

# Los Angeles Unified School District

## Office of Environmental Health and Safety

**AUSTIN BEUTNER**  
*Superintendent of Schools*

**CARLOS A. TORRES**  
*Director, Environmental Health and Safety*

**JENNIFER FLORES**  
*Deputy Director, Environmental Health and Safety*

September 3, 2020

Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Chair  
Members, Planning and Land Use Management Committee  
City of Los Angeles  
200 N Spring St  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Support for Motion to Study Incompatible Industrial Uses Next to Schools & Residential Areas; Council File 20-0826

Dear Chair Harris-Dawson:

I am reaching out to the Planning and Land Use Management Committee (“Committee”) in my capacity as the Director of Environmental Health & Safety for the Los Angeles Unified School District. I am tasked with the mission of ensuring a safe environment for over 700,000 students to learn, 24,000 teachers to teach and 66,000 employees to work. In concert with this mission, Los Angeles Unified is in full support of the attached Motion to Study Incompatible Industrial Uses Next to Schools & Residential Areas (“Motion”), Council File 20-0826.

Los Angeles Unified applauds this Committee’s efforts to study the potential incompatibilities plaguing neighborhoods and looks forward to learning next steps to be taken to correct potentially dangerous situations from high risk facilities. With full understanding of the pandemic’s likely effect on the Committee’s important work, it is not entirely surprising that your September 3, 2020 meeting has a limited agenda. However, I implore that this Motion be added to the agenda of your next meeting, as it has been several months since it was introduced by Councilmember Wesson in June 2020.

To illustrate the need for this Motion, I need to call to your attention to a dangerous air quality and health and safety hazard situation. There is an ultra-hazardous metal recycling facility, Atlas Iron and Metal Company (“Atlas”), located in Watts that threatens the health and safety of students, teachers and staff at Jordan High School, as well as the local Watts community, including the newly constructed Jordan Downs development currently being populated with approximately 1,500 families. Jordan High School is on one side of the Atlas facility and the new Jordan Downs housing community is on the other.

Los Angeles Unified has been working tirelessly to eliminate the environmental, health and safety impacts caused by Atlas, but to date, none of the appropriate regulatory authorities has taken any significant action to require Atlas to mitigate its impacts. Of interest to this Committee are the

constant metallic emissions and deposit of metal particulates from Atlas that have permeated the newly installed athletic facilities and internal buildings of our school. In addition, there are also dangers posed by projectiles and shrapnel flying over Atlas' walls onto the school campus. Each time this happens, there is a substantial risk of harm to students and staff from these flying metal shards. Unfortunately, we have not been able to receive sufficient help from city agencies such as the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety. This department is well aware of the situation and has received numerous complaints from Los Angeles Unified, but to date, only limited action has been taken. As you know, Watts has been an underserved community in Los Angeles for a long time and these type of unregulated facilities and incompatible land uses result in serious issues of environmental "injustice".

Through our support of this Motion, we are hopeful that this is yet another way that Los Angeles Unified and the City of Los Angeles can work together towards the common goal of making our communities a safe place to learn, work and live. We of course will provide any information or supporting testimony to assist your review.

For more information, please see the following Los Angeles Times article, <https://lat.ms/2EqM4wP>, the attached photos and the site where we have housed pertinent documents, photos and videos at <https://achieve.lausd.net/Page/16939>. We look forward to discussing this issue with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Carlos A. Torres, Director  
Office of Environmental Health and Safety  
Los Angeles Unified School District

Attachments:

Photos

c: Councilmember Bob Blumenfield  
Councilmember Curren D. Price, Jr.  
Councilmember Gilbert A. Cedillo  
Councilmember John S. Lee

## MOTION

Los Angeles continues to evolve; communities are changing, and zoning must continue to be updated to both respond to and prepare for the continuous population movement. New housing, new schools, new childcare, restaurants, and recreational areas are creating residential neighborhoods next to industrial sites. These inconsistencies can pose real threats to public safety and the potential severe health risks posed by exposure to airborne contaminants and concern that this is disproportionately happening in low-income communities of color.

Black and Brown communities have always been targeted as dumping sites for toxic pollution. This issue was brought into the national spotlight in 1982 when a landfill in Warren County, North Carolina became the proposed site for dumping toxic soil filled with polychlorinated biphenyls – chemicals that were commonly found in electrical equipment with a known range of adverse health impacts. Warren County was one of the only majority African American counties in the state. This event is widely seen as the beginning of the environmental justice movement.

