

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Plan

The City of Los Angeles possesses a wealth of buildings, structures and sites that provide tangible evidence of the unique history and culture formed over past centuries. The richness of the City's heritage encompasses its founding in the eighteenth century, its development in the nineteenth century, and its maturation in the twentieth century. However, recognition of the city's roots has been a relatively recent phenomenon. Despite the continued efforts of city agencies, organizations, and committed individuals, the city has not fully acknowledged the importance of its historic resources or created a comprehensive preservation program.

The level of stewardship for a community's historic resources says much about that city's awareness of its identity. Resident awareness is in turn critical to a city's ability to command recognition and to shape the perceptions of outsiders about its resources. To protect and reuse its cultural, architectural, and historic resources, the City of Los Angeles must have comprehensive policies and integrated decision making to ensure efficient use of those resources; to promote public awareness; and to ensure that the cultures and physical environments are celebrated, protected, and preserved.

Current landmark and other programs aimed at historic preservation are fragmented, resulting in inadequate attention to preservation needs. Even as historic structures continue to deteriorate, many of the city's processes create burdens and uncertainties for property owners, developers, and the public in their efforts to rehabilitate and reuse historic structures.

The Cultural Heritage Masterplan proposes a course of action designed to strengthen the City's preservation ethic and treat historic resources not simply as monuments to the past but as integral parts of the City in the next millennium. The Masterplan provides a multifaceted historic preservation strategy to address major preservation issues. It is a policy document intended to guide and coordinate historic preservation activity in Los Angeles and establish a framework for decision-making. It outlines procedures for identification and interpretation, guides the stewardship of public-owned historic resources, proposes the use of financial and other incentives for private stewardship, and identifies specific improvements to the existing regulatory framework.

The creation of the Masterplan involved a wide segment of the community. Close coordination among the Regional Arts Councils, preservation organizations, developers, and other stakeholders ensured a balanced and thoughtful discussion of the issues.

The Masterplan contains four chapters and is supplemented by a collection of preservation reference materials. Chapter One discusses the importance of and the necessity for the Plan, introduces the vision, affirms the benefits of preservation, and identifies current challenges. Chapter Two places preservation in context by providing a brief history of the City, tracing the origins of historic preservation in Los Angeles, and explaining the regulatory framework for preservation. Chapter Three covers the identification, evaluation, and designation of cultural resources. It discusses existing designation programs, explains what resources are considered significant, and outlines the process for determining the significance of the various resource types. Chapter Four identifies goals, objectives, and implementation measures needed for a comprehensive program. The reference materials provide additional information on a wide variety of historic preservation topics. However, because of the sheer volume of material contained in these reference volumes, these technical resources have not been prepared for mass distribution but are available in the Cultural Affairs Department.

The Benefits

The existence of historic resources in a community is beneficial to all its citizens. To some, the benefits are aesthetic; historic neighborhoods provide ambience. Others derive educational benefits, learning about the past from the physical environment. Still others may benefit in economic terms. Los Angeles cannot afford to ignore the benefits of preservation which are substantial, compelling, and quantifiable. Some of the significant benefits of historic preservation, which are pertinent and important to Los Angeles, are seen in the following:

Urban Revitalization: Urban revitalization programs are often associated with historically or architecturally important structures. These structures and buildings provide the focal points (landmarks) that distinguish one urban area from another. They provide a “sense of place”.

Employment Opportunities: Rehabilitation is generally more labor intensive than new construction and creates more jobs for the dollar per dollar in investment. Other job opportunities lie in tourism, historic site management, hospitality, and other industries.

Cost Effective Preservation of Affordable Housing: Much of the affordable housing stock in Los Angeles, like other major cities, is located in older neighborhoods with architecturally and historically significant buildings.

Economic Development Opportunities: Older buildings frequently provide retail and commercial space for small businesses which are vital to the neighborhood economy.

Enhanced Quality of Life: The distinctive design and visual prominence of historic buildings make

them important symbols of the community and add to the quality of the built environment.

Community Identity and Image: Preservation of historic buildings encourages knowledge of and respect for the community's character, history, and culture.

Education, Cultural and Artistic Values: Historic preservation helps maintain a record of diverse cultural traditions, building types and architectural styles, materials, and crafts. Children learn about their communities and of life in Los Angeles in eras other than their own. They develop a sense of pride and respect for the environment.

Tourism: Historic resources are among the strongest community assets for attracting visitors, giving visitors and residents a physical setting in which to base the stories that invite increased visitation.

Film-making: Los Angeles is acknowledged as the film capital of the world, and the diversity of building types, architectural styles, and urban environments within the city provide many opportunities for location filming.

In order to receive maximum benefit from its historic assets, the City should develop policies for their protection and use. The responsibility for a successful preservation program cannot rest with city government alone. Both the public and private sectors have important roles to play in realizing the Plan's vision. Together, they must create a cohesive preservation ethic which recognizes that preservation of historic resources is an opportunity and not an obstacle. Historic preservation activities can enhance the education of our children, instill a sense of pride in our community, and allow for tangible exploration of times and places different from the present. It can be the basis for physical and economic revitalization of neighborhoods and commercial centers, create jobs and tourism, and enhance the quality of life for residents. In essence, it can positively alter the face of the public persona of each and every street, neighborhood, and community.

