

State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary #  
HRI #  
Trinomial  
NRHP Status Code: 6Z

Other Listings  
Review Code

Reviewer

Date

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\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder): Sierra Madre Public Library

P1. Other Identifier: None

\*P2. Location:  Not for Publication  Unrestricted

\*a. County: Los Angeles and (P2b and P2c or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)

\*b. USGS 7.5' Quad: Mt. Wilson Date: 1995 T1N; R11W; \_\_\_ of \_\_\_ of Sec ; \_\_\_ B.M.

c. Address: 440 W. Sierra Madre Boulevard City: Sierra Madre Zip: 91024

d. UTM (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone: \_\_\_, \_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_ mN

e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate): APN 5768-021-900

\*P3a. Description (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries):

The subject property features an asymmetrical front-gabled roof (longer on the east side) behind a lower, flat-roofed entrance section. The walls are clad in a combination of red brick, board-and-batten, stucco, and floor-to-ceiling metal trim windows. There is extensive metal-trim clerestory fenestration on the front-gabled north and south sides. The footprint of the building is rectangular, with minor deviations on the north and east sides. (See Continuation Sheet page 4)

\*P3b. Resource Attributes (List attributes and codes): HP14 Government Building

\*P4. Resources Present:  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)

P5a. Photo or Drawing (Photo required for buildings, structures, and objects.)



P5b. Description of Photo (view, date, accession #):

North/Entrance Façade  
April 4, 2023

\*P6. Date Constructed/Age and Source:

Historic  Prehistoric  Both  
1955 - Sierra Madre Public Library

\*P7. Owner and Address:

City of Sierra Madre  
P.O. Box 0457  
232 West Sierra Madre Blvd.  
Sierra Madre, CA 91024

\*P8. Recorded by (Name, affiliation, and address):

Graham Larkin  
Sapphos Environmental, Inc.  
430 N. Halstead Street  
Pasadena, CA 91107

\*P9. Date Recorded: April 4, 2023

\*P10. Survey Type (Describe): Intensive

\*P11. Report Citation (Cite survey report and other sources, or enter "none"): None

Attachments:  NONE  Location Map  Sketch Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure, and Object Record  
 Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  
 Artifact Record  Photograph Record  Other (List):

# BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder): Sierra Madre Public Library  
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\*NRHP Status Code: 6Z

**B1. Historic Name:** Sierra Madre Public Library

**B2. Common Name:** Sierra Madre Public Library

**B3. Original Use:** Public Library

**B4. Present Use:** Public Library

\*B5. Architectural Style: Contemporary

\*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

The building located at 440 W. Sierra Madre Boulevard was completed in 1955 according to the Library Facility Master Plan (2017). The original building permits were not available online or through the City of Sierra Madre. The 2017 Master Plan report states that the original architect was Sierra Madre resident Robert Henry Ainsworth (1895-1970). Building permits indicate general repairs and regular plumbing, electrical and HVAC upgrades, as well as an addition for the construction of the Jameson Sierra Madre Room in 1981, and the creation of a basement computer room in 2021.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: N/A

Original Location: N/A

\*B8. Related Features: N/A

B9a. Architect: Robert H. Ainsworth

b. Builder: N/A

\*B10. Significance:

Theme: Civic Architecture

Area: Sierra Madre

Period of Significance: 1955

Property Type: Public Library

Applicable Criteria: N/A

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

The subject property is located within the Sierra Madre Tract. The Sierra Madre Tract was surveyed in 1881, and according to the tract map it was owned by N.C. Carter. Born in Lowell, MA, Nathaniel C. Carter (1840-1904) is regarded as the founder of the City of Sierra Madre. A 2014 report from the Sierra Madre Historic Preservation Society states: "In 1881, Carter was living with his family in San Gabriel when he began extensive land purchases in the foothill area that would become Sierra Madre. In 1882, Carter built a small hotel, the 'Ocean View House' and his residence, 'Carterhia,' both of which overlooked his Sierra Madre Tract." (See Continuation Sheet page 8)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes (List attributes and codes): N/A

\*B12. References: See Continuation Sheet page 11.

