



# Isla Vista Children's Park Renovation Project

## CEQA Categorical Exemption Report

*prepared by*

**Isla Vista Recreation and Park District**

961 Embarcadero del Mar  
Goleta, California 93117

*prepared with the assistance of*

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209 East Victoria Street  
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**April 2021**



**RINCON CONSULTANTS, INC.**

Environmental Scientists | Planners | Engineers

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# 1 CEQA Exemption Report

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This report serves as the technical documentation of an environmental analysis performed for the proposed Isla Vista Children's Park Project (project) located at 810 Camino Del Sur in Santa Barbara County. The intent of this analysis is to document whether the project is eligible for a Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 Categorical Exemption (CE), pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This report provides an introduction, project description, and evaluation of the project's consistency with the requirements for a Class 1, 2, and 3 CE. The report concludes that the project is eligible for these exemptions.

## 1.1 Introduction

Section 15301 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states that a Class 1 CE applies to the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration to existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use at the time of the lead agency's determination.

Section 15302 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states that a Class 2 CE is for replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced.

Section 15303 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states that a Class 3 CE is for construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure.

*CEQA Guidelines* Sections 15300.2(a) through (f) list specific exceptions for which a CE shall not be used. These exceptions are as follows:

- a. **Location.** Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.
- b. **Cumulative Impact.** All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.
- c. **Significant Effect.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.
- d. **Scenic Highways.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.
- e. **Hazardous Waste Sites.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.

- f. **Historical Resources.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

Rincon Consultants, Inc. (Rincon) evaluated the project in relation to the purpose of the Class 1, 2, and 3 exemption categories and these exceptions to an exemption to confirm the project's eligibility for the exemptions (Section 4 of this report). None of the exceptions would apply to the project; therefore, the project is eligible for Class 1, 2 and 3 CEs.

## 1.2 Project Site and Existing Conditions

The project site is located at 810 Camino Del Sur, at its intersection with Picasso Road, in the community of Isla Vista in unincorporated Santa Barbara County. Figure 1 shows the regional location of the project site and Figure 2 shows the project location and surrounding land uses. The project site is identified as assessor's parcel number 075-051-022 and measures approximately one acre in size. The site is currently developed with an existing park (Isla Vista Children's Park) that includes a play structure, restroom/storage structure, rock retaining walls, dirt pathways, and other park amenities such as benches. Undeveloped areas of the park are covered in nonnative grasses. There are approximately 23 trees located on the project site. Tree species on the project site include: *Alnus rhombifolia*, *Ligustrum lucidum*, *Melaleuca nesophila*, *Pinus sabiniana*, *Platanus acerifolia*, *Pyrus calleryana*, *Quercus agrifolia*, and *Tipuana tipu*. The site is accessible via on-street parking on Camino Del Sur and Picasso Road. See Figure 3 for photographs of the project site.

The project site is surrounded by multi-family residential development to the north, south, east, and west (Figure 2). Picasso Road borders the site to the north and Camino Del Sur borders the site to the west. The site is approximately 2,000 feet north of the Pacific Ocean.

