

### 1.1 Purpose of EIR and Project Overview

This environmental impact report (EIR) discusses the potential environmental consequences resulting from the proposed Cate School Master Plan Update (Project). The proposed Project would revise the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for Cate School (Applicant) to allow for:

- Expansion and renovation of existing educational and administrative facilities; including:
  - Demolition of 26,582 square feet (sf) of existing buildings;
  - Construction of 180,861 sf of new building space; and
  - Renovation of 41,402 sf of existing building space;
- An enrollment increase from 280 to 300 students; and
- Revisions to the existing onsite childcare center.

The CUP revision would also define specific limits for existing activities, such as use of a Public Address (PA) system and amplified sound during athletic events and student events. Although the proposed Project would result in amendments to the CUP that would allow for new development and minor changes to Cate School operations, the proposed Project would not alter the existing permitted campus use as a private high school and boarding facility. The County of Santa Barbara (County) is the Lead Agency under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the County Board of Supervisors has the authority to approve the CUP Amendments.

### 1.2 Legal Authority

CEQA was enacted in 1970 by the California legislature to disclose to decision makers and the public the significant environmental effects of proposed activities and the ways to avoid or reduce those effects by requiring implementation of feasible alternatives or mitigation measures. CEQA applies to all California government agencies at all levels, including local government agencies that must issue permits or provide discretionary approvals for projects proposed by private applicants. Accordingly, the County is required to undertake the CEQA process before making a decision on a project. In accordance with Section 21067 of CEQA and Sections 15367 and 15050 through 15053 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the County is the Lead Agency under whose authority this document has been prepared, and it will be taking primary responsibility for conducting the environmental review and certifying the EIR.

Guidance for the process and contents for the preparation of an EIR are codified in the CEQA Statutes provided in California Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21000 et seq. and the State CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 14, Section 15000 et seq.). Additionally, in June 2010, the County published the revised *Guidelines for the Implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, As Amended* (County of Santa Barbara 2010). This document provides definitions, procedures, and forms to be used in the implementation of CEQA and to

supplement the State CEQA Guidelines to the specific operations of the County. The purpose of these local guidelines is to help the County accomplish the following basic objectives of CEQA:

- To enhance and provide long-term protection for the environment;
- To provide information to governmental decision makers and the public regarding the potential significant environmental effects of a proposed project;
- To identify ways that environmental damage can be avoided or significantly reduced;
- To prevent significant avoidable environmental damage through utilization of feasible project alternatives or mitigation measures; and
- To disclose and demonstrate to the public the reasons why a governmental agency approved a project in the manner chosen.

The County also published, in July 2015, the amended *Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual* (County of Santa Barbara 2015). This manual was prepared to assist the public, applicants, environmental consulting firms, and County decision makers in understanding the use and application of various environmental impact thresholds as they relate to project proposals. The thresholds of significance and guidelines in the manual are intended to implement and/or supplement provisions in the State CEQA Guidelines for determination of significant environmental effect, including Sections 15064, 15065, 15382, and Appendix G. Thresholds of significance supplemented by the manual that are applicable to the Project include additional agricultural resources guidelines; air quality thresholds; biological resources guidelines; cultural resources guidelines; archaeological, historical, and ethnic elements; geologic constraints guidelines; noise thresholds; public safety thresholds; surface and storm water quality significance guidelines; solid waste thresholds; traffic impact thresholds; and visual aesthetic impact guidelines. This EIR applies the County's thresholds of significance where applicable, which are described in each section contained in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 of this EIR.

While Section 15021(a) of the State CEQA Guidelines requires that major consideration be given to avoiding environmental damage, the Lead Agency and other responsible public agencies must balance adverse environmental effects against other public objectives, including social and economic goals, in determining whether and in what manner a project should be approved.

## 1.3 Scope of Analysis

The EIR addresses the potential environmental effects of the proposed Project and CUP Amendments, including associated development and operational changes, and was prepared following input from the public, as well as responsible and affected agencies, through the EIR scoping process. This process was conducted using several of the tools available under CEQA, as described below.

