



SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Dr. Antonio Shelton – Superintendent

Carey Upton – Chief Operations Officer

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION

2026 062839

FILED
Mar 20 2026

Dean C. Logan, Registrar – Recorder/County Clerk

Electronically signed by RICKENA MCCLAIN

THIS NOTICE WAS POSTED

ON March 20 2026

UNTIL April 20 2026

REGISTRAR – RECORDER/COUNTY CLERK

To:
County Clerk and Registrar-Recorder
County of Los Angeles
12400 Imperial Highway
Norwalk, CA 90650

From:
Santa Monica/Malibu Unified School District
1717 Fourth Street
Santa Monica, CA 90405

Project Title:

Michelle & Barack Obama Center for Inquiry & Exploration – Modernization Project

Project Location – Specific:

Michelle & Barack Obama Center for Inquiry & Exploration – 721 Ocean Park Blvd, Santa Monica, CA 90405
The Michelle & Barack Obama Center for Inquiry & Exploration (Obama Center), APN 4287-002-900, is bounded by Pine Street to the north, Lincoln Boulevard to the east, and Ocean Park Avenue to the south. Residential uses are located to the west, with commercial and light industrial uses located to the north, south and east. Local access to the campus is provided via Lincoln Boulevard and Pine Street. The Obama Center is zoned PL: Institutional/Public Lands, and has a Land Use designation of Institutional/Public Lands.

Project Location – City:

Santa Monica

Project Location – County:

Los Angeles

Description of Nature, Purpose, and Beneficiaries of Project:

The Michelle & Barack Obama Center for Inquiry & Exploration (Obama Center) houses three distinct programs for the Santa Monica/Malibu Unified School District (District), Olympic Continuation High School/Adult School (Olympic High), the District’s Special Education Local Plan Area (SEPLA), and a preschool area. The Obama Center Modernization Project (Project) aims to provide for better separation of these three learning areas, while providing a modern, safe, and sustainable learning environment for students and staff while enhancing the overall campus infrastructure. The Project entails campus interior and exterior renovations.

The SMMUSD preschool program occupies Buildings C and D. Renovations to the C and D Buildings will include the conversion of five standard classrooms into five preschool classrooms, including the addition of a single occupant toilet in three of the classrooms, upgrading the existing classrooms with fixtures sized for preschool students, and conversion of an existing boy’s bathroom into a staff restroom. Additional activities include development of a new preschool playground area with access from the upper-level classroom walkway, development of a new shade structure in the area behind three classrooms to provide enhanced outdoor learning opportunities, and landscaping improvements to the existing hillside behind the classrooms.

SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

1717 Fourth Street • Santa Monica • California 90401 • (310) 450-8338 • www.smmusd.org

Board of Education: Jon Kean • Maria Leon-Vazquez • Laurie Lieberman • Alicia Mignano

Stacy Rouse • Jennifer Smith • Dr. Richard Tahvildaran-Jesswein

Superintendent: Dr. Antonio Shelton

Building A houses the Olympic High programming. Interior work for Building A includes creating separate offices for both Olympic High and the Adult School programs, converting an existing boy's restroom into an all-gender restroom, and new wayfinding and signage. The SELPA program is housed in Building B. Renovation activities for Building B include creating new administrative office space, design of a new interior courtyard that would be utilized by the SELPA program, conversion of an existing girls' restroom into all gender or multiple single occupancy stalls, and new wayfinding and signage. These improvements will create a clear separation of the preschool area from the rest of the programs located at the Obama Center campus. Additional site improvements will include ADA upgrades and landscaping improvements.

The Project will be implemented pursuant to all applicable State, federal, and local regulations and all applicable District's specifications, standards, and/or guidelines, including those in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and SMMUSD's design guidelines, and best management practices are designed to be incorporated into the Project design in order to avoid or limit potential adverse impacts associated with the District's projects.

The beneficiaries of the Project include Obama Center's students, faculty, staff, families, school supporters, and the community at large who may request access to the Campus pursuant to the Civic Center Act (CA Ed. Code Sections 38130 - 38139).