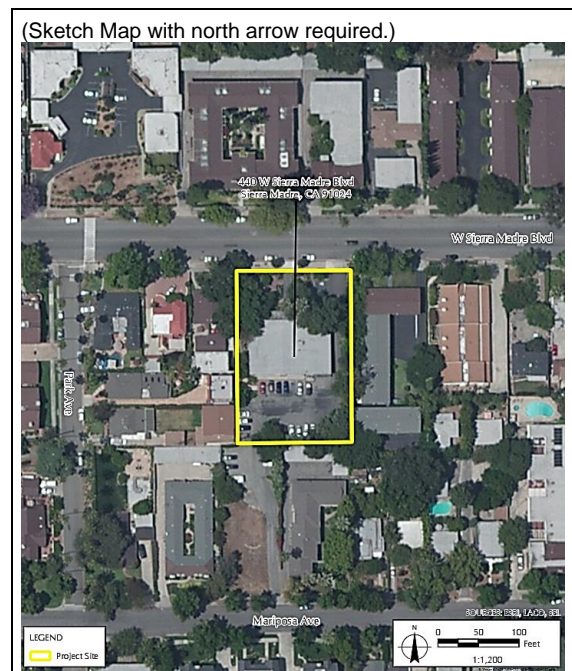
\*B13. Remarks: N/A

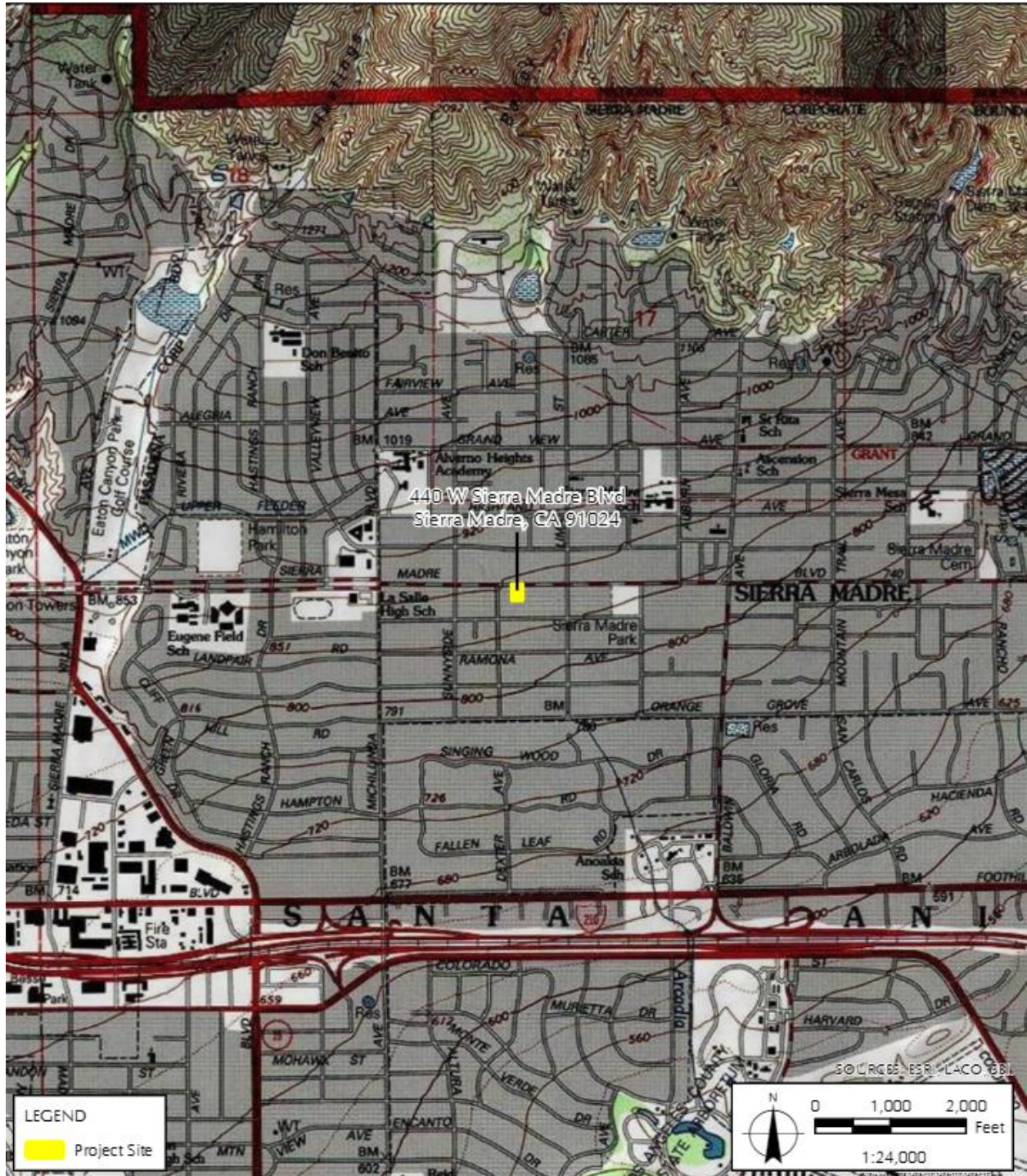
\*B14. Evaluator:

