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Cultural Resources

SAN BERNARDINO



Introduction

San Bernardino has a rich history and culture few realize. For over eight generations, families have migrated to the city, bringing knowledge and traditions from around the nation and the globe. The Serrano, Spanish, Mexican, African American, American Pioneers, and Asian Pacific peoples have all contributed to San Bernardino's history. These influences have created a multicultural city in the San Bernardino Valley with a unique perspective on community.

Each of these successive waves of people has left tangible evidence of their past and current contributions to San Bernardino. These contributions are embodied and reflected in many ways through buildings, structures, street names, artistic expression, characteristic business establishments, urban traces, and oral history. Collectively, these expressions of San Bernardino's culture have created a unique, diverse, and rich context for planning the city's future.

The Cultural Resources element provides the basis for continued efforts by the City and partner organizations to preserve, enhance, and maintain sites and structures that are deemed architecturally, historically, archaeologically, and/or culturally significant. It also provides the basis for remembering and memorializing the many traditions, stories, and memories of the San Bernardino community.



San Bernardino Festival: Where Our Cultures Connect



Regulatory Framework

While state law requires the general plan to address the preservation of open space lands of historic, archaeological, or cultural significance, a separate element is not required. Many communities simply defer to the California Environmental Quality Act and state or federal laws, where applicable, to address this topic. However, the City of San Bernardino recognizes the importance and value of its historical, archaeological, and other cultural resources, and has chosen to include an elective Cultural Resources element reflecting its commitment to preserving the city's heritage.

Organization Framework

The 2050 General Plan includes this Cultural Resources element for the purposes of celebrating San Bernardino's story; ensuring that appropriate preservation actions are taken to protect local features; and providing direction on how to bring the cultural values, heritage, and lives of residents into focus on a daily basis. Topics include:

- Historic resources, defined as buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts of significance to San Bernardino's history.
- Paleontological resources, defined as fossilized remains from prehistoric environments found in geologic strata.
- Archaeological resources, defined as the physical remains of past human activities that are prehistoric or historic in origin.
- Cultural resources, including but not limited to the varied performing, music, and visual arts.

Relationship to Other Elements

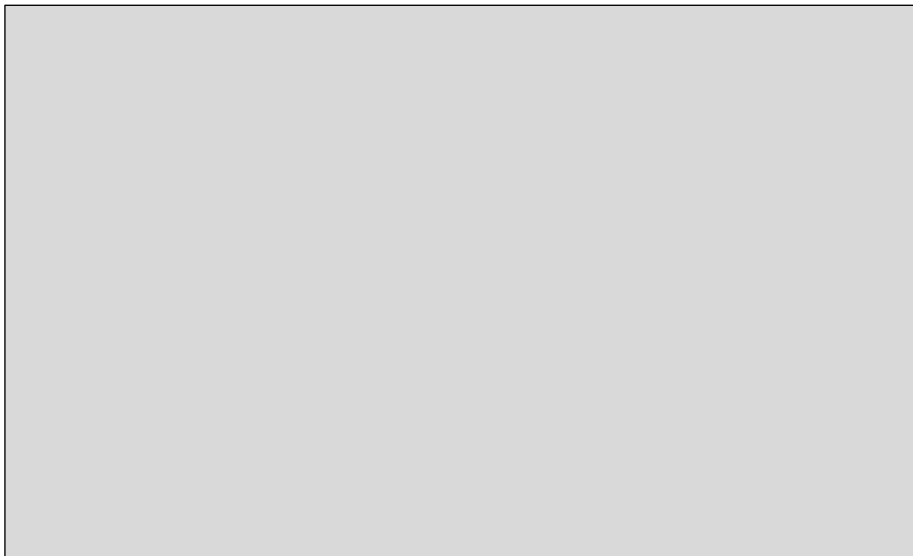
The Cultural Resources element is closely linked with the Land Use element and the Open Space and Conservation element. Together, these elements address the preservation and enhancement of resources on land in the community. In addition, the city's cultural resources are protected by state and federal legislation, including the California Environmental Quality Act. However, there is currently no City management plan in place to ensure the protection, preservation, and restoration of cultural resources.

Achieving the Vision

The City of San Bernardino has a rich and diverse history that should be celebrated and capitalized on. Incorporated in 1854, San Bernardino is one of the oldest cities in the state and thus has many cultural resources. These include 6 Historic Landmarks, 25 points of Historical Interest, and more than 1,100 historic built resources. In addition, San Bernardino has countless local cultural resources that are important and worthy of preservation but are not recognized under state or federal criteria.

San Bernardino's General Plan vision recognizes the city's rich heritage as the gateway and the hub of commerce, entertainment, governance, **culture**, education, recreation, and transportation. The City has a unique opportunity and privilege to preserve, enhance, and promote its history and related resources, and integrate this effort with broader community goals. Policies, goals, and implementation measures in this element strive to achieve this vision. These include:

- A comprehensive cultural resources program that is designed to preserve the City's treasured resources.
- Specific opportunities to ensure the preservation of historical, archaeological, and paleontological resources in the city.
- Support for the development of a robust and vibrant visual and performing arts program in the community.





Planning Context

San Bernardino's buildings, structures, objects, archeological sites and features, landscapes, and neighborhoods are physical reminders of the ways in which early inhabitants and later citizens used and developed the land. Overlaid onto these features are stories, contemporary culture, and other non-physical elements that make up the fabric of San Bernardino. These resources represent contexts or themes important in the history of the city. Taken together, these resource types reflect the physical patterns and social trends that give the city its unique character and identity.

