centers). Physical impacts to public services are usually associated with population in-migration and growth, which increase the demand for public services and facilities. The project would not induce population growth. No impacts to other public facilities would occur.

3.16 RECREATION

a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities, such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?

No Impact. The project involves the construction of a new school and would include physical education facilities (consisting of basketball courts, hardcourt play areas, multipurpose room/gym, and track and field). Students would not use off-campus recreation facilities. Therefore, it would not increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities and would not cause physical deterioration of these facilities. No impact would occur.

b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities, which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?

Less than Significant Impact. The project involves the construction of basketball courts, hardcourt play areas, multipurpose room/gym, and track and field. The environmental effects of the construction and operation are considered throughout the environmental analysis in this Initial Study. The project would not require the construction or expansion of additional recreational facilities that could have an adverse effect on the environment. Adverse physical effects on the environment would be less than significant.

3.17 TRANSPORTATION

The analysis in this section is based in part on the following information:

- *Traffic Impact Analysis for the Proposed Relocation of Richmond Elementary School,* Garland Associates, August 2020.

A complete copy of this study is in the technical appendices of this Initial Study as Appendix G.

a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?

Less Than Significant Impact. Construction of the project would entail large construction equipment, transportation of equipment to and from the site, and worker vehicles, lasting until the school opening in fall 2023. All construction activity and staging areas would be on the project site and would not obstruct traffic lanes or have any long-term effects on the circulation system.

Roadways

Study area roadways are described below, and roadway classifications are identified in the City of Ridgecrest General Plan Circulation Element.

Richmond Road is a two-lane north-south street that abuts the east side of the school site. It is classified as a collector road. Access to the school site would be provided by two driveways on Richmond Road. The speed limit is 50 miles per hour (mph) north of Ridgecrest Boulevard and 35 mph south of Ridgecrest Boulevard.

Ridgecrest Boulevard is a two- to four-lane east-west street that abuts the south side of the school site. It has two lanes west of China Lake Boulevard, four lanes between China Lake Boulevard and Richmond Road, and two lanes east of Richmond Road. It is classified as an arterial roadway west of China Lake Boulevard and as a State highway east of China Lake Boulevard (State Highway 178). The speed limit is 25 mph west of China Lake Boulevard, 40 mph between China Lake Boulevard and Sunland Street, 45 mph between Sunland Street and Gateway Boulevard, 50 mph between Gateway Boulevard and Richmond Road, and 55 mph east of Richmond Road.

Gold Canyon Street is a two-lane east-west street that abuts the north side of the school site. It is classified as a secondary street. The speed limit is 35 mph.

China Lake Boulevard/US 395 (Business) is a four-lane north-south roadway approximately one mile west of the school site. It is classified as State highway 178 north of Ridgecrest Boulevard and as an arterial roadway south of Ridgecrest Boulevard, and as US 395 (Business) throughout the study area. The speed limit is 35 mph.

Drummond Avenue is a four-lane east-west street that intersects China Lake Boulevard 1.25 mile northwest of the school site. It is classified as an arterial roadway. The speed limit is 40 mph.

Las Flores Avenue is a four-lane east-west street that intersects China Lake Boulevard approximately one mile west of the school site. It is classified as a secondary street west of China Lake Boulevard and as a collector street east of China Lake Boulevard. The speed limit is 35 mph east of China Lake Boulevard and 40 mph west of China Lake Boulevard.

French Avenue is a four-lane street that intersects China Lake Boulevard approximately one mile west of the school site. It intersects with China Lake Boulevard in an east-west direction then curves in a northeasterly direction to provide access to a City park and to Murray Middle School and Burroughs High School. It is classified as a secondary street east of China Lake Boulevard and as a local street west of China Lake Boulevard. The speed limit is 40 mph east of China Lake Boulevard and 25 mph west of China Lake Boulevard.

3. Environmental Analysis

Sunland Street is a two- to four-lane north-south street that intersects Ridgecrest Boulevard approximately 0.5 mile west of the school site. It has two lanes north of Ridgecrest Boulevard and four lanes south of Ridgecrest Boulevard and is classified as a secondary street. The speed limit is 25 mph.

Gateway Boulevard is a two-lane north-south street that intersects Ridgecrest Boulevard near the southwest corner of the school site. It is classified as a secondary street north of Ridgecrest Boulevard and as an arterial roadway south of Ridgecrest Boulevard. The speed limit is 25 mph.