## 1.3 Project Description

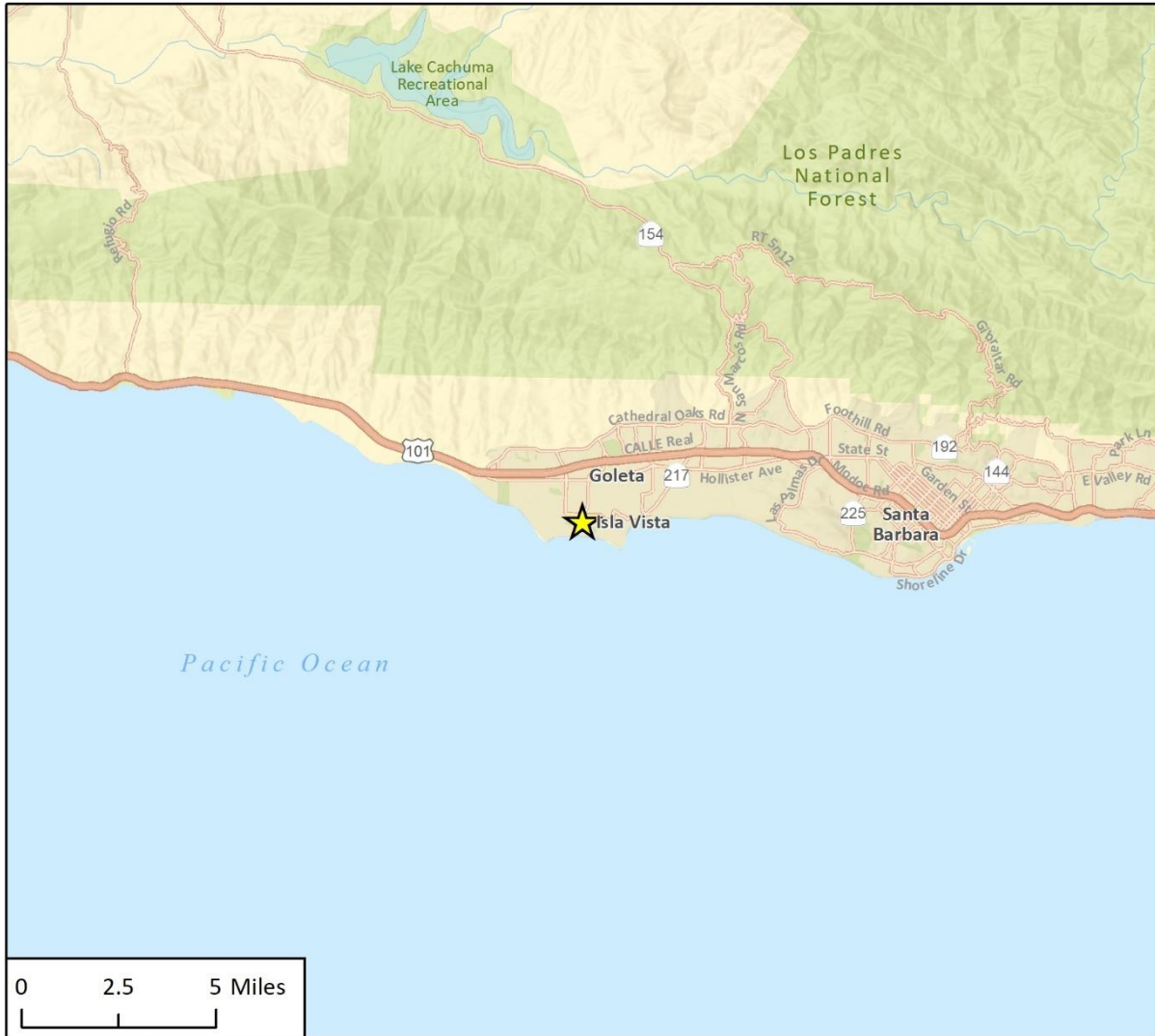
The project would involve renovating the existing Children's Park in Isla Vista. Renovation would include replacement and modernization of existing features and adding of new features to enhance the park. Existing features in the park would be replaced to provide Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility, install modernized nature-themed features, and improve overall site useability. Portions of the site would be cleared of existing turf, vegetation, and pavement to meet accessibility requirements, functional objectives, and aesthetic goals. The following existing park features would be replaced with similar modernized features:

- |                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| ▪ Playground, swings, and surfacing | ▪ Non-accessible barbeque                            |
| ▪ Non-accessible drinking fountain  | ▪ Non-accessible gazebo structure and related paving |
| ▪ Non-accessible benches            |  |

New features added to the site to replace those listed above would include a new playground with rubberized surfacing, accessible pathways, secondary nature paths, drinking fountain, and gathering area with barbeque and seating.



**Figure 1 Regional Location**



Imagery provided by Esri and its licensors © 2021.

