

Cultural Resources Policy Framework

Introduction

The City of Palmdale has embarked on a comprehensive update to its General Plan, called “Envision Palmdale 2045: A Complete Community,” to create a forward-looking document that will serve as the blueprint for the City’s vision through the year 2045. The goals, policies, and actions in Palmdale 2045 will serve as a compass for decision-makers and will shape future plans and actions of the City. This revised policy document will replace the 1993 General Plan.

This cultural resource policy framework is an interim step in the General Plan Update process prior to drafting the elements (or chapters). This framework highlights key outcomes and performance metrics related to cultural resources and includes a draft policy framework that includes goals, policies, and implementation activities. This policy framework was developed by compiling feedback from community members, General Plan Advisory Committee members, Planning Commission, and City Council. This framework synthesizes critical issues and policy approaches by describing key strengths and opportunities, challenges, and threats, and what we heard from the community.

What is the Cultural Resources Element?

The purpose of a General Plan Cultural Resources Element is to preserve, maintain, and enhance cultural resources in the city. The cultural resources element must address how to protect cultural resources that include buildings with historical significance, sites with potential paleontological and archaeological resources, Native American cultural, historical, and sacred sites, and artifacts. The element should also enhance Palmdale’s unified and welcoming identity as a great place to live and work.

Assembly Bill (AB) 52 and Senate Bill (SB) 18 require tribal consultation to assure protection and preservation of natural resources and Native American historic, cultural, or sacred sites. Resources could potentially be lost or damaged if sites are not properly investigated. Therefore, City consultation with local tribes will help ensure that cultural resources are preserved and mitigated through acceptable means.

Where We Are Now

Earlier steps in the planning process have identified community strengths and opportunities, and challenges and threats related to cultural resources. These are summarized on the following pages.

Strengths and Opportunities

- **Palmdale has engaged in promoting awareness of existing cultural and historical resources, increasing awareness of Antelope Valley’s history, and creating community identity.** The City’s history is recognized through several historical buildings and sites. Some of the sites include Moore’s Hall, Old Leona School house, and Old Palmdale Cemetery. Continuing to preserve historic resources and cultivate history and culture in Palmdale will help protect historically significant areas. In addition, creating programs and events related to culture and arts could help bolster community pride.

Challenges and Threats

- **The City of Palmdale does not currently have a Historical Preservation Ordinance.** New development has the potential to adversely affect historic resources. Implementing a Historical Preservation Ordinance compliant with state and federal guidelines can help protect and preserve these resources.
- **An increase in archaeological and paleontological resources has been identified as more site surveys have been conducted in conjunction with new development.** Archaeological and paleontological resources could be damaged or lost if sites aren’t properly investigated before new development occurs. Therefore, the City will need to continually require and update surveys, reports, and mapping of resources to help identify and assess resources and best practices. As more resources are identified, the City will have to assess the need for protection, preservation, and mitigation.

What We Heard About This Topic

Cultural resources were not directly discussed at the community workshops; however, the following topics that were discussed that may impact cultural resources in Palmdale.

- Improve architecture and design of new buildings
- Add more greenery, trees, parks, and preserve open spaces
- Provide additional opportunities for recreation through new parks, library facilities, formal trail heads, sidewalks, and bike lanes, and other community spaces Add connections from neighborhoods to open space and parks

- Create a conservancy district
- Consider environmental tourism in Palmdale
- Preserve the natural desert setting
- Preserve western Joshua Trees
- Promote Palmdale pride and diversity

Where we want to be in the future

Applicable Vision themes and Guiding Principles

Through the first phase of community engagement, the General Plan team explored how individuals envision the future of Palmdale, what makes it unique and special, and what things residents and businesses would like to change. Summarized into a stand-alone document, the General Plan Vision and Guiding Principles illustrate the future of Palmdale, capturing key values and aspirations, and providing a framework for future decision-making.

The list below represents vision themes and guiding principles that are most relevant to cultural resources. Visit the Palmdale 2045 website at <https://www.palmdale2045.org/resources> for the complete vision and guiding principles document.

A unified and welcoming community that we're proud to live in

- Respect and promote diversity within Palmdale
- Boost community beautification
- Enhance partnerships with surrounding communities in the Antelope Valley

Palmdale's beautiful natural setting

- Maintain safe and convenient access to open space and trails
- Improve connectivity and beautify trails and open space
- Preserve existing mountain views

Top key outcomes (related to topic)

- **Preserve and Protect:** Promote the identification and preservation of historic structures, historic sites, archaeological sites, cultural and paleontological resources in the City.
- **Public Awareness:** Promote awareness of historically significant resources in order to continue protection of significant resources.
- **Identification of Resources:** Conduct cultural resource surveys and mapping, as needed, prior to development to help identify and protect historically significant resources.
- **Cultural Identity:** Work with the Native American Heritage Commission and tribes to promote cultural programs and embrace cultural identities in the City.

Key performance indicators

- **Key Performance Indicators:** Protection and preservation of historical, cultural, paleontological, and archaeological resources.
 - **Target:** Develop and adopt a cultural and/or historical resources protection ordinance.
- **Key Performance Indicators:** Promotion of cultural resources to the public.
 - **Target:** Identification and celebration of resources using landmark designation plaques, directional signage, self-guided tours, school curriculum, programs and events.
- **Key Performance Indicator:** Maintain an up-to-date cultural sensitivity map.
 - **Target:** Update the cultural sensitivity map as necessary to track cultural assets in Palmdale.

Draft Goals and Policies

The following section includes draft goals and policies under consideration for the Palmdale General Plan Cultural Resources Element. Many of the goals and policies are from the existing General Plan and have been retained, but in certain cases goals and policies have been reorganized, rephrased, and or simplified while the objectives from the current element have been reframed as either goals or policies.

- **Goal 1: Protect historical and culturally significant resources, which contribute to the community's sense of history.**
 - Identify and recognize historic landmarks from Palmdale's past.
 - Maintain, rehabilitate, and appropriately reuse identified landmarks where feasible.
 - Require that new development preserve significant historic, paleontological, or archaeological resources.
 - Develop and maintain a cultural sensitivity map. Require special studies/surveys to be prepared for any development proposals in areas reasonably suspected of containing cultural resources, or as indicated on the sensitivity map.
 - Conduct Native American consultation consistent with most recent regulations when new development is proposed in potentially culturally sensitive areas.
 - When human remains suspected to be of Native American origin are discovered, coordinate with the Native American Heritage Commission and any local Native American groups to determine the most appropriate course of action.

- Cooperate with private and public entities whose goals are to protect and preserve historic landmarks and important cultural resources.
- Promote respect and recognition of unique historical resources within the community by identifying significant cultural resources with landmark designation plaques, directional signage, self-guided tours, school curriculum, programs, and events.
- Discourage historic landmark properties from being altered in such a manner as to significantly reduce their cultural value to the community.
- Identify and preserve unique cultural and historic buildings and features in order to enhance community character.
- **Goal 2: Promote community design that reflects Palmdale’s history and preserves Palmdale’s cultural resources.**
 - Promote use of design elements, which reflect the various periods of history and settlement in Palmdale.
 - Historic architectural themes and elements appropriate to Palmdale should be incorporated into buildings, building components and public spaces, where appropriate.
 - Community design should reflect the community’s roots, rather than simulating historic periods or events, which did not occur in the Antelope Valley.
 - Preserve the natural heritage of the region through landscape design by ensuring the local stock of native trees and vegetation is replenished and protected.