The project would include new ingress and egress driveways, on-campus parking, and interior driveways and emergency lanes. Access to the school site would be provided by two driveways on Richmond Road. The north driveway is an entry-only driveway for bus access only. The south driveway would be an entry/exit for student drop-off/pick-up, the bus exit, and access to the parking lots. At this time, it is anticipated that 11 buses would be used to transport students to and from the school: 7 special needs buses (for 69 students), 2 general education buses (for 130 students), and 2 buses from the Base (for 70 students).

Subject to approval by the City of Ridgecrest (Gateway Boulevard), Caltrans (Ridgecrest Boulevard), and NAWSCL (Richmond Road), other roadway improvements would include:

- Widen Gateway Boulevard to the east to its full secondary street design standard, with curb, gutter, and six-foot-wide sidewalk from Richmond Road to the new crosswalk (about 800 linear feet).
- Widen Richmond Road to the west to its half-width collector road design standard, with deceleration and merge lanes for southbound traffic and designated turn lanes for northbound traffic, curb, and gutter from about 400 feet south of Gold Canyon to Ridgecrest Boulevard. Roadwork also includes a six-foot-wide sidewalk from the southernmost access driveway to Ridgecrest Boulevard (about 1,120 linear feet).

New street deceleration and merge and designated turn lanes along with driveway length would ensure that student drop-off and pick-up vehicles would not obstruct travel lanes along Richmond Road. The project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the roadways. Impacts would be less than significant.

Public Transit

The project site is served by three Ridgerunner Transit bus routes: Coyote L1, Roadrunner L2, and Rattlesnake L3. The Coyote L1 line runs along China Lake Boulevard south of Ridgecrest Boulevard, along Ridgecrest Boulevard between China Lake Boulevard and Gateway Boulevard, and along Gateway Boulevard south of Ridgecrest Boulevard. The Roadrunner L2 line runs along China Lake Boulevard and parts of Drummond Avenue, French Avenue, Gold Canyon Street, and Ridgecrest Boulevard east of the China Lake Boulevard corridor. The Rattlesnake L3 line runs along China Lake Boulevard and on parts of Drummond Avenue, Las Flores Avenue, French Avenue, and Ridgecrest Boulevard west of China Lake Boulevard. In addition, the Mid-Day Express line runs along the China Lake Boulevard corridor. The closest bus stop to the project site is the Coyote L1 stop located at the intersection of Ridgecrest Boulevard and Gateway Boulevard.

The City of Ridgecrest's Ridgerunner Transit does not have any bus lines that run adjacent to the school site. The Coyote L1 line runs along Ridgecrest Boulevard and Gateway Boulevard (south) and has a bus stop at the corner of Ridgecrest Boulevard and Gateway Boulevard near the southwest corner of the school site. The new school would not conflict with transit circulation or schedules. No impacts would occur.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

There are Class II bike lanes[113] along:

- **Richmond Road north of Ridgecrest Boulevard:** both sides delineated by a white stripe and pavement markings, but without signs.
- **Richmond Road south of Ridgecrest Boulevard:** Class I on east side.
- **Ridgecrest Boulevard:** both sides delineated by a white stripe, but without signs and pavement markings.
- **Gateway Boulevard south of Ridgecrest Boulevard:** both sides delineated by a white stripe, signs, and pavement markings. None north of Ridgecrest Boulevard.
- **China Lake Boulevard:** both sides delineated by a white stripe, but without signs and pavement markings.

Sidewalks are sporadic and scattered in the project vicinity, and only exist adjacent to developed areas. There are no sidewalks adjacent to the undeveloped project site. The signalized intersection of Ridgecrest Boulevard and Richmond Road has painted crosswalks, pedestrian signals, and pedestrian push buttons to activate the signals.

Currently the elementary students north of Ridgecrest Boulevard, in Ridgecrest Landing Apartments and Gateway Villa Apartments, west of Gateway Boulevard, along with the single-family neighborhoods to the west[114] attend Pierce Elementary School at 674 Gold Canyon Street. Students that walk to school use the many trails cut into the open space to the north for access to Pierce Elementary School. Some students in the apartments walk north on Gateway Boulevard then cut across the open space; some students in the single-family homes use the concrete storm drain channel in the northeast corner of the neighborhood to access the open space trails to the school.

The project may increase pedestrians and bicycle travel on streets to the west. The streets adjacent to the school site (Richmond Road, Ridgecrest Boulevard, Gateway Boulevard, and Gold Canyon Street) do not have sidewalks along the property.

