II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The project site is located in the Chatsworth community of the City of Los Angeles at 11023 Lurline Avenue in the west San Fernando Valley. The 4.89 (net) acre site is bounded by Department of Water and Power (DWP) property on the north and northwest (including a small covered storage reservoir) and two vacant single-family lots on the west. Partially improved Lurline Avenue forms the eastern site boundary. The southern site boundary is defined by the existing termini of Rinaldi Street, east of De Soto Avenue, and by the right-of-way for the future extension of Rinaldi Street, which curves in a northeasterly direction through currently vacant property. The project site is located approximately 750 feet south of the Ronald Reagan Freeway (SR-118) and 470 feet east of De Soto Avenue. Rinaldi Street, which is a designated major highway east of De Soto Avenue, currently terminates and is gated at the western site boundary. The right-of-way for the future extension of Rinaldi Street bounds the entire southerly boundary of the site. The location of the project site is shown in **Figure II-1, Location Map**.

B. PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

PROJECT OVERVIEW AND FEATURES

The Sierra Canyon High School Foundation (the project applicant) proposes to develop a 550-student (maximum enrollment) private secondary school north of the Rinaldi Street extension as shown in **Figure II-2** through **II-4**, **Parking, Plaza, and Upper Level Plans**, respectively. Currently, Sierra Canyon intends to operate their existing secondary school (referred to as the first-year campus) at 19809 Nordhoff Place, approximately 3.5 miles to the southeast of the project site, commencing in September 2005. Initially, the project would be occupied as a high school consisting of grades 9 through 12, but could eventually include grades 7 and 8 as well, and the new high school.[1] However, whether the school operates as a high school or as a secondary school that includes grades 7 and 8, the maximum enrollment would not exceed 550 students. In addition, the school would employ approximately 100 full-time and part-time faculty and staff members.

New construction would total 120,542 square feet of floor area in four buildings. The proposed new buildings would consist of a classroom building, with classroom, art and science areas, student services and administrative functions; a performing arts center with a 600-seat auditorium; an administration building and attached aquatics center; and an athletics center with a gymnasium, athletic department offices, and weight, training, and cardio-aerobics rooms. A breakdown of school uses is shown in **Table II-1, Sierra Canyon Secondary School Campus**. New buildings would be one to three stories, and on the southerly side of the site, would be built above an at-grade parking level. The project would have a parking level, a plaza level and an upper level, as illustrated in **Figures II-2** through **II-4**. A total of 236 parking spaces (153 standards spaces, 75 compact spaces and 8 disabled access spaces) would be provided, which would meet Los Angeles Municipal Code requirements. The project would require the removal of the existing single-family residence, associated improvements, and accessory structures.

[1] The Sierra Canyon Elementary and Middle School is privately owned. This project for a secondary school called Sierra Canyon Secondary School is operated by a charitable foundation legally separate from the Elementary and Middle School.

Figure II-1
Location Map

Figure II-2
Parking Level Plan

Figure II-3
Plaza Level Plan

Figure II-4
Upper Level Plan

TABLE II-1
SIERRA CANYON SECONDARY SCHOOL CAMPUS

Building	Uses	Floor Area/Parking (sq. ft./spaces)	Comments
Classroom Building	• Classrooms • Science Center • Library/Media Center • Arts Center • Administration • Student Services • Restrooms and Other Uses	53,016 sq. ft.	Includes general classrooms, a foreign language lab, science classrooms and a study lab. Arts Center includes studios, a dark room, a kiln room and a ceramics lab. 20,000 volume library. Includes student store. Built over at grade parking. Maximum height of 69 feet, but the height will be lower at different elevations due to topography.
Performing Arts Building	• Auditorium and Stage • Media Center • Screening Room • Music Rooms • Dressing room • Work Room, Equipment Room • Restrooms and Other Uses	29,785 sq. ft.	Auditorium provides 600 fixed seats. Media facilities include film and video editing. Built over at grade parking. Maximum height of 69 feet, but the height will be lower at different elevations due to topography.
Administration Building	• Food Services • Student Services • Offices For School Administration and Officers • Board Room • Conference Room • Business Staff Offices • Restrooms and Other Uses	15,276 sq. ft.	Campus plaza connection to main education building. Includes Student store. Maximum height of 69 feet, but the height will be lower at different elevations due to topography.
Athletics and Aquatics Center	• Gymnasium • Weight Room • Training Room • Cardio-aerobics Room • Locker Rooms • Athletic Department Offices • Restrooms and Other Uses	22,465 sq. ft.	Two basketball courts with bleachers. Maximum bleacher seating for 500. Maximum height of 54 feet. Athletic facilities also include a 2,728 sq. ft. aquatic center/ and 8 lane pool north of the administration building and bleacher seating for 80.