Name of Public Agency Approving the Project:

Santa Monica/Malibu Unified School District

Name of Person or Agency Carrying Out Project:

Santa Monica/Malibu Unified School District

Exempt Status: (check one below)

- Ministerial [Public Resources Code (PRC) Section 21080(b)(1); CEQA Guidelines Section 15268¹];
- Declared Emergency [PRC Section 21080(b)(3); CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(a)];
- Emergency Project [PRC Section 21080(b)(4); CEQA Guidelines Section 15269(b)(c)];
- Categorical Exemption (PRC Section 21084; CEQA Guidelines Sections 15300 -15333):
 - *CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 – Existing Facilities*
 - *CEQA Guidelines Section 15302 – Replacement or Reconstruction*
 - *CEQA Guidelines Section 15314 – Minor Additions to School*
- Statutory Exemption: PRC Section 21080.35

Reasons why project is exempt:

Section 15301 – Existing Facilities

Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of use.

The Project will result in the modernization of the Obama Center that will allow three distinct programs to operate on one campus including: Olympic HS, SELPA and Preschool. The proposed Project includes renovations of both the campus interior and exterior. Implementation of these improvements will not generate new student population growth or require the addition or construction of new facilities. Therefore, the Project fulfills the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15301.

¹ CEQA Guidelines can be found at California Code of Regulations Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15000 - Section 15387.

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Section 1502 – Replacement or Reconstruction

Class 2 consists of replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced, including but not limited to: (a) Replacement or reconstruction of existing schools and hospitals to provide earthquake resistant structures which do not increase capacity more than 50 percent; (b) Replacement of a commercial structure with a new structure of substantially the same size, purpose, and capacity; (c) Replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity; (d) Conversion of overhead electric utility distribution system facilities to underground including connection to existing overhead electric utility distribution lines where the surface is restored to the condition existing prior to the undergrounding.

The Project will result in the modernization and upgrades at the Obama Center campus, including the conversion of standard classrooms into preschool sized classrooms, and developing separate office space within an existing building. The Project will also provide enhanced outdoor learning opportunities, ADA improvements, and landscaping improvements. The Project will not result in an increase or alteration of the current use, function, or capacity of the existing campus. Therefore, the Project fulfills the requirements of CEQA Guidelines Section 15302.

Section 1514 – Minor Additions to School

Class 14 consists of minor additions to existing schools within existing school grounds where the addition does not increase original student capacity by more than 25 percent or ten classrooms, whichever is less.

The Project aims to provide for better separation of these three learning areas, while providing a modern, safe, and sustainable learning environment for students and staff while enhancing the overall campus infrastructure. These improvements will create a clear separation of the preschool area from the rest of the programs located at the Obama Center campus. Additional site improvements will include ADA upgrades underground utilities, new play structure in the preschool yard, new shade structure, removal of existing portable, landscape and minor canopy structural upgrades. These improvements will address unmet campus needs and provide students with a safe and healthy learning environment. The proposed project will not alter or expand the existing school use, increase student capacity or the number of classrooms, and will only result in minor improvements to the existing campus. No off-campus improvements will occur. Therefore, the project is exempt from CEQA under Section 15314.

Section 15300.2 – Exceptions

Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines, Exceptions, provides conditions under which categorical exemptions are inapplicable. Review of the Project indicates that they would not violate any of the exceptions, as described below.

1. *The project would occur in certain specified sensitive environments or locations;*

The Project will occur on the existing Obama Center campus that is located within an urbanized setting. The surrounding uses of the Campus are commercial uses to the north, south, and east, with residential uses to the west. The campus is not designated as a biologically sensitive location. The nearest significant ecological area (SEA) is the Ballona Wetlands which is located approximately 2.9 miles south of Obama Center.² The nearest critical habitat is designated for the Western Snowy Plover along the Santa Monica Beach located approximately 2 miles south of the Obama Center campus.³ As such, the Project will not impact sensitive environments or locations.

2. *Cumulative impacts would be considerable because successive projects of the same type would occur at the same place over time;*

² Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html, accessed February 2025.

³ United States Fish and Wildlife Service Critical Habitat Portal, <https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/report/table/critical-habitat.html> accessed February 2025.



Obama Center is an active school site and there will likely be ongoing maintenance activities and minor projects on the campus to keep the school operational upon completion of the proposed Project. There are currently no known successive projects of the same type or scale planned for the campus. As the Project would not result in any lasting impacts once construction of the Project is complete, the Project would not contribute to cumulative impacts when considered with expected successive projects. Therefore, no cumulative impacts will result from the Project and successive projects of the same type and at the same place over time.

