

CENTRAL KITCHEN, INSTRUCTIONAL FARM, AND EDUCATION CENTER

FAST FACTS: California Environmental Quality Act



THE CENTER: THE CHALLENGE -- AND OPPORTUNITY

Today in Oakland, **one in four children** does not have access to affordable, healthy food. Within the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), this issue is even more urgent, with **72 percent** of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. By creating The Center, a Central Kitchen, Instructional Farm, and Education Center, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has the opportunity to dramatically improve the meals we serve in our schools. Through The Center, we aim to boost student achievement and support mental, emotional, and physical health, all of which are closely tied to healthy eating.

Beyond promoting healthy eating, The Center will offer real-world learning opportunities through its Instructional Farm and Education Center, and add a new branch to West Oakland's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) Corridor.

This project is presently undergoing an environmental review process under the California Environmental Quality Assurance Act (CEQA).



WHAT IS THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ASSURANCE ACT, COMMONLY REFERRED TO AS CEQA?

The California Environmental Quality Assurance Act (CEQA) is a state law requiring public entities (like OUSD) to determine whether a proposed project will significantly impact the environment and how to adopt possible modifications to the proposed project to reduce environmental impacts to a less-than-significant level before making a final decision to proceed with a proposed project. Possible modifications to a proposed project to reduce potential environmental impacts to a below-significant-level are known as mitigation measures.

HOW DID OUSD DETERMINE WHETHER THIS PROJECT WOULD SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACT THE ENVIRONMENT?

OUSD hired an independent consultant, Patricia Jeffreys, ACIP, of PLACEMAKERS, to lead a team of experts to analyze whether this project as proposed would significantly impact the environment. This team studied the proposed project and concluded that all potentially significant impacts to the environment could be mitigated. The team identified the mitigation measures for OUSD, and OUSD then agreed to incorporate those mitigation measures into the proposed project. With these measures in place, CEQA consultants concluded that the project would not have a significant effect on the environment.

HOW WILL THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW INFORMATION BE SHARED WITH THE PUBLIC?

OUSD's CEQA consultants have prepared an Initial Study of the proposed project, and have concluded that the appropriate environmental review document for this project is a Mitigated Negative Declaration. Once the Mitigated Negative Declaration is completed, these documents will be publicly accessible.

WHAT IS AN INITIAL STUDY?

An Initial Study is a preliminary analysis of a proposed project to determine whether a proposed project will have a significant impact on the environment. It describes the project, the environmental setting, potential environmental impacts of a project, and any mitigation measure for any significant impacts. There is no requirement under CEQA to

publicly circulate an Initial Study independent of issuing a Mitigated Negative Declaration. In the case of the Center, OUSD hosted a CEQA workshop on May 2, 2015 at the project site where its CEQA consultants discussed preliminary findings from the Initial Study and recommendations with the public.

WHAT IS A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION?

A Mitigated Negative Declaration is an environmental review document prepared when the Initial Study identifies potential significant effects to the environment, but revisions to the project agreed to prior to public review of the Initial Study would avoid the significant effects or reduce them to a less-than-significant level. A Mitigated Negative Declaration describes the proposed project, presents findings related to environmental concerns, and includes a copy of the Initial Study which documents the reasons to support the findings, and includes the mitigation measures, if any, included in the project to avoid potentially significant effects. A Mitigated Negative Declaration does not require analysis of alternative sites considered. In the case of The Center, OUSD did in fact consider other sites.

WHEN WILL THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AND INITIAL STUDY BE PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE?

OUSD anticipates that these documents will be publicly accessible and available mid-September 2015.

WILL THE PUBLIC HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT ON THE CONTENTS OF THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION?

Yes. The public will have thirty (30) days to comment on the Mitigated Negative Declaration after it has been released for public review.

WHO WITHIN OUSD WILL APPROVE THE MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION AS THE APPROPRIATE ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW DOCUMENT FOR THIS PROJECT?

The OUSD Board of Directors will vote in October on whether to approve the Mitigated Negative Declaration as the appropriate environmental review document for this project.

WOULD YOU LIKE MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS PROJECT?

Please go to www.ousdthecenter.org to see images of the award-winning design. Would you like to give OUSD feedback about this project? Do you have additional questions? If so, please email thecenter@ousd.org or call 510-761-8360.