### 1.3.1 Notice of Preparation/Environmental Impact Assessment

The contents of this EIR were established based on the findings in the Notice of Preparation (NOP) and the EIR Scoping Document and Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) that preceded the NOP, as well as public and agency input during the scoping period. In accordance with Section 15063 of the State CEQA Guidelines, the NOP was prepared and distributed to responsible and affected agencies

and other interested parties for a 30-day public review. The County distributed a NOP and the public review period began on February 10, 2015, and ended on March 12, 2015. The NOP was also posted in the Santa Barbara County Clerk's office for 30 days and sent to the State Clearinghouse at the Governor's Office of Planning and Research to solicit statewide agency participation in determining the scope of the EIR. A copy of the NOP and comments received during the NOP review period are included in Appendix A.

### 1.3.2 Scoping Meeting

A public scoping meeting was held on March 3, 2015 at the County's Planning Department, located at 123 East Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, California. A public notice of the EIR scoping meeting was published in the local newspaper and sent to various local agencies, special interest groups, and owners/tenants of properties in proximity of the Project site. The meeting was intended to solicit comments with regard to environmental concerns, feasible ways in which Project impacts may be minimized to insignificant levels (mitigation measures), and potential alternatives to the proposed Project.

### 1.3.3 Previous Environmental Review

Previous to this EIR, the County prepared a MND in March of 2014 and an EIR Scoping Document in February 2015. These documents analyzed the proposed Project and defined the scope of analysis to be performed in the EIR, respectively. Both documents were reviewed and incorporated as part of the analysis for this EIR.

### 1.3.4 Areas of Known Controversy/Issues to be Resolved

Based on results of the public scoping meeting and responses to the NOP, the County identified issues known to be of concern to the Lead Agency, the public, and other agencies. Such issues include air quality impacts during construction, odor impacts from increased use of the wastewater treatment plant, noise impacts associated with operation of the PA system, traffic impacts related to increased enrollment and use of the daycare facility by the public and staff, fire hazards associated with limited site access, construction impacts to avocado orchards and other established trees, and potential impacts to local biological species, particularly steelhead trout in Carpinteria and Gobernador Creeks.

## 1.4 Required EIR Contents and Document Organization

The content and organization of this EIR are designed to meet the current requirements of CEQA and the State CEQA Guidelines. The required CEQA Sections are referenced along with the contents below to demonstrate compliance CEQA.

**Executive Summary (Section 15123)** presents a summary of the proposed Project and alternatives, potential impacts and mitigation measures, and impact conclusions regarding growth inducement and cumulative impacts.

**Table of Contents (Section 15122)** provides a list of the contents included within the EIR.

**Chapter 1, "Introduction,"** provides an overview of the EIR process, describes the purpose and scope of this EIR, and outlines required EIR contents and the organization of the EIR.

**Chapter 2, “Project Description,” (Section 15124)** describes the Project location, Project details, and the objectives for the proposed Project.

**Chapter 3, “Environmental Setting and Analysis, Primary Issue Areas,” (Sections 15125, 15126.2, 15126.4, 15128, and 15130)** describes the existing conditions for the primary issue areas of concern (i.e., air quality, noise, and fire protection) before Project implementation, methods and assumptions used in the impact analysis, criteria for determining significance, impacts that would result from the proposed Project, and applicable mitigation measures that would eliminate or reduce significant impacts.

Chapter 3 of this EIR is divided into sections for each issue area and includes a detailed discussion of the potential impacts. The significance of each identified impact was determined using Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and the Santa Barbara County Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual. The following categories are used for classifying proposed Project-related impacts:

- ***Class I - Significant and unavoidable:*** Significant impacts that cannot be effectively mitigated. No measures could be taken to avoid or reduce these adverse effects to insignificant or negligible levels. Even after application of feasible mitigation measures, the residual impact would be significant.
- ***Class II – Less than significant with mitigation:*** These impacts are potentially similar in significance to those of Class I, but can be reduced or avoided by the implementation of mitigation measures. After application of feasible mitigation measures, the residual impact would not be significant.
- ***Class III – Less than significant:*** These impacts are less severe than Class I or Class II impacts and would not exceed the thresholds of significance established for the primary issue area. Additionally, while not required under CEQA to reduce an impact to a level of insignificance, recommended mitigation measure(s) are often applied to an identified adverse but not significant impact to mitigate the impact to the maximum extent feasible in accordance with County policy.
- ***Class IV –Beneficial impacts:*** Effects that are beneficial to the environment.

