



1890 Alcatraz Avenue African American Holistic Resource Center Project

CEQA Categorical Exemption Report

prepared by

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1 CEQA Categorical Exemption Report

This report serves as the technical documentation of an environmental analysis performed for the proposed African American Holistic Resource Center Project (project). The intent of this analysis is to document whether the project is eligible for a 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 the exemption class. The report concludes that the project is eligible for the proposed exemption.

1.1 Introduction

Section 15303 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states that a Class 3 CE applies to construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and 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 3 category and in relation to these exceptions to confirm the project's eligibility for a CE.

1.2 Project Site and Existing Conditions

The project site is an approximately 9,600 square-foot parcel (Alameda County Assessor's Parcel Number 52-1527-24-1) located on the south side of Alcatraz Avenue between Dover Street and Martin Luther King, Jr., Way in Berkeley. The site is generally level, sloping gently toward the west. It is developed with a single-story commercial building of approximately 3,910 square feet, constructed circa 1958, and a paved surface parking area. Figure 1 shows an aerial view of the project site and immediate neighborhood context.

The site is surrounded by one- to three-story residential and commercial buildings.

1.3 Project Description

The proposed project would involve demolition of the existing building on the project site and construction of a new community center – the African American Holistic Resource Center – of approximately 6,000 square feet, and outdoor activity areas. The Resource Center would host services to benefit the community with education, employment, health, mental health, and housing advocacy and support.

1.4 Consistency Analysis

Section 15303 of the *CEQA Guidelines* states that a Class 3 CE applies to construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and 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) further specifies that new small structures can include non-residential structures up to 10,000 square feet in size in urbanized areas "on sites zoned for such use if not involving the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances."

- The proposed new building would be approximately 6,000 square feet, well under the 10,000 square feet cited in the Guidelines.
- The project site is zoned Adeline Corridor Commercial District (C-AC). A wide range of commercial and institutional uses are allowed uses in this district, including Community Centers (Berkeley Municipal Code Section 23.204.150 and Table 23.204-1); thus, the site is zoned for the proposed use.
- The proposed community center use and anticipated activities at the site, by their nature, would not involve the use of significant amounts of hazardous substances.

Therefore, the project meets the applicability requirements for a Class 3 CE pursuant to Section 15303 of the *CEQA Guidelines*.

Figure 1 Project Location



Imagery provided by Microsoft Bing and its licensors © 2024.

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CRFig 2 Project Site

1.5 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.*

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 wetlands (USFWS 2024a), active fault zones, hazardous materials contamination (DTSC 2024, SWRCB 2024), or critical habitat for listed threatened or endangered species (USFWS 2024b). The project site is located in an urbanized area free of designated critical environmental resources or hazardous conditions. This exception to a CE does not apply to the proposed 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 for the project site or adjacent sites that, with the project, would result in a significant cumulative impact. 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 site is generally level, paved and developed, and surrounded by urban development and active land uses. There are no unusual circumstances related to the site or the proposed project. The project would not have a reasonable possibility of resulting in significant effects on the environment due to unusual circumstances. This exception to a CE is not applicable 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, near, or clearly visible from a California Scenic Highway (California Department of Transportation 2024). 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 site is not a hazardous waste site and is not included on a list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code (DTSC 2024, SWRCB 2024). This exception is not applicable to the proposed 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.*

As determined in a Historical Resources Evaluation prepared for the City of Berkeley by Rincon Consultants, Inc. in December of 2024 (on file and available for review at City of Berkeley Parks, Recreation & Waterfront Development Department offices during regular business hours), the existing building on the project site is not eligible for federal, state, or local designation and is not considered a historical resource for the purposes of CEQA.

The project's proposed depth of disturbance would not extend to previously undisturbed soils. The project would additionally be required to comply with the City's Standard Conditions of Approval for the treatment of archaeological resources throughout demolition, grading, and construction, thereby avoiding significant impacts to any unknown archaeological resources. The project would not cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. This exception to a CE is not applicable to the proposed project.

1.6 Summary

Based on the analysis in sections 1.4, 1.5 and 1.6 of this report, the 1890 Alcatraz Avenue African American Holistic Resource Center Project meets the criteria for a Class 3 CE pursuant to Section 15303 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.

2 References

California Department of Transportation. 2024. List of eligible and officially designated State Scenic Highways (XLSX). <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways> (accessed December 2024).

California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). 2024. EnviroStor database. <https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/> (accessed December 2024).

California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB). 2024. GeoTracker database. <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/> (accessed March 2024).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS). 2024a. National Wetlands Inventory. <https://fwsprimary.wim.usgs.gov/wetlands/apps/wetlands-mapper/>. (Accessed December 2024).

_____. 2024b. Threatened & Endangered Species Active Critical Habitat Report. <https://fws.maps.arcgis.com/home/webmap/viewer.html?webmap=9d8de5e265ad4fe09893cf75b8dbfb77>. (Accessed December 2024).