Graham Larkin  
Sapphos Environmental, Inc.  
430 N. Halstead Street  
Pasadena, CA 91107

\*Date of Evaluation: April 4, 2023

(This space reserved for official comments.)





**Exterior**

**Northern/Entrance Façade**

The northern/primary entrance façade of the subject property reveals a front-gabled roof with a lower, flat-roofed entrance section in front. The entrance section comprises two expanses of red brick wall framing an inset entrance with a board-and-batten section of wall beside a full-lite metal door surrounded by metal-trim windows. Behind sits the main building, which features extensive clerestory fenestration, with walls clad in a mix of board-and-batten and floor-to-ceiling multi-lite windows. There are brick planters integrated into the front of the building, and on the left (east) end there is a concrete access ramp with pipe railing.



**Northern/Entrance Façade, general view**



**Northern/Entrance Façade, left side**



**Northern/Entrance Façade, right side**

\*P3a. Description: (Continued from Continuation Sheet page 4)

**Western Façade**

Beneath a deep side-gabled and boxed eave roof, the walls of the western façade of the subject property are clad in board-and-batten and stucco. There is a set of windows on the left, and concrete steps leading to a small porch and flush steel door on the right.



Western Façade, general view



Western Façade, right side

\*P3a. Description: (Continued from Continuation Sheet page 5)

***Southern/Rear Façade***

Higher than the front façade, due to the drop in ground level, the southern/rear façade of the subject property is clad in stucco beneath a deep eave with extensive clerestory fenestration. Beneath the clerestory there is a six-lite expanse of window on the main floor, below which an eave shelters two flush metal basement doors. A metal staircase wraps around the right (southeast) corner.



**Southern/Rear Façade**

***Eastern Façade***

Beneath a deep eave, the walls of the eastern façade are clad in stucco. On the left, there is a flush metal door leading to an elevated steel porch. To its right are three metal-trim windows, and at right there is a shallow porch with pipe railing on a concrete base. On the far right there is a door approached by an accessibility ramp, and an expanse of red brick wall.



**Eastern Façade**

**Interior**

The library interior features a large space with an exposed-beam gable ceiling, and extensive natural lighting thanks to the clerestory windows. There is also extensive fluorescent lighting, largely encased in boxes suspended on wires. The floor is clad in low-pile carpet, and there are fixed desks and shelves as well as many tables and chairs. On the north/entrance side there are two rooms that were added much later than the initial construction: the Jameson Sierra Madre Room to east of the main entrance, and the main floor Computer Room to the west. The basement was not accessible at the time of visit.

