

**INITIAL STUDY**

**ALBANY HIGH SCHOOL**  
**COUGAR FIELD IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT**

*April 2006*

*Prepared for:*

Albany Unified School District  
904 Talbot Avenue  
Albany, CA 94706

*Prepared by:*

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## I. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and its Guidelines, the Initial Study, herein, has been prepared by the Albany Unified School District (District). It provides documentation to support the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the proposed project, the *Albany High School Cougar Field Improvements Project*, which will be implemented at the existing Albany High School Cougar Field and a portion of the contiguous Albany Middle School. The project site is located along the boundary of the City of El Cerrito, in Contra Costa County, and the City of Albany in the County of Alameda. Cougar Field, which is situated about one-quarter mile northwest of the main high school campus, is in the City of El Cerrito, while the middle school is within the City of Albany.

The District will serve as the lead agency for the project and will be responsible for meeting the CEQA review requirements.

The Initial Study includes the location of the project site, project sponsor's objectives, detailed description of the proposed project, evaluation of the potential environmental impacts based upon established significance thresholds and by qualitative criteria established as part of accepted CEQA practice and judgement, and the findings from the environmental review. The 2006 CEQA Environmental Checklist Form has been used as the basis for the preparation of the evaluation contained in the Initial Study.

Given the scope and character of the proposed project and the application of the significance criteria, the District concluded that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) must be prepared as part of the CEQA review process to examine potentially significant physical effects upon the existing environment that could result from the development of the campus improvements project. The Initial Study identifies the scope of the specific topics and issues that must be addressed as part of the EIR. Topics and issues that would not result in environmental effects that are not relevant, or that would have a less than significant impact resulting from the implementation of the proposed project, have been screened out from further evaluation in the EIR.

As explained in the NOP, responsible public agencies and the public at-large may submit comments about their environmentally related concerns regarding the proposed project upon review of the Initial Study. The District will consider and address these concerns, as applicable, in the preparation of the EIR.

## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### *REGIONAL LOCATION*

Located along the eastern shore of San Francisco Bay, the City of Albany is situated in the northwest corner of Alameda County (Figure 1). The neighboring City of El Cerrito lies to the north within the west-northwest part of Contra Costa County. Both communities are characterized by long-established residential neighborhoods consisting primarily of modest-sized single-family dwellings. More recent development within the City of El Cerrito has resulted in an increased number of multiple-unit residences.

The estimated year 2005 population for the City of Albany was 16,800 while the City of El Cerrito was 30,100. The year 2010 populations of Albany and El Cerrito have been forecast to be 17,200 and 31,100 (Association of Bay Area Governments, *Projections 2005*, December 2004).

In addition to the City of El Cerrito to the north, the boundaries of Albany include the City of Berkeley to the east and south, San Francisco Bay to the west, and a small portion of the City of Richmond to the northwest. Adjacent to the west and north of El Cerrito lies the City of Richmond. To the north and northeast is an unincorporated area of the County known as East Richmond Heights. Wildcat Canyon Regional Park is located to the east and the unincorporated community of Kensington is to the southeast.

Interstate 80 (coincidental with part of Interstate 580), which runs through part of the City of Albany and is immediately west of the City of El Cerrito, serves as a major north-south access. State Route 123 (San Pablo Avenue), provides another key north-south roadway and serves as the primary commercial area for both communities. The area is crisscrossed by an extensive network of surface streets. The elevated tracks of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) light rail system are located east of San Pablo Avenue and roughly parallel this roadway.

### *PROJECT SITE LOCATION AND EXISTING CHARACTER*

The proposed field facilities improvement project would be implemented within the approximately 7.6-acre existing Albany High School Cougar Field and about a 1.38-acre portion of the adjacent Albany Middle School (Figure 2). Situated along the boundaries of the cities of El Cerrito and Albany, Cougar Field, the athletic and physical education center serving Albany High School and the Albany Middle School, is within El Cerrito while the middle school, at 1259 Brighton Avenue, is in Albany. The site is less than one-quarter mile northwest of the Albany High School, located at 603 Key Route Boulevard. The high school campus, with an enrollment of approximately 1,200 pupils in grades 9-12, and the middle school, with about 900, serve students in the entire District attendance area which coincides with the boundaries of the City of Albany.

Existing facilities within the Cougar Field portion of the proposed project site include a natural turf field, oriented northwest-southwest (long axis), that is used for field sports (e.g., football, soccer) and ringed by a six-lane dirt running track, individual field event venues, home and visitor bleachers with seating for 600 and 400, a small concession stand, a field house and a restroom portable (Figure 3). A baseball field and additional turf areas are located within the northern part of Cougar Field. The football/soccer field is currently used for approximately 26 school-related weekday events during daylight hours from 9 a.m. to sundown. The baseball field includes 54 weekday events in the afternoons to sundown. Public use is permitted after school until darkness and weekends from 3 p.m. to sundown during non-school hours.

Figure 1. Regional Location  
(Available at the District Office, 904 Talbot Avenue, Albany, CA 94706)

Figure 2. Project Site and Vicinity  
(Available at the District Office, 904 Talbot Avenue, Albany, CA 94706)

Figure 3. Existing Cougar Field and Albany Middle School Site  
(Available at the District Office, 904 Talbot Avenue, Albany, CA 94706)

A maintenance road, with entry from the south corner of the middle school, runs along the eastern, northern, western and southern edge of the perimeter fencing. Two maintenance buildings and storage containers are in the southeast corner of the field portable buildings. The middle school portion of the proposed project site, situated in the southwest side of the campus, currently comprises the driveway from Brighton Avenue and unmarked parking for approximately 148 vehicles within part of the paved school yard.

A second access to the field for maintenance and service vehicle use only is situated off Behrens Street to the east. A retaining wall buttresses the western side of the site along the BART right-of-way. A concrete box culvert, underlying the area between the field and the middle school, conveys runoff collected from the highly urbanized Cerrito Creek watershed.

The topographic character of the site is relatively flat with drainage sloping away toward the west and southwest. The elevation of the site is approximately 57 feet above mean sea level (msl). At the retaining wall, the field grade ranges from about two to four feet above the level of the pedestrian/bike path within the BART right-of-way. An open drainage ditch, surfaced with concrete at the southern end and grass and soil on the northern end, is located below the retaining wall.

The *City of Albany General Plan 1990-2010 and Final EIR* (adopted December 7, 1992) land use designation for the middle school site is *Residential High Density* and the zoning is *Residential High Density* (R-3). The alignment of Cerrito Creek is zoned *Watercourse Combining District* (:W:P). The *City of El Cerrito General Plan Update, Draft* (August 30, 1999) land use designation for Cougar Field is *Park and Open Space* and the zoning is *Open Space, Scenic Resources and Recreation* (F).

Lands contiguous and in proximity to the project site include several uses. Brighton Avenue, a two lane street, runs along the south side of the middle school and serves as the main frontage and access to the campus and Cougar Field. Middle school facilities adjacent to the project site consist of a gymnasium, cafeteria, and one and two-story classroom buildings along Brighton Avenue. A second driveway is located at the south corner of the school. Three-story multi-family residential units (New Brighton Place Apartments), and single-family residential uses occur on the south side of Brighton Avenue. The Albany Adult School is located to the south of the middle school at the intersection of Brighton Avenue/San Gabriel Avenue while Behrens Street runs along part of the south corner of the middle school before continuing north-northwest to front houses contiguous to the southeast and east sides of the field.

Additional single-family residences are adjacent to the north-northwest perimeter of Cougar Field. The BART right-of-way, with elevated tracks and the associated Ohlone Greenway with a bicycle path and pedestrian trail is contiguous to the western boundary of the middle school and Cougar Field. Land uses immediate west of the BART right-of-way include apartments and the parking lots and commercial structures of the El Cerrito Shopping Plaza. Cerrito Creek emerges briefly from a culvert below the BART right-of-way. From this location, it alternately flows in a subsurface culvert or in an open or daylighted channel, going underground for about 600 feet before it continues as open or daylighted stream from near the northern end of Cornell Avenue to San Pablo Avenue, where it again goes underground to re-emerge as an open channel toward San Francisco Bay.

The General Plan designations for lands adjacent to the middle school in Albany include residential *Low Density* (zoned R-1, *Residential Low Density - Single Family*) at the southeast corner of Brighton Avenue and the BART right-of-way, *High Density* (R-3 zoning) along the south side of

Brighton Avenue, *Public/Quasi-Public* (PQ) for the Albany Adult School and residential *High Density* west of the BART right-of-way and residential *Low Density* (zoned R-1) east of the middle school.

The open channel of Cerrito Creek west of the BART right-of-way is zoned *AWatercourse Combining District@ (:W:P)*.

In the City of El Cerrito lands to the north and east of Cougar Field are designated residential *ALow Density@* (zoned R-1 or *ASingle Family Residential@*) and *ACommercial/Mixed Use@* (C-2-A, *ACentral*

*Commercial@* [C-2] and *ACombining Commercial@* [A]) for the El Cerrito Shopping Plaza to the west of the BART right-of-way. The area is part of the Ohlone Greenway Residential Area.

### ***PROJECT SPONSOR'S OBJECTIVES***

The Albany Unified School District's primary objective for the proposed project would be the provision of improved and expanded recreational opportunities at Cougar Field for students and the local community. Used by the Albany High School for over 50 years and the middle school since its opening in 1998, the athletic and physical education field and facilities have significantly deteriorated and are in need of repair, upgrading, and modernization. The present condition of the field does not meet current District needs. The dirt track should be replaced. During the winter, the field is often unusable. Activities by soccer teams have been severely restricted by shortened winter hours and the lack of sufficient light.

Implementation of the proposed project would substantially enhance configuration of the relatively small field and result in an improved all weather field and track and additional associated facilities. The installation of night lighting and all-weather surfacing would allow greater participation and flexibility for student events and activities and limited use by the community. The proposed facilities improvements project would be carried out within the already existing high school field and middle school site.

### ***PROJECT DESCRIPTION***

The proposed improvements project would consist of the repair, renovation, modernization and upgrade of the existing Cougar Field facilities. Older portions of the field would be replaced with improved facilities that would include an all-weather track and field, and new grandstands. The present field house, concession stand and portable restroom would be demolished/removed and replaced by a rebuilt athletic field house with concession stand and permanent restrooms and possibly a new scoreboard or relocation of the existing scoreboard. Lighting would be installed to allow evening use of the facilities.

The District has been contemplating the placement of a residence for an on-site caretaker to oversee the usage of the fields and facilities. The residence would be located adjacent to the maintenance buildings.

The District would be responsible for the operation of the facilities during non-school hours. The operation of the new facilities would reflect expanded education and recreational use by students and enhanced accessibility by the local community. The District would provide ongoing maintenance of the facilities.

