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CHAPTER 7 Historic Preservation Element

7.1 Introduction

A. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WEST SAN GABRIEL VALLEY

Nestled in the diverse historical tapestry of Southern California, the West San Gabriel Valley Planning Area comprises nine unincorporated communities with rich and varied pasts. Spanning from the pre-contact era of the indigenous Tongva people to contemporary times, this land has witnessed an intricate interplay of cultural and historical forces.

The Historic Preservation Element is dedicated to guiding the identification, preservation and celebration of the WSGV's historic and cultural resources. Emphasizing a vision of shared history and stewardship, this Element underscores the significance of local historic, archaeological, and cultural districts, sites, buildings, landscapes and landmarks. Drawing from the detailed historical insights provided in the *Historic Context Statement* (HCS) and *Community Cultural Assets Background Brief* (see Appendices X and X), this Element aspires to weave these narratives into a cohesive strategy for historic preservation. This integration not only aims to bolster the economic vitality of the WSGV Planning Area but also to enrich the cultural fabric

and enhance the overall quality of life for its residents and visitors, fostering a deepened sense of community identity and continuity.

Organization

This section summarizes the types of resources addressed in this Element, with a comprehensive description of each resource available in Appendix X, *Community Cultural Assets Background Brief* and *The HCS* for the WSGV Planning Area (see Appendix X). It then delineates the primary issues and opportunities for preserving historic and cultural resources, guiding the establishment of goals, policies and actions in Section X of this Element.

7.2 Cultural Resources

Cultural resources encompass a broad range of prehistoric and historic artifacts, structures and landscapes. These resources reflect the dynamic and cultural evolution within the WSGV. This Element addresses four types of cultural resources, including archaeological, historic, Tribal Cultural and paleontological, each containing its own unique significance.

A. TYPES OF CULTURAL RESOURCES

Historical/Architectural

Historical resources include buildings, structures, districts, landscapes and objects generally over 50 years old with potential or recognized historical significance on a local, state, or national register of historic resources. These resources serve as tangible links to the WSGV's past through their association with historical individuals; their embodying of key architectural styles, construction methods or works of art; or their representation of significant historical events, periods or patterns of social, cultural, economic or political history that have contributed to the shaping of the WSGV's identity and landscape.

Archaeological

Archaeological resources include artifacts, structural remains and human remains that span both the historic and precontact eras, revealing the daily lives, practices, and cultures of earlier inhabitants through physical remnants. These resources include precontact sites

such as villages, temporary camps, lithic scatters,¹ rock art, roasting pits/hearths, milling features,² rock features, and burial/human remains. They can also include historic resources like refuse heaps, bottle dumps, ceramic scatters,³ privies,⁴ foundations, and human remains.

Tribal Cultural

Tribal Cultural Resources are integral to understanding the rich and diverse history of the WSGV. These resources encompass sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a Native American tribe. These may include, but are not limited to, villages, ceremonial sites, prayer circles, sacred stones, and areas associated with traditional tribal cultural practices like gathering or ritual. The WSGV, traditionally inhabited by the Tongva people, holds numerous locations that are significant for their cultural, historical, and spiritual importance to these indigenous communities. The preservation and recognition of Tribal Cultural Resources are crucial not only for acknowledging and respecting the deep-rooted heritage of Native American tribes in the region but also for protecting and maintaining the continuity of their living cultural traditions and practices.

Paleontological

Paleontological resources, encompassing fossilized remains older than 5,000 years, offer insights into the ancient ecological and biological history of the WSGV. They include fossilized geological formations, animals and plants.

B. LEGISLATIVE TOOLS

This section outlines the legislative frameworks at local, state, and federal levels that provide the foundation for protecting historic and cultural resources in the WSGV Planning Area, as defined by the Los Angeles County General Plan.

Local: Los Angeles County Historical Landmark and Records Commission reviews and recommends cultural heritage resources in the unincorporated areas for inclusion in the State Historic Resources Inventory. The County's Historic Preservation Ordinance seeks to

¹ Lithic refuse or debris produced during flaked- or ground-stone tool manufacturing or use.

² Features upon which seed and other plant and animal products are ground.

³ Pottery

⁴ pit beneath an outhouse

preserve, conserve and protect buildings, objects, landscapes and other artifacts of historical and cultural significance.

State: The California State Parks Department's Office of Historic Preservation maintains the State Historic Resources Inventory, which is a compilation of all resources formally determined eligible for or listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources or designated as State Historical Landmarks or Points of Historical Interest.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) provides guidelines for the identification and protection of archaeological sites, artifacts, and paleontological resources. If a project threatens an archaeological or paleontological resource, the project is required to provide mitigation measures to protect the site or enable study and documentation of the site. Assessment of these resources requires a survey prepared by a qualified archaeologist or paleontologist. For discretionary projects on sites containing Native American resources, CEQA also requires a monitor if warranted.