SOIURCE: Parallax Associates, Inc.

Classroom Building

The classroom building would be the largest of the five campus structures, containing 53,016 gross square feet of floor area located in the lower portion of the existing project site. The building would have multiple functions including small, medium and large classrooms; a language lab; the school science center including classrooms a science office and a prep room, a 20,000 volume school library and media center; an arts center with studios, a dark room, ceramics lab and kiln room; student services including a teachers lounge, conference rooms and dean's offices; and, various storage, service and restroom uses, as needed. The building would be situated parallel to the Rinaldi Street extension and would be built above an on-grade parking level. The library and media center would occupy the first floor, while classrooms and the arts and science centers would occupy the second and third floors. A campus plaza providing student and faculty access to all structures would meet the lower side of the building in the rear. The project seeks relief from the current 45-foot height limit. The classroom building would have a maximum height of 69 feet above grade from the lowest point of adjacent grade within five feet of the structure to the highest point of the roof, structure or the parapet wall, whichever is highest, per Municipal Code Section 12.03. However, when measured relative to adjacent grades, most of the building would range from between 45 and 60 feet in height. The building would be set back 25 feet from Rinaldi Street (except for the right-turn pocket at the westerly project entrance). Access into and out of the classroom building would be provided along all sides.

Performing Arts Center

The 29,785 square foot performing arts center would be located at the southern rear of the classroom building in the lower, western portion of the site. As with the classroom building, this structure would be built above the on-grade parking level. The project seeks relief from the current 45-foot height limit. The performing arts center would have a maximum height of 69 feet from the lowest point of adjacent grade within five feet of the structure to the highest point of the roof, structure or the parapet wall, whichever is highest, per Municipal Code Section 12.03. However, when measured relative to adjacent grades, most of the building would range from between 40 and 53 feet in height and would be built to two stories. The facility would include a 7,500 square foot auditorium with 600 fixed seats for performances and other school events; a media center with film and video editing capabilities; stage and dressing room areas; a screening room; a dance studio and music rooms; restrooms; and, other related facilities. Access into the building would be provided from the plaza level at the building entry and main lobby, and from a courtyard at the southeast corner of the building.

A typical annual performance schedule and related special events are described later in this Project Description.

Athletics Center and Aquatics Center

The 19,737 square foot athletics building would be located in the northeastern corner of the property parallel to the top of the future Rinaldi Street extension as it passes by the site. Unlike the classroom building and performing arts center, this building would primarily sit on grade as it is at the higher site elevation of the existing residential lot (i.e., the upper portion of the site). The facility would include a gymnasium with two basketball courts and pull-out bleachers with a maximum capacity of 500 people. The athletics center would also include athletic department offices; a weight room, training room and cardio-aerobics room; boys and girls locker rooms;

storage rooms and restrooms. The building would have a maximum height of 54 feet and two stories, and, as with the classroom building, would be set back 25 feet from the future extension of Rinaldi Street (except for the right-turn pocket at the easterly project entrance). The project seeks relief from the current 45-foot height limit. The building would also be set back from the rear of the property to allow a minimum 28-foot width clear lane of travel for the Fire Department. Main access to the athletics center would be provided at the front from the plaza level, and from the rear. The athletics center would also be used for school assemblies, dances and other special events as described later in this Project Description.

The school would also provide an eight-lane pool and 2,748 square foot, one-story aquatic center, with shaded rooftop seating for 80 spectators, located between the administration building and the northerly property line. The aquatics center would be attached as part of the administration building in the northern portion of the site, but would not serve any administrative functions.

Administration Building

The 15,276 square foot administration building would be located in the northwestern (upper) part of the property on the site of the existing single-family residence, which would be removed by the project. Development of both the administration building and the athletics building would necessitate the removal of the residence and the associated hardscape, landscape and other related improvements. The administration building would include a number of administrative offices; student services including a student center and counseling facilities; and food services including a dining hall and student union; kitchen; staff areas; and, restrooms. Access to the building would be provided from the plaza level, which would also provide access down to the parking level below. The two-story building would have a maximum height of 69 feet and the project seeks relief from the current 45-foot height limit.

