

West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan: Historic Preservation Element Summary

1. Existing Conditions

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. **Historical/Architectural:** Historical resources in the WSGV include buildings, structures, landscapes, and objects over 50 years old, holding local, state, or national historical significance. These resources connect the WSGV's past through their ties to historical figures, architectural styles, or significant events, shaping the region's identity.

Archaeological: Archaeological resources reveal past inhabitants' lives and cultures through physical remnants like artifacts, structural and human remains. These resources range from pre-contact sites to historic remnants such as refuse heaps and foundations.

Tribal Cultural: Integral to WSGV's history, Tribal Cultural Resources encompass sites, features, and objects of cultural value to Native American tribes. These include villages, ceremonial sites, and areas associated with traditional tribal practices, acknowledging the deep-rooted heritage of Indigenous communities.

Paleontological: Fossilized remains older than 5,000 years offer insights into the ancient ecological and biological history of the WSGV, including fossilized geological formations, animals, and plants.

LEGISLATIVE TOOLS FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Local: The Los Angeles County Historical Landmark and Records Commission and Historic Preservation Ordinance preserve and protect historical and cultural artifacts in unincorporated areas.

State: The California State Parks Department's Office of Historic Preservation maintains the State Historic Resources Inventory (SHRI), protecting resources listed in various registers.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA): Guidelines within CEQA protect archaeological sites, artifacts, and paleontological resources, requiring measures for projects that could impact these resources.

State Historical Building Code (SHBC): Established to protect historic structures, SHBC offers alternative building regulations for rehabilitating and preserving designated historic buildings.

Federal: Acts like the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 and Native American Heritage Act of 1992 safeguard archaeological and Native American resources, while the National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks recognize and preserve significant historic sites nationally.

2. Issues & Opportunities

DIVERSE AND DISTINCT HISTORIES

The nine communities within the WSGV Planning Area have diverse development histories shaped by various factors. Each community has unique narratives, necessitating nuanced preservation strategies to honor their distinct historical and cultural identities.

LACK OF DOCUMENTATION

Limited large-scale architectural surveys and archaeological assessments have resulted in a lack of comprehensive inventories of historical resources. Without extensive research and documentation, the sensitivity of specific areas remains undetermined, highlighting the need for more thorough surveys and documentation efforts.

LIMITED REMAINING EARLY HISTORICAL RESOURCES

Rapid development throughout the 20th century has led to the loss of many early historical resources in the WSGV Planning Area. Remaining resources from the early 1900s through the 1940s are scarce, underlining the importance of preserving what remains of the area's early history.

LACK OF INTEGRITY IN EXISTING RESOURCES

Many potentially significant residential and commercial resources lack the architectural or historic integrity required for designation. The many alterations and additions, both permitted and non-permitted, have diminished the integrity of many historical resources, emphasizing the need for thoughtful preservation strategies.

COUNTY PRESERVATION FRAMEWORK

The County's Historic Preservation Ordinance, established in 2015, is vital for identifying and protecting historic resources within unincorporated areas. This ordinance outlines specific criteria and procedures for designating landmarks and historic districts. Additionally, Los Angeles County's attainment of Certified Local Government (CLG) status in 2020 further empowers local governments in preservation efforts. This status enables engagement in federal and statewide historic preservation programs, as well as access to matching grant funds, encouraging preservation and strengthening local preservation objectives.

MILLS ACT CONTRACT PROGRAM

Adopted in 2013, the County's Mills Act Contract Program provides an opportunity for property owners of qualified historic properties to enter into an agreement with the County to commit to maintaining and rehabilitating their historic property, and in turn receive tax relief. This program can incentivize ongoing maintenance and repair of historic properties and encourage ongoing preservation efforts.

HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT

The Historic Context Statement for the WSGV Planning Area serves as a foundational document, offering pre- and post-contact histories of the area. This resource guides the evaluation of potential historical resources and provides recommendations for future preservation efforts.

COMMUNITY HISTORICAL KNOWLEDGE

Residents possess valuable knowledge of their communities' histories and cultures, which can enrich preservation efforts. Collaboration with community members and organizations is essential for capturing and understanding the Plan Area's diverse heritage.

3. Policy Recommendations

FOSTERING COMMUNITY PRIDE

The first goal of the Historic Preservation Element focuses on promoting a sense of community pride and celebrating unique historical attributes. These policy recommendations aim to establish local ownership and civic pride through educational programming and community celebrations, as well as enhancing historical narratives through built environment enhancements and public art installations.

IDENTIFYING AND PRESERVING HISTORIC RESOURCES

Identifying, evaluating, and preserving historic resources across communities is a priority. Policy recommendations under this goal seek to expand efforts to document and nominate historic resources, preserve known historic sites, and provide financial relief measures for property owners to support preservation efforts.

INTEGRATING COMMUNITY KNOWLEDGE

The Historic Preservation Element emphasizes actively celebrating and integrating local community knowledge and history into the preservation process. This method involves expanding historic preservation and leveraging local history knowledge to increase awareness of historic resources.

RECOGNIZING AND INTEGRATING UNIQUE COMMUNITY ROOTS

The Historic Preservation Element focuses on seamlessly integrating each community's historical and cultural roots into the built environment. Policy recommendations for this goal promote adaptive reuse of historic resources and encourage public-private partnerships for restoration efforts.

IDENTIFYING AND EVALUATING RESOURCES

This Element prioritizes the comprehensive identification and evaluation of archaeological and paleontological resources. Policy recommendations aim to assess and monitor potential resources within the Planning Area and integrate archaeological and paleontological knowledge into planning and educational efforts.

INCLUSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Historic Preservation Element promotes collaborative efforts among stakeholders to achieve comprehensive and inclusive historic preservation. Policy recommendations aim to encourage meaningful tribal consultation and develop partnerships to integrate tribal perspectives and community insights into preservation initiatives.