The State Historical Building Code (SHBC) is a set of regulations adopted in 1979 that was created to improve the protection and enhancement of historic structures. The intent of SHBC is to protect California's architectural heritage by recognizing the unique construction problems inherent in historic buildings and offering an alternative code to deal with these problems. The SHBC provides alternative building regulations for the rehabilitation, preservation, restoration, or relocation of structures designated as historic buildings. SHBC regulations are intended to facilitate restoration or accommodate change of occupancy to conserve a historic structure's original or restored architectural elements and features.

Federal: The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 protects archaeological resources and provides requirements for permit issuance to excavate or remove archaeological resources.

The Native American Heritage Act of 1992 provides guidelines for the protection of Native American remains and artifacts.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the country's historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service's National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to

coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect the country's historic and archeological resources.

National Historic Landmarks are nationally significant historic places designated by the Secretary of the Interior because they possess exceptional value or quality in illustrating or interpreting the heritage of the U.S. Today, fewer than 2,500 historic places bear this national distinction.

C. ISSUES & OPPORTUNITIES

The *Community Cultural Assets Background Brief* (Appendix X), together with the feedback received through community outreach, identified several issues (I) and opportunities (O), summarized below, that are critical to the preservation of the WSGV's rich historical and cultural fabric. The County General Plan also identified primary threats to historic, cultural, tribal, and paleontological resources that are relevant for the WSGV, including "incompatible land uses and development on or adjacent to resources, a lack of local registry, and the limitations of state and federal programs to protect resources". Several County programs and initiatives offer avenues for the effective preservation of cultural resources in the WSGV Planning Areas.

I-1: Diverse and Distinct Histories among WSGV Communities

The nine communities of the WSGV Planning Area exhibit diverse development histories shaped by various historical factors, resulting in distinct and sometimes unique narratives. What may be an historically appropriate narrative for Altadena would be inappropriate for Whittier Narrows. Similarly, the pre-contact tribal history and archaeology vary among the nine communities due to factors like proximity to water and other resources, and their significance to tribes based on pre-contact settlements. The diverse and distinct histories of the WSGV's nine communities necessitate nuanced preservation strategies that honor each area's unique historical and cultural identity.

I-2: Lack of Documentation of Historical Resources

Federal, state, and local regulations that protect historic, archaeological, paleontological, and tribal resources are based on identification, significance evaluation, and designation. While limited historic surveys with associated contexts on specific themes have been

produced, no large-scale architectural surveys of the Planning Area have been completed. Without surveys that provide an in-depth analysis of existing resources, no comprehensive inventories of community assets exist, and by extension, very little protection exists. Some limited research has been done on a project-by-project basis; however, large scale archaeological surveys or testing, such as subsurface probing, remote sensing, and field walking to assess the Planning Area's archaeological potential, has not been completed. Consequently, the sensitivity of some areas remains undetermined. A comprehensive inventory of historical resources is essential for effective preservation and underscores the need for more extensive research and documentation.

I-3: Limited Remaining Early Historical Resources

Early American History of the WSGV Planning Area, from the early 1900s through the 1940s, was dominated by large agricultural institutions and smaller single-family farmsteads. However, the communities of the WSGV Planning Area were subject to a dramatic amount of development pressure throughout the 20th century, especially during the rapid suburbanization in the post-World War II era. There are limited historical resources remaining from the first half of the 20th century and very few potential resources that represent the early history of the area, underscoring the importance of preserving what remains.

I-4: Lack of Integrity in Existing Resources

To qualify as a historical resource, a building must have both significance and integrity.⁵ While many commercial and residential resources in the WSGV Planning Area are potentially significant, they lack the required architectural or historic integrity required for designation, emphasizing the need for thoughtful preservation strategies. The housing shortage in Los Angeles County especially impacts residential resources, with a high number of alterations and additions, both permitted and non-permitted, resulting in limited remaining integrity.

⁵ According to the National Park Service, "integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance." The seven aspects of integrity are location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

0-1: Countywide Historic Preservation Ordinance

Adopted by Los Angeles County in 2015, the County’s Historic Preservation Ordinance (HPO) “specifies significance criteria and procedures for the designation of landmarks and historic districts” in order to “enhance and preserve the County’s distinctive historic, architectural, and landscape characteristics.”⁶ The ordinance is a critical vehicle for the identification and protection of historic resources within the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.