San Bernardino History

The City of San Bernardino has experienced many major historical and cultural changes from its inception to the present day. While no narrative can capture all the important events in San Bernardino's history, the contexts of the following general eras are described to help with understanding the city's evolution to the present day.

Native American Settlements

The San Bernardino Valley's first inhabitants were Native Americans who settled along the Santa Ana River as early as 8000 BC. Natives living in the valley when the Spanish arrived were Uto-Aztecans, Takic speakers, possibly from the Serrano, Luiseño, and Gabrieleño tribes. Later, a Mountain Cahuilla group was brought to the valley by the local Spanish family to work their rancho. Prehistoric sites in the planning area represent at least three periods of Native American occupation—the Milling Stone, Late Prehistoric, and Protohistoric periods—dating from around 3000 BC to the mid-19th century AD. These prehistoric sites include food procurement sites, specialized lithic technology sites, and seasonal habitation sites.

The only local Native American community in residence today is the Yuhaaviatam of the San Manuel Nation from the Serrano group. In 1866, a conflict came to the area, and militia forces from San Bernardino killed Serrano men, women, and children in a 32-day campaign. Their Yuhaaviatam tribal leader, Santos Manuel, safely led the remaining Yuhaaviatam from their homelands to the valley floor. In 1891, the federal government recognized the reservation as a sovereign nation through Presidential Executive Order.

Mission-Rancho Period (1770–1820)

The Mission-Rancho historic period was the first organized attempt on the part of Europeans to colonize the western part of North America. The mission/pueblo/presidio triad, a settlement strategy representing the clerical, civilian, and military authority of the Spanish Crown, was implemented over the decades that followed the overland exploratory expeditions of Alta California conducted by Gaspar de Portolá from 1769 to 1770. Although the missions are the most tangible surviving evidence of this period of history, other artifacts related to this period are known to remain in some areas.

In 1810, the Rancho de San Bernardino of Mission San Gabriel was established near the confluence of Lytle Creek, Warm Creek, and the Santa Ana River. Though the original site was destroyed, a second rancho was established at the Guachama rancheria in Loma Linda. In 1821, the San Bernardino Asistencia was established in Redlands. From this branch mission, agriculture began to develop in the valley. Water was transported via a ten-mile ditch from Mill Creek, known as the Zanja, to irrigate olive trees and vineyards.

Mexican American Period (1820–1847)

Mexico's independence from Spain and the political disarray that followed resulted in the dismantling of the Mission era. In 1842 Don Antonio Mario Lugo received approval to colonize present-day San Bernardino and Yucaipa. The Lugo family developed their land grant, the Rancho San Bernardino, and erected an adobe. In 1843, Miguel Blanco was granted a 30,000-acre land named Rancho Muscupiabe that occupied most of present-day northwestern San Bernardino, but he was forced to abandon the rancho after an attack.

The Lugos were eventually unsuccessful in colonizing the land. During this period of time, emigrants traveling overland through the Mojave Desert and Mormons from Utah began to travel to the San Bernardino Valley. Some emigrants were greeted by the Lugos at the San Bernardino Rancho, and some undoubtedly returned to establish permanent residences. The Gold Rush also provided the ranchos with opportunities to provide emigrants and northern settlements with livestock and other agricultural commodities.



Early California Settlements

Mexico's hold on Alta California ended with the Mexican-American War, and California becoming a state in 1847. In 1851, 37,700 acres of the San Bernardino Rancho were sold to newly arrived settlers from the Mormon Battalion. Near the site of the Lugo family adobe, the Mormons erected Fort San Bernardino near the present-day courthouse. In 1852, Mormon pioneers staked the center of a new settlement, which was to become San Bernardino. The town was laid out in 1853 in a grid format, with one block designated as Mormon Plaza, now known as Pioneer Park.



Mormon Trail Monument, North of San Bernardino

Wikimedia Commons.

In 1854, San Bernardino became incorporated as a city with a population of approximately 1,200 inhabitants, 75 percent of whom were Mormon. Over the next few years, the character of the city reflected the values of its chief inhabitants. In 1857, the Mormons from across the country were recalled to Utah; however, the agricultural character of the valley, established during the Mexican and Mormon periods, continued to dominate the economy, although the city experienced lawlessness during these times.

During the 1860s and 1870s the city grew slowly, with various civic groups forming, including drama, library, and temperance associations. San Bernardino's early routes made it a transportation center, which role was significantly expanded with the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s. San Bernardino would become a center of commerce for agriculture and local citrus, supporting agricultural enterprises in the region. Renowned for its oranges, San Bernardino even became the site for the first "Orange Show" in 1889, which became a major venue for decades.

This era also saw the migration of new peoples into San Bernardino, bringing with them cultures from around the nation and the globe. African Americans first arrived as slaves with the Mormons, and Chinese and Hispanic cultures also arrived—the former employed in the railroad industry and the latter fleeing the Mexican Revolution. In 1866, militia forces in the mountains attempted to wipe out the Serrano Indians, whose tribal leader Santos Manuel led the remaining Yuhaaviatam from the mountains to the valley floor. The San Manuel Reservation was established in 1891 as their home.