### ***Structural Facilities***

The structural facilities, upgrades, and modernization would include the following main components described below and shown in Figure 4:

- X **Field and Track:** The present field and track would be realigned a few feet slightly to the south of its present location to improve its usability and the placement of additional athletic facilities within the 7.6-acre site. The present turf field and dirt track would be replaced. An artificial all-weather AstroTurf® (or similar) material would be installed on field surfaces and the field could be configured for various types of field sports. A synthetic compound would be used for the track surface. The track would continue to provide six lanes rather than a regulation eight-track design due to the limited amount of space.
- X **Baseball Field.** The present turf baseball outfield would be extended about five feet by relocating the home plate toward the north by approximately three feet. The seating, dugout, and walkway would be improved by installing new bleachers with 150-person seating capacity, new 30-foot high backstop, and new concrete walkway. The dugout would remain along the grade chain link fence.
- X **Field Lighting:** Four field lighting poles, approximately 80 feet high (and subsurface depth of 20 to 25 feet) with an associated array of 12 lamps each, would be located and installed at the perimeter of the track and field facility (Figure 4). The 1,500-watt metal halide lamps would have an optical system to permit precise beam control adjustability for different events. The fixtures would be aimed downward toward the field and would be equipped with special internal optical reflectors and external visors to control potential off-site light spill. In addition to the event lighting, pedestrian-level lighting, which would be available for track users (e.g., joggers), would be mounted on the light poles at a height of about 30 feet to provide safety and security and cleaning of the field after usage.
- Seven additional 80-foot light poles would be placed along the foul lines and the outfield of the baseball field. The light fixtures would include from four to eight lamps. Scheduled use of the event pedestrian-level light is described in the Facilities Operation subsection below.
- X **Grandstands and Public Address System.** A new home grandstand with seating for 600 would replace the existing visitor northern grandstand. The grandstand would include approximately 2,100 square feet of storage space underneath the seating area secured by chain link fencing. Several of the storage spaces would be enclosed with wood paneling for weather protection. A smaller visitor grandstand with seating for 400 and underside storage would replace the existing home grandstand.
- A public address system, with two speakers on 30-foot poles would be installed along the home grandstands. The speakers would be directed southwest toward the center of the field.
- X **Field House/Concession Stand/Restroom.** A new combination field house, concession stand, and public restroom would be constructed within the approximate site of the present field house. The building would comprise approximately 1,250 square feet. The structure would include restrooms, locker rooms, offices and other support facilities. An approximately 750-square foot storage space would be provided adjacent to the field house.
- X **Scoreboard.** The existing scoreboard or a new scoreboard would be located to either the eastern or western portion of the football field to allow unobstructed views of the field house by security cameras.

Figure 4. Conceptual Plan: Albany High School Cougar Field Improvements Project  
(Available at the District Office, 904 Talbot Avenue, Albany, CA 94706)

- X **Field Entrance.** The entrance to the home bleachers, located at gated entrances at the northeast corner of the middle school parking lot, would be upgraded for handicapped accessibility. A gated visitor /emergency vehicle entrance would be provided from the south side of the field.
- X **Parking Lot.** The existing paved hard court parking area within the middle school site, that is currently used for basketball, would be available for scheduled high school events. A total of 148 spaces would be available for users of the improved field facilities. Access would be continued from the existing driveway from Brighton Avenue at the southwest corner of the middle school. Security lighting currently exists at the middle school
- X **Other Work.** The current emergency access road within the project site would be repaved in accordance with the requirements of the El Cerrito Fire Department and the Albany Fire Department. Existing telephone and power poles would be removed and present aboveground utilities would be placed underground.

### ***Facilities Operation***

#### **Field Operation**

The purpose of the lighted facilities is to provide lighting during periods when ambient light is reduced due to seasonal changes (winter) and the transition from daylight savings time to standard time.

Implementation of the proposed improvements project would permit extended use of Cougar Field. In addition to the use of the field for educational purposes during normal school hours, the District would use the lighted facilities during evenings for Albany High School student athletic events. The events would occur from late August to late May each year (see Table PD-1). They include the following:

- 1) eight home football games on Friday from dusk to 10:00 p.m.
- 2) 88 soccer games on Mondays through Fridays from dusk to 7:30 p.m. for practice games and until 8:00 p.m. for games.
- 3) three to four home track meets on Tuesdays through Fridays from dusk to 7:30 p.m. for practice and 8:00 p.m. for meets
- 4) 54 practices and home baseball games on Mondays through Fridays from dusk to 7:30 p.m. for practice games and until 9:00 p.m. for games.

Upon the completion of each event, the grandstands would be cleared in a timely manner, followed up by clean up of the facilities. The lighting for the events would be shut down by no later than 8:00 p.m. for track and field and soccer, 9:00 p.m. for baseball and 10:00-10:30 p.m. for football.

In addition, up to 15 non-school related annual evening events would be allowed through a permitting program that would be established by the District. The events could be limited to school events such as graduation and fund-raising such as Arace for the cure. Community events would be considered based on close association with school-related activities, prior relationship with the District, past management behavior of field-use constituents, clean up and abiding by District rules and District Board policies.

#### **Event Traffic Management**

To minimize effects upon circulation and parking on local streets, the District would develop and implement a traffic management program. The program would maximize the effective use of the on-

Table PD-1. Cougar Field Operations Schedule

Table 1

Sport	Season	Practice Hours requiring lights	Game/Meet Hours requiring lights	Comments
Football	mid-Aug to end-Nov	After standard time, until 7:30 pm <sup>(1)</sup>		78 games/practices
Football Fri nights	“		Until 10:00 pm <sup>(1)</sup>	8 game nights /season
Track & Field	Feb to early Jun	Until 7:30 pm <sup>(1)</sup>	Before day light savings time, until 8:00 pm <sup>(1)</sup>	8 home meets /season 98 practices
Soccer	Nov to end-Feb	Until 7:30 pm <sup>(1)</sup>	Until 8:00 pm <sup>(1)</sup>	88 days of practice/games/season
Baseball	Feb to May	Until 7:30 pm <sup>(1)</sup>	Until 9:00 pm <sup>(1)</sup>	≤ 2 nights/ week; 54 days of practice/games/season
Extra usage School & private	Various			15 times/year, which will include 5 School uses and/or fund raisers

## Footnotes:

(1) approximately one-half to one hour is needed after game/practice to clean up the facilities. Lower level lights will be used to complete this task

(2) the usage of lights is driven by the amount of day light available to perform the sport safely and appropriately. Standard time occurs between the end of October to the beginning of April, with contemplated legislation that may change what is customarily April. It is during this time period that the lights will be used to allow play to continue until the times noted above. Once day light savings time occurs, the usage of lights diminishes as natural light extends to the times noted above.

site parking areas for the enhanced and additional activities that would result from the field improvements. Measures could include, but not be limited to, facilitation of circulation during special night-time events, use of monitors and signage, and differential scheduling to avoid conflicts from overlapping school activities.

### ***Landscaping***

No changes to the present landscaping within Cougar Field are proposed as part of the project other than possible drip irrigation or other water conservation measures. Existing trees and other vegetation will be reviewed for health and their ability to dampen noise.

### ***Infrastructure***

Consistent with its role as an existing high school and middle school site, the athletic and physical education field improvements and associated facilities project would continue to use be used, including current infrastructure connections and services. The site would be graded so that the storm drainage within the site would still be collected by the City of El Cerrito drainage lines. East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD) would continue to supply potable water and wastewater collection and treatment services to the site. Stormwater drainage is provided by Stege in El Cerrito. Solid waste from the proposed project would be handled through present service provided by Waste Management, Inc. The school district would maintain its ongoing program of solid waste recycling and recovery.

### ***Plans and Permitting***

Prior to construction, detailed design plans for the project would be prepared. Plans would be consistent with the Division of the State Architect, State Department of Education criteria, and Title 24 of the *California Uniform Building Code*. Foundations and materials for new structures would conform to requirements for adequate soils and seismic safety for Seismic Zone 3 consistent with the recommendations from the preliminary geotechnical report for the proposed project.

These recommendations include, but are not limited to: removal of concrete slabs, asphalt paving, vegetation and other materials within project area prior to construction; improvement of near-surface soil (e.g., replacement with suitable fill, in-place treatment of on-site clays with lime); use of shallow spread footings and concrete slabs-on-grade for structures; compaction of soils including areas underlying the structures, light poles and field; backfilling of utility trenches; and monitoring of subsurface work by qualified personnel to ensure consistency with design criteria.

The proposed project would meet regulations (e.g., fire lanes, emergency access, sprinkler system) set forth for public schools by the State Fire Marshall. The District would obtain a AGeneral Construction Activity Stormwater Permit@ from the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) for construction activities in there would be one acre or more of disturbance resulting from a proposed project. It would also comply with any applicable Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP) design and operational considerations (e.g., retention of runoff from first major seasonal storm event, periodic sweeping of parking lots) to maximize water quality through coordination with the County of Contra Costa, as applicable, and the cities of Albany and El Cerrito.

### ***Site Preparation***

Since the site is fairly level topographically, relatively minimal site preparation would be required with the most extensive grading occurring at the northwest corner of the site. The existing irrigation and natural turf would be removed from the football field. Minor grading and shallow foundation work would be

needed to install the synthetic turf and track materials and structures within this field area, including the field house, bleachers and lights, and to provide suitable drainage. Grading of the site is expected to be generally balanced with a minimal amount of imported fill used in place of existing near surface soils. The grading and related reconstruction would address requirements associated with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

To protect remaining vegetation, measures would be implemented to minimize effects during construction. Measures would include, but are not limited to, the following: establishment of protection zones, extension of the driplines around each existing tree as required; use of fencing and planking when working around vegetation to lessen disturbance as needed; prohibition of heavy equipment and vehicle use around trees and other vegetation; and limitation of infrastructure trenching within driplines.

## **Construction**

### *Equipment*

Excavation, grading and facilities development would require the use of excavator, backhoes, cranes, graders, trenchers, dump trucks, loaders, compactors, bulldozers, pavers, concrete trucks, and other heavy machinery.

### *Erosion, Air Emissions and Noise Control*

The proposed project would incorporate measures to minimize erosion, air emissions, and noise. Many of these measures are part of standard site preparation and construction practices typically set forth and required for many development projects.

*Erosion Control.* Best Management Practices (BMPs) would be used to control erosion and excess sedimentation and maintain water quality. These measures could include, but not be limited to, use of temporary silt detention basins, use of hay bales for reducing siltation from any site runoff, check dams in roadways, timely covering and/or revegetation of construction areas, and street sweeping to remove soil from construction activities. Excavation work would be conducted (e.g., confirmation of alignment, equipment setback, avoidance of excavation/disturbance) to ensure that the Cerrito Creek culvert underlying the field would not be affected by construction activities. As required, erosion control measures would be installed and in-place by October 15 to lessen effects of construction during the rainy season. Consistent with the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program, construction of the project would conform with requirements to minimize erosion and adverse effects upon water quality.