[113] As defined by Caltrans, Class I Bikeway (Bicycle Path) is a paved right-of-way completely separated from any street or highway; Class II Bikeway (Bicycle Lane) is a dedicated on-street space for bicyclists (usually to the right of travel lanes) delineated by a white stripe, signs and pavement markings; Class III Bikeway (Bicycle Route) is a shared lane with motor vehicle traffic, and has signs but no striping and directs cyclists to the superior through route. To achieve the best conditions for bicyclists and motorists to share the lane, a wide curb lane should be included. Source: Ridgecrest General Plan, December 2009. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/166/General-Plan-PDF

[114] These residents take access off Sunland Drive, American Street and Broadway Street.

3. Environmental Analysis

Because of the lack of students in the Richmond Elementary School attendance boundary and other pedestrians, no street-adjacent sidewalks would be constructed on Ridgecrest Boulevard, Gold Canyon Street, or Richmond Road north of the southern driveway, and Gateway Boulevard would not be extended north to Gold Canyon Street.

Students in the adjacent residential developments are anticipated to travel to school in the same manner as they would for Pierce Elementary. Some students would walk from the drainage channel, across open space and south on Gateway to the school access gate; some would walk to Ridgecrest Boulevard east to Gateway Boulevard north to the access gate.

A school access gate would be provided on Gateway Boulevard for students that walk and bike, and a six-foot-wide, on-campus walkway would connect the gate to the school campus. A six-foot-wide on-campus walkway would also run from the Gold Canyon Street/Richmond Road intersection diagonally southwest to the bus area. Other pedestrian and bicyclist improvements would include:

- A 6-foot wide sidewalk from Richmond Road to the new crosswalk (about 800 linear feet).
- A 6-foot wide sidewalk from the southernmost access driveway to Ridgecrest Boulevard (about 1,120 linear feet).
- School area warning signs on Ridgecrest Boulevard, Richmond Road, and Gold Canyon Street that state "School – Speed Limit 25 – When Children Are Present" and install a school zone sign on Gateway Boulevard.
- Repaint the crosswalks at the Ridgecrest Boulevard/Richmond Road intersection with yellow or thermoplastic paint.

The project would not conflict with a program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

The design of the project considers and includes requirements needed to comply with applicable traffic and circulation regulations and guidance set forth by the City of Ridgecrest (Gateway Boulevard), Caltrans (Ridgecrest Boulevard), and NAWSCL (Richmond Road), including required roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. Therefore, the proposed improvements would adhere to all relevant circulation regulations and be consistent with policy and planning document guidance related to needed improvements. Impacts would be less than significant.

b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?

Less Than Significant Impact. CEQA Guidelines section 15064.3 eliminates auto delay, level of service (LOS), and similar measures of vehicular capacity or traffic congestion as the basis for determining significant impacts:

> Generally, vehicle miles traveled is the most appropriate measure of transportation impacts. For the purposes of this section, "vehicle miles traveled" refers to the amount and distance of

> automobile travel attributable to a project. Other relevant considerations may include the effects of the project on transit and non-motorized travel. Except as provided ... (regarding roadway capacity), a project's effect on automobile delay shall not constitute a significant environmental impact.

The City of Ridgecrest, along with other agencies, had an opt-in period until July 1, 2020, to adopt the guidelines and new VMT-based thresholds. However, the City continues to use its established LOS criteria. Daily VMT is an average of the total number of miles traveled by all vehicles each day on principal arterials in Ridgecrest. This is divided by the city's total population for daily VMT per capita. The city of Ridgecrest had 331.28 urbanized daily VMT per 1,000 population.[115] Neither the City of Ridgecrest nor the County of Kern have adopted VMT thresholds.

The new school is about two miles south of the damaged school, and about one mile southeast of the temporary school. The damaged school is inside the NAWSCL secured area; therefore, because of security protocols, not all parents/guardians, family, or friends had access to the school. The new school is outside of the NAWSCL secured area, closer to residential development, and the easier access may increase the use of personal vehicles for drop-off/pick-up of students, and for after school programs, which may increase VMT compared to the previous school, but would be similar to the existing temporary school (during non-COVID times).

Distance from students on the west side of the city along Erwin Street, at the edge of the Richmond ES attendance boundary, is about 2.8 miles from both the damaged school and the new school site. Therefore, the overall VMT for students that are driven to school would be similar between the two schools.

The students closest to the new school, that would walk or bike, are likely already using these travel modes to attend Pierce Elementary School. Students near the damaged school to the east and south that were walking and biking to school, would take a bus or personal car to the new school, which would increase VMT. Compared to the temporary school (existing condition), with no adjacent residential development, it is anticipated that few students walk or bike to school. Therefore, the new school would increase walking and biking and decrease VMT.

