



AMERICAN RIVER COLLEGIATE ACADEMY

Facilities Update

Submitted to:

Sacramento County Office of Education

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I. Overview

Rocklin Academy Family of Schools (RAFOS) was founded on the beliefs and values that all students have the ability to learn at high levels and the expectations of our organization/schools to meet or exceed that level. This belief drives our work to address the significant and persistent disparity in academic performance between different groups of students existing in public schools across the Sacramento region today. This conviction led to the opening of American River Collegiate Academy in August 2020 with the intention to provide the proven highly successful educational program of Rocklin Academy schools to the Citrus Heights and Sacramento area communities.

Rocklin Academy Family of Schools understands Sacramento County Office of Education's priority to enroll students at American River Collegiate Academy who are historically underserved. This is our goal as well, and we have worked diligently to attract these families and believe that our efforts are proving to be successful. An enrollment preference for students who qualify for free and reduced priced meals and targeted marketing tactics are implemented aimed to serve the highest needs students. In the 2023-24 school year we have increased the percentage of several of these student groups including the Hispanic/Latino population by 1.7%, English learners by 1.1%, socioeconomically disadvantaged students by 5.2%, and the LCFF unduplicated pupil count by 4.5%. Additionally, this year our percentage of students with disabilities have also increased by 6.4%, those whose district of residence is San Juan Unified increased from 58.8% to 70.5% and students residing in Citrus Heights increased from 45% to 55% when comparing 2022-23 to 2023-24 school years.¹

American River Collegiate Academy opened in August 2020, the first year of the Global COVID-19 Pandemic. Striking a delicate balance between in-person and remote learning became a daily challenge, requiring constant adaptability. Compounding our efforts, a national decline in enrollment cast uncertainties on enrollment projections and future growth. Adding to the complexity, the surge in construction costs due to the pandemic-induced economic strain posed a significant hurdle in developing a permanent facility. Despite the unprecedented obstacles, we forged ahead with unparalleled resilience and creativity determined to provide an exemplary educational option for Citrus Heights and Sacramento area families.

¹ Source: 2023-2024 CALPADS Reports

- 1.1, Enrollment - Primary and Short-term Enrollment Count by Subgroup
- 1.3, Enrollment Count Disaggregated
- 1.17, LCFF Unduplicated Pupil Count

II. Facilities Timeline

April 2019-December 2022

In April 2019, we began working with Turner Impact on potential long-term facility solutions. As we began our journey, our original estimate was between \$12-14 Million (estimated at \$22,000-\$25,000 per student).

October 2019 we toured multiple potential sites in Citrus Heights exploring the feasibility of the sites as a long-term plan.

In December 2019, while working on our appeal through SCOE, we explored the land at 7951 Antelope Road in Citrus Heights as well as a short-term facility at 7755 Hazel Avenue in Orangevale, just over a mile from Citrus Heights.

In January 2020, while working through a Letter of Intent for the Antelope Road property in Citrus Heights, we secured a short-term rental at the Temple Or Rishon at 7755 Hazel in Orangevale.

By February 2020, we had come to an agreement on the price of the land on Antelope Road in Citrus Heights and were developing the full site plan. We also received our project overview and scalable projections to evaluate the fiscal viability of the plan. The projections of cost estimated at \$16-17M which were higher than we had originally thought, however we believed they would be manageable using enrollment figures of 350 in year 1, and growing to 558 by year 3 as well as utilizing SB740 funding. Additionally, we received our approval for ARCA charter petition to open Fall of 2020 and moved forward full steam ahead with the intent to develop the Antelope Road property in Citrus Heights as our permanent site.

March 2020 the unprecedented effects of the Global Pandemic began to materialize.

Unknown effects lead to uncertainty; however, we did not slow down on the facility planning. We entered into a cost-reimbursement agreement with Turner Impact to ensure the project would not stop and could continue moving forward.

August 2020, we opened ARCA with 31 students and we were confident that enrollment would rebound across the State of California and within our school specifically.

We continued working with Turner Impact and the City of Citrus Heights over the next several months where we received approval from the City of Citrus Heights planning department for the development of the Antelope Road property.

We continued to move forward, though our enrollment numbers and waitlist were down, and the effects of the pandemic did not subside. We extended our purchase agreement multiple times as we worked through the challenges of slow enrollment growth (we grew from 31 students to 60, then to 80 students in year 3). Additionally, Transitional Kindergarten ages were expanded by the State which would have had an impact on our potential facility. Labor shortages and rising inflationary costs leading to an unsurmountable rise in the cost of the facility causing the deal to no longer be feasible. The cost of working through the pandemic on this facility was approximately \$1.7 million of funds from our organization.

Although we were devastated that the project we had worked on for the past several years had come to a close it did not diminish our dedication in finding a location within Citrus Heights.

In April of 2022, it appeared that enrollment numbers were not moving as quickly as we had planned. We began to explore additional short to long term facilities within the City of Citrus Heights where we could potentially grow at a slower pace. One of those properties which appeared to be a possibility was Holy Family Catholic Church in Citrus Heights. This facility, though it needed repairs, was already set up for a school, had a multi-purpose area and plenty of parking. We toured the facilities and pursued the possibility of a lease with the Sacramento Diocese; however our lease inquiries were unsuccessful.