★ Project Location

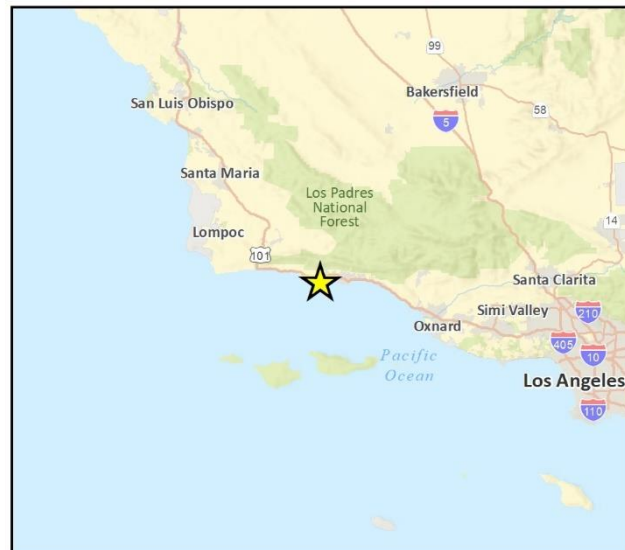


Fig. 1 Regional Location

Figure 2 Project Site





**Figure 3    Photographs of the Project Site**



**Photograph 1.** Existing park features including playground, restroom, and gazebo, viewed facing west toward Camino Del Sur.



**Photograph 2.** Trail and trees in park, viewed facing east toward cul-de-sac.

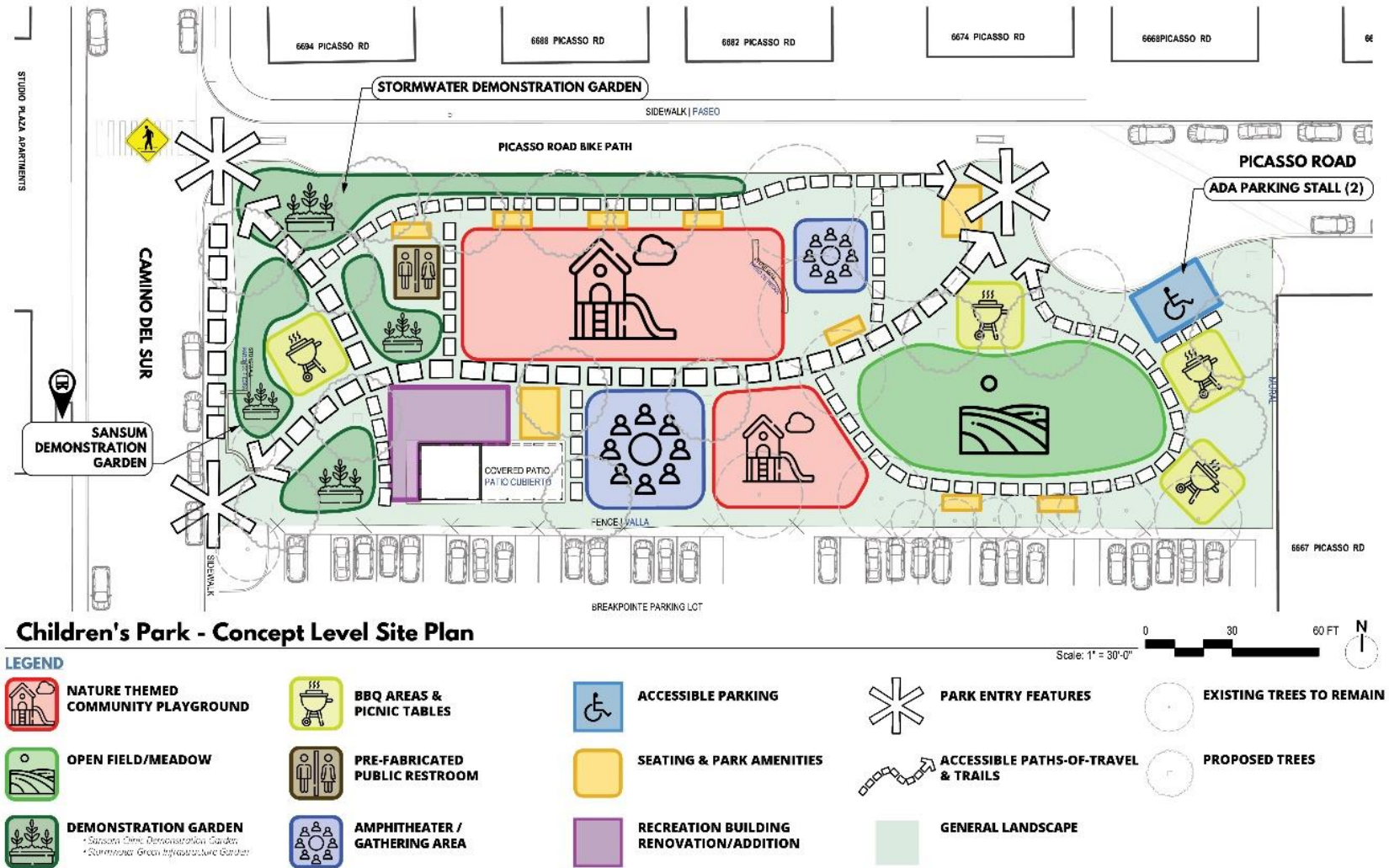
The existing restroom/storage structure, constructed in 2000, would be renovated to host Isla Vista Recreation and Park District (District) resident-serving programs such as concessions, office space, or storage. Renovation would include up to 420 square feet with an expansion of up to 200 square feet, addition of a covered patio up to 1,300 square feet, and removal of the restroom. Solar panels may be added to the roof of the existing structure to provide electricity to the project site. A new pre-fabricated restroom would be added to the site to replace the existing restroom. The pre-fabricated restroom would connect to existing site utilities, such as sewer and water, and may operate on solar power. The existing rock retaining walls along Camino Del Sur and in the center of the park would be preserved and renovated for durability.

