
IV. ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS
J. PUBLIC SERVICES
5. SCHOOLS

The focus of environmental analysis prepared under CEQA is a project's potential to impact the physical environment. Impacts on schools are considered primarily social and economic; however, they are analyzed in this section to determine if there are related impacts on the physical environment.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Public education within the City is administered by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Specifically, the project locale is served by the following LAUSD public schools (please see Figure IV.J-4 in Section IV.J.4 (Libraries) for the locations of these schools):

1. Apperson Street Elementary School (grades K-5), located at 10233 Woodward Avenue in Sunland (4.8 miles from the project site);
2. Mountain View Elementary School (grades K-5), located at 6410 Olcott Street in Tujunga (2.4 miles from the project site);
3. Pinewood Elementary School (grades K-5), located at 10111 Silverton Avenue in Tujunga (2.9 miles from the project site);
4. Vinedale Elementary School (grades K-5), located at 10150 La Tuna Canyon Road in Sun Valley (4 miles from the project site);
5. Mount Gleason Middle School (grades 6-8), located at 10965 Mt. Gleason Avenue in Sunland (5.4 miles from the project site);
6. Sun Valley Middle School (grades 6-8), located at 7330 Bakman Avenue in Sun Valley (7.8 miles from the project site);
7. Francis Polytechnic Senior High School (grades 9-12), located at 12431 Roscoe Boulevard in Sun Valley (7.3 miles from the project site); and
8. Verdugo Hills Senior High School (grades 9-12), located at 10625 Plainview Avenue in Tujunga (5.2 miles from the project site).

The 2002-2003 school capacity and enrollment for these schools is shown in Table IV.J-3. As shown in Table IV.J-3, only one of the public schools in the area currently exceeds its enrollment capacity (i.e., Francis Polytechnic Senior High School). However, the LAUSD is currently pursuing plans to

construct a new high school in the eastern San Fernando Valley that is intended to relieve overcrowding at three existing high schools, including Francis Polytechnic Senior High School.¹ The new high school, East Valley Area New High School #2, will be completed in 2005 and have 1,512 two-semester gross seats.²

The project site is undeveloped and, therefore, does not currently contribute to the existing school enrollment.

Table IV.J-3
School Capacity and Enrollment
Canyon Hills Project

School	2002-2003 Enrollment Capacity	2002-2003 Enrollment	Over/Under Capacity
Apperson Street Elementary	654	523	131 Under
Mountain View Elementary	766	557	209 Under
Pinewood Elementary	950	783	167 Under
Vinedale Elementary	505	461	44 Under
Elementary School Totals	2,875	2,324	551 Under
Mount Gleason Middle	2,090	1,788	302 Under
Sun Valley Middle	3,360	3,136	224 Under
Middle School Totals	5,450	4,924	526 Under
Francis Polytechnic Senior High	3,612	3,956	344 Over
Verdugo Hills Senior High	2,411	2,319	92 Under
High School Totals	6,023	6,275	252 Over

Source: Correspondence from the Los Angeles Unified School District, Rena Perez, Director, Master Planning and Demographics, April 3, 2003.

Open Enrollment Policy

The open enrollment policy is a State-mandated policy that enables students anywhere in the LAUSD to apply to any regular, grade-appropriate LAUSD school with designated “open enrollment” seats. The number of open enrollment seats is determined annually. Each individual school is assessed based on the principal’s knowledge of new housing and other demographic trends in the attendance area. Open enrollment seats are granted through an application process that is completed before the school year

¹ Los Angeles Unified School District, “LAUSD Breaks Ground on Two New Schools in the Valley,” www.laschools.org/news/item?item_id=321310, October 31, 2002.

² Los Angeles Unified School District, “Project Status, East Valley Area New HS #2,” www.laschools.org/project-status/one-project?project_id=11697&print_p=1, April 10, 2003.

begins. Students living in a particular school's attendance area are not displaced by a student requesting and open enrollment transfer to that school.³

School Facilities Fee Plan

The Leroy F. Greene School Facilities Act of 1998 (SB 50) sets a maximum level of fees a developer may be required to pay to mitigate a project's impacts on school facilities. The maximum fees authorized under SB 50 apply to zone changes, general plan amendments, zoning permits and subdivisions. SB 50 also prohibits a local agency from denying a development project, by either legislative or adjudicative action, on the basis that school facilities are inadequate to serve the project.

In enacting SB 50, the Legislature stated its intent to occupy the field of school facilities impact mitigation and to preempt local regulation in that area. SB 50 expressly overrides both CEQA and local laws in providing the exclusive method of considering and mitigating impacts on school facilities that may result from a legislative or adjudicative act. Furthermore, the provisions of SB 50 are deemed to provide full and complete mitigation of school facilities impacts, notwithstanding any contrary provisions in CEQA or other State or local laws (Government Code Section 65996). In other words, payment of developer fees constitutes full and complete mitigation of school impacts.

Pursuant to Section 65995.5-7 of the California Government Code, the LAUSD has established a residential developer fee at a rate of \$3.55 per square foot on new residential construction within the boundaries of the LAUSD.⁴

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Threshold of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G to the CEQA Guidelines, impacts on school services would be significant if the project would result in a substantial adverse physical impact associated with the provision or need of new or physically altered schools in order to maintain acceptable service ratios or other performance objectives of the LAUSD.

Project Impacts

The increase in the number of permanent residents on the project site resulting from the proposed project and the potential need to enroll any school-aged children into LAUSD schools would increase the demand for school services. Based on LAUSD student generation rates, the proposed project would generate a total of 122 students including 61 elementary school students, 30 middle school students, and 31 high school students (see Table IV.J-4).

