

4.8 Schools

This section evaluates whether new or physically altered school facilities would be required to provide school services with implementation of the Housing Plan, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts.

4.8.1 Setting

Public education in the City of Santa Barbara is provided by four public school districts: Santa Barbara Unified School District (SBUSD), Hope Elementary School District (HESD), Cold Spring School District, and Montecito Union School District (MUSD). There are also private elementary schools, high schools, trade schools, and colleges, such as Santa Barbara City College and Antioch University, that operate in the City. The four local public school district boundaries and existing school locations are shown in Figure 4.8-1.

SBUSD and the City Parks and Recreation Departments share facilities through a joint use agreement. The agreement calls for the two agencies to cooperatively plan the development and maintenance of specific schools, recreational areas, and facilities. The four public school districts are discussed below, focusing on each of the district's facilities and enrollment patterns.

a. School Districts

Santa Barbara Unified School District

SBUSD consists of two separate district boundaries: an elementary district and high school district. The elementary district covers approximately 22 square miles within the City, as well as Goleta. The high school district service area covers approximately 136 square miles within the City, and the surrounding metropolitan areas from Montecito to Goleta. SBUSD maintains 859 certified staff and is comprised of nine elementary schools (TK-6), four junior high schools (7-8), three traditional high schools (9-12), one alternative high school (9-12), one continuation high school (10-12), and three authorized elementary charter schools (TK-6) (SBUSD 2022).

Hope Elementary School District

HESD maintains approximately 100 staff and is comprised of three elementary (TK-6) school sites: Monte Vista Elementary, Viejas Valley Elementary, and Hope Elementary. HESD covers approximately 7 square miles. As shown in Figure 4.8-1, the district serves neighborhoods primarily in the western portion of the City, including Hope Ranch, a variety of multi-family housing options in the Upper State area, and single-family home neighborhoods. HESD is a partner district to SBUSD, as students matriculate into their secondary schools.

Cold Spring School District

Cold Spring School is a TK-6 public school that serves approximately 189 students in a small classroom, one-school district, primarily serving residents in the Montecito community. Cold Spring School covers approximately 4 square miles. The faculty consists of a Superintendent/Principal, 12 classroom teachers; a music specialist; an art specialist; a technology and garden specialist; a science, technology, engineering, arts, and math (STEAM) specialist; a reading specialist/librarian; a physical education specialist, and 13 instructional assistants (Cold Spring School District 2023).

Montecito Union School District

MUSD is a one-school (TK-6) district serving the community of Montecito and a small portion of the City which covers approximately 9 square miles. MUSD has a current enrollment of approximately 390 students. MUSD maintains approximately 74 staff and is governed by a five-member Board of Trustees and is administered by a superintendent, principal, assistant principal, and chief business official (CDE 2023d; MUSD 2022).

b. Enrollment

Current Enrollment

Table 4.8-1 provides 2022-2023 TK-12 enrollment data for SBUSD, the Cold Spring School District, and the Montecito Union School District. Enrollment data from Hope Elementary School District is derived from the district’s 2024 Focused Housing Development Impact Study. As shown, there are 13,869 students in SBUSD, 878 in the Hope Elementary School District, 189 in the Cold Spring School District, and 390 in the Montecito Union School District.

Table 4.8-1 City of Santa Barbara 2022-2023 Student Enrollment

School District	Total
Santa Barbara Unified School District	13,869
Hope Elementary School District	878
Cold Spring School District	189
Montecito Union School District	390
Total	15,326

Sources: SBUSD 2023a; Schoolwork 2022; Cold Spring School District 2023; Montecito School District 2022; Hope Elementary School District 2024.

As shown in Table 4.8-1, SBUSD serves approximately 91 percent of students in the City. According to the California Department of Education (CDE), between school years 2011-2012 and 2023-2024, the number of students enrolled in SBUSD declined by approximately 12 percent, from 15,326 to 13,573. SBUSD experienced enrollment growth from school years 2011-2012 to 2014-2015 and enrollment decrease from 2015-2016 to present (CDE 2023b). Between school years 2011-2012 and 2021-2022, the number of students enrolled in the Hope Elementary School District declined by approximately 16.5 percent from 1,001 to 836 (CDE 2023a). Between school years 2011-2012 and 2021-2022, the number of students enrolled in the Cold Spring and Montecito School Districts have fluctuated between approximately 152-192 and 368-473, respectively (CDE 2023c; CDE 2023d).