Project Design

A model depicting the massing and orientation of the proposed project structures as viewed from the southwest and the northeast is shown in **Figures II-5** and **II-6**, respectively. A series of renderings is provided in **Figures II-7** through **II-9**. These renderings depict the project as viewed from various internal and off-site campus perspectives. The proposed school project will be designed to create an academic village atmosphere comprised of separate buildings that provide a variety of indoor and outdoor spaces. The design will use simple building masses to complement site topography with an emphasis on natural materials, colors and textures with rich architectural stylings and an efficient site footprint that utilizes the site's sloping character.

Other Site Improvements and Landscaping

A landscape plan will be provided as part of the project design process. Additionally, as the owner/builder, the school has expressed an interest in integrating environmentally sensitive ("green building") features into the school's landscape plan and elsewhere within the project. Such green landscape features, if incorporated into the project, would seek to maximize water efficiency for irrigation and could include water reclamation through the use of captured rainwater recycled for irrigation, use of non-potable sources, including grey water, and planting of drought resistant/tolerant species.

Figure II-5
Project Model – Oblique Southerly View

Figure II-6
Project Model – Oblique Northeast View

Figure II-7
Conceptual Rendering - Northeasterly Plaza View Towards Administration and Athletics Center

Figure II-8
Conceptual Rendering - Northerly Plaza View Towards Performing Arts Center And Administration Building

Figure II-9
Conceptual Rendering - Northwesterly View of Project

As described in Section IV, Environmental Setting, an existing equestrian trail crosses Rinaldi Street at De Soto Avenue. A signalized equestrian crossing has been placed at this intersection to accommodate passage across De Soto Avenue and provide connectivity between major horsekeeping neighborhoods. In order to facilitate continued equestrian access, a 12-foot wide trail that would extend from the current improved trail terminus on Rinaldi Street would be dedicated to the City of Los Angeles Department of Parks and Recreation. The trail would extend from Rinaldi Street along an existing 12-foot dedicated DWP equestrian easement adjacent to the site and into the site along the western edge behind the performing arts center, curving northeasterly along the western site boundary, where it will eventually connect to an easement on DWP property below the existing backbone trail. This trail extension would facilitate a link between the "backbone" trail and the equestrian crossing at Rinaldi Street and De Soto Avenue.

RINALDI STREET EXTENSION

The extension of Rinaldi Street has been planned for over 10 years to provide access from De Soto Avenue and the Chatsworth community to the south, to the expanding Porter Ranch community, north of SR-118. The Los Angeles City Council approved the extension on June 29, 2001. The extension would be built to major highway standards with a 100-foot dedicated right-of-way and would connect via an existing bridge over the SR-118 freeway northeast of the project site. The bridge is currently gated and will remain closed until the completion of the Rinaldi Street extension that will run to the south and east of the project site. A portion of Rinaldi Street between De Soto Avenue to the westerly property line of the project site has been fully improved. Although the extension of Rinaldi Street would be built to major highway standards as called for by the Chatsworth-Porter Ranch Community Plan, the street was recently re-designated as a local street west of De Soto Avenue by the City Council (January 22, 2002, CPC 2000-42-89-GPA). Construction of the Rinaldi Street extension is underway and is expected to be completed by summer 2005 (even if delayed, the extension would be complete by the time of initial project occupancy in 2006).

ACCESS AND PARKING

Parking would be provided in an on-grade parking level. The sloping nature of the property affords the ability to provide a largely unenclosed covered parking level that would be "nested" into the lower elevations without significantly increasing building height. The two lower school buildings (the classroom building and the performing arts center) would be built entirely above the parking level and the upper two buildings (the athletics and administration buildings) would be built at-grade or partially above the parking level. A total of 236 spaces would be provided on the parking level.

Provided parking would meet requirements of City of Los Angeles Planning and Zoning Code. Specifically, Section12.21.A.4(e) of the Zoning Code requires one space for every five fixed seats contained within any theatre, auditorium or similar place of assembly. In the instance of the proposed secondary school, the performing arts center is the largest place of assembly with 600 fixed seats. However, the school would also allow assembly in the athletics building gymnasium, with bleacher seating for a maximum of 500 people, and would provide bleacher seating for up to 80 people at the aquatics center (both are considered fixed seats for purposes of parking). Therefore, maximum site occupancy of these facilities would be 1,180 people resulting in a total of 236 parking spaces under the Zoning Code, if events were ever held at all

three facilities simultaneously. Additionally, the project would provide for additional special event parking (for graduation, open houses, etc.) at off-site locations, with shuttle transport offered to and from the site when special events are held, if needed. Special events and seasonal athletics would occur during the school year. A description of a typical annual schedule is provided in a subsequent discussion.