*Control of Air Emissions.* To minimize air quality impacts to lowest practicable levels, Best Available Control Technology (BACTs) and applicable measures, set forth in the City of El Cerrito General Plan and consistent with the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) would be used by the contractor during site preparation and construction to ensure that equipment is properly tuned and maintained. Dust (particulate matter), and to a lesser extent, other air emissions, would be controlled by implementing the following measures as applicable: (1) preparing and adopting a comprehensive construction activity management plan to most effectively use equipment and ensure that it is properly maintained to minimize emissions; (2) periodic watering (twice daily), sprinkling or treatment of soils piles and unpaved site grading to prevent airborne dust from leaving the property, with increased watering whenever wind speeds exceed 15 miles per hour and halting activities when winds exceed 25 miles per hour; (3) timely installation of the synthetic field and track surfaces and any additional turf areas and minimizing the amount of uncovered area at any one time; (4) covering or watering of all excavated materials transported off-site; (5) limiting on-site vehicle speeds to 15 miles per hour; (6) removing mud

and soils from the tires of equipment; and (7) sweeping of adjacent streets as needed to remove accumulated dirt.

*Noise Controls.* To reduce potential noise-related impacts from site preparation and construction, the following measures would be incorporated as part of the proposed project:

- C consistent with the City of El Cerrito noise controls, work would be scheduled during weekdays (except holidays) from 7:00 a.m. to 7:30 p.m., unless otherwise approved and, as applicable (should it occur in the jurisdiction of Albany), in conformance with City of Albany noise ordinance prohibiting construction activities between 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 a.m. Monday through Saturday and 6:00 p.m. to 10:00 a.m. on Sundays and holidays;
- C ensure that mufflers in good condition are installed on internal combustion engine-equipment;
- C setback procedures with the highest noise potential away from any nearby sensitive land uses (i.e., residences adjacent to the school);
- X route construction traffic to and from site using main roadways; and
- X perform noisy procedures at an off-site location, as practicable, and;

*Health and Safety Measures.* Site preparation and construction activities would be conducted consistent with Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) and CalOSHA regulations and local requirements to provide for worker and public safety. Construction of the project (as well as its subsequent operation) would be consistent with already established and ongoing local emergency and evacuation plans.

To protect the general public during construction, the proposed building areas would be fenced and signed and other appropriate measures taken to restrict public access. Applicable regulatory and cautionary signage (and personnel if required) along local roadways and at the site entry would be put up to control and/or warn local traffic about construction traffic and equipment use in the area of the school. As applicable, the District would establish routes for the relatively short-term of construction to minimize effects of traffic and noise along local streets. When utility/service lines are to be connected, the appropriate agency would be notified and in-place procedures to protect/relocate the utilities would be implemented as part of the proposed project.

In accordance with federal and State regulations, the District is currently conducting sampling, inventory, and analysis for asbestos and asbestos-containing materials (ACMs) and other potential contaminants, as required, prior to demolition of the existing structures within the project area. In the event that hazardous substances are present, asbestos/ACMs and any other hazardous materials/wastes (e.g., lead paint) would be removed and properly disposed of in a designated landfill as required by regulatory requirements. The school district would also comply with any BAAQMD consultation, permitting, or notification requirements for asbestos removal/remediation.

During operation of the facilities, limited amounts of materials, such as fertilizers and herbicides, would continue to be applied to existing landscaping and the baseball field as well as infrequent use of materials for the maintenance of the field house, restrooms, and bleachers. As part of its ongoing program, the District will continue to manage these substances in accordance with manufacturers' procedures and regulatory agency requirements. Maintenance staff would minimize the amounts that would be used to the extent practicable.

### *Protection of Cultural Resources*

The proposed project site is an existing facility that has been used for recreational activities for decades. The field area and the underground culvert carrying drainage from the Cerrito Creek watershed have already been highly disturbed and it is very unlikely that cultural resources (i.e.,

historical, archaeological, paleontological) occur within the site. However, to ensure that there are no adverse effects upon unknown potential cultural resources that may be present, particularly in proximity to the Cerrito Creek culvert alignment, a qualified cultural resource specialist(s) would be present during site preparation for the proposed improvements program. Should such resources be uncovered, appropriate measures would be implemented to protect significant materials. Appropriate and specific measures would be identified that could include, but not be limited, to a halt of construction within the affected area, establishment of setbacks, investigation, and recording of the site and findings. As required, appropriate agencies would be notified (e.g., Northwest Information Center at Sonoma State University; Native American Heritage Commission).

### *Project Schedule and Funding*

The construction of the proposed project is scheduled to begin in Spring 2007 near the end of the student school year. Existing structures would be demolished followed by minor grading and removal of existing utility lines (including the water sprinkler system). The field renovations would proceed with construction of the field house/concession stand/restrooms, grandstands, and all-weather track/football/soccer field. The project would be completed with improvements to the baseball field.

The project would be funded by Measure AA, @ a general obligation fund approved by Albany voters in 2004.

### III. ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

- 1) **Project Title:** Albany High School Cougar Field Improvements
  
- 2) **Lead Agency Name and Address:**  
Albany Unified School District  
904 Talbot Avenue  
Albany, CA 94706
  
- 3) **Lead Agency Contact Person and Phone Number:**  
Dr. William Wong, Superintendent  
(510) 558-3766
  
- 4) **Project Location:** Adjacent to Albany Middle School at  
1259 Brighton Avenue, Albany, CA 94706
  
- 5) **Project Sponsor's Name and Address:**  
Albany Unified School District  
954 Talbot Avenue  
Albany, CA 94706
  
- 6) **General Plan Designation:** City of Albany - Residential High Density; City of El Cerrito -  
Park and Open Space
  
- 7) **Zoning:** City of Albany - Residential High Density, Watercourse Combining District (:W:P);  
City of El Cerrito - Open Space, Scenic Resources and Recreation
  
- 8) **Description of Project:** (Describe the whole action involved, including but not limited to,  
later phases of the project, and any secondary, support, or off-site features necessary for  
implementation. Attach additional sheets if necessary.)  
  
See previous description and discussion (Chapter II, Project Description)
  
- 9) **Surrounding Land Uses and Setting:** See previous discussion (Chapter II, Project  
Description)
  
- 10) **Other agencies whose approval is required** (e.g., permits, financing approval, or  
participation agreement.  
  
CA Department of Education; Division of the State Architect; City of Albany; City of El  
Cerrito; Regional Water Quality Control Board; Bay Area Air Quality Management District

**Environmental Factors Potentially Affected:**

The environmental factors checked below would be potentially affected by this project, involving at least one impact that is a "Potentially Significant Impact" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

- |                                 |                                      |                          |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| x Aesthetics                    | Q Agricultural Resources             | Q Air Quality            |
| Q Biological Resources          | Q Cultural Resources                 | Q Geology/Soils          |
| Q Hazards & Hazardous Materials | Q Hydrology/Water Quality            | x Land Use/Planning      |
| Q Mineral Resources             | x Noise                              | Q Population/Housing     |
| x Public Services               | Q Recreation                         | x Transportation/Traffic |
| Q Utilities/Service Systems     | Q Mandatory Findings of Significance |                          |

**DETERMINATION**

On the basis of this initial evaluation:

- G I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment, and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- G I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions in the project have been made or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.
- X I find that the proposed project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required.
- G I find that the proposed project MAY have a "potentially significant impact" or Apotentially significant unless mitigated" impact on the environment, but at least one effect 1) has been adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and 2) has been addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis as described on attached sheets. An ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT is required, but it must analyze only the effects that remain to be addressed.
- G I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, because all potentially significant effects (a) have been analyzed adequately in an earlier ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT or NEGATIVE DECLARATION, pursuant to applicable standards and (b) have been avoided or mitigated pursuant to that earlier ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT OR NEGATIVE DECLARATION, including revisions or mitigation measures that are imposed upon the proposed project.

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Printed Name

## EVALUATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

- 1) A brief explanation is required for all answers except "No Impact" answers that are adequately supported by the information sources a lead agency cites in the parenthesis following each question. A "No Impact" answer is adequately supported if the referenced information sources show that the impact simply does not apply to a project like the one involved (e.g., the project falls outside a fault rupture zone). A "No Impact" answer should be explained where it is based on project-specific factors as well as general standards (e.g., the project will not expose sensitive receptors to pollutants, based on a project-specific screening analysis).
- 2) All answers must take account of the whole action involved, including off-site as well as on-site, cumulative as well as project-level, indirect as well as direct, and construction as well as operational impacts.
- 3) Once the lead agency has determined that a particular impact may occur, then the checklist answers must indicate whether the impact is potentially significant, less than significant with mitigation, or less than significant. "Potentially Significant Impact" is one or more "Potentially Significant Impact" entries. When the determination is made, an EIR is required.
- 4) "Negative Declaration: Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated" applies where the incorporation of mitigation measures has reduced an effect from "Potentially Significant Impact" to a "Less than Significant Impact." The lead agency must describe the mitigation measures, and briefly explain how they reduce the effect to a less than significant level (mitigation measures from Section XVII, "Earlier Analysis," may be cross-referenced).
- 5) Earlier analyses may be used where, pursuant to the tiering, program EIR, or other CEQA process, an effect has been adequately analyzed in an earlier EIR or negative declaration (Section 15063 (c)(3)(D)). In this case, a brief discussion should identify the following:
  - a) Earlier Analysis Used. Identify and state where they are available for review.
  - b) Impacts Adequately Addressed. Identify which effects from the above checklist were within the scope of and adequately analyzed in an earlier document pursuant to applicable legal standards, and state whether such effects were addressed by mitigation measures based on the earlier analysis.
  - c) Mitigation Measures. For effects that are "Less than Significant with Mitigation Measures Incorporated," describe the mitigation measures which were incorporated or refined from the earlier document and the extent to which they address site-specific conditions for the project.

- 6) Lead agencies are encouraged to incorporate into the checklist references to information sources for potential impacts (e.g., general plans, zoning ordinances). Reference to a previously prepared or outside document should, where appropriate, include a reference to the page or pages where the statement is substantiated.
- 7) Supporting Information Sources: A source list should be attached, and other sources used or individuals contacted should be cited in the discussion.
- 8) This is only a suggested form, and lead agencies are free to use different formats; however, lead agencies should normally address the questions from this checklist that are relevant to a project's environmental effects in whatever format is selected.
- 9) The explanation of each issue should identify:
  - a) the significance criteria or threshold, if any, used to evaluate each question; and
  - b) the mitigation measure identified, if any, to reduce the impact to less than significance.