Euro-Americanization (1883–1916)

San Bernardino's opening with its railroad network gave rise to a period of unprecedented regional growth and development. Mass migration from the Eastern United States and Europe, beginning in 1885, was fueled by the heavy promotion and arcadian image of Southern California, especially its climate and agricultural potential, and frequently by the railroads themselves. The real estate speculation bubble deflated abruptly in 1888, but not before scores of town sites were platted along the Southern Pacific rail lines.

The Santa Fe Railroad fueled San Bernardino's economic growth. Packinghouses and warehouses were built along railroad corridors, which provided access for tourists and immigrants alike. Upon completion of the railroad, San Bernardino became a boom town. Commercial enterprises dominated the urban landscape, with an emphasis on service and retail business, and industrial enterprises supported agriculture business. By the early 1900s, more than 85 percent of the city's population was directly employed by the railroad, despite increased industrial and agricultural development.

With the center of the city established near Lugo's Agua Caliente rancho adobe, the city's commercial core grew slowly to the east, west, and north. Downtown businesses included hotels, restaurants, saloons, retail shops, and small service-oriented businesses. Property to the south, closer to the Santa Ana River, appears to have remained primarily agricultural. To the west, transportation-related industries developed around the Santa Fe railyard. To the north and east, small agricultural farms and ranches dominated the landscape. Service industries slowly intermingled with the eastern farms, while farms to the north became the city's primary residential district.

During this time, a city hall was built in 1901 at Third and D Streets, and the city's first public library was built on Fourth and D Streets. San Bernardino High School was also built around this time. In 1910, the chamber of commerce was organized, followed by the National Orange Show. By 1915, San Bernardino had transformed from a scarcely populated rancho to a prosperous, semiurban transportation center with a population of nearly 5,000 people who enjoyed modern hotels, street lighting, theaters, railroads, and paved streets with a thriving downtown.



*National Orange Show, 1911
Courtesy: Daily Bulletin*



World Wars and Depression (1917–1945)

This period is characterized by the establishment of a well-defined regional image in economic, social, and cultural terms. Between 1920 and 1930 the population grew from 18,000 to 50,000 as the city expanded outward. Significant developments during this period include the Andreson Building, Harris Department Store, Heritage Building, and Municipal Auditorium. The California Theater was built in 1928, followed by the Ritz Theater. Many of these new buildings reflected the Spanish Colonial Revival, Mediterranean, and Classical Revival styles of the day. Public buildings included the Casa Ramona School, San Bernardino College, and the courthouse.

During the Depression era of the 1930s, new construction slowed. However, several public buildings were built at this time, some with New Deal funding. Works Progress Administration (WPA) funds were used to build the auditoriums at San Bernardino High School and to restore the Asistencia Mission. Other public buildings built included the County's Public Health and Public Defender Buildings on Mountain View Avenue, and the San Bernardino Cultural Center and Fire Hall on E Street, built around 1933. St. Bernardine Medical Center, founded by the Sisters of Charity, was built in 1931.



Norton Air Force Base

Source: Wikimedia Commons

At the end of the 1930s, the Arrowhead Springs Resort Hotel was destroyed by fire and a new hotel was built in 1939. Maurice and Richard McDonald opened the first McDonalds in San Bernardino in 1940. During the 1940s, one-quarter of the city's population of 40,000 was employed by the Santa Fe Railroad. However, with the advent of World War II, the development and expansion of Norton Air Force Base on the grounds of the San Bernardino Municipal Airport rapidly replaced the railroad as the city's leading economic contributor.

During World War II, the "San Bernardino Army Air Field" served as a major repair and maintenance facility for military aircraft, providing logistical support for the Mojave Desert Training Center. Thousands were employed by the military. After the events of Pearl Harbor, Japanese-American residents were forced into internment camps by 1942, and residents were sent to the Poston Relocation Center in Arizona. The city was also home to Camp Ono, a prisoner-of-war camp for Italians captured in Europe and Africa.

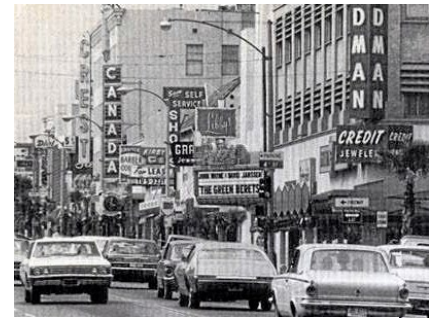
Post-World War and Suburbanization (1945–1977)

The 1940s to 1960s ushered in a period of growth. San Bernardino Air Depot (Norton Air Force Base) was built in 1942. The base transformed the economy, population, and job market. During the early 1940s, 20,000 employees worked at the base, and San Bernardino's population grew from 43,000 to nearly 63,000. Defense workers flocked to the city to fill wartime labor shortages, fueling a home building boom in the city's north-central and Del Rosa areas.

During the 1950s, freeways profoundly altered the city's physical landscape and its emerging role in the Inland Empire. San Bernardino saw the arrival in 1954 of Interstate 10, whose eastward push lasted well into the 1960s. Coupled with the railroads, these projects cemented the city's identity as a gateway city to the region and nation. Caltrans also built Highway 395 (renamed I-215) in a north-south alignment that veered northwest toward Cajon Pass, paralleling the Santa Fe Railroad. The freeway accelerated the city's development of housing near the mountains.

The city also saw tremendous change in its local educational system. The California State University system opened its San Bernardino campus (CSUSB) in 1965, and it has now grown to nearly 20,000 students. San Bernardino Valley College completed significant expansion and construction of new educational facilities, resulting in enrollment increases to a total of 18,000 students by 1975. Three municipal branch libraries were opened. And finally, the local public school system was forced to end segregation after the NAACP's landmark lawsuit prevailed in the California Supreme Court.