0-2: Certified Local Government Program Status

The Certified Local Government Program (CLG), established through the 1980 amendments to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, is a program that empowers local governments in the local preservation process. It encourages the direct participation of local governments in the identification, evaluation, registration, and preservation of historic properties.⁷ Additionally, the program promotes the integration of local preservation interests and concerns into local planning and decision-making processes. Los Angeles County, having attained official CLG certification in 2020, is now enabled to engage more directly in federal and statewide historic preservation programs. This status also provides access to matching grant funds, fostering local preservation objectives and facilitating community-based historic preservation initiatives.

0-3: Mills Act Program

Adopted by Los Angeles County in 2013, the Mills Act provides property tax relief for owners of qualified historic properties to preserve, restore, rehabilitate, and maintain the historic character of such properties on an ongoing basis.⁸ This statewide program is considered “the most important economic incentive program in California for the restoration and preservation of historic buildings by private property owners.”⁹

⁶ “Historic Preservation Ordinance,” Chapter 22.124 of the Los Angeles County Code of Ordinances.

⁷ “Certified Local Government Program,” National Park Service, <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/historicpreservationfund/certified-local-government-program.htm>.

⁸ “Los Angeles County Mills Act Program,” Chapter 22.168 of the Los Angeles County Code of Ordinances.

⁹ “Mills Act Program,” California Office of Historic Preservation, https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=21412.

0-4: Historic Context Statement

The Historic Context Statement (HCS) for the WSGV Planning Area (see Appendix X) serves as a foundational document, providing a pre- and post-contact history of the Planning Area, along with detailed narratives of each of the nine unincorporated communities. This essential resource offers a structured approach for evaluating potential historical resources within the WSGV. The HCS not only identifies recommendations for potentially significant individual resources and potential historic districts but also provides recommendations for future historical research and preservation efforts.

0-5: Community Historical Knowledge

Community members of the WSGV possess invaluable, often intangible knowledge of their own communities' histories and cultures, which can be critical in identifying, interpreting and preserving the area's historic, archaeological, and tribal resources. Recognizing and actively engaging with this local expertise can greatly enrich the preservation process. Therefore, fostering a collaborative environment where local residents and community organizations can contribute their insights and participate in preservation initiatives is vital for capturing and interpreting the diverse and rich heritage of the WSGV Planning Area.

D. GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

The following goals, policies, and actions specifically address historic preservation issues and opportunities within the Planning Area, complementing the broader framework established in the Conservation and Natural Resources Element of the Los Angeles County General Plan.¹⁰ These goals, policies, and actions are designed to work in tandem with the General Plan's goals, policies, and implementation programs, providing a focused approach to historic preservation in the Planning Area.

¹⁰ "Chapter 9: Conservation and Natural Resources Element, Los Angeles County General Plan," Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, Updated July 22, 2022, <https://case.planning.lacounty.gov/generalplan/generalplan>.

Goal CR-1: Unincorporated communities with unique historic and cultural identities, that foster a sense of place and community pride.

Policy CR-1.1: Foster community pride. In partnership with educational institutions, local historical societies, community organizations and other interested groups, establish a sense of local ownership and civic pride for each community in the WSGV through educational programming, celebrations or other activities.

Policy CR-1.2: Emphasize and celebrate community histories through built environment enhancements. Leverage new improvements in the built environment to accentuate and celebrate the unique historical attributes and narratives of each community, through initiatives such as installing public art into new or renovated developments that incorporate local history and tribal narratives in its themes and styles.

- *Action:* Develop historical-themed signage and streetscape improvement program (e.g., themed wayfinding, lighting, benches, paving, etc.) and design standards for each community that reflect the unique heritage of each community.

Goal CR-2: The identification, evaluation, and preservation of historic resources are prioritized across communities, enhancing the historical and cultural fabric of the WSGV.

Policy CR-2.1: Document and nominate historic resources. Expand efforts to identify, document and nominate historic resources within the WSGV communities, prioritizing the evaluation and nomination of historic properties and districts with known historic significance as outlined in the Historic Context Statement (HCS).

- *Action:* Pursue evaluation and nomination of the County's first designated historic district, as recommended within the HCS. Potential districts include the following:
 - a. Michillinda Park
 - b. Park Planned Homes, subdivision designed by Gregory Ain
 - c. Montrose, first planned community in WSGV
 - d. Chapman Woods neighborhood

- e. Altadena Commercial Corridor
 - f. Altadena Grand Estates
 - g. San Pasqual Grand Homes
 - h. Period Revival estates
 - i. Pre-WWII smaller tract
- *Action:* Use the County's status as a CLG to pursue funding for surveys and/or historic context statements, prioritizing a comprehensive Asian American Historic Context Statement for the WSGV. Integrate oral histories and outreach as part of these efforts to leverage and expand local history knowledge.
 - *Action:* Commission contexts of various thematic, geographical, or cultural studies that can serve as a framework for multiple nominations. For example, thematic studies could focus on the agricultural, industrial, and residential development patterns in the WSGV, especially highlighting the transition from indigenous lands to Spanish missions, ranchos, and modern urban development. Potential themes include the following:
 - a. Stone Homes of La Crescenta-Montrose
 - b. Mid-Century Apartment Buildings
 - c. Altadena Grand Estates, potentially organized by architect.