**Issues:**

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>I. AESTHETICS</b> -- Would the project				
erse effect on a scenic vista?	T			
scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a				T
the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?	T			
f substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	T			
<b>II. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES:</b> In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Department of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. Would the project:				
ind, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepare and Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?				T
zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?				T
in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland				T
<b>III. AIR QUALITY</b> -- Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. Would the project:				
act implementation of the applicable air quality plan?				T
/ standard or contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation?			T	

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporated	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under ambient air quality standard (including releasing emissions which exceed quantitative thresholds for			T	
o substantial pollutant concentrations?			T	
affecting a substantial number of people?			T	

**BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES** -- Would the project:

effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive species, or species of special concern, including those listed in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or				T
effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or US Fish and Wildlife Service?				T
effect on federally protected wetlands as defined by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (including, but not limited to, tidal wetlands, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?				T
the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native populations, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?				T
violations of local ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?				T
violations of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local habitat conservation plan?				T

**CULTURAL RESOURCES** -- Would the project:

change in the significance of a historical resource as defined in SS15064.5?				T
change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to SS15064.5?				T
destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?				T
disturb or remove cultural resources, including those interred outside of formal cemeteries?				T

**GEOLOGY AND SOILS** -- Would the project:

result in potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>an earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map issued for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Publication 42.</li> </ul>				T
cause seismic shaking?			T	
cause ground failure, including liquefaction?			T	
cause erosion or the loss of topsoil?			T	
create unstable slopes or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in landslides, soil spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?			T	
create or exacerbate seismicity, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial risks to life and property?			T	
adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative waste water disposal systems where sewers are not available for the collection and treatment of waste water?				T

**HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS** -- Would the project:

pose a public health hazard through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?				T
---	--	--	--	---

	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
azard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving hazardous materials into the environment?			T	
ions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of a school?			T	
hich is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 66000 and which, if it creates a significant hazard to the public or the environment?				T
within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area?				T
in the vicinity of a private airstrip, would the project result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the vicinity of the airport?				T
or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?				T
poses a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires, including where wildlands are adjacent to or where residences are intermixed with wildlands?				T

**VIII. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY --** Would the project:

exceed applicable quality standards or waste discharge requirements?			T	
deplete groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that there would be a net lowering of the local groundwater table level (e.g., the production rate of pre-existing nearby wells would be reduced or support existing land uses or planned uses for which permits have been granted)?			T	
alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or channel, or result in substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site?			<u>    </u> T	
alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or channel, or the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or off-site?				T
create runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide sources of polluted runoff?			T	
adversely affect riparian habitat or other biologically sensitive resources, wetlands, or water quality?			T	
be located within a 100-year flood hazard area as mapped on a federal Flood Hazard Boundary or Flood Insurance Rate Map or on a local flood hazard map?				T
be located within a flood hazard area structures which would impede or redirect flood flows?				T
pose a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving flooding, including flooding as a result of dam failure or levee breach?				T
be located in a tsunami, or mudflow?				T

**IX. LAND USE AND PLANNING -** Would the project:

be located in an established community?				T
be located in an unincorporated area where a general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance adopted for the purpose of avoiding or reducing impacts of development?			T	
be located in a riparian habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?				T

**X. MINERAL RESOURCES --** Would the project:

deplete a known mineral resource that would be of value to the region and the residents of the state?				T
deplete a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan, or zoning ordinance?				T

**XI. NOISE --** Would the project result in:



	Potentially Significant Impact	Potentially Significant Unless Mitigation Incorporation	Less Than Significant Impact	No Impact
<b>XVI. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS --</b> Would the project:				
attainment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?				T
the construction of new water or wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of significant environmental effects?				T
the construction of new storm water drainage facilities or expansion of existing facilities, the construction of significant environmental effects?				T
water supplies available to serve the project from existing entitlements and resources, or are new or expanded supplies available?			T	
provision by the wastewater treatment provider which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to meet projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?				T
landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs?			T	
state, and local statutes and regulations related to solid waste?				T

**XVII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife, or to reduce a wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major geologic or historic sites?	T			
impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? "Cumulatively considerable" means those impacts of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other projects, and the effects of probable future projects?	T			
environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly?	T			

## IV. RESPONSES TO THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHECKLIST FORM

The following explanations are presented in response to the items contained in Chapter III, CEQA Environmental Checklist Form. The explanations are keyed to the corresponding number and letter of the topic presented in the checklist. The intent of the checklist is to determine the following: (1) identify the environmental topics that will require further evaluation as part of the preparation of an EIR and (2) screen out environmental topics that will not need to be analyzed as part of an EIR because they are either less than significant, cause no impact, or are not applicable.

The discussion contained in the responses are predicated on information and judgements from the lead agency. Criteria to define the level of impact upon environmental resources have been set forth. The significance criteria has been based upon quantitative thresholds (e.g., noise levels) where applicable, professional judgements as deemed appropriate and necessary by CEQA., and standards that have become commonly accepted as part of the preparation of CEQA documentation. In accordance with CEQA, A.....a significant impact is a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project.@ As appropriate and applicable, a reference or source for supportive information has been cited within the response for each topic.

### ***I. AESTHETICS***

#### ***Significance Criteria***

*Aesthetic impacts would be significant if the project resulted in the obstruction of any scenic view or vista open to the public, damage to significant scenic resources within a designated State scenic highway, creation of an aesthetically offensive site open to the public, substantial degradation to the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surrounding, or generates new sources of light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area, including that which would directly illuminate or reflect upon adjacent property or could be directly seen by motorists or persons residing, working or otherwise situated within sight of the project. The significance level may be determined by the intensity of the lighting.*

#### ***a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?***

*Potentially Significant Impact.* The site is within the existing Albany High School Cougar Field and the hardcourt play area and the southwest driveway of the Albany Middle School. Portions of these areas are at least partly visible from the backs of many of the single-family residences adjacent to the northern and eastern perimeter of the field located on Behrens Street, Coronado Street, Tahoe Place, and Victoria Street. The current visual features of the field are readily apparent to pedestrians, bicyclists and others using the BART trail along the western boundary of the project site. BART riders would have relatively brief views of the field and the hills to the east. The present field facilities would not be readily visible to travellers along Brighton Avenue and residents of the single-family residences and apartments to the south of the Albany Middle School. The two-story and high one-story school buildings would effectively screen out views of the field.

Other than distant views of the Eastbay Hills, it is unlikely that any scenic vista of visual note would be adversely affected by the proposed project. The site and the adjacent area is located upon relatively level lands within a highly urbanized setting that does not generally offer Asuperior@ (elevated location) views of local features, such as the Bay shoreline and the San Francisco Peninsula, and expansive view corridors that would be blocked by proposed project facilities. However, the implementation of the proposed project could have a significant effect upon existing visual environment. Construction activities, removal and relocation/reconstruction of several structures, including lights, would be readily apparent and minor

changes to site features would occur. During operation of the facilities, the light standards would be visible features along with increased field activities. The visual impacts of the project upon existing views will be evaluated as part of the preparation of the EIR.

**b) Substantially damage scenic resources within a State scenic highway?**

*No Impact.* There are no State scenic highways with views of the middle school and Cougar Field site. The nearest State highway, State Route 123 (San Pablo Avenue), is approximately one-third mile to the west. Interstate 80 is almost three-quarter mile away. Neither roadway is designated as a State scenic highway nor does the proposed project site include any designated scenic resources that could be associated with a scenic highway. Because of intervening features, including residences, landscaping and other vegetation and the buildings of the El Cerrito Shopping Plaza, the middle school and Cougar Field site would not be visible from the lower elevation of San Pablo Avenue. Views of the site from Interstate 80 would be effectively blocked by 300-foot high Albany Hill, located near the freeway. No further evaluation of scenic highways will be provided in the EIR.

**c) Substantially degrade existing visual character or quality?**

*Potentially Significant Impact.* Please see the response to item I.a, above.

**d) Create new sources of light or glare that would affect views in the area?**

*Potentially Significant Impact.* Implementation of the proposed project would result in new light and glare that would be significant from the installation and subsequent operation of four 80-foot high light poles/lamps and pedestrian-level light at the track and field and an addition seven light pole arrays to illuminate the baseball field. Light from the track and field would be readily discernible from adjacent residences and areas in proximity to the field during night-time events. Additional light and glare would occur from increased traffic using the facilities during evening hours. Construction activities could also result in further sources of light and glare. The potentially significant effects from new sources of light and glare during construction and long-term operation, including off-site light spillage and night glow from field reflection, will be evaluated as part of the preparation of the EIR.

## **II. AGRICULTURE RESOURCES**

### **Significance Criteria**

*Project impacts to agricultural resources would be significant if it leads to direct or indirect loss of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance, defined by the California Department of Conservation, or conflicts with existing agricultural zoning or a Williamson Act contract.*

**a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance?**

*No Impact.* The project would be implemented within the existing Albany High School Cougar Field and Albany Middle School site which are surrounded by residential development and commercial/mixed use. No further analysis of Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance will be provided in the EIR.

**b) Conflict with existing agricultural zoning or a Williamson Act contract?**

*No Impact.* Please see the response to item II.a, above.

**c) Cause changes to environment that would lead to conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use?**

*No Impact.* The project would not result in indirect conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use. The site is within the existing Cougar Field and Albany Middle School. Lands adjacent to the school are highly urbanized. No further evaluation of farmland conversion will be provided in the EIR.

### **III. AIR QUALITY**

#### **Significance Criteria**

*Air quality impacts would be significant if the project does not conform with an applicable air quality plan, violates an ambient air quality standard, contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation, exposes sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations, or creates odors that affect a substantial number of people. The primary source of air pollutant emissions associated with urban land uses is motor vehicles. Typically these land uses do not directly produce significant amounts of air pollutants, but they may result in vehicle trips that generate adverse levels of "indirect" emissions that may affect air quality.*

*The Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) has developed significance thresholds for air emissions under CEQA Guidelines. They include:*

*C Reactive Organic Compounds (ROG) - 15 tons/year or 80 pounds/day.*

*C Nitrogen Oxides (NOx) - 15 tons/year or 80 pounds/day.*

*C Fine particulate matter (PM10) - 15 tons/year or 80 pounds/day.*

*C Carbon Monoxide (CO) - 550 pounds/day.*

*The BAAQMD CEQA Guidelines also identify the kinds of development that may lead to significant levels of operational emissions. Examples include approximately 375 new single-family housing units, general office development of 305,000 square feet, or a community college with 345,000 square feet of developed floor area.*

#### **a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of applicable air quality plan?**

*No Impact.* The existing high school and the middle school facilities have been included as part of the land uses within the City of El Cerrito and City of Albany general plans and therefore the air quality plan for the region. In addition, related land uses, such as residential (where students originate), have been factored in as part of the air quality plan as well as the current and future population projections for the communities.

The campus facilities improvements would not be inconsistent with the air quality plan nor conflict or obstruct its implementation. No further evaluation of the project with air quality plan consistency will be required for the EIR.

