



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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SMMUSD Begins Demolition of Former Church Property

The Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District started demolition this week of the former Sunset Park Christian Church at Maple and 16th.

Contractors have removed furniture and fixtures from the building at 1515 Maple Street, before beginning the work to raze the structure and remove the debris. Abatement of hazardous materials will occur next under the strict regulatory process and oversight. When demolition is complete, no later than March, the district will repair the existing parking lot and install and maintain a lawn and shrubs on the rest of the property that it acquired last year.

District staff met with local community members and worked with them on the immediate plans. During that process, district officials said that they looked into rehabbing the existing building, but found that it was cost prohibitive and impractical for use as a school building.

Before demolition began, the district tried to reduce the volume of items going to a landfill. Among those efforts:

- Two of three pianos are in new forever homes.
- A load of historical items — including birth, baptismal and death records — were donated to the Santa Monica Historical Society.
- One resident who requested to do so was allowed to take bibles and other spiritual items.
- The demolition contractor was able to donate the outdoor play equipment.

Officials also requested that the contractor protect the cross atop the church from damage. As much as it difficult to see items discarded, it is ineffective and cost prohibitive to find reuse of all furniture, fixtures and equipment.

The property will be used as overflow parking for John Adams Middle School staff during construction of a new performing arts center on Pearl Street. Construction on this project is expected to start in the spring.

The church property will be developed as part of the Will Rogers Learning Community in the future, but the district has not made plans yet beyond the temporary parking and landscaping.

District Chief Operations Officer Carey Upton said the district acted quickly once the property became available in early 2018. “It was a rare opportunity for us to grow the footprint of one of our schools and, eventually, improve the environment for students.”

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Written by Chris Clonts, Communications Specialist