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News Release

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LAUSD APPROVES “VISTA HERMOSA” OPTION TO COMPLETE BELMONT LEARNING CENTER

Plan Serves 3,100 High School Students and Includes Only Park Space in Downtown Los Angeles

The Board of Education of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) today approved a plan to build a new high school and a 10-12 acre park at the Belmont Learning Center (BLC). The Board’s approval, by a vote of 4-3, means that construction will proceed to deliver 3,100 high school student seats to an extremely overcrowded area.

Superintendent Roy Romer recommended the approval of the Vista Hermosa option, which was developed cooperatively by LAUSD School Board Members José Huizar, Marlene Canter and Mike Lansing.

Under the Vista Hermosa option, the District will complete a high school on the BLC site, demolish two buildings that sit atop a seismic fault, complete the remaining buildings (2,100 student seats) and build two new structures: a new 500-seat academy and a student union that includes an auditorium, library and cafeteria. Another 500-seat academy will be built at the Central LA High School #10 (known as 3rd Street Annex).

“This is a tremendous victory for our community,” said Huizar, who represents the area. “The commitment of the parents, students, community leaders and elected officials has been the catalyst for the extraordinary plans of the Vista Hermosa option.”

Vista Hermosa combines the development of 3,100 high school seats in the Pico-Union/Westlake area with a 10-12 acre park (Vista Hermosa Park) to be developed by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy.

“This is a real victory for children and public education in Los Angeles,” said Romer. “Vista Hermosa transforms downtown Los Angeles, providing safe schools and a park – both essential to a thriving community. We can now move forward with building a complex of schools that connect elementary, middle and senior high schools students in the area and provide a link that will enhance the quality of education in the downtown area. “

With approval of the Vista Hermosa option, the District will:

- Deliver 3,100 high school seats within 4 years
- Demolish the existing Administration and Academy #1 buildings on the BLC site
- Complete Academy Buildings #2, 3, 4 (already 60 percent complete)
- Build a new auditorium, library, student union, cafeteria and parent center
- Build a 500-seat academy at Central LA High School #10
- After construction of other schools serving the Belmont community is completed, convert the existing Belmont High School to a middle school, which adds 2,400 middle school seats to the area
- Work with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to create a 10-12 acre park that will feature a soccer field, several picnic areas, an urban fishing pond and an outdoor amphitheater for use by students and the community.

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The District will complete environmental studies under the guidance of the State's environmental agency, the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC). The DTSC certifies schools as safe before they are occupied by students.

The cost of completing the project is approximately \$131 million and would be mostly funded by developer fees. A breakdown of costs:

- \$80 million to redesign and complete existing buildings to create 2,100 seats at the BLC
- \$20 million to build new 500-seat academy at the BLC site
- \$10 million to build a new auditorium and cafeteria
- \$1 million for demolition
- \$20 million to build a second 500-student academy at the 3rd Street Annex site

Because the District already owns the land at both the BLC and the 3rd Street Annex site, the costs of completing the project are lower and the District does not have to purchase land or relocate homes and businesses.

The District is building four new high schools in the downtown Los Angeles area to relieve decades of severe overcrowding at the existing Belmont High School: the high school at the 3rd Street Annex, the high school at 450 N. Grand, Ambassador and now BLC high school with Vista Hermosa Park. The District broke ground on Central L.A. High School #10 (3rd Street Annex) yesterday.

The existing Belmont High School currently serves more than 5,000 students on a staggered year-round calendar. Another 2,400 students who live in the Belmont attendance area are bused to other schools because of the lack of classroom space.

Construction of the Belmont Learning Center was halted amid environmental concerns in 2000. Construction was 60 percent complete and the District had invested \$154 million on the project. Efforts to complete the school in its original configuration were again halted in late 2002 after a seismic fault zone was discovered at the site and scientists were unable to conclusively determine whether the faults are active or inactive. Three options were originally presented to the Board for consideration: 1) to complete construction of the BLC in its original configuration, 2) to build an all-new high school on the west 14 acres of the site and 3) abandon the site altogether and begin the process to build two all-new high schools.

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