Despite the social challenges of this era, San Bernardino enjoyed its heyday during the 1960s and 1970s. As the car-cruising capital of Southern California from the 1940s to 1970s, memories of cruising E Street or Route 66 are etched into the city's collective memory. New residential neighborhoods and modern stores dotted the landscape. The local economy was strong, and job opportunities were plenty. San Bernardino was a highly sought-after city to live and work in. Indeed, the National League of Cities even recognized San Bernardino with an "All American City" award in 1977.



Downtown San Bernardino

Source: San Bernardino Sun.



Urban Challenges (1980 to the present)

Since the 1970s, the city has grappled with various urban challenges. Closure of the BNSF Railroad Maintenance Yard, Norton AFB, and Kaiser Steel resulted in a loss of 30,000 direct jobs and another 60,000 to 90,000 jobs when economic multipliers are factored in. The mortgage meltdown of the mid-2000s resulted in thousands of home foreclosures that eroded the City's property tax base. Closure of the Carousel Mall and auto malls resulted in lost tax revenues.



Curtain of Courage Memorial

Like most urban areas, San Bernardino faced other key challenges, many of them still present today. Public safety issues (specifically crime and violence) became increasingly problematic, affecting all residential neighborhoods throughout the community. Poverty had never been a major issue in San Bernardino but became more prevalent during this time and remains today. Poverty affected youth performance in school, housing conditions, crime, resident health, and the overall quality of life for residents.

San Bernardino's misfortunes culminated with the City's bankruptcy in 2012, a terrorist attack in 2015, and the aftermath of the pandemic. Few cities in the nation compare regarding the challenges that San Bernardino faced during this time. Though the City officially emerged from bankruptcy proceedings in 2022, challenges remain. The City was required to defer significant funds from infrastructure planning and rehabilitation, a liability which will require investments through 2050 to fully recover. Civic leaders recognize these challenges and are forging a path.

The City is preparing a 2050 General Plan update and Downtown Specific Plan that will reinvigorate downtown and the community. City finances have improved, allowing increased expenditures for community services, public safety, and development. Building permits are at the highest levels in years. The Norton AFB continues its successful transition to a general aviation center surrounded by industrial and manufacturing land uses. The City is reinvesting in its neighborhoods and addressing some of its more challenging social problems, including poverty, unemployment, and crime.

Within this context, the 2050 San Bernardino General Plan motto, **The Future Is Ours**, speaks to the juncture where the City finds itself and the need for collective action to realize opportunities ahead.

Goal CR-1 Cultural Resources Program

A multifaceted program for enhancing cultural resources as a means to acknowledge and celebrate the leadership, achievements, accomplishments, and diverse histories of its residents.

Policies

- CR-1.1 Cultural Resources Index.** Consider identifying, mapping, and designating historic, archaeological, and other resources of significance in San Bernardino for review and eventual ratification by the City Council.
- CR-1.2 Cultural Resources Plan.** Consider creating a cultural resources plan, based on the cultural resources index and map as well as community and stakeholder input, that reflects San Bernardino's cultural heritage.
- CR-1.3 Commission Involvement.** Continue the role of the Arts and Historical Preservation Commission in advising the Mayor, City Council, Planning Commission, and staff in matters pertaining to the arts, culture, and historic reservation and heritage and in making recommendations related to the designation, preservation, and protection of historical properties.
- CR-1.4 Cultural Resources Ordinances.** Ensure that municipal ordinances are in place that provide guidance that govern the designation, preservation, and recognition of City cultural resources.
- CR-1.5 Yearly Events and Celebrations.** Create regular yearly events, proclamations, and celebrations that are oriented around recognizing the achievements of San Bernardino's diverse cultures and contemporary values.
- CR-1.6 Cultural Resources Education.** Inspire public support for San Bernardino's cultural resources through a broad public education program that includes schools, public art, library corners, museum displays, and events.
- CR-1.7 Partnerships.** Identify, solicit, and strengthen partnerships with museums, historic societies, stakeholders, and other groups to create and sustain a cultural resources program in San Bernardino.



San Bernardino Cultural Resources

Fundamental to this element is the recognition and appreciation that San Bernardino has archaeological and historical resources. They are not limited to historic buildings and monuments, but include oral traditions, art, and community events. Cultural resources embrace both the built environment and the natural environment. Cultural history exists in traditional physical structures as well as in the memories of San Bernardino's residents. And these cultural resources are important to restore and preserve.

San Bernardino's cultural resources can be grouped into categories that assist with understanding the many community treasures. The cultural resources categories are listed here and discussed below.

- **Historic Structures.** Buildings of relevance and significance to the history of the city, regardless of whether they are eligible for official registration with the federal or state government.
- **Monuments, Public Art, and Landmarks.** Monuments, plaques, and public art testify to the significance of a historic event, person, or structure no longer in existence.
- **Cultural Landscapes.** A cultural landscape is a place with layers of history that evolve through design and use over time. It includes streets, cemeteries, parks, and other elements.
- **Urban Fabric and Traces.** Traces of historic settlements and cultures that are only partially preserved or preserved as fragments because no complete historic districts exist.
- **Oral History.** Famous or unique events or places that are preserved largely in the collective memory of residents but are not marked or recorded in the built fabric.
- **Contemporary Culture.** Yearly events and celebrations, visual and performing arts, and other expressions that give a special quality and identity to life in San Bernardino.