As indicated in the General Plan Program EIR (2010), several individual schools were near or over stated capacity; however, none of these schools were officially designated as overcrowded through the State’s Critically Overcrowded Schools program (City of Santa Barbara 2010). As noted above, overall enrollment in the City has generally been declining since 2011 and, as needed, Districts retain the ability to transfer students among schools to best utilize the existing physical capacity available in the City. Table 4.8-2 provides a comparison of student enrollment in 2011-2012 to 2022-2023 Student Enrollment shown in Table 4.8-1.

Table 4.8-2 2011-2012 Student Enrollment Comparison

School	2011-2012 Enrollment	Percentage Difference from 2022-2023 Enrollment
Santa Barbara Unified School District	15,326	-9.4%
Hope Elementary School District	1,187	-35.2%
Cold Spring School District	152	21.7%
Montecito Union School District	438	-11.6%
Source: CDE 2023e; SBUSD 2023a; schoolwork 2022; Cold Spring School District 2023; Montecito School District 2022; Hope Elementary School District 2024		

Figure 4.8-1 Local School Districts and Existing Facilities



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Additional data provided by City of Santa Barbara, 2022.

Projected Enrollment

The following discussion provides projected enrollment data for SBUSD and the Hope Elementary School District, which collectively comprise approximately 96 percent of City-wide public school enrollment. Projected enrollment data is not available for the Cold Spring School District or Montecito Union School District.

Santa Barbara Unified School District

California Demographics Services prepared *Enrollment History and Projections in the Santa Barbara Unified School District* in March 2017, which provides enrollment projections for SBUSD schools through 2029-2030 (California Demographic Services 2017). Local birth data has been the strongest predictor of future kindergarten enrollment in the SBUSD, which, in turn, drives subsequent enrollment in higher grades. “Outmigration”¹ has increased from SBUSD schools in recent years, and the combination of decreased births and outmigration has resulted in the expectation that elementary enrollment will decline in the coming years. On a kindergarten through 12th grade basis, enrollment in SBUSD schools is expected to decline approximately 9 percent by the 2029-2030 school year (over 1,000 students) (California Demographic Services 2017). SBUSD has a student generation factor of 0.3189 students per household (SBUSD 2018).

Hope Elementary School District

Tom Silva Consulting prepared a 2024 Focused Housing Development Impact Study in June 2024 for the Hope Elementary School District to anticipate additional students generated from residential development through 2035. As indicated in this Study, the District anticipates 555 new students from residential development through 2035 (Hope Elementary School District 2024). This equates to a generation factor of 0.258 students per household.

c. Developer Fees

Development fees for schools are imposed by school districts under Education Code Section 17620 and Government Code section 95995 - 65998. Development impact fees on construction projects help support the public school system through the construction of new and expanded school facilities as well as the maintenance of existing school facilities. These fees are not currently at their maximum allowed levels under State law. Residential fee schedules for each of the four school districts are shown in Table 4.8-3 (SBUSD 2019).

Table 4.8-3 School District Developer Fees in the City of Santa Barbara

School/District	Elementary District Fee (50% of total sf)	Secondary District Fee (50% of total sf)
Santa Barbara Unified School District	\$3.79 per sf	\$3.79 per sf
Hope Elementary School District	\$3.36 per sf	\$3.79 per sf
Cold Spring School District	\$3.36 per sf	\$3.79 per sf
Montecito Union School District	\$3.48 per sf	\$3.79 per sf
Sources: SBUSD 2019		

¹ “Outmigration” is a local term used to describe the circumstance that there has historically been a departure of families from the south coast which results in less enrollment in local schools (also referred to as the “grade progression ratio” or “cohort survival ratio,” referring to the proportion of students in one grade compared to the number of students in the preceding grade the previous year). This circumstance is not being experienced by the Hope, Cold Spring, and Montecito Union School Districts.

4.8.2 Regulatory Setting

a. State Regulations

California Education Code

Educational services and school facilities are subject to the rules and regulations of the California Education Code, CDE and governance of the State Board of Education (SBE) (Gov. Code Section 33000, et seq.). CDE is the government agency responsible for public education throughout the State. With the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, CDE is responsible for enforcing education law and regulations and for continuing to reform and improve public elementary school, secondary school, childcare programs, adult education, and preschool programs. CDE oversees funding, and student testing and achievement levels for all state schools. A sector of CDE, SBE is the 11-member governing and policymaking body of the CDE that sets kindergarten through 12th grade (K–12) education policy in the areas of standards, instructional materials, assessment, and accountability. The State also provides funding through a combination of sales and income taxes. In addition, pursuant to Proposition 98, the State is also responsible for the allocation of educational funds that are acquired from property taxes. Further, the governing board of any school district is authorized to levy a fee, charge, dedication, or other requirement against any construction within the boundaries of the district, for the purpose of funding the construction or reconstruction of school facilities².

