

Plans for New Library Move Forward

by R.A. Louka

According to Library Director Toni Buckner, Sierra Madre's present library building is 21% undersized to hold just its existing contents. By today's building standards, the present 8762 square-foot building should be 10,736 square-feet to accommodate the 56,000 item collection alone.

Now add in the unmet needs for a community room for public programs (which last year saw 10,492 people participate in the library's 394 offerings), space for the historical archives, space for the Youth Service and Teen Book Club programs (now gathering in the basement), more room than the 187 sq. ft. currently serving the Computer Learning Programs, a room for library instruction classes (so that children don't have to sit on the floor) and the additional staff workspace so that part of the staff doesn't have to work along the side of an aisle - and that 21% deficit grows considerably.

A database developed by the California State Library, used to plan public library buildings, estimates that for Sierra Madre's current needs, and for projected 20-year community growth, 23,

831 square-feet is required.

Taking all this into consideration, along with the availability of state library funding programs, the City Council has given its approval to a plan recommended by the Library Board of Trustees that would see a new 21,000+ square-foot library built for Sierra Madre.

The new facility is envisioned as a two-story structure with esthetics and landscaping similar to the present style, built on the existing site. Such a facility would meet the qualifications for funding under the Library Bond Act, which requires that all proposed projects plan for both today's needs and the estimated needs 20 years ahead.

A two-story facility would maximize utilization of the site, minimize impact to trees and landscaping, while meeting City parking requirements for the irregularly shaped lot.. The existing building cannot structurally support a second story without gutting it — thereby leaving only a facade. And, adding a second story to the gutted facade

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would increase the library size to only 16,000 square-feet.

Fred Wesley and Janet Change of PBWS Architects have begun work on architectural sketches and building designs. These will be presented to Council and the community in January or February 2003, in time to get a go-ahead to apply for The Library Bond funding applications available in late March.

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The Library Board of Trustees holds their regular public meeting meet tonight, November 21, at 7:00 PM at City Hall. Discussions will include a report regarding the city's application for the Library Bond Act.