These cultural resource categories can help residents and decision-makers understand and appreciate their eventful history, build on its richness, and continue the process of community improvement.

Historic Structures

The City of San Bernardino has many buildings of relevance and significance to the history of the city, regardless of whether they are eligible for official registration or have official historic designations with the federal or state government. Local structures can be of local historic significance. Historic buildings remind us of how San Bernardino developed over time.

Structures include, but are not limited to: San Bernardino Santa Fe Depot, California Theatre, Heritage Building, Lady of the Rosary Church, Pioneer Society House, and Arrowhead Springs.

Historic Structures

1. Santa Fe Depot
2. Heritage Building
3. Heritage House
4. Our Lady of the Rosary Cathedral
5. Arrowhead Springs
6. California Theatre

Clockwise from upper left.





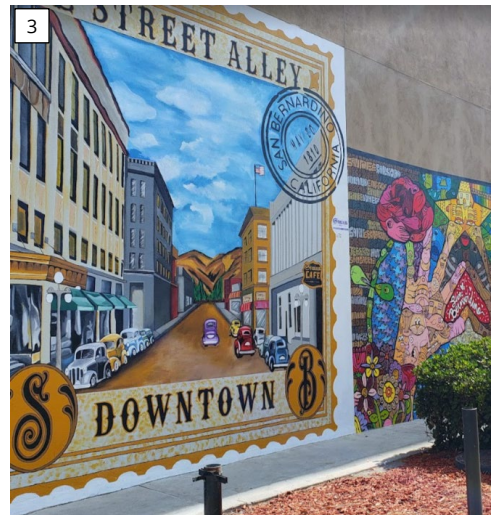
Monuments, Public Art, and Landmarks

Monuments, commemorative plaques, and public art commemorate people, events, or places. These features testify to the significance of a historic event, person, building structure, or establishment that is no longer in existence. Monuments can include war memorials, buildings, and funerary monuments. Public art can include murals, painting, sculpture, tilework, and other decorative artwork. And landmarks represent significance to a specific culture.

San Bernardino does not have a formal inventory of monuments, public art, and landmarks. However, many such features exist in San Bernardino that are important to the historical and cultural fabric of the community.

San Bernardino Monuments, Public Art, and Landmarks

1. San Bernardino Arrowhead
2. Amapola Mural along Mt Vernon Corridor
3. Downtown Murals along E Street Alley
4. World War Memorial at La Plaza Park

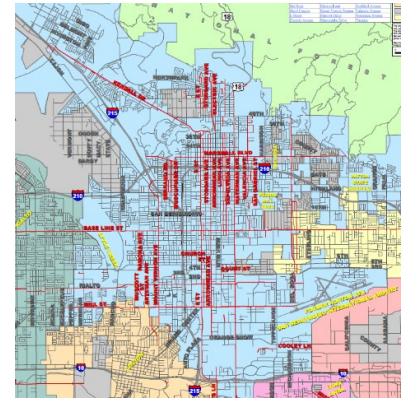


Cultural Landscapes

A cultural landscape is a place with many layers of history that evolved through design and use over time. A cultural landscape embodies the associations and uses that evoke a sense of history for a place. Physical features of cultural landscapes can include trees, buildings, pathways, parks, cemeteries, water bodies, street names, or other elements that express cultural values and the history of a site. This section describes several features that stand out.

Street Names

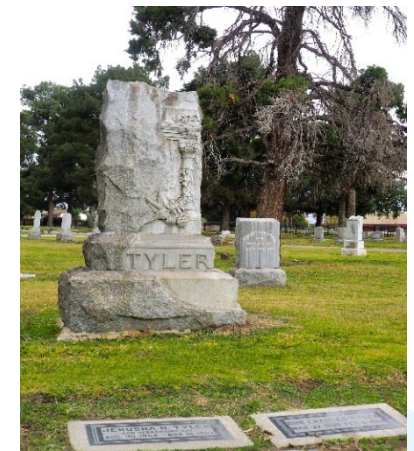
Street names are a significant part of the cultural landscape because they reflect the history, identity, and important figures of a city. The City's website maintains the history of approximately two dozen specific streets that herald back to the city's early years and connect residents to its past. Names that immediately come to mind include Edison Street, the location of the Pacific Electric Trolley; Waterman Avenue, named after a San Bernardino resident and California Governor; and Lugo Avenue, owner of the Rancho San Bernardino.



San Bernardino Historic Streets

Cemeteries

San Bernardino's cemeteries provide evidence of the city's past. Pioneer Cemetery, which opened in 1857, is the resting place for many of San Bernardino's early settlers. Mountain View Cemetery, which opened in 1907, has more than 80,000 internments. The Home of Eternity Cemetery is the oldest Jewish cemetery in Southern California and is a State of California Historic Landmark. Campo Santa Memorial (AKA the Old Catholic Cemetery) opened in 1852 and converted to a park in 1977. Patton State Hospital also has a closed cemetery that was the burial site of former residents.



Pioneer Cemetery

Natural Features

In the foothills directly above San Bernardino, the Arrowhead is a natural landmark that has been important to the Native Americans, pioneers, and settlers of the area for centuries. Indians who inhabited the valley believed that the arrowhead pointed the way to hot mineral springs with healing qualities, and thus considered it holy ground. While features have been affected by erosion, the arrowhead remains a symbol of the pioneer spirit of the San Bernardino Valley and retains cultural significance among Native American tribes.