For each significant adverse impact identified, mitigation measures are presented where feasible to reduce the impacts to acceptable levels. In those instances where mitigation measures cannot reduce adverse impacts to less-than-significant levels, the impacts are categorized as Class I Impacts.

**Chapter 4, “Environmental Setting and Analysis, Secondary Issue Areas,” (Sections 15125, 15126.2, 15126.4, and 15128)** includes a brief overview of the existing conditions for the secondary issue areas of concern (e.g., aesthetics, biological resources, agricultural resources, etc.), criteria for determining significance, impacts that would result from the proposed Project, and applicable mitigation measures that would eliminate or reduce significant impacts. The resource analyses in this chapter include a brief discussion and determination of potential impacts, using the classifications discussed above for Chapter 3 (e.g., Class I, Class II, etc.).

**Chapter 5, “Plans and Policies,” (Section 15125.d)** discusses any inconsistencies between the proposed Project and applicable general plans and regional plans. In this case, the plans most relevant to the Project are the California Coastal Act (CCA), the Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan (Comprehensive Plan), and the Santa Barbara County Coastal Land Use Plan (CLUP).

**Chapter 6, “Alternatives Analysis,” (Section 15126.6)** evaluates the environmental effects of Project alternatives, including the No Project Alternative. It also identifies the environmentally superior Project alternative.

**Chapter 7, “Cumulative Impacts,” (Section 15130)** describes impacts that could occur from the combined effect of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, as well as the Project’s contribution to those cumulative impacts.

**Chapter 8, “Other CEQA Section,” (Section 15126.2 and 15126.2)** includes a discussion of direct and indirect growth-inducing impacts that could be caused by the proposed Project and a discussion of significant adverse impacts that cannot be reduced to less than significant levels due to unavailable or infeasible mitigation measures, as well as irreversible commitments of resources caused by the proposed Project.

**Chapter 9, “List of Preparers,” (Section 15129)** lists the individuals involved in preparing this EIR.

**Chapter 10, “References,” (Section 15129)** identifies documents (printed references) and individuals (personal communications) consulted during preparation of this EIR. This chapter includes agencies and people consulted to ascertain information and support for conclusions made in impact analyses.

**Technical Appendices** provide information and technical studies that support the environmental analysis contained within this document.

## 1.5 Public/Agency Involvement and Availability of the EIR

One of the primary objectives of CEQA is to enhance public participation in the process of planning a project. In addition to providing information and disclosing environmental impacts, the environmental review process provides several opportunities for the public to participate through scoping, public notice, public review of the CEQA document, and public hearings. Thus, public involvement is considered an essential feature of CEQA, and community members are encouraged to participate in the environmental review process, request to be notified, monitor newspapers for formal announcements, and submit substantive comments at every possible opportunity afforded by the agency. Additionally, agencies are required to consider comments from the scoping process in the preparation of the EIR and respond to public comments in the Final EIR.

This EIR has been distributed to federal, state and county agencies; interested members of the public; citizens’ groups; and local libraries with a comment period that runs from March 23, 2016 to May 9, 2016. The EIR is also posted on the County’s website and is available for review and download at <http://sbcountyplanning.org/environmental/active.cfm>. The County will hold a public hearing during the public review period on Thursday April 21, 2016 to receive public comments on the EIR. The hearing will be scheduled at 5:00 p.m. at the County’s Planning Department, located at 123 East Anapamu Street, Santa Barbara, California. Notice of the public hearing has been published in the local newspaper and sent to various local agencies, special interest groups, and owners of properties adjacent to the Project site. Comments received at the public hearing, as well as written comments received during the public review period, will be addressed in the Final EIR. Comments may be addressed to:

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