#### **b) Violate any air quality standard or contribute to an existing or project air quality violation?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Given the project scale and its relatively short duration of construction, BAAQMD significance thresholds for ROG, NOx, CO, and PM10 would not be exceeded during either construction activities or operation of the reconstructed buildings. Project development would result in emissions of particulates during the relatively short period of site preparation and construction along with a small quantity of other pollutants from construction equipment. To minimize local impacts from construction activities, measures for dust suppression and combustion engine emissions control have been incorporated as part of the proposed project. Potential adverse effects during site preparation and construction would be less than significant with incorporation of these measures which are consistent

with BAAQMD guidelines. The project is intended to accommodate the same number of students that would be attending the high school even if the project was not implemented. The provision of enhanced and expanded recreational and physical education facilities could increase the number of trips to the high school from additional community use, including evening events held at the athletic facilities. However, it is likely that many existing trips already occur to other recreational facilities and for other activities, so that the overall number of vehicle trips would not significantly differ within the area. No further evaluation of air quality standards or violations will be provided in the EIR.

**c) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the region is in non-attainment?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Implementation of the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable increase of any criteria pollutant for which the region is in nonattainment. Currently the Bay Area is in attainment for federal Clean Air Act standards while it violates State standards for ozone (one-hour) and suspended particulates. The project would incrementally add to emission levels of these contaminants (particulates during construction, possibly ozone during operation), but the amount would not be significant, given the relatively small scale of the project and incorporated measures to reduce emissions. Please also see the response to item III.b, above, pertaining to possible additional trips. No further evaluation of cumulative air emissions will be included as part of the EIR preparation.

**d) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The project would be implemented within the existing Cougar Field and part of the middle school site. Schools, along with such facilities as hospitals and senior facilities, are considered sensitive receptors. During construction air particulates would be the contaminant of most concern. Because of the relatively short duration of construction and measures incorporated into the project to control particulates to the extent practicable and consistent with BAAQMD Guidelines, potential particulate impacts would not be significant. These measures would also minimize the amount of already minor contaminants generated by gasoline and diesel-powered equipment. Future operation of the field would generally be similar to the existing conditions with primary use by students. While contaminants could increase from additional trips from community use of the facilities, they would typically be distributed during non-school hours (i.e., outside of peak a.m. and p.m. peak hours). No further evaluation of substantial pollutant concentrations will be included as part of the EIR preparation.

**e) Create objectionable odors affecting a substantial number of people?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* There may be some objectionable odors from the operation of diesel-powered equipment during reconstruction of the proposed facilities. However, these odors would be limited to the short-term construction period of the project and would not be significant. No further evaluation of odors will be included as part of the EIR preparation.

#### **IV. BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES**

##### **Significance Criteria**

*Project impacts upon biological resources would be significant if any of the following resulted:*

- C substantial direct or indirect effect on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local/regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Game or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;*
- C substantial effect upon sensitive natural communities identified in local/regional plans, policies, or regulations or by agencies above;*

- C* substantial effect (e.g., fill, removal, hydrologic interruption) upon federally protected wetlands under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act;
- C* substantially interfere with movement of native resident or migratory wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede use of native wildlife nursery sites;
- C* conflict with any local policies/ordinances that protect biological resources (e.g., tree preservation policy or ordinance);
- C* conflict with provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved habitat conservation plan.

**a) Effect on candidate, sensitive, or special status species?**

*No Impact.* Implementation of the proposed project would take place within the existing Cougar Field and part of the paved areas of the Albany Middle School. The site is already highly developed and disturbed and there is no natural habitat or natural communities on the property. Furthermore, the project site is surrounded by other parts of the middle school, existing residences, the Albany Adult School, businesses at the El Cerrito Shopping Plaza, the BART tracks, pedestrian/bicycle path and right-of-way, and streets. The drainage of Cerrito Creek flows through an underground culvert that would not be adversely affected during project construction. The project design provides some setback of the track and field from the alignment of the culvert. In addition, measures have been incorporated into the proposed project to maintain the integrity of the culvert. There are no known candidate, sensitive, or special status species present on the site that would be significantly impacted.

**b) Substantial effect on any sensitive natural communities?**

*No Impact.* Please see the response to item IV.a, above.

**c) Substantial effect upon federally protected wetlands under Section 404?**

*No Impact.* Please see the response to item IV.a, above.

**d) Interfere with movement or migratory corridors of native residents or migratory species, or use of native wildlife nursery sites?**

*No Impact.* The project would be developed on the site of the present Cougar Field and part of the Albany Middle School. There would be no impact. Please see the response to item IV.a, above.

**e) Conflict with any local policies/ordinances protection biological resources?**

*No Impact.* The implementation of the proposed project would not result in the removal of any existing trees. Measures (e.g., setbacks) have been incorporated to protect remaining trees during construction. The grass turf would be removed from the present football/soccer field and replaced with a synthetic surface. No further evaluation will be provided in the EIR.

**f) Conflict with Habitat Conservation Plan or other approved conservation plan?**

*No Impact.* There is no Habitat Conservation Plan or other approved conservation plan that is applicable to the site or the reconstruction project.

**V. CULTURAL RESOURCES**

### ***Significance Criteria***

*A significant impact to cultural resources would occur if implementation of the project would cause a substantial change to a historical or archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines, the destruction of a unique paleontological resource, site or unique geological feature, or disturbs any human remains.*

#### ***a) Substantial effect upon historical resource?***

*No Impact.* No known historic structures or features are located within the proposed field and middle school project area. The site has been used for school facilities for decades and has been highly disturbed. Should any historic features underlying the field be present, the project has included mitigation measures to protect historic resources (see item V.b, below). No further evaluation of historical resources will be provided in the EIR.

#### ***b) Substantial effect upon an archaeological resource?***

*No Impact.* The proposed project site is an existing facility that has been used for recreational activities for decades. The field area and the underground culvert carrying drainage from the Cerrito Creek watershed have already been highly disturbed and it is very unlikely that cultural resources (historic, archaeological, paleontological) occur within the site. The location and alignment of the field has been designed to provide as much setback as practicable from the alignment of the culvert. Furthermore, other than the 20 to 25-foot depth of the light poles, site preparation activities would generally consist of fairly shallow grading for the new facilities. To further ensure that there are no adverse effects upon unknown potential cultural resources that may be present, particularly in proximity to the Cerrito Creek culvert alignment, a qualified cultural resources specialist(s) would be present during site preparation for the proposed improvements program. Mitigation measures have been incorporated into the proposed project to address the protection of cultural resources. No further analysis of cultural resources will be provided in the EIR.

#### ***c) Destroy unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?***

*No Impact.* The underground alignment of Cerrito Creek is located several feet from the south edge of the proposed track location. Other than the undergrounded alignment, there are no unique geologic features (e.g., hills, rock outcroppings) within the site. As previously described, above, the field area has been highly disturbed and the layout of the project has been designed to avoid potential effects to the underlying creek alignment. Although it is unlikely that paleontological resources are present, a qualified cultural resources specialist would be present during site preparation activities for the proposed project consistent with mitigation incorporated into the project description. In the event that paleontological resources are uncovered, appropriate measures would be implemented to protect them. No further evaluation of paleontological resources or unique geological features will be provided as part of the EIR.

#### ***d) Disturb any human remains?***

*No Impact.* Please see the response to item V.b, above.

## ***VI. GEOLOGY AND SOILS***

### ***Significance Criteria***

*A significant geologic impact would occur if a project exposed people or structures to major geologic hazards such as earthquake damage (rupture, groundshaking, ground failure, landslides), slope and/or foundation instability, erosion, soil instability, or other problems of a geologic nature.*

**a) Expose people or structures to the following:**

**i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault as delineated by Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map or other substantial information?**

*No Impact.* The proposed project location is not located within an Alquist-Priolo Fault Zone (as defined by the State of California Special Studies Zone Act) where a major fault rupture could occur (Miller Pacific Engineering Group, *Geotechnical Investigation Albany High School Athletic Facilities Improvements Albany, California*, March 6, 2006 and City of El Cerrito, *City of El Cerrito General Plan Final Environmental Impact Report*, August 10, 1999). No further evaluation of fault rupture will be provided as part of the preparation of the EIR.

**ii) Strong seismic shaking?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The proposed site is located within the San Francisco Bay Area, a region where strong seismic groundshaking could occur during moderate to severe earthquakes. Earthquake faults generally trend in a northwesterly direction. There are several active faults that pose likely sources of seismic activity including the Hayward (one mile away), Rodgers Creek (15 miles away), Calaveras (16 miles away), San Andreas (20 miles away), and the San Gregorio (21 miles away).

With a California Building Code Seismic Zone Factor coefficient of AZ@ and a site specific value of 0.40, a major earthquake could cause moderate to strong groundshaking within the proposed project location. By mandatory conformance with the Uniform Building Code provisions applicable to the site, design standards of the Division of the State Architect for school construction and adoption of the recommendations from the preliminary geotechnical report required for school construction, the potential for damage of the athletic facilities (which would be constructed to a higher standard than the existing structures) from seismic shaking would be reduced to a less than significant level. No further evaluation of effects from seismic shaking will be included in the EIR for the proposed project.

**iii. Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Consistent with the findings from the Miller Pacific geotechnical report, seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction, is considered low. Site soils are composed of stiff soils that are not susceptible to liquefaction. Project conformance with mandatory building standards would preclude significant impacts resulting from potential seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction. The EIR will not include further evaluation of seismic ground failure.

**iv. Landslides?**

*No Impact.* Since the project site and adjacent lands are relatively flat and largely overcovered with existing residences, educational facilities, and landscaping, there would be little potential of landsliding. No further analysis of landslide hazards will be included as part of the EIR preparation.

**b) Result in soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Given the relatively level character of the project site, lack of loose granular materials and limited grading, the project would result in minimal soil erosion or the loss of

topsoil. During construction, measures, including Best Management Practices and other controls consistent with the RWQCB stormwater permit, that have been incorporated into the project would reduce potential for erosion or the loss of topsoil to a less than significant impact. On completion of the project, the recovering of the site with the synthetic field and track surfaces, buildings, and paving would resist soil erosion and loss of topsoil in a manner similar to the existing conditions. No further evaluation of soil erosion or loss of topsoil will be provided as part of the preparation of the EIR.

**c) Located on unstable geologic unit or soil or such instability caused by project?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Please see the responses to the items within VI.a, above, concerning geological instability and characteristics of site soils.

**d) Located on expansive soil as defined by the Uniform Building Code?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Findings from subsurface borings and testing conducted by Miller Pacific indicate that the near surface alluvial soils down to approximately four to five generally consist of moderately to highly plastic clay soil prone to shrink and swell cycles associated with expansive soil. Potential effects from expansive soil shrink/swell is considered to be moderate when subjected to fluctuations in moisture content (Miller Pacific Engineering Group, *Geotechnical Investigation Albany High School Athletic Facilities Improvements Albany, California*, March 6, 2006). To address the mandatory requirements of the California Building Code, measures will be adopted from the geotechnical evaluation to address moderately expansive or other inadequate soils. No further evaluation of expansive soils will be included in the preparation of the EIR.