Urban Traces

San Bernardino's history exists on the ground and in the collective memory of its citizens. Traces of urban fabric are patterns of urban elements within the city's contemporary landscape that remain as remnants of earlier settlements of cultural significance. As cities change, physical remnants of street patterns, buildings, and other elements often remain. In many cases, however, change is so pervasive that all traces of an event or period of time are lost.

Two notable examples of urban traces include the former Black community of Valley Truck Farms and Chinatown.

Valley Truck Farms



Valley Truck Farms

Valley Truck Farms was a predominantly Black community on the southeast side of San Bernardino. Valley Truck Farms was roughly bounded by Mill Street on the north, Tippecanoe Avenue on the east, Washington Avenue on the west, and Dumas Street on the south. The community was intended for Black residents without racial restrictions, where residents could pursue the dream of homeownership, own land, and grow produce, and raise animals. At its peak in the 1940s and 1950s, 500 families lived in the district. The area began to decline in the 1960s and 1970s, including closure of the historic Mill School and the rezoning of the area for industry. Today, its memory lives on through scattered former residents, St. Mark's Baptist Church, and physical remnants of its history.

Chinatown



Chinatown along Third Street

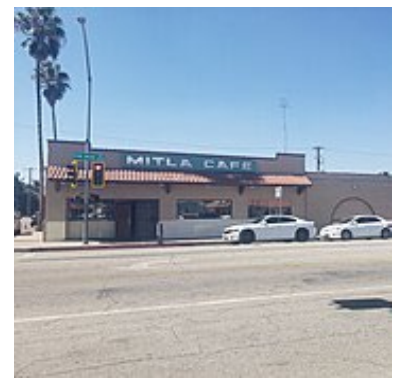
In 1867, the first Chinese immigrants arrived in San Bernardino to work on the construction of the railroads. By the late 1890s, San Bernardino's Chinatown on Third Street had extended to Arrowhead and Sierra Way and was home to between 400 and 600 residents. After the railroads were built, many Chinese residents worked on farms in the Base Line Gardens tract; in the citrus industry; or as cooks, launderers, and bus boys. Anti-Chinese sentiment began to develop when a statewide depression devastated California in 1875. In 1882, the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act banned Chinese laborers from immigrating into the United States. By the mid-1920s, fires and other agents had wiped out most of the homes. And when San Bernardino County purchased the few remaining structures, the remaining portion of Chinatown was demolished in 1960.

Oral History

San Bernardino's cultural and historical events and places are a source of pride and education. Oral history encourages citizens to consider where their city has been and where it is going. Among the many waves of history and cultures that have influenced San Bernardino, there are examples of events or places that are preserved largely in collective memory, but are not necessarily marked or recorded in the current built fabric of the city. Many of the events in San Bernardino hearken back to segregation.

Mitla Café

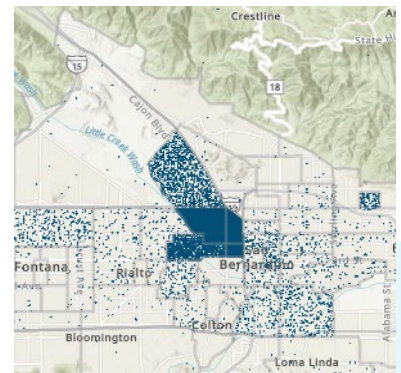
Mitla Café, in San Bernardino's westside and Mt. Vernon district, has a history among Mexican-American activist groups. During the 1930s and 1940s, segregation was prevalent statewide, including San Bernardino and the Inland Empire. Local schools, public theaters, the public pool, and even the Santa Fe Railroad station were segregated. After many years of segregation, Mitla Café became a central location for business, civic, and church leaders to discuss and make plans for action. Their efforts resulted in the formation of the Mexican American Defense Committee (MADC), which later filed a lawsuit against the city for access to the public pool. In 1944, the courts ruled in favor of MADC and required desegregation of public pools, parks, and recreation facilities for Mexican Americans.



Mitla Café, Mt. Vernon Ave.

African Americans Civil Rights

The postwar period in San Bernardino was a time of segregation. Blacks and Mexican Americans were denied equal opportunity and access to housing, schools, and public facilities. In San Bernardino, the Community League of Mothers led school boycotts and protests to demand desegregation and equal education. The NAACP and Congress of Racial Equality filed lawsuits, advocating for fair housing and better job opportunities. Though housing segregation ended with the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the NAACP finally prevailed in its lawsuit in 1976, when the California Supreme Court upheld Judge Egly's 1972 ruling, resulting in school desegregation. The stories of these struggles are memorialized in oral history, preserved by the "Bridges That Carried Us Over Project", at CSUSB.



Density of African Americans in San Bernardino, circa 1970



Goal CR-2 Historic Resource Preservation

Sites, buildings, and districts that have architectural or historical significance are protected, preserved, and restored as an ongoing component of the City's current and long-range planning process.