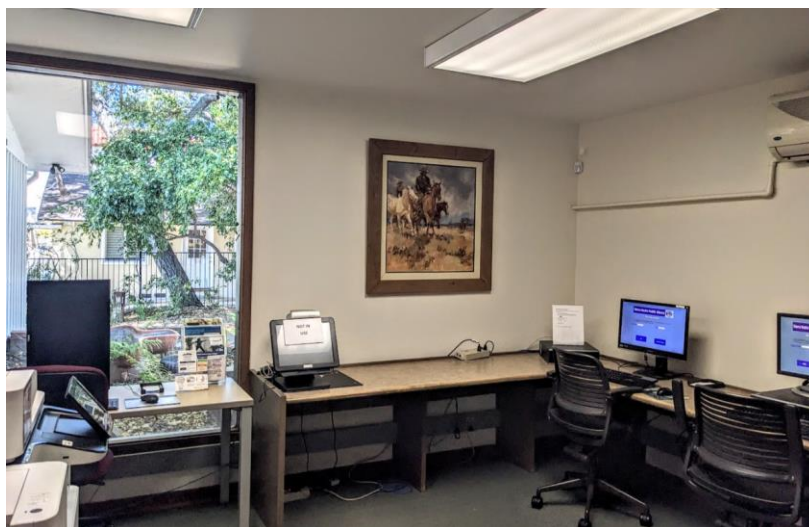
\*P3a. Description: (Continued from Continuation Sheet page 6)



Interior, facing south from near main entrance



Interior, facing northwest from near main entrance



North Side Main Floor Computer Room, facing west

\*P3a. Description: (Continued from Continuation Sheet page 7)



Jameson Sierra Madre Room, facing northwest

\*B10. Significance: (Continued from Building, Structure, Object Report page 2)

Permits and the 2017 Master Plan were consulted to chart the construction and alteration history was (Table 1, 440 W. Sierra Madre Boulevard Permit Data).

**TABLE 1**  
**440 W. SIERRA MADRE BOULEVARD PERMIT DATA**

Year	Permit N°	Work
1/4/1954	N/A	Install lavatory, water closets, sinks, drinking fountain
8/13/1980	B13501	Repair 7,200 square feet
8/19/1981	B14406	Permit for 400 square feet library addition, valued at \$50,000 [2017 Master plan indicates that the Jameson Sierra Madre Room (with 200-square foot addition) was constructed in this year]
1998		Entrance door remodeled to meet disability requirements
3/10/1995	E2967	Lighting renovation per approved plan
12/28/2011	B201099	Install new doors & windows + minor framing & drywall in children's room
3/31/2021	B2012	Create basement computer room

Another source of information for the original building is the two photographs reproduced below, which appeared in the timeline of the 2017 Master Plan. That document states that the building measured "approximately 8,400 square feet" and included a main floor, basement, and a kitchen," with room to hold 25,000 items on two levels. It was built at a cost of \$60,075.00. The photo of the northern façade shows the entrance section before the build-out of the Jameson Sierra Madre Room and the main floor computer room. The interior shows the floors with checkered covering (possibly linoleum) before the space was carpeted, and with lights embedded in the ceiling rather than suspended in boxes.



\*B10. Significance: (Continued from Continuation Sheet page 8)



North façade, ca. 1955. Photographer: Julius Schulman



Interior views looking north, ca. 1955. Photographer: Julius Schulman



Early photographs of the façade and the southeast portion of the interior  
(dates and photographer unknown)

**\*B10. Significance:** (Continued from Continuation Sheet page 9)

Due to the closure of public buildings, Assessor data was not reviewed for the subject property. The subject parcel has been in continuous use as a City-operated public library since 1887. In 1955, the original library was demolished and replaced with the current building.

Sierra Madre was initially established in the 1880s. The Pacific Electric Railway line was extended to Sierra Madre in 1906 which ushered in a period of residential development. A period of economic and residential boom occurred throughout Southern California in the 1920s as a result of the oil industry. Given that the current building replaced the earlier library active since 1887, the current building does not reflect a specific important event in history and does not reflect a significant historic trend in development in the community of Sierra Madre. It does not contribute to early residential development in the city.

The subject property is located within the Sierra Madre Tract. The Sierra Madre Tract was surveyed in 1881, and according to the tract map it was owned by Nathaniel C. Carter (1840-1904), who is regarded as the founder of the City of Sierra Madre. The subject property does not appear to have been significant within the development of the area or the City, with notably little mention and no illustration of its construction in local historic newspaper publications. Additionally, the subject property's date of construction was much later than initial tract advertisements. The subject property does not have a significant association with the development of the City, and the tract and developer do not appear to be significant in the history of the nation, state, or community. Therefore, the subject property is ineligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) and California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) and is ineligible for inclusion in the Sierra Madre Designated Historical Properties List (List) pursuant to Criterion A/1/A.