The anticipated future increase in students at Richmond Elementary School is based students already attending another charter school. These students would attend Richmond and other District schools in Ridgecrest; therefore, VMT is anticipated to be similar.

The distance students travel to school would be the similar with and without the new school. Schools do not generate students; they accommodate students generated by residential development.

At this time, it is anticipated that 11 buses would be used to transport students to and from the school: 7 special needs buses (for 69 students), 2 general education buses (for 130 students), and 2 buses from the Base (for 70

[115] State of California, California State Transportation Agency, California Department of Transportation. *California Public Road Data. Statistical Information Derived from the Highway Performance Monitoring System*. Released November 2019. Table 6. *2018 Maintained Miles & Daily Vehicle Miles of Travel Estimates by Jurisdiction* https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/research-innovation-system-information/documents/california-public-road-data/prd-2018-a11y.pdf

students), and some people would use personal vehicles. Typical City VMT Guidelines have a screening-level analysis for VMT, and certain types of projects do not result in significant VMT impacts. VMT screening criteria provide guidance to identify when impacts would not occur or are de minimus so that a detailed analysis is not required. VMT analysis typically does not apply to K-12 public schools because they are considered a local-serving essential service.[116] Additionally, even without the new elementary school, students would be attending school somewhere, but not on the Base. Therefore, the project would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3(b) and impacts would be less than significant.

c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (e.g., sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (e.g., farm equipment)?

Less Than Significant Impact. Incompatible uses for a school would include agricultural operations where soil tilling and/or pesticide use creates air pollution, or logistic distribution centers that have large tractors, semitrailer trucks, and oversized equipment constantly traveling the local roadways and creating a hazard to cars or pedestrians. Circulation design that would result in vehicular and/or pedestrian safety hazards would be sharp curves or dangerous intersections.

Construction

During construction, equipment, trucks, and workers would drive to and from the staging area on the project site. Construction trips would be spread throughout the workday and would not occur during peak traffic periods. SSUSD's construction contractor would prepare a construction worksite traffic control plan prior to commencement of construction. This plan would establish methods to avoid conflicts between the construction traffic and the existing vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic. SSUSD's construction BMPs, identified in the construction worksite traffic control plan, would include the location of any haul routes, hours of operation, protective devices, warning signs, and access to abutting properties. All proposed truck routes would be approved by the City before beginning construction. Additionally, construction fencing would be used on the project to separate construction zones and to ensure safety. Impacts would be less than significant.

Operation

School design would include the use of standard engineering practices such as standard driveway widths and turning radii and provision of adequate line of sight to avoid design elements that could result in hazards. "Sight Distance Standards" from the Caltrans Highway Design Manual list minimum sight distance values for a range of design speeds.[117] In addition, the school design is required to accommodate ingress and egress of emergency vehicles, as required by KCFD. SSUSD has worked with the City of Ridgecrest Public Works Department during site design, and the site plan complies with specifications for provision of adequate access, parking, and circulation in the vicinity of a school site. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

[116] Based on the assumption that, like local-serving retail, the addition of necessary local in-person services will reduce VMT given that trips to these locations will be made irrespective of distance given their non-discretionary nature.

[117] Highway Design Manual, California Transportation Department, May 7, 2012.

d) Result in inadequate emergency access?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would not result in inadequate emergency access. The access and circulation would accommodate emergency ingress and egress by fire trucks, police units, and ambulance/paramedic vehicles. On-site emergency access lanes would be provided for access to the school buildings and athletic facilities. All access features are subject to and must satisfy the City's, SSUSD, DSA, and KCFD design requirements. Impacts would be less than significant.

3.18 TRIBAL CULTURAL RESOURCES

a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code section 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 Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or

No Impact. Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52) requires meaningful consultation with California Native American tribes on potential impacts to tribal cultural resources, as defined in PRC § 21074. Tribal cultural resources are sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe that are either eligible or listed in the California Register of Historical Resources or local register of historical resources.[118] No historical resources or historic properties were discovered within the project site. The project does not have the potential to result in adverse impacts or effects to significant historical resources or properties.[119]

No tribal cultural resources on or within one mile of the site are listed in the National Register of Historic Places,[120] California Register of Historical Resources, California State Historical Landmarks, or Points of Historical Interest.[121] The project would not impact tribal cultural resources listed on any of the registers of historic resources. No impact would occur.