Senate Bill 50

The Leroy F. Greene School Facilities Act of 1998 (known as the Greene Act), enacted in 1998, is a program for funding school facilities largely based on matching funds. For new school construction, grants provide funding on a 50/50 State and local match basis. For school modernization, grants provide funding on a 60/40 State and local match basis. Districts that are unable to provide some, or all, of the local match requirement and meet the financial hardship provisions may be eligible for additional State funding (State of California 2019).

The Greene Act permits the local district to levy a fee, charge, dedication, or other requirement against any development project within its boundaries, for the purpose of funding the construction or reconstruction of school facilities. The Act also sets a maximum level of fees a developer may be required to pay. Pursuant to Government Code Section 65996, the payment of these fees by a developer serves to mitigate all potential impacts on school facilities that may result from implementation of a project to a less-than-significant level.³

Open Enrollment Policy (Cal. Educ. Code Sections 48350, et seq.)

The open enrollment policy is a state-mandated policy that enables students located in SBUSD to apply to any regular, grade-appropriate SBUSD school with designated “open enrollment” seats. Open enrollment seats are granted through an application process that is completed before the school year begins. SBUSD maintains procedures for new student enrollment and transfer student enrollment within the district (SBUSD 2023a).

² California Education Code Section 17620(a)(1).

³ California Government Code Section 65996.

Class Size Reduction Kindergarten-University Public Education Facilities Bond Act of 1998

Proposition 1A, the Class Size Reduction Kindergarten-University Public Education Facilities Bond Act of 1998 (Ed. Code, Section 100400–100405) is a school construction funding measure that was approved by the voters on November 3, 1998. This Act created the School Facility Program where eligible school districts may obtain state bond funds.

b. Local Regulations

In accordance with the California Education Code and other regulations, the Santa Barbara County Board of Education sets local policy through the Santa Barbara County Education Office (SBCEO), approves the SBCEO budget, approves the SBCEO Local Control and Accountability Plan, and serves as an appeals board for inter-district transfer requests, student expulsions, and charter school applications.

4.8.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds

The Housing Plan's impacts are evaluated using Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*. Impacts would be significant if implementation of the Housing Plan would:

1. Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered school facilities, need for new or physically altered school facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for public schools.

The following analysis focuses on determining whether the Housing Plan would result in adverse physical impacts to the environment due to the expansion of existing school facilities or construction of new facilities. Whether additional facilities would be required is determined primarily by considering the adequacy of existing school facilities, effects of the Housing Plan on demand for school facilities, and applicable regulations and policies that would influence future provision of school facilities and allow for mitigation of potential environmental impacts.

For purposes of the Program EIR, a significant impact on schools would occur if the Housing Plan would promote growth patterns resulting in the need for and/or the provision of new or physically altered public school facilities (including charter schools), the construction of which would cause significant environmental impacts to maintain service or other performance objectives. To the extent that the Housing Plan causes impacts to classroom sizes or school service impacts that would result in the need for new facilities or alterations to existing facilities, and the impact from construction of new facilities or alterations to existing facilities results in a potential impact to the environment, such impacts must be disclosed in this EIR. Discussion in this EIR that relates solely to the level of school services provided to the residents of the city, including any existing or future needs and deficiencies, is for informational purposes only. The ultimate determination of whether there is a significant impact related to schools is based on whether a significant impact would result from the construction of new or expanded school facilities.

The discussion of impacts to public schools addresses impacts for the City. Public school service needs are dependent on the size of the service population and the geographic area served. This analysis estimates the number of students that would be generated by housing development

accommodated under the Housing Plan using local student generation rates and assesses whether existing and planned school facilities expected to serve the City would have sufficient available capacity to accommodate the students. The analysis also discusses State-required developer mitigation fees and addresses all levels of educational facilities operated by the City's school districts (i.e., elementary, middle, and high schools). If there would not be sufficient available capacity, the EIR considers whether new school facilities would be needed, and whether the construction of the school facilities would result in a significant environmental impact.

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1: Would the project result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered school facilities, need for new or physically altered school facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives for public schools?

