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Proposed SP school under scrutiny

Critics of proposed Angels Gate Park High focus on latest designs, which include wind turbines.

By Melissa Pamer, Staff Writer



Students crowd a doorway on the first day of school at San Pedro High, which had 3,600 students enrolled Wednesday. The proposed high school at Angels Gate Park would reduce some of that crowding. Project critics are expected to show up at Barton Hill Elementary today to scrutinize the latest school design. (Steve McCrank / Staff Photographer)

A proposal to build a new high school campus near San Pedro's Angels Gate Park is expected to come under the intense scrutiny of residents opposed to the plans at today's community meeting.

Los Angeles Unified School District officials intend to unveil the latest in a series of designs for the campus, which houses 810 students from crowded San Pedro High School. The campus would occupy 29 acres of the district's property at a former Army site, the Upper Reservation portion of Fort MacArthur.

The plans have evolved since broad strokes were first painted by the district in a March 2008 initial study. The school has shrunk in size from its initial 1,215 students to 810, and officials have said they intend to educate only about 500 students from San Pedro High's two magnet programs at the site.

"To say that we've been responsive to the community is an understatement. We've gone above and beyond," said David Kooper, chief of staff to Richard Vladovic, the LAUSD board member who represents the area.

Kooper stressed that today's presentation, which will cover design and a draft environmental impact report that was released late last month, is not the final site plan.

Though some of the changes made by the district came in response to community complaints, those many iterations have themselves irritated residents who oppose the proposed campus.

"Our main frustration is an ever-changing design that's not being represented by the (environmental impact report)," said Chad Christian, a San Pedro resident who is a member of NOISE, a group opposed to the project.

One of the newest and most unexpected changes to the \$89 million project has been the addition of three dozen 50-foot wind turbines that would provide energy to the school, which would be a "green" demonstration project.

Christian said he and other members of NOISE (Neighborhoods Organized and Involved to Support Education) found the turbine concept especially perplexing since an earlier district environmental assessment had listed top wind speed at the often gusty site as about 6 mph - a figure that was mocked at a meeting last month.

"We think that's disingenuous that they put (the wind turbines) in there for something to bargain with, to pull back out later. I think that's just a trick," Christian said.

Kooper said the effort was part of the district's broader push to make new campuses under its multibillion-dollar construction program more environmentally friendly.

The types of turbines used will be less obtrusive than the big bladed poles found near Palm Springs, he said.

"It's not, I guess, aesthetically pleasing, but it's good for the environment," Kooper said. "To be honest, if the community says they don't want the wind turbines, they get removed."

The district plans to open the school in fall of 2012.

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