Proposed new site amenities may include a charging station for electronics (i.e., cell phones), bicycle parking and repair station, built-in games, fitness equipment, skate elements, murals and mosaics, security cameras, safety lighting, signage, and stormwater improvements. The proposed site plan is shown in Figure 4.

Park landscaping would include drought tolerant and native vegetation and a potential demonstration garden. Up to five of the parks existing 23 trees would be removed as part of the project. Four of the five trees (two *Quercus agrifolia* [coast live oak], a *Tipuana tipu* [tipu], and a *Pinus sabiniana* [gray pine]) would be removed to allow for proposed site improvements. The fifth tree, a coast live oak, would be removed because the tree is unhealthy and is a safety concern for park users. Proposed earthwork would not impact the critical root zones of trees to be preserved on the site.



Figure 4 Site Plan



## 2 Consistency Analysis

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### 2.1 Class I CE Applicability

Section 15301 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states that a Class 1 CE is for the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. Section 15301(c) includes “existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities, and other alterations such as the addition of bicycle facilities, including but not limited to bicycle parking, bicycle-share facilities and bicycle lanes, transit improvements such as bus lanes, pedestrian crossings, street trees, and other similar alterations that do not create additional automobile lanes.” Section 15301(d) includes restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures, facilities, or mechanical equipment to meet current standards of public health and safety. Section 15301(e) includes additions to existing structures provided that the addition will not result in an increase of more than 10,000 square feet if the project is in an area where public services and facilities are available to allow for maximum development permissible in the General Plan, and in an area that is not environmentally sensitive.

