

NEWS

Reports tackle worries surrounding Hermosa Beach's North School

RYAN MCDONALD | MAY 19, 2016



The site of the potential new North School. A pair of reports attempts to limit concerns about impact of the school opening. Photo

The Hermosa Beach City School district released a pair of independent reports last week addressing the impacts of proposed school construction under a pending bond measure. While the reports — a traffic impact analysis for the area around North School, and a historical resources assessment of the 25th street campus — indicated that the rebuilding would have minimal impact on congestion or cultural heritage, opponents of the bond measure remain

unconvinced, contending that the reports demonstrate bias in favor of district positions.

The reports come as the community prepares for the June 7 vote on Measure S, a \$59 million school facilities bond. The lion's share of the money would go toward rebuilding North School, a district-owned site that currently houses two preschool programs, which would house the district's third and fourth graders if the bond passes.

According to the traffic study, prepared by Garland and Associates, total traffic in the area would decrease by 170 vehicle trips per day if the HBCSD population were to replace the existing preschools. This estimate came despite "conservatively high assumptions" about traffic intensity and future growth, the report states. School board members noted that transferring some students to North would ease traffic at View and Valley, the district's existing campuses.

Resident Blair Smith was among those who doubted the conclusions of the district's traffic report. Smith, who lives across the 25th street from the school, said he has spoken to about 200 people in the area, and most of them are very concerned with the impact the school will have on traffic, especially during pickup and drop-off times.

"What they're doing here is impacting a residential area that already has more cars from residents and the park nearby," he said, referring to Valley Park, which borders the school. "The whole traffic report was set up to just gloss over the thing and make it look like it's not going to affect us."

The historical resources assessment, prepared by architectural historian Pamela Daly, was requested by the district after opponents of the bond measure raised questions about the historical significance of the North School site.

But the report states that the existing buildings at North School were actually the result of several distinct construction phases between 1924 and 1958, and that the buildings "do not represent a cohesive set of buildings united by an intentional plan."

"I have a strong feeling that most people in the community think that North School is one building on 25th Street," said board member Monique Ehsan after a presentation on the report. "But it has an enormously fragmented history, and it's an enormously fragmented campus."

Chris Miller, a local historian and author of two books on the history of Hermosa, disputed the report's conclusions. Miller said they ignored the contributions of North graduates, which she said include at least 11 members of the city's Surfer's Walk of Fame.

"It seems to me that this report from their 'consultants' is biased toward the destruction of the last of Hermosa's early schools," she said in an email.