In this era of deeper concern for the air we breathe, the impact on our pulmonary health, the increasing public knowledge of how particles (human and/or industrial) can move through the air now necessitates that the operation and location of recycling plants be reviewed. Senate Bill (SB) 1249 by Senator Jerry Hill became law January 1, 2015, after fires at metal shredding facilities in his district, as well as historic concerns about metal shredders and their impact on the environment, raised concerns about metal shredder safety. SB 1249 required the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to thoroughly evaluate the operations of metal shredding facilities to ensure adequate protection of human health and the environment, particularly when these facilities are near sensitive, vulnerable populations.

A metal recycling facility (known as a “scrap recycling facility” in statute) is a facility where machinery and equipment are used for processing and manufacturing scrap metal into prepared grades and whose principal product is scrap iron or nonferrous metallic scrap for sale for re-melting purposes. A scrap recycling facility includes, but is not limited to, a feeder yard, a metal shredding facility, a metal crusher, and a metal baler.

A “metal shredding facility” represents a unique subset of metal recycling facilities, one which uses a shredding technique to process end-of-life vehicles, appliances, and other forms of scrap metal to facilitate the separation and storing of ferrous metals (metals that contain iron, such as steel), nonferrous metals (metals that do not contain iron, such as aluminum and copper), and other recyclable materials from nonrecyclable materials that are components of end-of-life vehicles, appliances, and other forms of scrap metal. “Metal shredding facility” does not include a feeder yard, metal crusher, or metal baler, if that facility does not otherwise conduct metal shredding operations.

JUN 23 2020

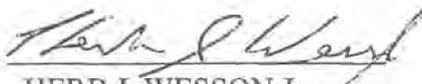


Over the past 20 years, in a challenging urban setting, voters directed L.A. Unified School District to build 131 new campuses and expand 65 existing ones, the largest effort ever in the nation. Locations for these new schools were selected to minimize destruction of scant housing and often fell to industrial locations.

**I THEREFORE MOVE**, that the City Council direct the Department of Building & Safety with assistance from the Department of City Planning to report back in 30 days on the following:

- 1) Identify any/all metal recycling or metal shredding facilities which are housed inside the City of Los Angeles and are next to any of the following:
  - a) Schools
  - b) Residential uses
  - c) Child care facilities
  - d) Recreational facilities
  - e) Hospital and medical facilities
  - f) Parks and Open Space
- 2) Report on any/all complaint histories and/or public records of violations against these facilities.
- 3) Rank each of these facilities by number of code enforcement complaints and gravity of code enforcement violation allegations.
- 4) List corrective actions taken by the Department of Building & Safety or any other City Department for each facility on the roster (Chronological Case History)
- 5) Identify any sites from this roster which are recommended as incompatible with existing or proposed residential uses and other land uses and an action plan to advance the complete remediation of any sites found to be incompatible.
- 6) Identify locations where schools and adjacent industry should be considered for rezoning to protect children and families from potentially harmful air, water, or other pollutants.