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 section 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource

[118] California Natural Resources Agency. 2019. AB 52 Regulatory Update. http://resources.ca.gov/ceqa/.
[119] ASM Affiliates. June 2020. Phase I Survey/Class III Inventory, Richmond Elementary School Replacement Project, Kern County, California.
[120] National Park Service. 2020, July 15 (accessed). National Register of Historic Places. https://www.nps.gov/maps/full.html?mapId=7ad17cc9-b808-4ff8-a2f9-a99909164466
[121] Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). 2020, July 15 (accessed). California Historical Resources. https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/?view=county&criteria=15

3. Environmental Analysis

Code Section 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

Less Than Significant Impact. As part of the AB 52 process, Native American tribes must submit a written request to SSUSD (lead agency) to be notified of projects within their traditionally and culturally affiliated area. SSUSD must provide written, formal notification to those tribes within 14 days of deciding to undertake a project. The tribe must respond to SSUSD within 30 days of receiving this notification if they want to engage in consultation on the project, and SSUSD must begin the consultation process within 30 days of receiving the tribe's request. Consultation concludes when either 1) the parties agree to mitigation measures to avoid a significant effect on a tribal cultural resource, or 2) a party, acting in good faith and after reasonable effort, concludes mutual agreement cannot be reached.

Pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.3.1, the District received a request for notification of projects from the Torres Martinez Desert Cahuilla Indians dated May 5, 2016, from Michael Mirelez, Cultural Resource Coordinator. The District notified the Tribe in a written letter dated October 1, 2020 and delivered via U.S. Post and email. No responses were received within the 30-day period provided in AB 52.

Additionally, although not part of the AB 52 process, during the cultural resources evaluation preparation, ASM Affiliates contacted the following Native American Tribes that were listed on a list provided by the Native American Heritage Commission:

- Big Pine Paiute Tribe of the Owens Valley
- Chumash Council of Bakersfield
- Kern Valley Indian Community
- Kitanemuk & Yowlumne Tejon Indians
- San Manuel Band of Mission Indians
- Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria
- Tejon Indian Tribe
- Tubatulabals of Kern County
- Tule River Indian Tribe
- Wuksache Indian Tribe/Eshom Valley Band

Letters were sent to the tribes on January 29, 2020, and emails were subsequently sent on March 28, 2020. The Santa Rosa Rancheria Tachi-Yokut Tribe was the only tribe that responded, stating they would be deferring to the Tejon Tribe based on the location of the project site (Tejon Indian Tribe did not respond).

Project-related impacts to a California Native American tribe resource pursuant to criteria in subdivision (c) of PRC § 5024.1 would be less than significant.

3.19 UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS

Would the project:

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 or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?

Less Than Significant Impact.

Water Treatment Facilities

Water treatment facilities filter and/or disinfect water before it is delivered to customers. The Indian Wells Valley Water District (IWVWD) provides water and water treatment for 38 square miles in the Indian Wells Valley (including Ridgecrest). The project involves the replacement of Richmond Elementary School and would serve current and future students living in the region. It would not generate an increase in District student population or water treatment demands in the IWVWD region. Schools do not generate students; they accommodate the demand for education. Students would be attending school in the local area and using water that requires treatment even without the project; therefore, the overall demand for water treatment would not increase. The project would not require the relocation or construction of new or expanded water treatment facilities; impacts would be less than significant.

Wastewater Treatment Facilities

The City's Wastewater Division operates and maintains the wastewater treatment facility (WWTF) and citywide collection system.[122] The WWTF is operating at 2.2 mgd (70 percent from City and 30 percent from NAWSCL). The City has been working on a new wastewater treatment plant plan since 2008.

The new school would replace the damaged school and would serve current and future students living in the region. The project would not increase overall District enrollment, and thus would not increase total treatment demands within the District or at the WWTF. The project would not require new or expanded wastewater treatment facilities. Impacts would be less than significant.

Stormwater Drainage Facilities

Stormwater from the site is either absorbed into the ground or carried off-site through a culvert under Gold Canyon Street, as described under 3.10(a). The project would create significantly more impervious surfaces, such as pavement and buildings, which do not allow stormwater percolation.

The project includes hydrologic features designed to retain, filter, and infiltrate stormwater on-site within landscaping and the four retention basins. The basins would hold stormwater from a 10-year, 5-day storm. The project would not increase stormwater runoff from the site compared to existing conditions. The project would

[122] City of Ridgecrest. https://ridgecrest-ca.gov/201/Wastewater-Division

not require the construction of new or expanded off-site stormwater drainage facilities. Impacts would be less than significant.