Over the past couple of years, we have continued to enhance our current facility. We have worked closely with the Temple in adding additional facility space, security and even some green space. These enhancements have cost over \$60,000. We also continued to explore the possibility of staying in our current location as we were recognizing that any potential facility would require significant upgrades and time. We evaluated the land adjacent to the current location – which Temple Or Rishon owns, to see if we could add portables or additional play space. We also sought to add an 8th portable to the current facility to allow for another year of growth. Neither of those options turned out to be possible.

We continued working closely with the City of Citrus Heights, who introduced us to the possibility of 6060 Sunrise Vista, Citrus Heights, a large three-story building which had ample room for growth, great traffic staging space and lots of potential. Though it did not “look” like a school, we were familiar with this type of structure as one of our other schools is in a three-story office building.

January 2023 – October 2023

In January 2023, we entered a draft Letter of Intent with 6060 Sunrise Vista, Citrus Heights. We worked closely with the owner of the facility on identifying a potential layout as we would need to be able to grow according to our enrollment. This facility was a single, 100,000 square foot building, and needed significant updates to make it school ready. We worked closely with the City of Citrus Heights undergoing a traffic study, our architect in developing potential space planning, and the appropriate departments in Sacramento County Planning. The cost of the traffic study and associated space planning was more than \$80,000.

Through discussions with the different agencies, we learned that the facility needed even more significant improvements (above and beyond the standard tenant improvements) which made this facility out of reach financially. Some of those upgrades included the entire building requiring fire upgrades, a new fire hydrant closed loop, upgrades to the elevator shaft and many, many other items. Additionally, we had planned to add a secondary building to the parking area to accommodate a gymnasium and kitchen. We learned that we would need to move the stormwater sewer drain from the adjacent department. These improvements would be at our cost and would require us to grow our enrollment faster than our previous projections in order to be fiscally viable.

Though we were not pleased with the outcome, we now have some projects and experiences we could use to refine our search within Citrus Heights. We went back to the City of Citrus Heights to discuss potential locations as well as direct our broker try to find any and all potential locations.

October 2023-December 2023

In October, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) issued several Public Service Announcements to highlight potential threats in the United States in response to the HAMAS attacks on Israel on October 7th. In response to the potential threat and in collaboration with the Temple Or Rishon, additional security measures were put into place including hiring a full-time armed guard and keeping the gate closed during school hours. Unfortunately, many families and staff have expressed their concern with safety at a Jewish facility. Due to online threats that on October 13th would be “a call of terror,” 30 students were absent from school as parents expressed concern of their child(ren) being safe at school. Three families have dis-enrolled indicating safety as their reason. This has led us to seek an alternative facility as soon as possible.

Staff and Board members continued to engage with the City of Citrus Heights to evaluate every facility opportunity aligned to our projected growth. Citrus Heights City manager, Ash Finney, met with San Juan Unified School District Superintendent, who indicated she would be willing to meet to discuss potential San Juan Unified space in Citrus Heights. Superintendent Stout reached out several times to the superintendent to schedule a meeting to discuss potential facility space. Unfortunately, a meeting did not occur and an email was received from the Chief Operations Officer indicating that no space is currently available in Citrus Heights.

Throughout this timeframe, staff continued to work with our real estate agent to explore any additional options within Citrus Heights including churches and private schools. Twenty churches with potential space were contacted. Unfortunately, there are no churches or private schools that have enough space to accommodate our current students, let alone future growth. Staff reached out again to Holy Family Catholic Church, but as of the date of this publication, we have not received a return call. As of now, we believe Holy Family Catholic Church to be our only feasible option in Citrus Heights.

As our real estate agent was looking into potential locations in Citrus Heights, he brought forward a promising facility next door to our current location, 7801 Hazel Avenue, Orangevale. Staff toured the facility and saw great potential for this location to be the home of American River Collegiate Academy.

III. Proposed Facility Location

Although this facility is located in Orangevale and is 1.3 miles from Citrus Heights, we believe we can continue to increase our number of Citrus Heights families, English learners, and socio-economically disadvantaged students. We recognize that even if we were located in Citrus Heights, we could not guarantee which families would choose to come to our schools. To that end, we are collaborating with the Sayonara Center in Citrus Heights to host an information night in January. We will host dinner and provide an English and

Spanish session to provide information of our school as well as seek input on needs and services. We anticipate transportation may be a barrier for families, so we are actively strategizing potential solutions. Additionally, we are in the process of identifying other potential locations to host information sessions within Citrus Heights.

The Temple Or Rishon has been a great partner in providing space for American River Collegiate Academy. Unfortunately, many of our families do not feel safe at our current campus due to the Israel-Hamas war. The proposed location at 7801 Hazel Avenue is not affiliated with the Jewish community and would not have the perceived threat as our current location.

Our current location restricts our growth. Unable to add additional portable classrooms, we will be forced to limit enrollment for the 24-25 school year and beyond. The proposed location at 7801 Hazel Avenue has space to accommodate our current and long-term projected enrollment.

Additionally, the proposed location at 7801 Hazel Avenue is fiscally responsible. With minimal improvements we would be able to occupy the location. As our enrollment grows, we would be able to justify the expansion of the location to meet the needs of our students. The proposed location would allow us to move in with minimal improvements and provide for growth through the long term as more improvements are required creating a fiscally viable solution. Additionally, with the look and feel of a school, it provides a welcome atmosphere to students which would continue to bolster our enrollment and waitlist.