Persons who made demonstrably significant contributions to the history of the nation, state, or region are not known to be associated with the subject property. Therefore, the subject property is ineligible for listing in the National Register and California Register and is ineligible for inclusion in the List pursuant to Criterion B/2/A.

The building is a common and altered example of a Contemporary-style residence and does not possess high artistic value or distinctive character-defining features. The building retains common character-defining features of Contemporary-style architectural style including the low-pitched gabled main roof in combination with a flat roof; widely overhanging eaves; windows on the gable ends, broad expanses of brick on the main façade, and recessed entry door. It is not a high-style example of Contemporary, and it does not embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. It has also been altered with the 200-square foot expansion (400 square feet according to the building permit) for the Jameson Sierra Madre Room in 1981, as well as numerous upgrades including flooring and lighting, as well as the addition of the main floor computer room and the modification of the entrance door and addition of a ramp to improve disability access. The architect Robert H. Ainsworth was successful; however, he never achieved the master level of his mentor Wallace Neff. Therefore, the subject property is ineligible for listing in the National Register and California Register and is ineligible for inclusion in the List pursuant to Criterion C/3/B.

The building was constructed using common techniques and materials. Additionally, the site was graded during construction of the buildings. Therefore, the site is not expected to yield important information pertaining to prehistory or history. The subject property is ineligible for listing in the National Register and California Register pursuant to Criterion D/4.

The subject property was evaluated against the seven aspects of integrity as outlined in the California Code of Regulations (Section 4852 [C]) and described in the National Register Program. The seven aspects of integrity include *location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association*. The building has been altered through additions as well as minor alterations such as the modification of the front door and the addition of the access ramp to the northeast corner. Due to these alterations the building does not retain integrity of *design, materials, workmanship, feeling, or association*. The building was constructed on a main street and has not been moved; therefore, it retains integrity of *setting and location*.

\*B12. References: (Continued from Building, Structure, and Object Record page 2)

Bissell, Merrilyn. 29 October 29 1954. "Sierra Madre Library Comes Down." *Pasadena Independent* (Pasadena, CA), p.20.

City of Sierra Madre. Issued 4 January 1954. Plumbing permit.

City of Sierra Madre. Issued 13 August 1980. Permit No. B13501.

City of Sierra Madre. Issued 19 August 1981. Permit No. B14406.

City of Sierra Madre. Issued 10 March 1995. Permit No. E2967.

City of Sierra Madre. Issued 28 December 2011. Permit No. B2012.

City of Sierra Madre. Issued 31 March 2021. Permit No. B2012.

McAlester, Virginia Savage. 2017. "Contemporary" in *A Field Guide to American Houses: The Definitive Guide to Identifying and Understanding Americas Domestic Architecture*. New York, NY: Alfred Knopf, pp.628-646.

Hutchinson, Stan. September 2016. "Sierra Madre Pioneer Cemetery." *Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society Newsletter* (Sierra Madre, CA), pp.1,7.

Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor. "AIN: 5768-021-900." Accessed April 2023. Available at: <https://portal.assessor.lacounty.gov/parceldetail/5768021900>

Pacific Coast Architecture Database. "Robert Henry Ainsworth (Architect)." Available at: <https://pcad.lib.washington.edu/person/2639/>

"Sierra Madre Library Near Building Stage." 18 October 1953. *Los Angeles Times*, 142.

Sierra Madre Public Library. Library Facility Master Plan 2017. Available at: [https://cdnsm5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_212309/File/Library%20Facility%20Master%20Plan.pdf](https://cdnsm5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_212309/File/Library%20Facility%20Master%20Plan.pdf)

Sierra Madre Public Library. Photographic Collection. Early photographs of the Sierra Madre Public Library by Julius Schulman and unknown photographers (© Getty Images).

Thomas, Caroline. 2014. "440 West Sierra Madre Blvd. The Sierra Madre Public Library 1955." *Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society*. Available at: <http://www.smhps.org/histprop/440.pdf>