News Release

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Roosevelt High School Comprehensive Modernization Project Moves Forward with Plan to Build a Social Justice Learning Center

LOS ANGELES – Dialogue and collaboration with the parents and stakeholders of Theodore Roosevelt High School continues to be a priority for Los Angeles Unified. A settlement agreement has been reached to provide funding that enhances the comprehensive modernization project underway and to recognize the unique culture and history at Roosevelt High School. Thanks to the commitment of the Boyle Heights community, the planned Interpretative Program included in the project will incorporate additional elements that further commemorate the stories and experiences of the historical events that took place at the school campus. In addition, the District will commit resources and partner with the Committee to Defend Roosevelt and other stakeholders to raise funding for a Social Justice Learning Center that will serve as an education center for its students and community.

Recognizing the importance of reaching a settlement agreement with the Committee to Defend Roosevelt, Board President Mónica García said, “In the spirit of the 1968 walkouts, we are grateful to the Committee to Defend Roosevelt for reaching a settlement agreement with Los Angeles Unified that allows the District to stay on course with the much needed modernization improvements for the Roosevelt High School campus and community.”

“We will always honor our past and continue the fight for educational justice,” she added. “Thank you to our parents and community partners for your continued participation in the development of this urgent project. Our District values your voice, and is ensuring your input is reflected in the Comprehensive Modernization project.”

“Providing state-of-the-art learning environments throughout the District will help Los Angeles Unified better prepare students for the 21st Century. To be able to accomplish that goal and commemorate the historical events that occurred at Roosevelt High School, is a victory for students, families, and the community,” said Los Angeles Unified Superintendent Austin Beutner. “We are enhancing the modernization plans to reflect
what is important to this community, which is to preserve the cultural significance of this school campus.”

Superintendent Beutner added, “The Social Justice Learning Center will be a place for the community to come together and help teach and inspire the next generation of students.”

"As the Ellis Island of Los Angeles, Roosevelt High School has been home to diverse communities, from Jewish to Japanese, African American to Italian and Latino communities, playing a pivotal role in American history,” said Los Angeles Councilman Gil Cedillo. “It is unfortunate that due to seismic and financial constraints, the physical structure at Roosevelt High School could not be saved. However, the living legacy of the school, the elite athletes, public servants, business entrepreneurs and social justice warriors that emerged from there, will be memorialized through a social justice center at the new state of the art facility.”

Councilman Cedillo added, “I congratulate the new Superintendent, the Los Angeles Unified School Board, School Board President Mónica García, the Los Angeles Conservancy, students and alumni, and most importantly the Committee to Preserve Roosevelt High School, who worked diligently to ensure that our history was preserved while providing our kids the best facilities available to them. When we invite everyone to the decision-making table, great things happen.”

“Modernization should never challenge Historic Preservation, which is the most educational information you can teach,” said Committee to Defend Roosevelt President Vivian Escalante. “A win-win situation is to have both complement one another and not modernization removing historical preservation.”

“We must first recognize the hundreds of youth and parents that for years demanded educational justice on behalf of future generations of Roosevelt High School students. We are grateful for their courageous leadership and continued call to action that moves the Roosevelt modernization project forward without any further delay,” said Inner City Struggle Executive Director Maria Brenes. “This is a historic investment for Boyle Heights providing new learning opportunities to prepare students for success.” She added, “This will be the school facility our youth truly deserve!”

"I am very pleased and excited that the community, alumni, parents, students and staff have come together to approve plans for the Modernization Project for Roosevelt High School,” said President of Roosevelt High School Alumni Foundation Vivian Candy Tanamachi. “The new campus infrastructure will provide current and future students with the facilities needed to build the foundation for their successes in life.”

She added, “With the completion date set for 2022, I look forward to celebrating the integration of the new buildings on campus with the Rough Rider traditions for Roosevelt's 100th Anniversary. We are all Rough Riders 4 Life.”
"As an alumni of Roosevelt, I was hoping to save the historic R Building," said Steven Ybarra, a member of the Board of Directors of the Committee to Defend Roosevelt. “It will be a loss that nothing can replace, however, I am pleased to see a significant part of the building will be preserved and relocated.”

“The Roosevelt modernization project will provide our students with a state-of-the-art facility that genuinely meets their needs as aspiring college students, professionals, and community leaders,” said Joan Sullivan, chief executive officer of the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, which includes Roosevelt High School among its 18 campuses. “We applaud today’s settlement, which makes it possible for us to deliver on much-needed campus upgrades, while honoring the powerful legacy of this historic campus. Roosevelt High School has a rich tradition in Boyle Heights, and we look forward to building on this tradition with our partners as we accelerate student achievement and deliver on the promise of a quality education for all.”

“With Roosevelt High School’s historic significance in East Los Angeles, I am pleased the District and the community have agreed on the modernization of the Roosevelt High School campus,” said Los Angeles Unified Local District East Superintendent Jose Huerta. “With the planned modernization, the school will offer a 21st century learning experience worthy of its students and community, and the school’s cultural significance and historical perspective will never be demolished.”

“Roosevelt is proud to be a school that the serves the community, and this agreement shows that we can modernize while honoring our campus history and legacy,” says Ben Gertner, principal of Roosevelt High School. “Upgrading our campus and technology will allow our teachers to work closely with college instructors and industry professionals to develop creative and innovation instruction and build on our strength as a center for high-quality education that prepares our students for a bright future.”

Los Angeles Unified Chief Facilities Executive Mark Hovatter said, “To reach this point, extensive due diligence activities, including historic evaluations, structural and seismic analyses, other environmental studies, and extensive public engagement have been done to ensure the Roosevelt High School community is ultimately provided with a safe and state-of-the-art high school campus that honors its culture and history, including the 1968 walkouts.”

In an effort to provide equity between newer and older campuses, Roosevelt High School is one of 22 large-scale comprehensive modernization projects approved by the Board of Education to address the most critical physical conditions at schools with the greatest need for significant improvements to its buildings and grounds.

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