Electricity and Natural Gas Facilities

Electricity is provided by Southern California Edison (SCE) and natural gas by Pacific Gas and Electric (PG&E) and the project would connect to existing off-site infrastructure. The project would not increase overall District enrollment and thus would not expand total demands within the District for electricity or gas. Additionally, the project includes solar voltaic electricity generation from panels over the parking lot; therefore, this school would likely require less electricity than the damaged school. Compared to the damaged school built in 1953 and other older District schools, the new school buildings would be significantly more energy efficient. The project would not require the construction of new or expanded facilities. Impacts would be less than significant.

Telecommunication Facilities

Various private services currently provide telecommunication services to Ridgecrest (Mediacom, IWV Internet Service). The project includes a connection to telecommunication facilities available at Burroughs High School. New cable would be pulled through existing conduit that runs from Burroughs High School to Pierce Elementary School. The new trench, conduit and cable would be constructed to connect with the project site. The route for the new trench runs along a dirt access road behind Pierce Elementary School, N. Gold Canyon Street and N. Gateway Blvd. Impacts would be less than significant.

The project would not require off-site construction or relocation of utilities and therefore would not cause significant environmental effects from such action.

b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?

Less Than Significant Impact. The IWVWD provides water and water treatment for 38 square miles in the Indian Wells Valley (including Ridgecrest). Projected water use for 2020 was 8,255-acre feet per year, and for 2040 the projection is 9,311 acre feet per year.[123]

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has designated the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin as a basin in critical overdraft. Overdraft in the IWVGB has been shown through several undesirable results, primarily the chronic lowering of groundwater levels, the degradation of water quality, and the reduction of groundwater in storage throughout the basin. Consequently, the Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Authority must implement projects and management actions to mitigate and avoid undesirable results and reach sustainability by 2040.[124]

[123] Krieger & Stewart, Incorporated. 2016, June. Indian Wells Valley Water District 2015 Urban Water Management Plan. https://www.iwvwd.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/IWVWD-UWMP2015-Final-06-17-2016.pdf

[124] Compliance with Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin, GSP Annual Report, Water Year 2019 (October 2018 to September 2019). May 2020. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a70e98dd55b41f44cbb2be0/t/5f1853506e1502488af4c47b/1595429732520/WY_2019_GSP_Annual_Report.pdf

Natural surface waters are not used as a drinking water supply source in the IWVGB. Approximately 2,490 acre-feet of recycled water was produced at the City of Ridgecrest's wastewater treatment plant during Water Year 2019 and was used for: China Lake Golf Course, parks and school athletic fields, NAWS turf and irrigated areas, agricultural irrigation, partial maintenance of the Mojave Tui Chub habitat, discharge to evaporation/percolation ponds.[125]

Water would be used on-site during construction for dust suppression and similar activities. The small amount of water that would be used would not change the existing water entitlements.

Water provided to the project vicinity includes groundwater and recycled water from the wastewater treatment plant. The new school would replace the damaged school and would serve current and future students living in the region. It would not generate an increase the student population or student water demands in the IWVWD region. Students would be attending school in the local area and using water even without the project; therefore, the overall demand for water would not significantly increase.

However, because the site is not currently irrigated, the new school would require an increase in treated water for landscape and turf fields; nevertheless, this increase would be negligible. The IWVWD has both mandatory and recommended watering restrictions and conservation measures. Additionally, installation of landscape and irrigation is required to adhere to mandatory nonresidential water conservation measures outlined in Division 5.3 of CALGreen, including § 5.304.6 for outdoor potable water use in landscape areas. Therefore, the project would not require a significant increase in water supplies; impacts would be less than significant.

c) Result in a determination by the waste water 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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The new school would replace the damaged school and would continue to serve existing and future students currently living in the region. The project would not generate an increase in the regional student population or the amount of wastewater treatment required as discussed under item a) above. The project would not affect wastewater treatment capacity. Impacts would be less than significant.

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?

