



Legislation Text

File #: 24-277, **Version:** 1

Receive a presentation providing an update on the Early Learning Center in Vallejo

Published Notice Required? Yes No

Public Hearing Required? Yes No

DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION:

The First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission recommends that the Board of Supervisors receive a presentation providing an update on the Early Learning Center in Vallejo.

SUMMARY:

The First 5 Solano Children and Families Commission is bringing forward a presentation to update the Board on the Early Learning Center in Vallejo, CA, which is a project to renovate the shuttered Beverly Hills elementary school. Utilizing funding from Solano County American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and the First 5 Commission, the school was purchased from the Vallejo City Unified School District (VCUSD) in December 2023 and transferred to Child Start, Inc. in January 2024.

The purpose of this project is to create an Early Learning Center (ELC) which will expand childcare and family strengthening opportunities for children ages 0-5 in Vallejo and throughout Solano County. The ELC will provide crucial childcare services for both the local and surrounding communities. In addition to 18 childcare and preschool classrooms for children ages 0-5, the project includes a new Community Resource Building established on the campus, providing resources to the families at the center, and the surrounding community as appropriate.

In addition, the project moves the two Head Start classrooms currently located at the Virginia Street County building on the Solano County Health & Social Services Vallejo Campus to the ELC in Summer 2025, allowing the County to use that space for another purpose.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no cost to receiving this presentation.

DISCUSSION:

In early 2021, County staff requested that the First 5 Solano work with Child Start, Inc. to identify a space to relocate two of its Head Start Classrooms located on Virginia Street in Vallejo on the Health & Social Services campus. Child Start, Inc., Solano's Head Start provider, had been looking for over eight years for a location to move their classrooms has been unsuccessful in identifying another location to serve the families in Vallejo.

First 5 Solano, in partnership with the Solano County Office of Education (SCOE), approached VCUSD to inquire about surplus property in which to house these two Head Start classrooms. Through those discussions,

VCUSD identified a surplus school site, Beverly Hills Elementary School, located at 1450 Coronel Avenue, in South Vallejo, as a space to house these classrooms.

Discussions with the leadership team, including First 5 Solano, Child Start, SCOE, and VCUSD, involved the consideration of community data that shows a significant lack of childcare and early learning spaces in Solano County. The team developed the idea of an ELC to utilize the entire school site, while providing expansion opportunities for local childcare and early learning providers.

Beverly Hills Elementary School was purchased in December 2023 to be the new home of the ELC. It has 18 classrooms, a large multi-purpose room, space to include age-appropriate playgrounds, a small prep kitchen, and a large grassy area. The school, built in 1949, has enough infrastructure, but needs a refresh of several large items, such as the roof, HVAC system, and appropriate plumbing to install two child bathrooms in every classroom in order to meet state childcare licensing standards. The renovation of the ELC is considered Phase 1 of this project.

The cost of Phase 1 renovation is estimated at \$13,000,000. This funding is fully secured through a variety of sources that include Solano County Board of Supervisors via American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, First 5 Solano, Child Start, City of Vallejo, Syar Foundation, State of California via Senator Dodd, and the Irwin Foundation.

The Phase 1 renovation includes two tiny toilets in every classroom, a kitchen area in every classroom, the existing central kitchen converted to a central laundry room, age-appropriate playground areas throughout the school, a children's library, adult bathrooms throughout the facility, a refresh of the entire interior and exterior including the large multi-purpose room and attached kitchenette, a new roof, a new HVAC system, and updated drought-resistant landscaping. This phase is underway and a contractor is currently being selected for the design-build.

Phase 2 of this project includes establishing a Community Resource Building on the campus to offer resources to the families of the ELC and the community as appropriate. The resources are expected to consist of a family resource center, food pantry, community meeting room and space for social service programs to deliver services and engage with the community. Phase 2 is still in development.

The cost of Phase 2 of this project is estimated at \$4,000,000. Of this amount, \$500,000 has been secured with Federal funds via Congressman Garamendi.

First 5 Solano will continue to be a partner at the ELC by working to secure the remaining funding for the Community Resource Building, participating on the ELC leadership team and working to problem-solve and address issues as they arise. Implementation of Phase 2 is funding dependent. Additionally, First 5 Solano will help to collect data and evaluate the effectiveness of the ELC.

ALTERNATIVES:

The Board could choose not to receive the presentation. This is not recommended since the school purchase is complete, the property has been transferred and the project construction team is in process of being selected to begin work in May 2024.

OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT:

First 5 Solano has worked with a team to develop the Early Learning Center, including members from Child

Start, Inc. and SCOE.

CAO RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE DEPARTMENTAL RECOMMENDATION