



New Solar Covered Parking

La Joya Community High School Looks Ahead to Campus Upgrades Focused on Safety, Student Experience, and School Pride

By: Staff Writer

La Joya Community High School is preparing for a series of campus improvements designed to enhance student safety, increase comfort, expand extracurricular opportunities, and strengthen school pride. During a recent episode of The Education Exchange podcast, Superintendent Jeremy Calles joined Principal Dr. William Sorensen and student leaders Ivan Valdez Garcia and Lily Brewer to discuss both recent upgrades and future projects planned for the campus.

One of the most noticeable recent improvements has been the student parking lot. According to student council Executive President Ivan Valdez Garcia, the addition of speed bumps has helped improve traffic flow and safety for students arriving and leaving campus.

“The speed bumps really do help,” Valdez Garcia said. “They help regulate the traffic a bit and help everything go kind of smoothly, whether that’s coming to school or on my way home.”

The district has also invested in solar-covered parking, providing much-needed shade during Arizona’s extreme summer temperatures. Principal Sorensen called the shaded parking a significant quality-of-life improvement for students.

“It’s so nice for kids to be able to park in the shade and not come into a car that’s 130 degrees,” Sorensen said.

Additional shade has also been added through the installation of a large canopy in the campus courtyard. Students praised the project, noting the importance of creating comfortable outdoor spaces in Arizona’s heat.

“It’s really hot in Arizona,” Valdez Garcia said. “I think it’s really beneficial that the students who hang out under the courtyard have shade provided.”

Looking ahead, district leaders are exploring plans to replace some of the campus’s rock-covered areas with turf, grass, and shaded gathering spaces. Both student representatives said such improvements would make the campus more attractive and functional.

Principal Sorensen noted that replacing rock areas could also reduce maintenance challenges, as loose rocks frequently clog drainage systems and require ongoing upkeep.

Another key project under consideration is campus beautification through new exterior paint and branding that reflects the school's colors and identity. Sorensen emphasized that appearance plays an important role in creating a positive school culture and student pride.

"The nicer things look aesthetically, the more pride we take," Sorensen said. "I think it improves the pride in our school, and that will carry over into a lot of aspects of how we function as a school."

Future plans also include renovations to the Performing Arts Center, featuring upgraded theatrical equipment, lighting, and learning spaces. Sorensen said modern equipment is essential for preparing students for careers in performing arts and entertainment industries.

"If we really want to set our students up for a career in that field regarding post-secondary success, we should have the best equipment for them to use that is industry standard," Sorensen said.

Additional athletic opportunities could come through the construction of an auxiliary gym. The facility would support growing student enrollment, create space for new athletic programs such as boys volleyball and badminton, and provide more indoor practice areas during Arizona's hottest months.

"Adding that facility will improve safety for our wellness classes," Sorensen said. "It will increase the opportunity for kids to find purpose, identity, and community."

As the district continues refining its capital improvement plan, students and staff agree on one priority above all else: creating spaces that support learning, engagement, and school pride. From added shade and green space to upgraded arts facilities, campus beautification, and a new auxiliary gym, the vision for La Joya Community High School is clear: a campus that reflects the excellence of its students and community.

Whether these improvements move forward, however, will ultimately depend on voter support. On November 3, 2026, Tolleson Union High School District voters will decide the future of these projects as part of the district's Bond and Override election. The bond would fund campus and facility improvements across the district, including many of the projects discussed for La Joya Community High School, while the override would support teacher pay increases, academic programs, extracurricular opportunities, and other services that directly benefit students. District leaders say the measures represent an opportunity to continue investing in safe, modern learning environments while supporting the educators and programs that help students succeed. As Superintendent Calles noted throughout the discussion, continued improvements to campuses like La Joya are made possible through community support and a shared commitment to providing students with the best possible educational experience.