Less Than Significant Impact. The project would be served by landfills with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs. The Kern County Public Works Department operates seven landfills throughout the county: in Bakersfield (Bena Landfill), Boron, Mojave-Rosamond, Ridgecrest, Shafter-Wasco, Taft, and Tehachapi.[126]

[125] Compliance with Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin, GSP Annual Report, Water Year 2019 (October 2018 to September 2019). May 2020. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a70e98dd55b41f44cbb2be0/t/5f1853506e1502488af4c47b/1595429732520/WY_2019_GSP_Annual_Report.pdf

[126] Kern County Public Works. https://kernpublicworks.com/waste-management/disposal-sites/

The project would generate some demolition debris from site clearance and waste and debris from construction. Ridgecrest Recycling and Sanitary Landfill accepts construction and demolition debris and includes a green waste composting facility. The amount from this school project would not be significant because buildings would be modular. CALGreen § 5.408.1.1 requires that at least 65 percent of the nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from nonresidential construction operations be recycled and/or salvaged for reuse. Demolition would not adversely impact landfill capacity.

Waste associated with the new school would continue to be brought to the Ridgecrest Recycling and Sanitary Landfill. This 320-acre landfill has a maximum permitted capacity of 10,5000,000 cubic yards; throughput of 701 tons per day; remaining capacity of 5,037,428 cubic yards, or about 3,778,000 tons; and an estimated closing date of 2045.[127] The project would replace the damaged school and would not expand enrollment in District schools. The school would not introduce a new demand to the region but would continue to serve an existing and future student population that already uses these services at school campuses in the District. The project would not increase solid waste generation in the District; impacts would be less than significant.

e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?

Less Than Significant Impact. During construction and operation of the new school the District would comply with applicable military, county, and state solid waste diversion, reduction, and recycling mandates. The District currently complies with federal, state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste and would continue this practice. CALGreen § 5.408 requires that at least 65 percent of the nonhazardous construction and demolition waste from nonresidential construction operation be recycled and/or salvaged for reuse. The District would comply with Assembly Bill 939 (AB 939), the Integrated Waste Management Act of 1989, which requires source reduction, reuse, recycling, and composting programs to reduce tonnage of solid waste going to landfills. The District would reuse or recycle the construction debris that would otherwise be taken to a landfill and would also dispose of hazardous wastes, including paint used during construction, only at facilities permitted to receive them, and in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations.

The new school would include a storage area for recyclable organic matter in compliance with AB 1826 (California Public Resources Code §§ 42649.8 et seq.). Additionally, the new school would include storage areas for recyclable materials such as paper and glass and would take part in a recycling program. Project development would not conflict with laws governing solid waste disposal and impacts would be less than significant.

3.20 WILDFIRE

Wildland fire protection in California is the responsibility of either the local government, state, or the federal government. State Responsibility Areas (SRA) are the areas where the State of California has the primary financial responsibility for the prevention and suppression of wildland fires.

Local responsibility areas (LRA) include incorporated cities, cultivated agriculture lands, and portions of the desert. LRA fire protection is typically provided by city fire departments, fire protection districts, counties, and

[127] CalRecycle. October 2020. https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SolidWaste/SiteActivity/Details/3893?siteID=707

CAL FIRE under contract to local governments. CAL FIRE uses an extension of the SRA Fire Hazard Severity Zone model as the basis for evaluating fire hazard in LRAs. The local responsibility area hazard rating reflects flame and ember intrusion from adjacent wildlands and from flammable vegetation in the urban area.

KCFD provides fire protection and emergency medical services to the City of Ridgecrest. Additionally, the CLFD provides fire protection and services to the NAWSCL.

Fire Hazard Severity Zones (FHSZ) are identified by Moderate, High and Very High in an SRA, and Very High in an LRA. Kern County has no Very High FHSZ in an LRA.[128] The City of Ridgecrest has no areas designated as FHSZ. The nearest Very High FHSZ in an SRA is approximately 22.4 miles west, near the Sequoia National Forest.[129] Most of the land between the edge of the Very High FHSZ and the City of Ridgecrest consists of mostly vacant desert land with some areas of development.

The project site and NAWSCL lands are designated Federal Responsibility Areas (FRA).[130] Specifically, the site is designated as 'Other Unzoned' and 'Other Moderate.'[131] The project site is not designated as a Very High FHSZ.

a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?

No Impact. Under the Federal Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000, local governments, including counties, cities, and tribes in the United States, are required to prepare a local hazards mitigation plan as a condition of receiving federal disaster mitigation funds. This plan identifies the hazards that have occurred or may occur in the study. area and provides mitigation strategies, or action items, designed to save lives and reduce the destruction of property. The emergency response plans and emergency evacuation plans in effect are through the County, the SSUSD, and the City.