**e) Soils incapable of adequately supporting septic tank or other non-sewer use?**

*No Impact.* Wastewater from the proposed project would be collected by an existing collection lines for conveyance to the East Bay Municipal Wastewater Treatment Plant. Septic tanks or other non-sewer systems would not be used. Discussion of septic tanks or other non-sewer use will not be included in the preparation of the EIR.

**VII. HAZARDS AND HAZARDOUS MATERIALS**

**Significance Criteria**

*A significant impact to the environment and the public associated with hazards and hazardous materials would result from a project if any of the following occurred:*

- C creation of a significant hazard to the public or environment by routine transport, use or disposal of hazardous materials or from foreseeable upset and accident conditions;*
- C emission and/or handling of hazardous, acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within 1/4 mile of an existing or proposed school;*
- C location of a project on a listed hazardous materials site compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5;*
- C location in an airport land use plan or two miles from a public airport;*
- C location in vicinity of private airstrip;*
- C impairment/interference with adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan;*
- C exposure to wildland fire hazard.*

**a) Hazard from routine transport, use, and disposal of hazardous materials?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The implementation of the proposed project is expected to have a less than significant effect or no impact upon the environment. Other than the existing field house used for changing and equipment, a restroom portable, two maintenance structures, grandstands and a small concession stand, there are no buildings within the project site. As part of the proposed project, the field house, grandstands, restroom portable and concession stand would be removed while the two maintenance buildings would remain. The District is currently conducting a hazardous materials assessment of the field house and snack bar to determine if contaminants such as asbestos/ACMs and other substances are present. In the event that such materials are present, the District would remove the substances to an approved landfill consistent with regulatory requirements. No addition of hazardous materials would occur from the operation of the new field house and grandstands other than paint and cleaning materials that might be used for routine maintenance.

A synthetic surface would be used for the football/soccer field while natural turf would still be used for the baseball field. Though fertilizers, herbicides, and other chemicals will still be needed for the upkeep of the baseball field, the synthetic field would not require such substances, resulting in a net reduction of potentially hazardous materials compared to the existing conditions. Consistent with its ongoing program, the District would continue to manage hazardous materials used for maintenance in accordance with manufacturers' procedures and regulatory agency requirements. Maintenance staff would minimize the amounts that would be used to the extent practicable. During construction, a small amount of diesel and gasoline fuel would be required to operate equipment, but the small quantity and routine handling of these materials would not result in a significant effect. No further discussion about the transport, use, or disposal of hazardous substances will be included as part of the EIR preparation.

***b) Hazard resulting from reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving release of hazardous materials into environment?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The operation of the school would not result in the significant release of hazardous materials into the environment. It is likely that a smaller quantity of such substances may be used for routine maintenance since the installation of the synthetic field would not require chemicals used for a natural turf field. With ongoing management, the potential hazard that could result from reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving release of hazardous materials into the environment is likely to be reduced (please see item VI.a, above). No further evaluation of upset and accident conditions will be included as part of the preparation of the EIR.

***c) Emit or handle hazardous/acute hazardous materials emissions, materials, substances or waste within one-quarter mile of existing or proposed school?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The site of the proposed project is the existing Cougar Field and part of the Albany Middle School. No significant levels of hazardous materials/wastes would be emitted during operation of the facilities (please see item VI.a, above).

***d) Located on a site included on list of hazardous materials sites?***

*No Impact.* The project site is not included on a list of hazardous materials site. The project would be implemented within the existing Cougar Field and part of the Albany Middle School.

***e) Located within an airport use plan or within two miles of public airport?***

*No Impact.* The proposed project site is not located within an adopted airport use plan nor is it within two miles of a public airport. The nearest airport facility, Oakland International Airport, is well over two miles away to the south. Because of the distance, it is not expected that the 80-foot height of the light poles

would pose a hazard to airport operations. No further discussion about airport land use and potential conflicts will be included as part of the EIR preparation.

***f) Located within vicinity of a private airstrip?***

*No Impact.* The proposed project site is not located near a private airstrip.

***g) Impair or interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?***

*No Impact.* The proposed project would be developed within the existing Cougar Field and part of the Albany Middle School site. Operation of the proposed field facilities are not expected to substantially affect coordination with present emergency response or emergency evacuation plans already in place and coordinated with both the City of Albany and the City of El Cerrito and other jurisdictions. No further evaluation will be included in the EIR.

***h) Expose people or structures to significant risk of wildland fires?***

*No Impact.* Since the proposed project would be implemented within the existing site of Cougar Field and part of the Albany Middle School, the risk of wildland fires would not be significant. In addition, intensive urban uses, rather than wildlands, surround the school.

## **VIII. HYDROLOGY AND WATER QUALITY**

### ***Significance Criteria***

*Significant impacts associated with hydrology and water quality would result from a project if water quality standards or waste discharge requirements were violated; groundwater and surface water quality and quantity were substantially altered; drainage patterns were substantially altered that would increase erosion/siltation and increase surface runoff; increase runoff that would exceed capacity of existing or planned drainage systems or add a substantial source of pollution; located in a 100-year floodplain; or expose people to hydrological hazards such as flooding or inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow.*

***a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The development of the project would not significantly affect any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements. Runoff from the school site would continue to flow into existing stormwater drainage facilities. During site preparation there would be a minimal potential for sediments from grading and foundation work to erode and run into the existing drainage facilities since the site is essential level. To further reduce this possible impact, the proposed project has incorporated measures to address off-site runoff quality during construction and measures consistent with the RWQCB General Construction Activity Stormwater Permit and Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program (e.g., periodic sweeping of parking lots). Please see Chapter II, Project Description, of this Initial Study and the response to item VI.b, above.

During operation of the new campus facilities improvements, a slightly greater amount of on-site urban contaminants (e.g., oil, litter) may be present in runoff from the project site parking area within the middle school compared to the existing conditions because of the increased use of the paved parking lot. However, notwithstanding, such contaminants are likely to still occur off-site within other parts of the community if the field facilities program was not implemented. Measures adopted as part of the SWPPP are expected to reduce contaminants to a less than significant level. Furthermore, the District would continue to manage the application of such items as herbicides, paints, fertilizers, and other materials used

for the typical maintenance of the school. No further evaluation about potential violation of water quality standards or waste discharge requirements will be provided in the EIR.

***b) Substantially deplete groundwater supplies or interfere with groundwater recharge?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Development of the proposed project would not significantly deplete any sources of groundwater or interfere with its discharge within the school site. The new field facilities would not use groundwater underlying the property. The installation of the synthetic track and football/soccer field, the paved grandstand areas, and the paved road would increase the impermeable area of the 7.6-acre field. However, its effects upon groundwater recharge would be relatively insubstantial. A portion of the field would remain natural turf. Furthermore, the proposed project would be developed within a highly urbanized area already overcovered with school buildings, residential and commercial uses, streets and sidewalks, and other paved surfaces. No further discussion about the depletion of groundwater supplies or interference with groundwater recharge will be included as part of the EIR preparation.

***c) Substantially alter existing drainage patterns leading to substantial erosion or sedimentation?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Consistent with the relatively level topographic character of the site, the grading, which would be limited, would be performed so that runoff would continue to flow into existing drainage facilities. There would be no significant alteration to existing drainage patterns that would lead to substantial erosion. Measures to minimize erosion during construction have been incorporated as part of the project. The EIR will not provide any further evaluation about the alteration of existing drainage patterns leading to substantial erosion or sedimentation.

***d) Substantially alter existing drainage patterns leading to substantial increase in rate/amount of surface runoff that would cause on-site or off-site flooding?***

*No Impact.* Since the proposed project would be implemented on the site of the existing Albany High School field and impermeable surfaces and the topography would not be substantially altered, the current drainage facilities would have the capacity to handle runoff from the project site. Drainage patterns would not be substantially revised by the project and no significant on- or off-site flooding is expected to occur. The increased landscaping would likely decrease the amount of surface runoff and would provide a beneficial effect. No further discussion of altered drainage patterns leading to an increase of surface runoff and potential flooding will be included in the EIR.

***e) Create or contribute runoff that would exceed capacity of existing drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The project would have no impact upon drainage capacity nor would it lead to a substantial increase in sources of polluted runoff. Please see the response to item VIII.d, above, concerning drainage capacity and item VIII.a, about the quality of the runoff.

***f) Otherwise substantially degrade water quality?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Please see the response to item III.a, above.

***g) Place housing within 100-year flood hazard area (as mapped on federal Flood Hazard Boundary, Flood Insurance Rate Map, or other delineated map)?***

*No Impact.* The development of the proposed reconstruction project would not involve housing. Furthermore, since the project would be implemented in the same location as the present field and middle school and drainage would be channeled to existing stormwater facilities, there would be no additional impact from flood hazard. The project area is within AZone C,@ which is not subject to the 100-year flood (City of Albany, *City of Albany General Plan 1990-2010*, adopted December 7, 1992). No further discussion about an increased risk of flood hazard will be included in the preparation of the EIR.

***h) Place structures within 100-year flood hazard area that would impede or redirect flood flows?***

*No Impact.* Please see the response to item VIII.g, above.

***i) Expose people or structures to significant risks from flooding as a result of levee or dam failure?***

*No Impact.* Since the proposed project would be implemented on the same site as the current school facilities, there would be no additional impact from flooding. The nearest watercourse is Cerrito Creek which flows in an enclosed culvert underlying the field. The creek becomes an open channel several hundred feet downstream of the field and does not pose a flood risk to the project site. There are no levees or dams nearby that would potentially cause flooding. No further discussion will be included in the preparation of the EIR.

***j) Inundation by seiche, tsunami, or mudflow?***

*No Impact.* Since the proposed project would be implemented on the same site as the current school facilities, the impact from seiche, tsunami, or mudflow hazards would be the same (resulting in a determination of no impact). Since no large lakes or reservoirs are in proximity to the field, there is no risk from a seiche (oscillations caused by seismic shaking of an enclosed body of water). Adverse effects from a mudflow would be unlikely. The site and adjacent lands are relatively level and overcovered by urban uses that include educational, residential, and commercial lands, and roadways and streets.

A tsunami (large sea wave), caused by undersea earth movements (e.g., seismic activity, rockslides, volcanos) are unlikely to affect the project site. Based upon information from the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA, formerly the U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey), the largest known wave to have occurred in the San Francisco Bay Area was recorded in April 1964 from the Alaskan earthquake. The wave reached a height of seven and one-half feet at the Golden Gate. A report by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers indicates that a probable maximum tsunami wave of about seven feet above mean sea level will occur once every 500 years (Benson Lee, Consulting, *Draft EIR for the San Mateo High School Reconstruction*, February 2002). Located at an elevation of about 57 feet msl and nearly one mile from the shore of San Francisco Bay, the proposed site would not be affected by a tsunami. No further discussion of hazards from seiches, mudflows, or tsunamis will be provided in the EIR for the Albany High school field improvements project.