³ News Release, Los Angeles Unified School District, Office of Communications, April 17, 2000.

⁴ Los Angeles Unified School District, telephone communication with Virginia Co, Accounting Technician 2, Developer Fee Program Office, April 11, 2003

Table IV.J-4
Project Student Generation
Canyon Hills Project

Grade Level	Student Generation Rate ^a	Single-Family Dwelling Units	Total Students
Elementary (K-5)	0.2161	280	61
Middle (6-8)	0.1059	280	30
High (9-12)	0.1082	280	31
Total Students			122
^a School Fee Justification Studies for Los Angeles Unified School District, September 2002.			

It is possible that some of the future residents in the proposed project already reside within the service boundaries of the LAUSD, with their school-aged children currently enrolled in the LAUSD schools near the project site. However, to provide for a worst-case scenario, it is assumed that all of the students produced from the proposed project would not be currently enrolled in the LAUSD schools near the project site, and would be enrolled upon relocation to the project area. Because it is unknown which specific project-serving elementary school, middle school, or high school a new student might attend, this analysis is based on grouping the school capacities, enrollments and the generation of new students into the appropriate school level. Based on existing capacities and enrollments, along with the projected number of new students, the proposed project would not exceed the overall enrollment capacities at the elementary or middle schools serving the project locale (see Table IV.J-5).

With respect to the 31 high school students that are projected to live in the proposed project, those students can be accommodated at Verdugo Hills Senior High School, which is currently 92 students under capacity. In addition, while there is an existing capacity shortfall at Francis Polytechnic Senior High school, which also served the project area, it is anticipated that the proposed East Valley Area New High School #2 will be completed in 2005, approximately four years prior to the completion of the proposed project. It is expected that the completion and operation of this new high school will relieve the overall high school capacity shortfall in the project area, which further supports the conclusion that the addition of high school students by the proposed project would not warrant the need for new or physically altered schools. Therefore, the proposed project's contribution of new students would not exceed overall enrollment capacities and impacts on school facilities resulting from implementation of the proposed project would be less than significant.

Table IV.J-5
School Capacity with Project
Canyon Hills Project

Grade Level	Combined Existing Capacity	Combined Existing Enrollment	Project Students	Future Enrollment (Existing + Project)	Over/Under Capacity
Elementary (K-5)	2,875	2,324	61	2,385	490 Under
Middle (6-8)	5,450	4,924	30	4,954	496 Under
High (9-12)	6,023	6,275	31	6,306	283 Over

Source: Christopher A. Joseph & Associates, April 2003.

MITIGATION MEASURES

The proposed project would not generate enough students to exceed the capacities of the schools serving the project site to necessitate the construction of new or physically altered school facilities. In addition, the planned East Valley Area New High School #2 will relieve overcrowding at Francis Polytechnic Senior High School and provide additional enrollment capacity for high school students within the proposed project. Therefore, impacts on schools would be less than significant. Furthermore, as discussed in the Environmental Setting section, the project applicant would be required to pay a school fee of \$3.55 per square foot of new residential development to the LAUSD in compliance with SB 50, notwithstanding the less-than-significant impact on school facilities. As previously discussed, this fee provides full and complete mitigation of any potential school impacts.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Development of the proposed project in conjunction with the identified 13 related projects in Figure II-1 in Section II.C (Related Projects) would cause an increase in the demand for public school services. However, Related Project No. 9, which is a residential project, is located in the unincorporated community of La Crescenta, which is served by the Glendale Unified School District. Therefore, the students associated with that project would not be served by LAUSD schools. The other residential related project is the Duke Project, which consists of 10 single-family homes and would generate an estimated two elementary school students, one middle school student and one high school student, for a total of approximately four students. Therefore, the proposed project and the Duke Project would cumulatively generate a total of 126 students (i.e., 122 students from the proposed project and 4 students from the Duke Project). The Duke Project would be subject to the State-required school fees to mitigate their impacts on schools.

Development of some of the commercial related projects may indirectly increase enrollment, by providing new jobs that could cause employees with families to relocate to be closer to their workplace. Although, given the general mobility of the greater Los Angeles population and the fact that there are many residential neighborhoods with varying housing costs within close proximity to these commercial

related projects, it is likely that no substantial amount of population relocation would occur with the development of the commercial related projects. In addition, the commercial related projects would likely employ people from the local workforce who may already have their children enrolled in project area schools. Furthermore, employees whose children attend LAUSD schools may petition under the LAUSD's "open enrollment" policy to have their children attend LAUSD schools away from their place of residence. The LAUSD allows such open enrollment in schools near the parent's place of employment where school capacity is deemed adequate. However, the LAUSD makes the final determination on whether or not they can accept students through their open enrollment policy, and would not accept them if it would adversely affect the provision of adequate educational services.

As discussed above in the Project Impacts section, only one school serving the project site, Francis Polytechnic Senior High School, is currently over capacity. However, the 32 cumulative new high school students could be accommodated at Verdugo Hills Senior High School, which currently has additional capacity for 92 students. To the extent that the cumulative high school students generated by the proposed project and the related projects would attend Francis Polytechnic Senior High School, the planned East Valley Area New High School #2 would relieve the overcrowding at that high school and easily accommodate the cumulative projected high school students. With respect to middle schools, the proposed project and the Duke Project would cumulatively generate an estimated 31 middle school students, which is well below the remaining capacity of 526 students at the two middle schools that serve the project site. Similarly, the proposed project and the Duke Project would cumulatively generate an estimated 62 elementary school students, far below the remaining capacity of 551 students at the four elementary schools that serve the project site. Therefore, the cumulative school impacts associated with the proposed project would be less than significant.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

The proposed project's impacts on school facilities would be less than significant.