Policies

- CR-2.1 Historic Resources Survey.** Consider updating the historic resources survey of historic and architectural resources and integrating it into the City's planning and historical preservation process.
- CR-2.2 Historic District and Overlay Zones.** Consider identifying and designating a historic district and overlay zone ordinances as deemed necessary to recognize places or areas of historic significance and preservation.
- CR-2.3 Adaptive Reuse.** Encourage the reimagining and repurposing of designated historical buildings in commercial areas to preserve, maintain, and enhance buildings for future generations.
- CR-2.4 Historic Preservation Ordinance.** Consider adoption of a historic preservation ordinance that authorizes the City to designate resources deemed of significance as a City historical landmark or district.
- CR-2.5 Development Review Process.** Plan for historic preservation of resources early in the development review process through early consultation with property owners, land developers, and community stakeholders.
- CR-2.6 Historic Building Renovation and Retention.** Encourage preservation, maintenance, enhancement, and reuse of historic buildings and relocation of existing residential homes when retention on-site is infeasible.
- CR-2.7 Maintenance of City Properties.** Require City-owned properties containing or adjacent to historic resources to be maintained in a manner that is aesthetically and/or functionally compatible with such resources.
- CR-2.8 Environmental Review.** Require environmental review to be conducted on all applications (e.g., grading, building, and demolition) for resources designated or potentially designated as historically significant.

Goal CR-3 Archaeology and Paleontology

Archaeological, paleontological, and tribal resources are protected, enhanced, and appreciated as an ongoing component of the long-range and current planning processes.

Policies

- CR-3.1 Archaeological Resources Survey.** Consider preparing an inventory of archaeological resources citywide based on archaeological sensitivity maps and project-based information provided during the entitlement process.
- CR-3.2 Archaeological Protection Policy.** Develop policy and administrative procedures to ensure the conservation of significant archaeological sites, districts, landscapes, sacred places, etc. in San Bernardino.
- CR-3.3 Paleontological Resource Protection.** Ensure conservation of significant archaeological sites, districts, and landscapes via compliance with all applicable state and federal laws and required mitigation.
- CR-3.4 Resource Sensitivity Maps.** Consider the preparation of resource archaeological and paleontological sensitivity maps to help recognize important resources, inform land use decisions, and preserve resources.
- CR-3.5 Native American Consultation.** Ensure opportunities for meaningful consultation with Native American groups in the identification and documentation of structures, sites, landscapes, artifacts, and documents.
- CR-3.6 Tribal Resource Protection.** Develop policy and administrative procedure for the proactive protection of San Bernardino's tribal cultural resources, working with local Native American groups.
- CR-3.7 Cultural Resources Staffing.** Designate City staff who are responsible for recording, tracking, and maintaining a list of important archaeological and paleontological resources in the community.



Creative Arts

San Bernardino residents understand the value of creative arts. Performing arts, visual arts, and literary arts connect residents to who they are and what they believe beyond their jobs, education, or place of residence. Creative arts can capture the imagination of residents and transform the city. San Bernardino's creative arts movement is alive and well in many areas.

Investing in the Arts

San Bernardino has seen significant investment in performing arts centers. Major projects include:

- \$50 million for performing arts centers in each high school
- \$125 million for a new performing arts center at CSUSB
- Renovations to the California Theatre and Roosevelt Bowl

Performing Arts

Proposition 28, the Arts and Music in Schools Act, required the state to establish a new program supporting the arts in public schools. SBCUSD specifically receives \$25 million annually in block grants to fund art education. SBCUSD has also committed more than \$50 million in bond funds to build or renovate performing arts facilities at each of the city's five high schools. CSUSB completed a \$125 million performing arts center that opened in 2025, and the City has made multimillion dollar investments to renovate the Roosevelt Bowl and California Theatre of Performing Arts.

Visual Arts

San Bernardino has a developing visual arts scene that consists of painting, public murals, ceramics, and other expressions. The City has sponsored murals at the Ruben Campos Center, Encanto Community Center, and Rudy Hernandez Community Center. Public art installations can be found in front of the County Board of Supervisors Building, at bus stops along the Metrolink route, downtown, and other select locations throughout the community. The City supports the visual arts with low-cost leases for the Garcia Center for the Arts and other support for visual artistic ventures.

Museums

San Bernardino is fortunate to be near the County Museum in Redlands. The city also has an array of local, special-interest museums. These include museums of local significance such as the Inland Military Museum, Norton Air Force Museum, San Bernardino Railroad Museum, Patton Hospital Museum, Cal Fire Museum, San Bernardino Historical Society, and Fullerton Museum of Art. These eight museums offer residents the opportunity to learn about San Bernardino's history as well as specialty subjects.

An active group of private and nonprofit organizations are involved in advancing the creative arts within the community and creating a cultural arts district. Among others, the San Bernardino Arts Council in downtown is designated by the County Board of Supervisors as a local partner to the California Arts Council. Its mission is to ensure a vibrant and thriving arts and cultural ecosystem throughout San Bernardino County. Other local groups are also active in promoting creative arts in the city.