## ***IX. LAND USE AND PLANNING***

### ***Significance Criteria***

*Significant land use impacts would occur if the project substantially conflicted with established uses, disrupted or divided an established community, or resulted in a substantial alteration to present or planned land uses. Proposed project consistency with the City of San Mateo General Plan and zoning, and other applicable environmental plans and policies is also evaluated in making a determination about potential land use impacts.*

***a) Physically divide an established community?***

*No Impact.* The project would not physically divide an established community. The proposed project would be developed within the already existing Cougar Field and the southwestern part of the Albany Middle School.

***b) Conflict with land use plan, policy or regulation of jurisdictional agency?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The high school field improvements would not substantially conflict with a land use plan, policy or regulation of a jurisdictional agency. The use of the site for school facilities would not change with the implementation of the proposed project. However, the location of possible caretaker residence on the site may require an approval and/or permit from the City of El Cerrito. This issue may need to be further evaluated as part of the preparation of the EIR.

***c) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan?***

*No Impact.* The project site includes the southwest part of the existing Albany Middle School and Cougar Field. There are no known habitat conservation or natural community conservation plans that would be applicable.

**X. MINERAL RESOURCES**

***Significance Criteria***

*Impacts to mineral resources would be substantial if the proposed project resulted in the loss of significant or locally important mineral resources.*

***a) Loss of known mineral resource of regional and State value?***

*No Impact.* The existing site has no known significant minerals.

***b) Loss of locally import mineral resource site delineated in local plan?***

*No Impact.* There are no known locally significant minerals and the school site is not designated as a mineral resource in either the City of El Cerrito or City of Albany general plans.

**XI. NOISE**

***Significance Criteria***

*Both the City of Albany General Plan and the City of El Cerrito have set forth noise standards that are based upon the State of California Department of Health Services (DHS) Office of Noise Control criteria that have been adopted by many communities throughout the state. The DHS has established four categories of community noise exposure (Ldn or CNEL [see definitions below]) for judging the severity of noise intrusion upon specific land uses: (1) Normally Acceptable; (2) Conditional Acceptable (with some exposure mitigation); (3) Normally Unacceptable (severe noise); and (4) Clearly Unacceptable (severe and not mitigatable).*

*Within the project area, uses generally include single-family and multi-family residences, schools, playground areas, and commercial.*

**X** *Single-family residential, exterior noise is normally acceptable below 60 dBA (max El Cerrito outdoor noise levels goal of 60 for residential areas of Ldn 60 dBA and 65 Ldn or below for residential areas*

in Albany) is normally acceptable, conditionally acceptable between 60 and 70 dBA, unacceptable between 70 to 75 dBA, and clearly unacceptable above 75 dBA.

- X Multi-family land use would be similar, except that the level of normally acceptable noise is 65 dBA. Schools are treated as a slightly less noise sensitive use and an additional five dBA is applied.
- X Playgrounds and neighborhood parks noise intrusion areas is normally acceptable to 70 dBA and conditionally acceptable from 70 to 75 dBA and clearly unacceptable beyond 75 dBA. For outdoor spectator sports, noise levels up to 75 dBA are conditionally acceptable with higher levels clearly unacceptable.
- X Commercial/office building noise intrusion of 70 dBA is normally acceptable and conditionally acceptable up to about 77 dBA, beyond which is clearly unacceptable.

The City of El Cerrito restricts construction activities between the evening hours from 7:30 p.m. to 7 a.m. Other than emergency work or public service utilities, the City of Albany prohibits construction and demolition activities between weekday and Saturday hours of 6:00 p.m. and 8: a.m. or 6:00 p.m. and 10:00 a.m. on Sundays or legal holidays such that the sound creates a noise disturbance across a residential or commercial real property line (Albany Municipal Code, Chapter VIII, 8-1, Noise). Interior noise limits are generally established at 45 dBA.

A-weighting is used in sound level meters to filter out extreme high and low frequencies, as to measure a representative sound level corresponding to the response of the human ear.

Decibel (dB) is a measure, representing one-tenth of a bell on a modified logarithmic scale that serves as a basis for measuring the relative loudness of sounds (where ten decibels are ten times more intense than one decibel, 20 decibels are 100 times more intense and 30 decibels are 1,000 times more intense). It is approximately equal to the small degree of difference of loudness ordinarily detectable to the human ear. DBA is defined as a unit, in decibels, for measuring sound level after a sound has been A-weighted. A measurement of 50 dBA would result from normal conversation. Typical auto traffic on heavily travelled city streets could range upward to about 70 dBA at 70 feet. A sonic boom could cause noise up to 140 decibels.

Ldn or Day/Night Noise Level is the 24-hour A-weighted average sound level from midnight to midnight, obtained with an added penalty of ten decibels to sound levels occurring in the night between 10:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m.

CNEL or Community Noise Equivalent, in addition to Ldn, adds a penalty of five decibels to sound levels to the hours from 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m.

#### **a) Exposure to or generation of noise levels in excess of established standards?**

*Potentially Significant Impact.* For the residential and commercial uses surrounding the school site, noise levels would typically range up from about 50 (relatively quiet outdoor residential) up to about 70 dBA (local auto traffic). Interior residential noise would generally be expected to range from 40 to 50 dBA. The operation of the BART trains is a primary noise generator, producing maximum noise levels of 72 to 76 dBA at rail stations and 75 to 80 dBA as they travel faster. Noise from the use of Cougar Field is an additional source of noise. Existing activities include physical education classes during school hours and sports evening, including football, soccer, track and field, and baseball. Table PD-1 shows the activity type and frequency of use. Further noise comes from community use of the field facilities during non-school hours.

There are two conditions associated with potential noise from the project. They include short-term construction noise and school operational noise after completion of the field improvements. Construction noise would be intermittent, short-term and temporary. Measures (e.g., lower truck speeds, maintain tune of equipment, scheduling of work at normal work hours) have been incorporated into the project to address noise during the building period. These measures, which are standard practices for construction projects, are expected to bring noise level to a level of significance.

During the post-construction operation of the project, noise would increase from expanded use of the new facilities that include a greater number of proposed scheduled events. The operational hours would be substantially lengthened into the evening hours, a time of greater sensitivity to noise. Larger numbers of the public would attend night events such as football and soccer games and public use of part of the field facilities would be allowed in the evening. Some additional noise may result from increased parking. Potential impacts from noise are likely to be significant. As part of the preparation of the EIR, noise generated from implementation of the proposed project will be evaluated and measures to reduce noise will be identified.

***b) Exposure or generation of excessive groundborne vibration or noise levels?***

*Potentially Significant Impact.* Development of the proposed project would not result in excessive groundborne vibration or noise levels. There may be relatively minor vibration from the use of trucks or grading equipment and possible from foundation work and lighting installation during construction activities. However, noise from such equipment would be intermittent and short-term. Excessive noise could result from the use of the recreational facilities, particularly from special events. Please see item XI.a, above.

***c) Substantial permanent increase in ambient noise levels caused by the project?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Generally, there would not be a substantial increase in the overall ambient noise levels from the post-project facilities. However, there will likely to be periodic (peak) increases in noise resulting from night-time events. Please see the response to item XI.a, above.

***d) Substantial temporary or periodic increase in ambient noise levels?***

*Potentially Significant Impact.* Temporary and intermittent noise from construction activities associated with the development of the project would occur along with elevated levels from the use of the proposed recreational facilities. Construction noise would be short-term, generally set back from existing residences, and limited to the duration of the construction period. Please see the response to item XI.a, above, concerning measures to lessen noise that have been incorporated into the project. Further evaluation of periodic increases in ambient noise levels resulting from use of the recreational facilities will be included in the EIR.

***e) Located within adopted airport land use plan or two miles of public airport?***

*No Impact.* The existing Cougar Field is not located within an adopted airport land use plan area. The runway of the nearest public airport, Oakland International Airport, is well over two miles from the project site. No further discussion of these issues will be included in the EIR.

***f) Within vicinity of a private airstrip?***

*No Impact.* The school site is not within the vicinity of any known private airstrip. No further discussion will be included in the EIR.

## **XII. POPULATION AND HOUSING**

### ***Significance Criteria***

*Population and housing impacts would be significant if the project induced substantial direct or indirect (e.g., road extensions) population growth in an area and displaced substantial numbers of existing houses and/or substantial numbers of people, thus requiring replacement housing elsewhere.*

#### ***a) Induce substantial direct or indirect population growth in an area?***

*No Impact.* There would be no substantial direct or indirect population growth resulting from the proposed field improvements program. The project is intended to enhance and expand educational and recreational opportunities for students and use by the local community. The relatively short-term construction period would not cause population growth within the area. No further discussion of direct and indirect population growth will be included in the preparation of the EIR.

#### ***b) Displace substantial numbers of existing housing?***

*No Impact.* The proposed project would be constructed on the existing Cougar Field and part of the Albany Middle School site. No existing housing would be displaced. No further discussion of housing displacement will be provided in the EIR.

#### ***c) Displace substantial numbers of people?***

*No Impact.* The development of the project would be within the existing field and middle school site. No persons would be displaced by the project and no further discussion of this matter will be included in the EIR.

## **XIII. PUBLIC SERVICES**

### ***Significance Criteria***

*Impacts to public services would be significant if the project resulted in adverse physical impacts upon capacity that would lead to construction of new public facilities or substantial alteration to existing governmental facilities to maintain acceptable service levels or performance levels.*

#### ***a) Substantial physical impacts associated with provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities to maintain acceptable service for following:***

##### ***Fire protection?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Fire departments in the cities of Albany and El Cerrito would continue to provide protection to the project site after the implementation of the field improvements program. Fire response time and fire flow requirements would not change. The greater number of event attendees and users could result in an increase in emergency medical calls. However, the number possible additional calls is not expected to be so significant as to warrant an expansion of existing fire facilities or staff. Fire lanes, emergency access, and other requirements of the State Fire Marshall would be incorporated into the project. No further discussion of fire protection will be included in the EIR.

***Police Protection?***

*Potentially Significant Impact.* The implementation of the proposed project could pose potential effects upon police protection/security during the operation of the improved field facilities. Night events, an increased number of events, greater attendance and associated traffic and parking, and post-event management could require additional policing and security staff. Traffic and parking measures may be needed. During construction, the site would be secured and signage placed to restrict access to the site so that the building period is unlikely to pose a significant impact. Further evaluation of police protection/security resulting from operation of the recreational facilities will be included in the EIR.

***Schools?***

*No Impact.* The proposed project is intended as improvements to educational and recreational facilities. The implementation of the project would provide benefits for schools. No further discussion will be included in the EIR.

***Parks?***

*No Impact.* The development of the project would have no adverse impacts upon existing park facilities. No further discussion will be provided in the EIR.

***Other public facilities?***

*No Impact.* There would be no substantial impacts from the proposed project upon any other known public facilities or services. No further discussion of other public facilities will be included in the EIR.

