



"100 Years of Excellence"

CYPRESS SCHOOL DISTRICT

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October 5, 2011

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SURPLUS PROPERTY HELPS FUND THE FUTURE

The Cypress School District has always been committed to excellence in education. The District has a reputation of successfully working with parents and community members in providing outstanding programs and services for our students. This success is proven by the positive results achieved by our students with high test scores and the recognition our schools receive.

Like all districts in California, we have been faced with severe budget cuts. However, Cypress School District has always found a way to excel and support our educational programs, especially during tough times. Districts are funded from a combination of local, state, and federal sources, all of which have been negatively impacted by the length and severity of the recession. For Cypress School District, this has resulted in layoffs to teachers and staff, increases in class sizes, and reductions to many programs and services offered to our students.

In addition, districts have also been impacted by declining student enrollment. Declining enrollment is a challenge because of the funding formula used by the state. The amount of funding received is determined based on the number of students who attend your schools. During the 1970s, the Cypress School District grew rapidly and at its peak, had 8,000 students enrolled in 12 schools. Today Cypress School District operates six schools serving approximately 3,900 students. Enrollment is expected to decline over the next few years to approximately 3,700 students.

In response to our community's declining enrollment and the ongoing recession in California, Cypress School District and its Board of Trustees has elected to proactively address these challenges in two ways. The first entailed the painstaking decision to close schools. As enrollment continued to decline, it became fiscally imprudent to operate our small schools. During 2009, from March to December, twelve public meetings were held in order to determine how many schools and which schools to close. This was a very difficult and emotional decision; however, it was a necessary one in order to ensure the financial health of the District.

The second decision recently made by our Board of Trustees is to utilize the closed school sites to replace the lost state revenue. This decision was made after several months of exploring best alternatives in how the District might maximize use of its six unused properties without asking property owners to tax themselves by means of a parcel tax.

Surplus Property Helps Fund the Future

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The State of California has a series of laws that control the steps a school district must take in order to lease, sell, or exchange their surplus property. Cypress School District is following these requirements. The Board of Trustees believe that it has a responsibility to use these surplus assets in such a way that their full value is realized and will benefit this generation and future generations of Cypress School District students. In addition, it is our belief that the reuse of these former school sites will benefit the city as a whole.

The District has identified six properties for reuse. The initial plan involves maximizing the value of three sites. As a result, the District is developing a Specific Plan which would govern the reuse of the Cawthon, Damron, and District office property sites. These sites would be sold to or exchanged with a new home builder. The builders who acquire the properties would develop them according to the guidelines of the Specific Plan. This plan, following a series of technical and environmental studies (traffic, noise, air quality, etc.) would eventually be approved or denied by the city. It is the intent of Cypress School District to develop a plan which provides for single family detached homes, which are compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods, on each of these sites.

In September 2011, the District hosted five public meetings in the Cawthon, Damron, and District Office neighborhoods to provide information about the reuse of the three sites initially being planned for reuse. The District mailed over 650 notices to residents living within 500 feet of each site, inviting them to these meetings. In total, about 100 neighbors attended one or more meetings to learn about the District's plan and to express their concerns regarding the potential impacts of a new home development in their neighborhood. Through the Specific Plan document, the District, with oversight by the City of Cypress, will develop a plan that will address the concerns expressed.

The Board of Trustees and Cypress School District truly value its community and will want to remain as good neighbors. We have heard and understand the concerns from some residents in the immediate vicinity of the schools planned for reuse. The District will continue working earnestly in addressing these concerns as we finalize the Specific Plans.

Education is a community endeavor and the Board of Trustees and Cypress School District are excited about how the development of these sites will create a financial legacy that will benefit its community and generations of future students.

Sincerely,



Beverly M. Hempstead
Superintendent