Impact SCH-1 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT FACILITATED BY THE HOUSING PLAN WOULD RESULT IN NEW STUDENTS ENTERING THE CITY'S SCHOOL DISTRICTS. HOWEVER, CAPACITY EXISTS TO ACCOMMODATE THE ANTICIPATED INCREASE, SUCH THAT NEW OR PHYSICALLY ALTERED SCHOOL FACILITIES WOULD NOT BE REQUIRED. IMPACTS TO SCHOOLS WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT.

For the purposes of estimating student generation from residential development forecasted under the Housing Plan, SBUSD's student generation factor of 0.3189 students per household is used as it provides an estimate that takes into account school-aged children from TK to 12th grade. This student generation factor is a conservative estimate and is greater than the Hope Elementary School District generation factor of 0.258 students per household utilized in their 2024 Focused Housing Development Impact Study (Hope Elementary School District 2024). Based on the SBUSD K-12 student generation rate of 0.3189 students per housing unit, the net increase of up to 8,001 new residential units could generate an increase of approximately 2,551 new students⁴ with approximately 555 students going to Hope Elementary School District and the remainder distributed across grades TK-12 entering local school districts. This estimate is conservative, as many of the housing units constructed under Housing Plan programs are anticipated to be studios and one-bedroom multi-unit development, and could potentially result in a lower student generation rate. Students not entering the Hope Elementary School District would mainly enter SBUSD, as these two districts currently represent 96 percent of students in the city, and the Housing Plan primarily targets new residential development in these School Districts.

New residential development has the potential to result in a need for new or physically altered school facilities when student population increases beyond existing capacity. No SBUSD schools were designated as overcrowded at the time the General Plan Program EIR (2011) was prepared, and SBUSD enrollment has decreased by approximately 12 percent, from 15,326 to 13,573, over the 14-year period since 2011. SBUSD, which represents approximately 91 percent of the City's student population, is not currently overcrowded and has adequate capacity to serve a majority of the anticipated growth in student enrollment that may result from implementation of the Housing Plan. If individual school facilities within a district experience overcrowding, districts have the ability to adjust enrollment boundaries, recommend inter-school district transfers, or other district actions that would balance enrollment between school facilities and districts in accordance with Santa

⁴ 8,001 housing units x 0.3189 (local student generation rate) = 2,551 students.

Barbara School Board policies. Due to current declining enrollment and the ability to balance enrollment between school facilities, it is not anticipated that the gradual increase in the number of students following implementation of the Housing Plan would exceed the total citywide enrollment capacity of existing public school facilities.

It should be noted that new residential development in the city is required to pay developer fees to fund school facilities. Additional sources of school funding include property taxes, and the federal and state government funding. Pursuant to Section 65995(3)(h) of the California Government Code (Senate Bill 50, chaptered August 27, 1998), the payment of statutory fees "...is deemed to be full and complete mitigation of the impacts of any legislative or adjudicative act, or both, involving, but not limited to, the planning, use, or development of real property, or any change in governmental organization or reorganization." Thus, payment of the development fees is considered full mitigation for potential impacts associated with the future development of individual residential projects.

Residential development facilitated by the Housing Plan would be required to pay developer fees for school facilities, which would offset the effects of specific projects on school facilities. Implementation of the Housing Plan would not result in substantial environmental impacts associated with the provision or need for new or altered school facilities. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required because this impact would be less than significant.

4.8.4 Cumulative Impacts

The general approach to cumulative impact analysis used in this Program EIR is discussed in Section 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*. Cumulative projects also include planned and pending residential development projects that contribute to the City's RNHA.

The geographic area to analyze cumulatively considerable impacts to the schools includes the city, including the four public school districts discussed herein, as well as adjacent areas that are served by these school districts that could be affected by the construction of new school facilities. The forecasted population in 2035 with implementation of the Housing Plan is expected to be approximately 99,900 persons.

If individual schools experience over-enrollment, it could require adjustment of enrollment boundaries, inter-school transfers, or other district actions to balance enrollment between schools. Residential development would continue to occur within the Downtown, an area currently served by multiple schools surrounding the downtown area. New students within the Downtown area would continue to be served by the existing school system, including schools which are outside of, but in proximity to, the downtown area. In addition, pursuant to Government Code Section 65996, the payment of fees by a developer serves to mitigate all potential impacts on school facilities that may result from implementation of specific projects to a less-than-significant level.

Based on the above information, the incremental effect of the Housing Plan with respect to schools would not be cumulatively considerable and cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

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