Access to the school would be provided by two entrances from the future extension of Rinaldi Street. The west entrance would be located on the north side of the Rinaldi Street extension, near the westerly property line, approximately 480 feet from De Soto Avenue. The easterly entrance would be located on the north side of the Rinaldi Street extension, approximately 250 feet southwest of the northerly property line and have a security kiosk. The design of the parking level would allow for direct through circulation from one entrance to the other, as shown in **Figure II-2**, as well as between and around all parking aisles. A student drop-off/pick-up area would be provided below the administration building with direct pedestrian access to the plaza level. Since the elevation of the site increases from south to north, most parking would be to the south of the student drop-off/pick-up area. Sufficient Fire Department turnaround radius would be provided at each end of the upper (northern) parking aisle. Pedestrian access up to the plaza level would also be provided on the south side of the parking level up to the classroom building.

SPECIAL EVENTS AND RELATED SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

Over the course of the school year, the school would hold seasonal athletic events, as well as other events typical of a secondary school calendar. With respect to athletics, approximately 10 to 12 events would be held in the gymnasium each season (fall, winter and spring) with event times beginning from 7:00 to 8:00 PM. Other events include admissions open houses, back-to-school night, standardized testing and test review, seasonal concerts, plays and dances, parents association and board meetings, college nights, graduation, alumni and family days, development evenings and picnics. Some of the events would occur during weekday evenings (such as parents association and board meetings, college nights, seasonal concerts, plays and dances and development evenings) approximately 25 nights over the course of the year while others (such as testing, open houses and picnics) would occur on weekends approximately 10 to 12 times a year. Additionally, the school would allow the campus to be rented to the community for a variety of events that could include use of the athletics building for basketball, use of the performing arts center for theater or speakers and use of the classroom building for night classes.

PROJECT PHASING

The project would be developed in three primary phases. After clearing and preparing the site for construction, an initial site occupancy phase would provide temporary classroom trailers (around 10 modular units) on the upper part of the site and temporary surface parking on the lower part of the site. This will allow for construction of the classroom building, while the school would use the existing residence primarily for administration. The first construction phase would include the classroom building, parking level and plaza levels, and provision of temporary athletic courts on the lower part of the site (construction phase 1). This will allow for construction to proceed on the upper part of the site, including demolition of the existing converted residence and construction of the administration building, the athletics center and the aquatics center as part of the second phase (construction phase 2). The third, and final, construction phase would likely develop the performing arts center in the middle of the site

(construction phase 3). It is possible that phasing may differ from this scenario and that either the performing arts center, athletics center or aquatics center could be constructed earlier. However, the phasing sequence as described is considered the most likely scenario at this point in time and is depicted in **Figure II-10**.

Site preparation and grading, development of on-site parking, and installation of the modular classrooms is expected to be completed by Fall of 2006. Construction of the classroom building would be completed in time for operation in the 2007-2008 school year. The performing arts center, and athletics and administration buildings would be completed in accordance with school fund raising efforts, and would be expected by 2010, but could be built sooner.

GRADING

Given the sloping nature of the middle of the property, significant grading would be required to accommodate the parking level and provide level building sites and transitions. Approximately 19,800 cubic yards of materials would be excavated, of which 6,300 cubic yards would be retained as fill (after accounting for shrinkage) and 10,500 cubic yards would require export off-site.

C. DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS AND APPROVALS

This Draft EIR addresses the environmental impacts of the proposed project that could occur upon approval of the following actions by the City of Los Angeles:

- Approval of a Vesting Conditional Use Permit to allow development of a school in the (T)RE-11-1 and A2-1 zones and, pursuant to Los Angeles Municipal Code Section 12.24.F to provide relief from: 1) the 45-foot height limit due to the sloping character of the property and maximum defined building heights under Code; 2) the 25-foot front yard setback requirement along Rinaldi Street to allow for right-turn only pockets at project entrances; 3) the 25-foot rear or side yard setback, if required, along the westerly property boundary to accommodate an equestrian trail; and, 4) hedges, fences and walls exceeding 12 feet in height.