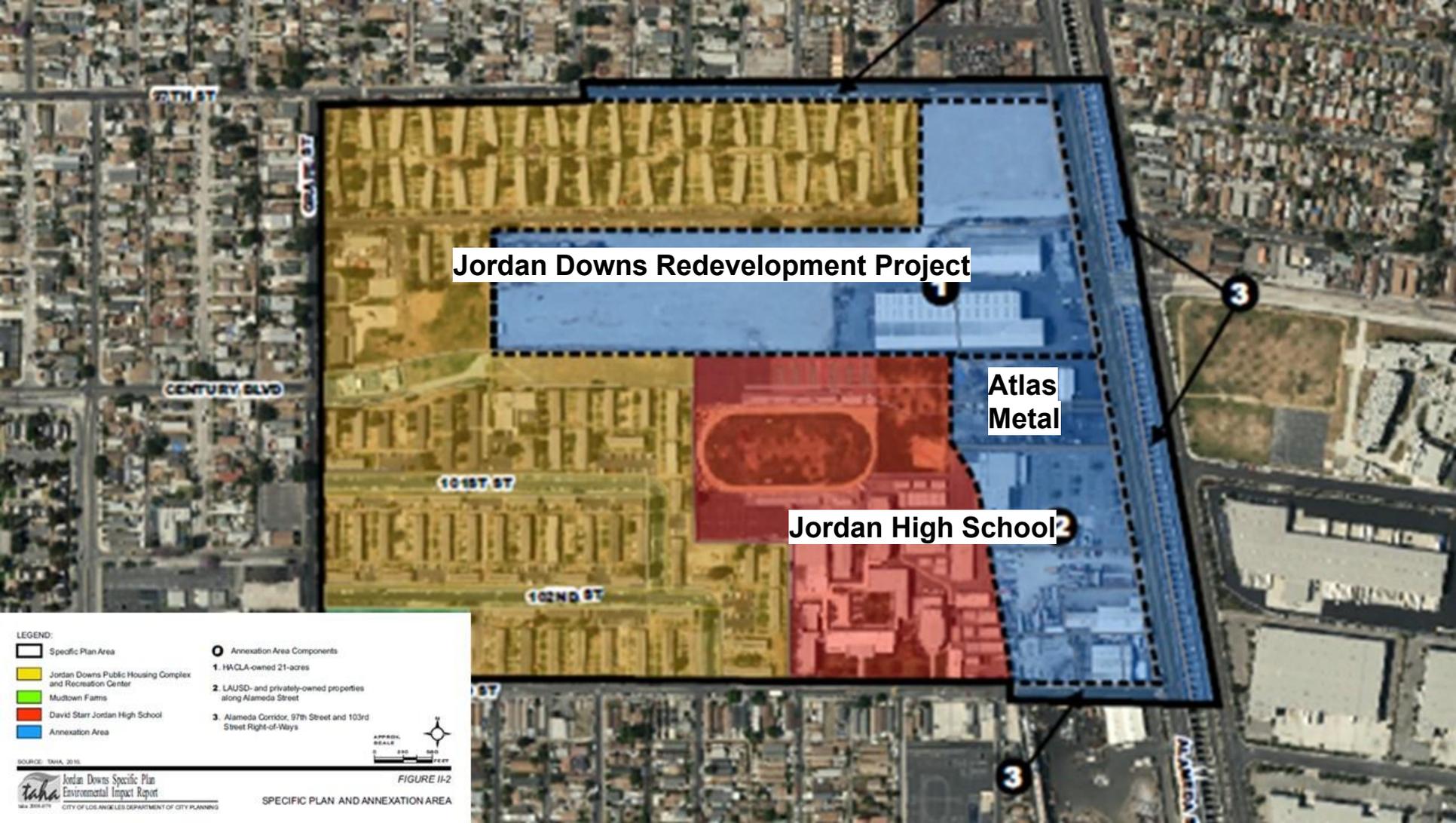
ORIGINAL

PRESENTED BY:   
HERB J. WESSON Jr.  
Councilmember, 10<sup>th</sup> District

SECONDED BY: 

RECENT IMAGES OF  
ATLAS METALS FACILITY NEXT TO JORDAN  
HIGH SCHOOL

August 2020



Jordan Downs Redevelopment Project

Atlas Metal

Jordan High School

**LEGEND:**

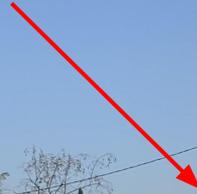
- Specific Plan Area
- Jordan Downs Public Housing Complex and Recreation Center
- Mudtown Farms
- David Starr Jordan High School
- Annexation Area

**○** Annexation Area Components

1. HCLA-owned 21-acres
2. LAUSD- and privately-owned properties along Alameda Street
3. Alameda Corridor, 97th Street and 103rd Street Right-of-Ways

APPROX. SCALE  
  
0 100 200 FT

**Atlas stockpile  
looking N from  
Jordan HS**



**Atlas stockpiles  
and equipment  
looking NE from  
Jordan HS**



Please click on picture  
to run video.