Policy CR-2.2: Preserve known historic resources. Enhance and preserve WSGV known historic resources in a viable condition for the enjoyment of future generations through initiatives such as streamlining the historic nomination process, and integrating the inventory of historic sites and structures into parcel conditions reports for ease of recognition during the permitting process.

- *Action:* Streamline the historic nomination process to the County Landmark Register,¹¹ potentially through the use of Multiple Property Documentation Forms, which allows a simpler and shorter nomination form if a property fits within an already established historic context.¹²
- *Action:* Publicize the Historic Preservation Ordinance and Mills Act Program through informational materials made available at County field offices.

¹¹ "Landmarks and Historic Districts," Los Angeles County Planning, <https://planning.lacounty.gov/long-range-planning/historic-preservation-program/landmarks-and-historic-districts/>.

¹² "National Register Multiple Property Submission Contexts for California," California Office of Historic Preservation, https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/?page_id=25660.

- *Action:* Integrate the inventory of historic sites and structures into parcel conditions reports for ease of recognition in permitting.

Policy CR-2.3: Encourage County landmark nominations.

Support the preservation of small properties with historic significance that are unable to benefit from programs such as the Mills Acts through fee waivers or other financial incentives.

- *Action:* Waive Building Permit Fees for small properties with historic significance, and low-income housing projects that involve the rehabilitation of historic resources, facilitating affordable housing while preserving historical integrity.

Goal CR-3: Local community knowledge and history are actively celebrated, embraced, and integrated into the historic preservation process.

Policy CR-3.1: Leverage community knowledge of local history.

Partner with local historic societies, historic preservation organizations and/or academic institutions to leverage local knowledge of historical assets to protect and preserve.

Goal CR-4: The unique historical and cultural roots of each WSGV community are seamlessly integrated and reflected in the built environment through adaptive reuse.

Policy CR-4.1: Promote adaptive reuse in the built environment.

Preserve the architectural and cultural heritage of the WSGV and balance growth with preservation through adaptive reuse of historic resources.

- *Action:* Create a clear and streamlined process for developers and property owners to follow when proposing the adaptive reuse of existing commercial buildings. This process should include consultation with historic preservation specialists and offer guidelines on maintaining the character of the building while accommodating new uses.
- *Action:* Implement a Transfer of Development Rights Program to facilitate the transfer of development rights, which would include allowing for the construction of new housing away from properties that have historic resources.

Policy CR-4.2: Promote public-private partnerships. Foster collaboration between the County, property owners, developers, and community groups for the restoration and adaptive reuse of historic buildings. (I-1, I-2, I-3, O-2)

Goal CR-5: Comprehensive identification and evaluation of archaeological resources are prioritized, enriching the understanding and preservation of the WSGV's ancient past.

Policy CR-5.2: Integrate archaeological insights into planning. Incorporate knowledge of archaeological resources into planning decisions to respect culturally sensitive areas. (I-1, I-2)

Action: Commission a confidential map by a qualified archaeologist(s) for planning purposes, populated with info from SCCIC and based on predictive modeling, that identifies culturally sensitive areas, including parcels and properties with archaeological and/or tribal cultural resources. Update the map bi-annually with new findings and contributions from tribal communities.

Goal CR-6: Comprehensive identification and evaluation of paleontological resources for the conservation of WSGV's prehistoric past and understanding of its ecological and climatic history.

Policy CR-6.1: Assess paleontological resources. Evaluate and monitor potential paleontological resources within the Planning Area for conservation and scientific understanding.

- *Action:* Commission a confidential map, maintained by the County, showing the location of paleontologically sensitive formations, to be updated bi-annually with information from recent projects.

Goal CR-7: Various stakeholders, including local communities, government agencies, and cultural groups collaborate to achieve comprehensive and inclusive historic preservation in the Planning Area.

Policy CR-7.1: Foster meaningful Tribal consultation. Engage in ongoing, project-specific, and land-specific tribal consultations to integrate tribal perspectives and knowledge into planning and preservation efforts, and ensure that tribal consultation is meaningful, respectful, and tailored to the specifics of each project, land area, and tribe involved to adequately understand and mitigate impacts to tribal cultural resources. (I-1, I-2, O-5)

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