3. *There is a reasonable possibility that the activity would have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

There are no known unusual circumstances that would have a significant effect on the environment. The Project will include minor ground-disturbing activities. These activities are not considered unusual circumstances for the classes of projects under which an exemption is claimed. Nevertheless, consideration must be given to the management of pavement removal and excavated soils associated with site improvements and earthwork activities for the Project. As the Project involves the removal of pavement, soil sampling and testing for characterization is required prior to demolition and removal of the paving materials. If construction or earthmoving activities require import or export of soils and materials, the District's contractor will be required to ensure that these activities are conducted in compliance with the requirements of the relevant provisions of South Coast Air Quality Management District Rule 1466, and other applicable environmental agency rules and requirements. Furthermore, construction activities must be stopped immediately upon discovery of subsurface features, such as buried resources (i.e., paleontological resources, archaeological resources), tanks or seepage pits, or stained/odoriferous soils. If storage tanks or stained soils are found, the District's contractor would have to investigate the soils and remediate if necessary in compliance with Department of Toxic Substances Control requirements. Therefore, the Project will not have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.

4. *The project may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway;*

The closest designated state scenic highway to the Project site is the Angeles Crest Highway, which is located approximately 23 miles northeast of the Obama Center Campus.⁴ The Project will not result in the removal of historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or other scenic resources. Therefore, the Project will not result in damage to scenic resources or similar resources within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway.

5. *The project is located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; or*

California Government Code Section 65962.5 requires the compiling of lists of the following types of hazardous materials sites: hazardous waste facilities subject to corrective action; hazardous waste discharges for which the State Water Quality Control Board has issued certain types of orders; public drinking water wells containing detectable levels of organic contaminants; underground storage tanks with reported unauthorized releases (LUST); and solid waste disposal facilities from which hazardous waste has migrated.

Four environmental databases were searched for hazardous materials sites on the site and within a quarter mile radius:

- EnviroStor. Department of Toxic Substances Control⁵
- GeoTracker. State Water Resources Control Board⁶

⁴ Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, http://gis.planning.lacounty.gov/GIS-NET3_Public/Viewer.html, accessed February 2025.

⁵ California Department of Toxic Substances Control: <https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/>, accessed February 2026

⁶ State Water Resources Control Board: <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>, accessed February 2026

- EnviroMapper. US Environmental Protection Agency⁷
- Solid Waste Information System. California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery⁸

None of the databases searched identified the project site as a hazardous materials site. The DTSC's EnviroStor tracker database identified a closed LUST cleanup site located approximately 120 feet east of the project site, across Lincoln Boulevard, and another LUST cleanup site located approximately 325 feet to the south of the project site, across Ocean Park Boulevard. According to EnviroStor records, both LUST sites are classified as closed with no further action required. The Project site is not identified as a hazardous materials site pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5 and the Obama Center campus is an active school and does not have a history of hazardous materials production or storage. Therefore, the Project will not have an impact related to being located on a hazardous waste site.

6. *The project may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.*

The Obama Center campus is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places, a California Historical Landmark, California Point of Historical Interest. Additionally, the Obama Center is not listed as a historic resource or landmark by the City's the Landmarks Commission⁹. The nearest listed historical resources are located approximately 90 feet to the south across Ocean Park Avenue at 706 and 702 Ocean Park Avenue respectively. The yare listed on the City's Historic Resources Inventory as individual resource eligible for state designation.

Neither the school nor any adjoining properties are listed as historic resources or potential historic resources by the City of Santa Monica. Additionally, the improvements are focused on the interior of existing buildings that would not result in the degradation of the building's exterior. . No off-campus improvements will occur as part of the proposed project. Thus, no historical resources have been identified on-site during preparation of this Notice of Exemption. Therefore, the historical sites exception does not apply to the proposed project.

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FILED
 Mar 20 2026

Dean C. Logen, Registrar - Recorder/County Clerk

Electronically signed by RICKENA MCCLAIN

Signed by:



Carey Upton
 Chief Operations Officer

Date:

3/19/2026

⁷ US Environmental Protection Agency. EnviroMapper for EnviroFacts. <https://www3.epa.gov/enviro/index.html>. Accessed February 2026

California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle). Solid Waste Information System⁸ <https://www2.calrecycle.ca.gov/SolidWaste/Site/Search>, accessed February 2026

⁹ City of Santa Monica. Historic Resources Inventory: https://www.smgov.net/uploadedFiles/Departments/PCD/Programs/Historic-Preservation/Appendix%20B_Individual%20Resources%20090418_rt.pdf. Accessed February 2026.