The emergency response plans in effect is the City of Ridgecrest is the City's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).[132] Schools are critical community facilities and are often used as evacuation centers during emergencies. The City implements the EOP, which identifies County agencies and other agencies that would be involved in emergency responses; threat summaries and assessments; and procedures for responding agencies and County agencies that would be involved in coordinating and managing responses. The EOP is focused on emergencies beyond the scope of the daily functions of public safety agencies, such as emergencies requiring multiagency and/or multi-jurisdictional responses.[133]

Additionally, Kern County, along with 62 other participating jurisdictions, adopted the Kern Multi-jurisdiction Hazard Mitigation Plan to reduce losses resulting from natural disasters. Hazard mitigation is the use of

128 CAL FIRE. 2008, November. Fire Hazard Severity Zones Maps. https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/divisions/wildfire-planning-engineering/wildland-hazards-building-codes/fire-hazard-severity-zones-maps/
129 CAL FIRE. 2007, November 7. Fire Hazard Severity Zones. https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/media/6687/fhszs_map15.pdf
130 CAL FIRE. 2007, November 7. Fire Hazard Severity Zones. https://egis.fire.ca.gov/FHSZ/
131 CAL FIRE. 2007, September 24. Draft Fire Hazard Severity Zones in LRA. https://osfm.fire.ca.gov/media/6686/fhszl06_1_map15.pdf
132 Ridgecrest, City of. 2013, June. Emergency Operations Plan. https://www.ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/186/2013-City-of-Ridgecrest-Emergency-Operations-Plan-PDF?bidId=
133 Ridgecrest, City of. 2013, June. Emergency Operations Plan. https://www.ridgecrest-ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/186/2013-City-of-Ridgecrest-Emergency-Operations-Plan-PDF?bidId=

sustained, long-term actions to reduce the loss of life, personal injury, and property damage that can result from a disaster.

Emergency preparedness and response planning and coordination would be coordinated through the SSUSD. Project construction would not interfere with any other existing emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans. When complete, emergency access would include vehicle access lanes throughout the campus. No emergency response impact would occur.

b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?

No Impact. The project site is not located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as high fire hazard severity. The new school would not place people or structures at risk from wildfire or exacerbate wildfire risks. No impact would occur.

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 temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?

No Impact The project site is not located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as high fire hazard severity. The project would not require the installation of new infrastructure that may exacerbate fire risk. No impact would occur.

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?

No Impact. The site is surrounded by flat topography. There are no vegetated slopes susceptible to wildfire in the surrounding area. The project would not result in runoff, postfire slope instability, or drainage changes. No impact would occur.

3.21 MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE

a) Does the project have the potential to substantially 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?

Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated. As discussed under Section 3.5, *Cultural Resources* and Section 3.7, *Geology and Soils*, buried archaeological resources and/or fossils are not anticipated, but if discovered may be a significant impact. The project would have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment if archeological or paleontological resources are accidentally damaged during construction activities. Mitigation measures CUL-1 and GEO-1 would reduce potential impacts to less than significant. The project would not eliminate important examples of major periods of California history or prehistory.

As discussed under Section 3.4, *Biological Resources* the new school site consists of disturbed and undisturbed habitats and the project development may impact Mohave ground squirrel (MGS). Mitigation Measure BIO-1 would reduce MGS impacts to less than significant. The project would not otherwise reduce the habitat of fish and wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, or reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal.

b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that 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.)

Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated. A cumulative impact could occur if the project would result in an incrementally considerable contribution to a significant cumulative impact in consideration of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects for each resource area. Because the project is a school, the cumulative analysis is generally confined to the immediate vicinity or within about a one-mile radius. The District has several past, present, and planned school projects within their attendance boundaries. In consideration of the preceding analysis, the project's contribution to cumulative impacts would be less than significant with mitigation, and therefore, project impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

c) Does the project have environmental effects, which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?

Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated. The project would comply with applicable local, state, and federal laws governing general welfare and environmental protection. The implementation of required mitigation measures specified in this Initial Study would reduce impacts to less than significant. Project impacts on human beings, either directly or indirectly, would be less than significant.

3. Environmental Analysis

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Appendix

Appendix A Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Background and Modeling

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Appendix B. Biological Resources Study

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Appendix C. Cultural Resources Evaluation (Phase I Survey/Class III Inventory)

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Appendix D. Preliminary Geotechnical Engineering Investigation

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Appendix E. Geological and Environmental Hazards Assessment Report

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Appendix F. Health Risk Assessment

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Appendix G. Phase I Environmental Site Assessment and Addendum

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Appendix H. Noise and Vibration Background and Modeling

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Appendix I. Traffic Impact Analysis

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