The project includes (1) developing new accessible trails and nature paths; (2) rehabilitation of the existing rock retaining walls; (3) minor grading and vegetation removal to improve park accessibility; (4) renovating (420 square feet) and expanding the existing restroom/storage structure up to 1,1,500 square feet with potential for solar panels; (5) addition a pre-fabricated restroom, and 6) addition of new park features on the site. The total proposed additional square footage would be up to 1,500square feet, which does not exceed the 10,000 square feet maximum allowed under the Class I exemption. The project site is in an area where public services and facilities are available to allow for maximum development permissible in the General Plan because the project site is developed with an existing park and restroom that is fully functioning. The pre-fabricated restroom would connect to utilities and may include solar panels on the restroom to meet future on site energy demands. The existing public services and facilities are therefore available to meet the maximum development permissible under the Santa Barbara County General Plan.

The project site consists of the property located at 810 Camino Del Sur in Santa Barbara County, which is developed with an existing park and related park infrastructure, including a gazebo, playground, and restroom, and surrounded by residential development. Based on a site visit conducted on February 8, 2021, as well as aerial imagery (see Figure 2), there are no wetlands, streams, aquatic or riparian habitat, scenic vistas, or other environmentally sensitive resources on the project site (please refer to the discussion of 15300.2(a) under *Exceptions to CE Applicability*, below). Therefore, the project site is not located in an environmentally sensitive area.

The minor additions and alterations to existing structures, as described above, would not expand the existing use of the park, which would remain a park on the same site and with comparable amenities. The project would replace existing features to meet current standards and increase accessibility. Therefore, the additions and alterations to existing facilities would meet the applicability requirements for a Class 1 CE pursuant to Section 15301 of the *CEQA Guidelines*.

## 2.2 Class 2 CE Applicability

Section 15302 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states that a Class 2 CE is for the replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced.

The proposed project would include removal of the existing playground, swings, playground surfacing, pavement, and non-assessable structures such as the drinking fountain, benches, and barbeque. These features would be replaced with modernized structures that would be ADA accessible. Existing paths would similarly be replaced for accessibility. The playground would be replaced with a nature themed playground and rubberized surfacing. These new features would be constructed on the project site, entirely within the boundary of the existing park. The replaced features would be modernized, but would have the same purpose as the existing features and would not increase user capacity on the project site. Therefore, the replacement features would be consistent with the requirements stated in Section 15302 of the *CEQA Guidelines*.

## 2.3 Class 3 CE Applicability

Section 15303 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states that a Class 3 CE is for construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure. Section 15303(c) states that a small structure should not exceed 2,500 square feet in floor area.

The proposed project would include conversion/restoration of the existing restroom/storage structure to serve the District with concessions, an office, and/or storage. Conversion would include expansion of the building up to 1,500 square feet, including a covered patio up to 1,300 square feet. Therefore, the 2,500 square foot threshold for a Class 3 exemption would not be exceeded. Solar panels may also be added to the roof of the building to meet future on site electricity demand. Therefore, expansion of the existing restroom/storage structure would include minor modification to the exterior of the structure. The project would include a new pre-fabricated to replace the existing restroom that would be converted. The pre-fabricated restroom would be a small structure that would connect to existing site utilities. Therefore, the converted and new restrooms would be consistent with the requirements stated in Section 15303 of the *CEQA Guidelines*.

## 2.4 Exceptions to CE Applicability

The applicability of CEs is qualified by the exceptions listed in Section 15300.2(a) through (f) of the *CEQA Guidelines*. In the discussion below, each exception (in italics) is followed by an explanation of why the exception does not apply to the proposed project.

**15300.2(a)** *Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply in all instances, except where the project may impact an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where*

*designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.*

The District does not propose to adopt a Class 4, 5, 6, and 11 CE. A Class 3 CE is proposed for the conversion of the existing restroom and addition of a new pre-fabricated restroom to the project site. There are no environmental resources of hazardous or critical concern that are designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies on the project site, such as critical habitat for listed threatened or endangered species (United States Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS] 2021a). According to a search of the State Water Resources Control Board GeoTracker database and the Department of Toxic Substances Control EnviroStor database conducted in February 2021, there are no active designated hazardous waste sites on or within the project vicinity (State Water Resources Control Board [SWRCB] 2021, California Department of Toxic Substances Control [DTSC] 2021a). The project site is located in an urbanized area and there are not critical environmental resources, such as wetlands or wildlife, on site (USFWS 2021a, USFWS 2021b). Therefore, this exception to a CE does not apply to the project.