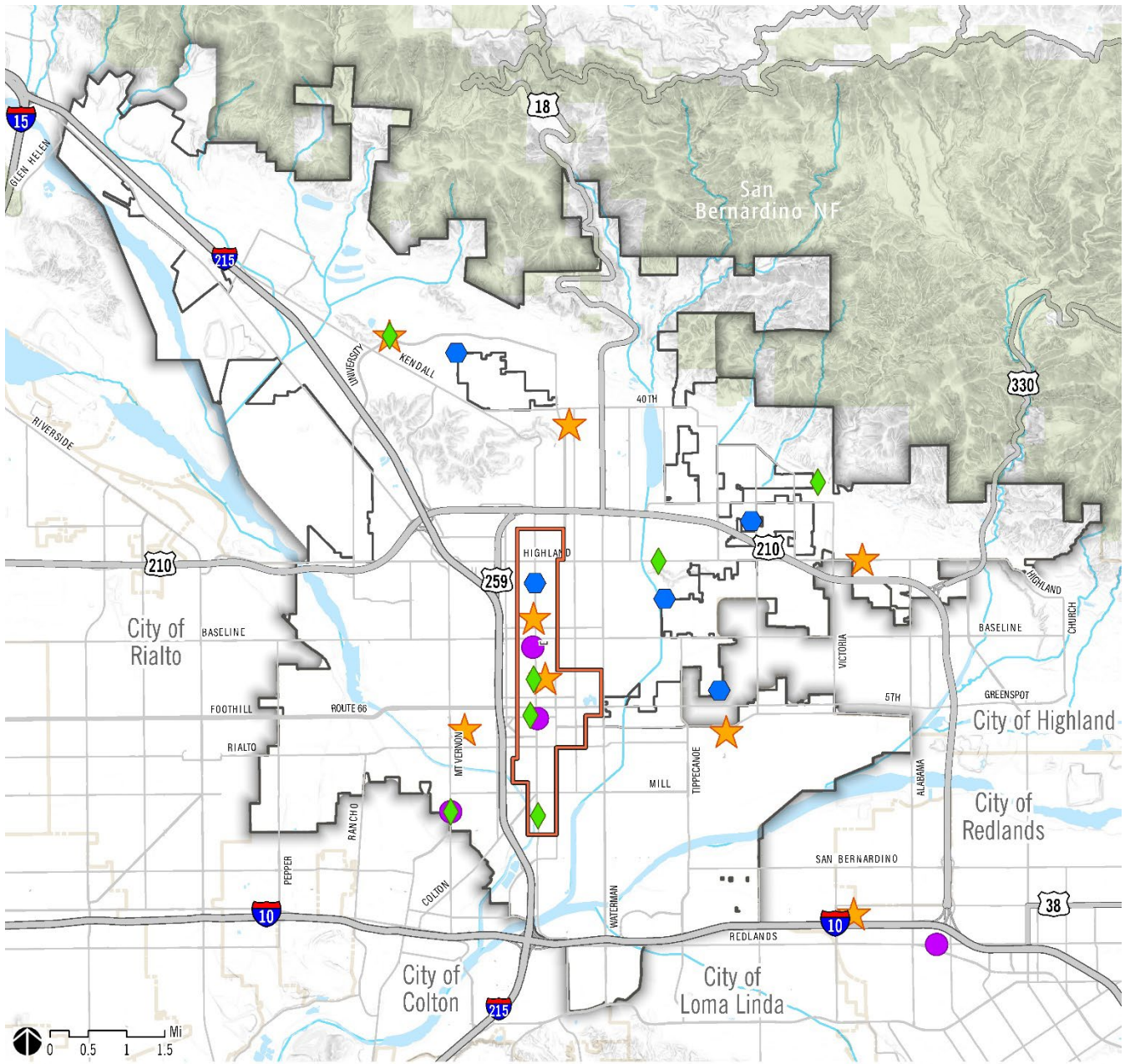


Creative Arts

Creative arts options include the following:

1. Lunar New Year Celebrations
2. Where Our Cultures Connect Festivals
3. Amapola Rico Taco Mural on Mt Vernon
4. Public Art at Metro Bus Stations
5. Downtown Murals Along E Street
6. California Theatre of Performing Arts

Figure CR-1 shows the location of the primary creative arts facilities and organizations in San Bernardino.



Date: 3/28/2025

Source: City of San Bernardino and PlaceWorks 2025

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------|
| City Boundary | Creative Arts Facility |
| City Sphere of Influence | Museum |
| Proposed Cultural District:
Contains more than 40
cultural resources along the
E Street corridor. | Art Studio |
| | Performance Venue |
| | High School Theatre |

Figure CR-1. Creative Arts Facilities

Goal CR-4 Creative Arts

A community that values its creative arts and cultural facilities and programs, seeks to expand their impact throughout San Bernardino, and works with the community to advance creative arts.

Policies

- CR-4.1 Master Plan.** Consider preparing an Arts and Cultural Master Plan to provide a long-term strategy to promote the city's arts and cultural amenities, and update the plan on a regular basis to maintain its relevancy.
- CR-4.2 Support for the arts.** Actively support public and private arts activities by coordinating City-sponsored programs, privately supported activities, loans and grants, and other means of participation.
- CR-4.3 Community collaborations.** Work with public and private organizations in the city, county, and state to ensure that cultural programs are expanded and that fiscal and administrative resources are coordinated.
- CR-4.4 Public Art to enhance identity.** Incorporate public art in City-owned buildings, public spaces, on utility boxes, and areas with high commercial and/or pedestrian activity to beautify the city. Improvements include:
- concrete hardscape with impressions of people, flora, fauna, or historical scenes
 - unique building materials, sculptural elements, and statutes as appropriate
 - wall murals; signs; streetscape designs including street furniture, period light poles, statuary
 - fountains or unique landscaping such as topiary or native plants; festive or seasonal banners, etc.
- CR-4.5 Creative art and education.** Offer and expand the provision of hands-on workshops and events for all ages, promoting creativity and community interaction; support community events celebrating culture.
- CR-4.6 Public Awareness.** Coordinate and promote awareness of the City's creative arts programs and the cultural arts programs in the community through print and digital media to residents, business, and stakeholders.



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