Other actions, either ministerial or discretionary, as may be required by the City of Los Angeles to implement and execute the project, including but not limited to:

- Building Permit approval
- Haul Route approval
- Structural (Building) Plan Check approval;
- Fire Department Plan Check approval;
- Disabled Access Plan approval;
- Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing Plan Check approval and permits;
- Driveway Plan Check approval and permit;
- Soils Report Plan Check approval and permit;
- Fire Protection Water Supply Connection Plan Check approval and permit and Alarm Approval and Permit;
- Grading Plan Check approval and permits;
- Other minor administrative deviations from the Building Code, as may be required; and
- Any additional actions, as may be determined necessary.

Figure II-10
Construction Phasing

D. PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Applicant's primary objective in building its permanent campus is to provide a state-of-the-art campus environment for a new independent secondary school program serving a critical mass of students from throughout the San Fernando Valley and neighboring communities: this would include students from the temporary campus and future students from the existing Sierra Canyon Elementary and Middle School (K-8) campus (a separate school). In doing so, the Applicant will be launching the first college-prep, non-sectarian co-educational independent school with secondary school grade levels in the San Fernando Valley in almost a half century (since 1961), an initiative that requires sufficient scale and funding to be successful.

In order to facilitate the demand for a nationally competitive independent secondary school program, the Applicant proposes a state-of-the-art secondary school campus, providing its students with academic, athletic, and arts facilities which will allow learning to flourish on the highest levels. In order to provide these opportunities, the Applicant must have excellent facilities and a total student population approaching 550 in order to be competitive with the best independent schools both regionally and nationally. To serve these needs the School's basic objectives are as follows:

1. Establish and maintain a rigorous, University of California (UC)-approved, college preparatory academic program alongside quality extra-curricular programs that together create an enriching independent secondary school experience (the 'Program'). For such a Program to be offered, the following elements are necessary:

    a. Adequate classroom space in order to maintain the broad program of UC-approved courses, electives, and Advanced Placement classes required for a college preparatory school.

    b. An auditorium which allows the entire student and faculty/staff populations to meet weekly for community time events during the school day (assemblies, announcement periods, speakers, etc.) without conflicting with sports or other productions

    c. A dedicated space for the performing arts of the proper dimensions so that student involvement in theatre production, dance, instrumental and vocal music and media studies can all be studied, practiced, rehearsed, and performed simultaneously.

    d. An athletic center of adequate space and resources to serve as the cornerstone of the School's athletic program, including coaches offices, a gymnasium, locker rooms, weight and conditioning rooms, and an aquatics center for both competitive swimming and water polo.

    e. A vibrant student life on the campus with buildings and places designed for both work and play

2. Enable the Program to be financially viable by having an enrollment of critical mass, which the Applicant believes is a maximum 550-student enrollment. Critical mass is achieved by:

a. Having comparable enrollment levels with other competing independent secondary schools.

b. Spreading the fixed costs, such as costs of Administration, across a sufficient revenue base of paying enrollees.

c. Having sufficient funds remaining, after fixed costs, to offer the Program described above.

d. Having sufficient funds for teacher salaries to attract the best faculty and staff and stay competitive with other independent schools. Independent schools traditionally pay the most competitive salaries because they are hiring faculty with advanced degrees and Ph.d's. Not being able to afford such salaries because of insufficient budget room after fixed costs will seriously impact the competitive position of the School and degrade the quality of the Program. The more students to absorb fixed costs, the more competitive the School will be in this area.

e. Having sufficient levels of annual donations from enrollees to cover the budget deficit of approximately 10% on which most independent schools run.

3. Provide safe and efficient access, parking, and internal circulation to accommodate students, faculty/staff, parents, and visitors.

4. To provide all parking for students, employees and visitors in facilities that is safe, readily accessible and entirely or largely illuminated by daylight in order to ensure their use and to minimize the recognized reluctance to use a fully-enclosed, subterranean parking facility.

5. Accommodate School graduation, admissions and other student-centered events.

6. Create a positive relationship with the Chatsworth community through offering use of School facilities during off-hours, weekends, weeknights, holidays, and summer and by opening the School's cultural and festival events to the community.

7. Create a campus that will have minimal impact on surrounding neighborhoods and takes advantage of the Rinaldi extension as an outer boundary to further buffer the community from School activities.

8. Integrate a keen awareness of the environment and other factors that comprise the natural setting for the school and utilize the unique location in the School's educational environment.