***XIV. RECREATION******Significance Criteria***

*Impacts to recreation would be significant if the project resulted in an adverse impact upon the quality or quantity of existing recreational opportunities or required development of new recreational facilities.*

***a) Increase use of existing parks and other recreational facilities that would cause substantial physical deterioration to occur or be accelerated?***

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The field improvements project would increase the use of the existing Cougar Field while it would not affect other existing and regional parks or other recreational facilities that would lead to their physical deterioration. The improved facilities at Cougar Field would be expanded and enhanced for community use. The District intends to budget for the maintenance of the new facilities. No further discussion of impacts upon the physical deterioration of existing parks and other recreational facilities will be provided in the EIR.

***b) Would project include recreational facilities construction or expansion that would cause substantial physical impacts?***

*Potentially Significant Impact.* The implementation of the proposed project is intended to provide improvements to the existing Cougar Field facilities. Potential physical impacts (e.g., light and glare,

noise) could result from the new facilities and have been specifically identified in relevant subsections of this Initial Study. Further discussion of these potential physical impacts will be included in the EIR.

## **XV. TRANSPORTATION/TRAFFIC**

### **Significance Criteria**

*The City of Albany has established a level of service (LOS) AD@ for the operation of local intersections (City of Albany 1990-2010 General Plan and Final EIR, adopted December 7, 1992) while the City of El Cerrito has set forth a level of service (LOS) AD@ for the operation of local intersections (City of El Cerrito General Plan Update Draft, August 30, 1999). The LOS standards consist of a scale ranging from "A" to "F" to grade intersection operation, where "A" and "B" results in little delay, "C" and "D" some delay, and "E" and "F" to substantial delays and congestion).*

*Other significant impacts would include:*

- X *substantial changes in traffic patterns resulting in a safety risk;*
- X *substantial increased hazards from design or incompatible use;*
- X *inadequate parking capacity or inadequate emergency access; and*
- X *conflicts with policies, plans, and programs for alternative transportation.*

#### **a) Cause substantial increase in traffic compared to existing traffic load and capacity of the street system?**

*Potentially Significant Impact.* During the construction period, there would be a minor increase in the number of trips resulting from workers coming to the site and materials hauled on and off the site. The relatively short-term duration and intermittent character of construction would not pose a significant impact upon the traffic load and capacity of the street system. The proposed project would include the establishment of haul routes to minimize the effects of traffic to the extent practicable. Signage and traffic control would inform motorists of construction activities to manage traffic.

Traffic would increase during evening operation of the new recreational facilities including attendees at night-time special events. In addition, the City of Albany is considering the closure of several nearby streets that intersect Brighton Avenue that could alter traffic circulation. As applicable and required, the preparation of the EIR will evaluate traffic loads and street capacity.

#### **b) Exceed, individually or cumulatively, an established level of service standard?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* Please see the response to item XV.a, above. The effects of construction traffic would be short-term, intermittent, and therefore less than significant. Because use of the field and associated recreational facilities are not expected to adversely impact traffic during the critical peak a.m. and p.m. periods, it is highly unlikely that an established level of service standard, individually or cumulatively, will be significantly affected. However, as required by possible revisions to the operational parameters of the project, further discussion will be provided in the EIR.

#### **c) Change air traffic patterns, resulting in a substantial safety risk?**

*No Impact.* There are no nearby airports or known airstrips. Please see the response to items VII.e and f and XI.e and f, above.

**d) Substantially increase hazards due to a design feature or incompatible uses?**

*Potentially Significant Impact.* During construction, a potentially increased hazard could result from construction traffic entering the project site. However, this condition would be short-term and intermittent. To offset any impacts relevant to safety, the project incorporates measures to maximize safety, including cautionary signage along roadways and traffic controls (e.g., flag persons when heavy equipment is moved on and off site).

Operation of the new recreational facilities could have an effect upon roads adjacent to the school, particularly during special night-time events. Such events could result in queuing to enter/exit the on-site parking lot. A traffic management plan will be developed as part of the proposed project if it appears that preliminary determinations before the EIR is prepared indicates that there may be possible significant effects. The ensuing EIR will evaluate traffic circulation and management.

**e) Result in inadequate emergency access?**

*No Impact.* The proposed project would not alter emergency access to nearby uses. Fire lanes and any other applicable conditions consistent with the requirements of the State Fire Marshall, and previously discussed with the City of Albany and the City of El Cerrito fire departments, will be provided as part of the proposed project. No further evaluation will be provided in the EIR.

**f) Result in inadequate parking capacity?**

*Potentially Significant Impact.* The proposed project would generate increased student and community use of the recreational facilities. The present paved area of the middle school hardcourt area has been used for vehicle parking and provides about 148 non-striped (i.e., nondesignated spaces). The amount of parking has been adequate for current student events and community needs. Many attendees of existing events (e.g., football games) presently walk to Cougar Field. With the implementation of the proposed project, however, the number of attendees is expected to substantially increase and the demand for parking could concomitantly rise for night-time events. The increase could cause a shortfall of on-site parking and could result in the need for off-street parking. The preparation of the EIR will discuss the adequacy of parking along with traffic management measures that may be applicable as part of the proposed project.

**g) Conflict with policies, plans, or programs for alternative transportation?**

*No Impact.* The proposed project would not conflict with any adopted policies, plans, or programs for alternative transportation. The operation of the improved field is not expected to adversely affect alternative transportation programs. No further discussion will be provided in the EIR.

**XVI. UTILITIES AND SERVICE SYSTEMS****Significance Criteria**

*Impacts to utilities and service systems would be significant if the proposed project results in a physical need to develop new systems or causes a substantial physical alteration to existing facilities.*

**a) Exceed wastewater treatment requirements of the applicable Regional Water Quality Control Board?**

*No Impact.* Implementation of the project would not cause an exceedance of wastewater treatment requirements of the local Regional Water Quality Control Board. Because the proposed project would not result in a net gain in students, there would be no increase to the wastewater load that would need to be

treated by the existing treatment system. An increased number of the public using the enhanced facilities may result in a minor increase in the generation of on-site wastewater. However, this wastewater would still be generated by the community and require treatment even without the implementation of the proposed project (see item XVI.b, below).

**b) Require or result in construction or expansion of water or wastewater treatment facilities that could cause significant environmental impacts?**

*No Impact.* Development of the improvements project would not result in impacts resulting from the need to construct or expand water or wastewater treatment facilities. Waste and wastewater connections are already in-place at the site. No further discussion will be provided in the EIR.

**c) Require or result in the construction or expansion of stormwater drainage facilities that could cause significant environmental impacts?**

*No Impact.* As part of the proposed project, no construction or expansion of stormwater drainage facilities would be required. Runoff from the project site area would continue to flow to existing drainage facilities that currently handle runoff from the existing site. No further evaluation of the adequacy of stormwater drainage facilities would be included in the EIR.

**d) Sufficient water available or are new or expanded entitlements needed?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* The project would not result in an increase in the number of students enrolled at the middle school and high school who use the field. No substantial amounts of additional water from East Bay MUD would be required to serve the project nor would new entitlements be required. A relatively small quantity of water would be needed during the short-term period of construction (e.g., control of dust). However, this amount of water would be minimal and less than significant. Furthermore, during operation less water would be required since the football/soccer field would be converted from natural turf to a synthetic surface. Please also see item XVI.b, above. The EIR will not provide any additional evaluation of water availability.

**e) Adequate wastewater treatment capacity to serve project and existing commitments?**

*No Impact.* The project would not result in a substantial demand for treatment. Please also see item XVI.b, above. No further discussion about treatment plant capacity will be included in the EIR.

**f) Served by landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate project?**

*Less Than Significant Impact.* During construction, there would be relatively minor amounts of construction materials that may need to be hauled to the landfill. Materials from demolished structures or removed structures would be recycled/reused to the extent practicable. Waste Management, Inc. currently provides solid waste disposal services for the project site. Except for the relatively minor amount of solid waste from construction materials and relatively minor amounts of litter from student events and community use, there would no effect upon landfill capacity as a result of the project. Mandatory regional planning to provide regional capacity for a 50-year period is required by the California Integrated Waste Management Board. Upon operation of the new facilities, the District would continue to implement its recycling and waste reduction program to minimize solid waste materials to conform with A.B. 939. No further evaluation of landfill capacity impacts will be included in the EIR.

**g) Complies with federal, state, and local statutes relevant to solid waste?**

*No Impact.* The operation of the school would comply with federal, State, and local statutes and regulations relevant to solid waste. The District's ongoing compliance with A.B. 939 for ongoing recycling and minimization of solid waste would extend to the operation of the field improvements project. No further evaluation of this item will be included in the EIR.

## ***XVII. MANDATORY FINDINGS OF SIGNIFICANCE***

### ***a) Substantially degrade environmental quality, biological resources, or examples of California history or prehistory?***

*Potentially Significant Impact.* Based upon the evaluation in this Initial Study, the proposed project could have the potential to significantly affect existing visual resources, present noise levels, traffic and off-street parking, and additional policing/security services. These issues would be further evaluated in the preparation of the EIR along with the identification of applicable mitigation measures.

The project would not substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, or reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal. It is unlikely to affect examples of California history or prehistory. Already a developed and highly disturbed area, the project site contains no significant habitat or other biological resources and no known cultural resources. The project would result in potentially minor short-term effects from construction activities such as particulate emissions, runoff, and noise during construction. However, these possible impacts are considered less than significant, an expected part of construction, and would be addressed by the measures to lessen the effects to the extent practicable.

### ***b) Impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable?***

*Potentially Significant Impact.* Development of the proposed school project could have a cumulative impact upon visual resources, noise, and traffic/circulation from expanded operation of the proposed field improvements.

In other respects, the implementation of the proposed project would not have the potential to achieve short-term environmental goals to the disadvantage of long-term ones (a short-term impact on the environment is one that occurs in a relatively brief, definitive period of time while long-term impacts would endure well into the future). The project would be implemented within the existing Cougar Field and part of the Albany Middle School site and is intended to accommodate existing levels of student enrollment. Relatively minor impacts may occur from construction activities, but these effects would be of short duration and not cumulatively considerable.

### ***c) Environmental effects that will cause direct or indirect impacts on humans?***

*Potentially Significant Impact.* The development of the proposed project could have environmental effects that would cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly. Potential environmental impacts have already been discussed as part of the evaluation. Effects could include visual effects (particularly night lighting), noise, traffic, and policing services. Further discussion of these impacts will be provided in the EIR.

## **V. PREPARERS OF THE INITIAL STUDY**

### ***BENSON LEE, CONSULTING***

Benson Lee, Principal

Dennis Pascua, Associate, Transportation Planner

## **VI. PERSONS AND AGENCIES CONTACTED**

William Wong, Superintendent, Albany Unified School District

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Phil Singer, Project Architect, SFE Urban Design Landscape Architecture

Ann Chaney, Director, City of Albany Community Development

John Erlich, Planner, City of Albany Community Development

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