State of California—Department of Fish and Wildlife

2026 ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FILING FEE CASH RECEIPT

DFW 753.5a (REV. 01/01/25) Previously DFG 753.5a

RECEIPT Number:	19 — 03/20/2026 — 202603200470005
STATE CLEARING HOUSE # (if applicable)	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON REVERSE. TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY.

LEAD AGENCY SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT	LEAD AGENCY EMAIL	DATE 03/20/2026
COUNTY/STATE AGENCY OF FILING LOS ANGELES/CA	DOCUMENT NUMBER 2026062839	
PROJECT TITLE MICHELL & BARACK OBAMA CENTER FOR INQUIRY & EXPLORATION - MODERNIZATION PROJECT		
PROJECT APPLICANT NAME CAREY UPTON	PROJECT APPLICANT EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER
PROJECT APPLICANT ADDRESS 1717 FOURTH STREET	CITY SANTA MONICA	STATE CA
		ZIP CODE 90405

PROJECT APPLICANT (Check appropriate box):

- Local Public Agency
 School District
 Other Special District
 State Agency
 Private Entity

CHECK APPLICABLE FEES:

- | | | |
|---|------------|----------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Impact Report (EIR) | \$4,227.50 | \$ 0.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mitigated/Negative Declaration (MND)(ND) | \$3,043.75 | \$ 0.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Regulatory Program (CRP) document - payment due directly to CDFW | \$1,437.25 | \$ 0.00 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exempt from fee | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of Exemption (attach) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CDFW No Effect Determination (attach) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fee previously paid (attach previously issued cash receipt copy) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Right Application or Petition Fee (State Water Resources Control Board only) | \$850.00 | \$ 0.00 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County documentary handling fee | | \$ 25.00 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | | \$ 0.00 |

PAYMENT METHOD:

- Cash
 Credit
 Check
 Other

TOTAL RECEIVED \$ 25.00

SIGNATURE X	AGENCY OF FILING PRINTED NAME AND TITLE RICKENA MCCLAIN , INTERMEDIATE CLERK
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State of California—Department of Fish and Wildlife

2026 ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENT FILING FEE CASH RECEIPT

DFW 753.5a (REV. 01/01/25) Previously DFG 753.5a

RECEIPT Number:		
19	03/20/2026	202603200470005
STATE CLEARING HOUSE # (if applicable)		

SEE INSTRUCTIONS ON REVERSE. TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY.

LEAD AGENCY SANTA MONICA - MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT	LEAD AGENCY EMAIL	DATE 03/20/2026
COUNTY/STATE AGENCY OF FILING LOS ANGELES/CA	DOCUMENT NUMBER 2026062839	

PROJECT TITLE
MICHELL & BARACK OBAMA CENTER FOR INQUIRY & EXPLORATION - MODERNIZATION PROJECT

PROJECT APPLICANT NAME CAREY UPTON	PROJECT APPLICANT EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER
PROJECT APPLICANT ADDRESS 1717 FOURTH STREET	CITY SANTA MONICA	STATE CA
		ZIP CODE 90405

PROJECT APPLICANT (Check appropriate box):

- Local Public Agency
 School District
 Other Special District
 State Agency
 Private Entity

CHECK APPLICABLE FEES:

- | | | | |
|---|------------|----|--------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Impact Report (EIR) | \$4,227.50 | \$ | <u>0.00</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mitigated/Negative Declaration (MND)(ND) | \$3,043.75 | \$ | <u>0.00</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Certified Regulatory Program (CRP) document - payment due directly to CDFW | \$1,437.25 | \$ | <u>0.00</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exempt from fee | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of Exemption (attach) | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CDFW No Effect Determination (attach) | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fee previously paid (attach previously issued cash receipt copy) | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Water Right Application or Petition Fee (State Water Resources Control Board only) | \$850.00 | \$ | <u>0.00</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County documentary handling fee | | \$ | <u>25.00</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | | \$ | <u>0.00</u> |

PAYMENT METHOD:

- Cash
 Credit
 Check
 Other

TOTAL RECEIVED \$ 25.00

SIGNATURE X	AGENCY OF FILING PRINTED NAME AND TITLE RICKENA MCCLAIN , INTERMEDIATE CLERK
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