**15300.2(b)** ***Cumulative Impact.** All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.*

The proposed project would not result in significant environmental impacts and there are no other successive projects of the same type or scale planned in Isla Vista as the project site is surrounded by existing development. Land to the north, south, east, and west of the site is fully developed with existing residential uses. The nearest park, Estero Park approximately 400 feet southwest, is already developed. In addition, the Del Sol Vernal Pool Preserve approximately 630 feet west would not be developed because it is designated open space. There are no major reasonably foreseeable future projects in the vicinity that would result in significant cumulative impacts. Therefore, no significant cumulative impact would result from successive projects of the same type in the same place over time. This exception to a CE does not apply to the proposed project.

**15300.2(c)** ***Significant Effect.** A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

The project consists of the existing Isla Vista Children's Park grounds and is developed with park structures and infrastructure, or maintained and landscaped park grounds. There are no wetlands, streams, aquatic or riparian habitat, scenic vistas, geological hazards, hazardous materials, or other unusual circumstances on or adjacent to the project site (please refer to the discussion of 15300.2(a) under *Exceptions to CE Applicability*, above).

Construction of the proposed project would require the removal of an estimated five trees. The tree species that would be removed consist of coast live oak, tipa, and gray pine, which are common and not rare or unique species. The other 18 trees on the project site would not be impacted and their root zones would be protected during construction. Additionally, replacement trees would be planted at rate of two new trees planted for each tree removed. Thus, there would be at least 10 new trees planted on the site. The trees that would be removed are in areas of high human activity and presence, and are isolated from forest or open grasslands. One of the coast live oak trees is unhealthy and would be removed for park safety. Thus, the trees that would be removed are not structures or habitat for substantial numbers of nesting migratory birds, or for special status birds and raptors. The project site is a relatively flat urban parcel and there are no other unusual



circumstances that exist. Due to the absence of unusual circumstances on the project site, and planting at a 2:1 ratio to reduce impacts associated with tree removal, the project would not have a reasonable possibility for a significant effect on the environment. This exception to a CE does not apply to the proposed project.

**15300.2(d) Scenic Highways.** *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.*

The project site is not on or near a California Scenic Highway (California Department of Transportation 2021). Highway 101 is mapped as an eligible state scenic highway, but is not designated. Highway 101 is located approximately 1.4 miles north of the project site. The project site is not visible from Highway 101. Therefore, this exception to a CE is not applicable to the proposed project.

**15300.2(e) Hazardous Waste Sites.** *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.*

The project site at 810 Camino Del Sur is not included on the DTSC EnviroStor database, DTSC Cortese List, SWRCB GeoTracker database, or U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) Envirofacts database (DTSC 2021a, DTSC 2021b, SWRCB 2021, USEPA 2021). The project site is not included on a list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code and this exception to the applicability and use of a CE does not apply to the project.

**15300.2(f) Historical Resources.** *A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.*

There are no historically significant structures on or adjacent to the project site. The existing restroom building was constructed in 2000, and is less than 50 years in age. This structure is not identified in the State register or by Santa Barbara County as historic, nor does the site or surrounding area contain historic resources as defined under California Public Resources Code Section 15064.5 (California State Parks 2021, Santa Barbara County 2010 and 2018). The proposed project would not remove permanent buildings. Therefore, this exception is not applicable to the proposed project.

### 3 Summary

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Based on the above analysis, the Isla Vista Children's Park Renovation Project meets all criteria for Class 1, 2, and 3 Categorical Exemptions pursuant to Sections 15301, 15302, and 15304 of the *CEQA Guidelines*. Furthermore, exceptions to the applicability of a CE, as specified in Section 15300.2(a) through (f) of the *CEQA Guidelines*, do not apply to the project. Therefore, the proposed project is exempt from CEQA.

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