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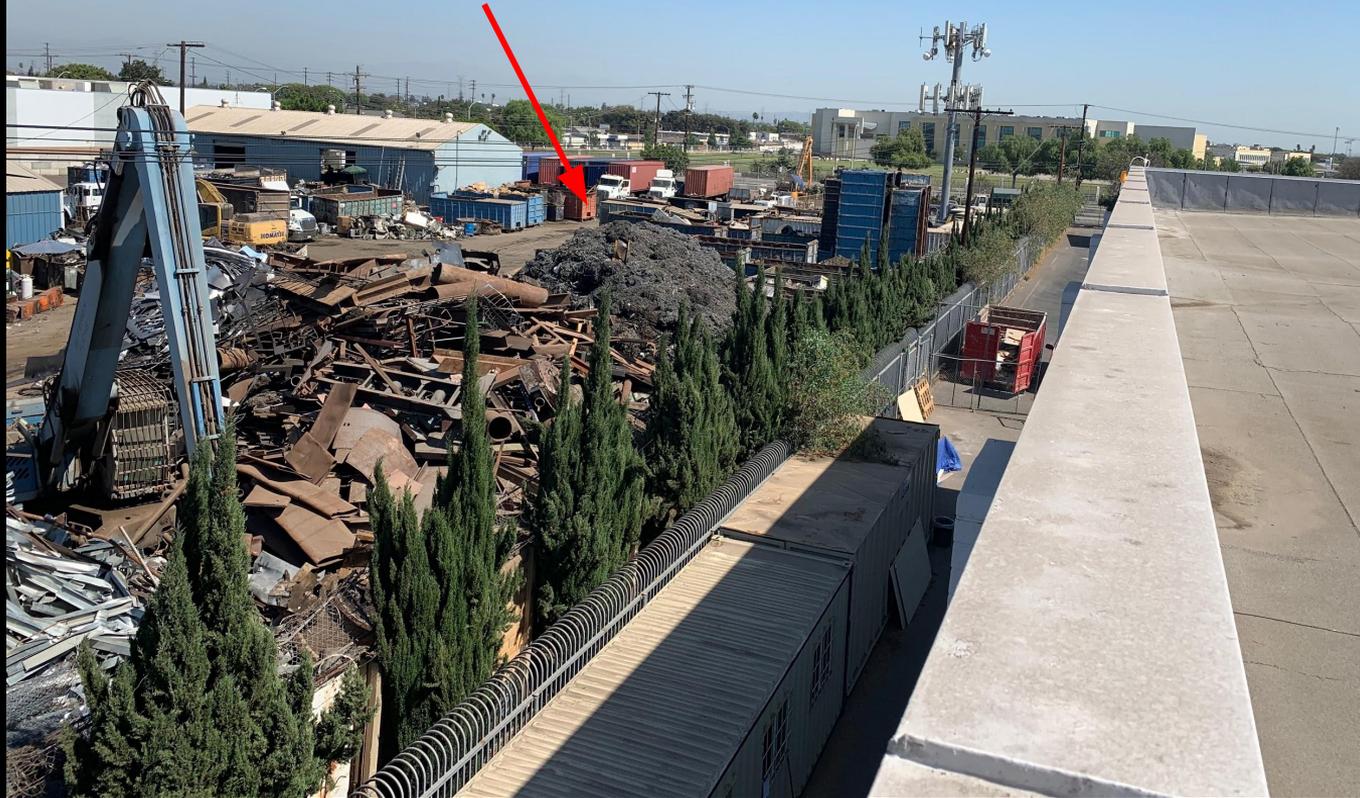
**Numerous metal stockpiles looking  
NW from the Jordan HS gym roof**



**Numerous metal stockpiles  
looking N from the Jordan HS gym roof**



**Uncovered metal shavings stockpile  
looking NE from the Jordan HS gym roof**



**Close-up of metal shavings stockpile  
looking N from Jordan HS**



# FIRES AT METAL RECYCLING FACILITIES



Becker, MN



Becker, MN



Becker, MN



Los Angeles, CA



Firefighters remain at the scene of a fire that has been burning for more than 24 hours at the Northern Metal Recycling plant in Becker, Minn. Firefighter Toni Knutson says the fire is burning under a huge pile of cars. She says cranes are being used to remove the vehicles from the pile one by one. David Joles | Star Tribune via AP  
FEBRUARY 19, 2020

# Projectile Flung onto Jordan High School Tuesday 2.25.20 @ 12:00 noon



## LAUSD Facilities Division Construction Site Accident/Incident Statement

<b>NAME of person making this statement:</b> Ric Rivera	
<b>PHONE #:</b> 626-460-9826	<b>DATE:</b> 2/25/20
<b>COMPANY:</b> A&B Construction, Inc.	<b>LOCATION:</b> Jordan High School
<b>POSITION:</b> Superintendent	<b>TASK at time of incident:</b>
<b>SUPERVISOR:</b> Ric Rivera	<b>TIME:</b> 12:00 PM

Your statement is important to the successful resolution of the Accident/Incident under investigation. It should be limited to the facts of the issue and should not set forth your opinions. Your opinions may be provided to the investigating official. Your statement will be used within LAUSD to support corrective actions, further safety and security investigations/reviews, sharing of lessons learned, and other administrative reasons. Your statement may be provided to LAUSD & the LAUSD OCIP Insurance Broker & Carrier in the furtherance of contractual obligations.

**SIGNATURE of person making this statement:** Ric Rivera

**STATEMENT by witness OR person involved in the accident/incident (gather several statements at accident/incident scene)** – what happened; where exactly did it happen – N,S,E,W of (draw a diagram on the back of what happened if it helps describe the incident); what did you see and hear; what did you do immediately after the accident; what did people say and who said it;

Piece of steel projectile flung over from the neighboring recycling yard on the south of the school behind the main gym narrowly

one of our construction employees.