The Challenges

There are a number of challenges to maximizing the benefits of historic preservation. Among these challenges are the lack of effective preservation programming, the need for information, coherent and efficient regulation and process, lack of community awareness, and insufficient financial and technical resources.

Lack of Effective Preservation Programming: The City lacks comprehensive preservation policy and a comprehensive program for inter-departmental coordination on preservation projects.

Lack of Information: There is a great deal of information in the City about historic resources, yet

the information is not always accessible to those who need it. Repositories have limited hours and are geographically dispersed.

Regulation and Process: Coordination among agencies in a large city is a challenge. Agencies with overlapping jurisdiction can lengthen review and approval times.

Awareness: Education, both about the unique characteristics of individual buildings and programs to effectively repair them, is lacking.

Insufficient Resources: The City needs to identify resources which can be directed to preservation programs. Many of the City's existing programs can be augmented with preservation components.

The Vision

The Cultural Heritage Masterplan envisions a city in which historic resources are not only recognized as symbols of the past, but as integral parts of everyday activity. Through revitalization and reuse, these resources will be alive with activity in the city's future: places to live, work, play, worship, and study.

The task of the Masterplan is to define a way of preserving the past in the "City of Tomorrow." In order for historic buildings to play a central role in the vitality of the city's diverse neighborhoods, preservation must reflect the multicultural nature and profile of Los Angeles. The spectrum will lengthen as various populations work to express their own identities and make their place in the history of the city.

The Masterplan seeks to commemorate the contributions of all its citizens by recognizing and preserving their contributions to the built environment. In so doing, we foster a greater appreciation for the city and for all aspects of our heritage as Angelenos.

Making it Happen: Policies, Goals and Objectives

The City should adopt the following policy:

POLICY

The City of Los Angeles shall protect and utilize its cultural, architectural

and historic resources.

In order to protect these resources, the City shall develop comprehensive policies and a program of integrated inter-departmental decision making to ensure efficient and thorough allocation of monetary, human and physical resources. This shall include a citywide inventory of potential resources, incentive programs for owners of such resources, adequate legal protections, criteria for maintenance and rehabilitation and educational programs and technical assistance.

The City shall promote public awareness of its historic and cultural resources to ensure that the culture and physical environment of all its citizens are celebrated, protected and preserved.

The City shall look for opportunities to establish partnerships with Federal, State and County governments, foundations, schools and universities, nonprofit institutions and others to preserve and protect all resources, regardless of ownership, within its jurisdiction.

GOALS

To carry out its stated policy, the City should develop clear goals to preserve the built environment. The following goals, developed with the community during the Masterplan process, acknowledge the current challenges to preservation in Los Angeles. The goals strive to create opportunities for protection and use of the historic built environment by using a variety of preservation tools and incentives.

GOAL 1 Create a comprehensive and cohesive preservation program for the City of Los Angeles.

A comprehensive and cohesive preservation program which enables the City to qualify as a Certified Local Government (CLG) under the National Historic Preservation Act will result in more efficient allocation of human and economic resources. Duplication of effort and delay in process can be avoided. Close coordination will result in more preservation projects with added economic and social benefit.

Among the recommended strategies for implementation are: application for Certified Local Government status; review and adoption of the Cultural Heritage Masterplan; and, a program of comprehensive preservation training and education to all city departments.

GOAL 2 Integrate historic preservation into city staff, departmental, and legislative decision making processes.

Decisions concerning economic development, building permits and compliance, public works, planning and resources, and housing, that impact historic and cultural resources are made daily throughout City government. An effective historic preservation program must be coordinated and supported among all City agencies to assure the protection of these resources.

Among the recommended strategies for implementation are: coordinate review of projects and work related to historic resources; provide for an interagency preservation division; increase staffing for HPOZs; and, staff the Division of Historic Preservation.

GOAL 3 Identify historic resources significant to the City of Los Angeles, including buildings, structures, sites, districts, objects, and archaeological sites that reflect the City's cultural, social, economic, political, prehistoric, and architectural history.

A comprehensive survey of historic and cultural resources will provide a framework for future designations that encompass the full spectrum of resources. A survey provides property owners, developers, and the community with a good sense of what historic cultural resources the City considers important, thereby providing predictability to the development process.

Among the recommended strategies for implementation are: a survey properties owned by the City of Los Angeles and review of maintenance provisions for conformance with Secretary of the Interior's Standards; a comprehensive survey of resources in the City to identify properties eligible for listing and designation; and a review surveys of previously identified historic areas and compilation and mapping of the results in a central repository.

GOAL 4 Increase public awareness of preservation by providing opportunities to learn about the benefits of preservation through education and marketing.

In order for a preservation program to be successful, it must have a constituency of advocates representative of the diverse population and interest groups which work and live in the City. The benefits of preserving historic resources must be made relevant to citizens of all social and economic

groups.

Among the recommended strategies for implementation are to change the name of the Regional Arts Councils and expand their membership to Regional Arts and Historic Preservation Councils; to undertake Preservation Week activities during each year; to support neighborhood preservation activities; to memorialize people, places, and events through an historic plaque program; and to recognize individuals, as well as structures and buildings, for their cultural significance.

GOAL 5 Expand the base of information on the city's history to promote knowledge and understanding of the built environment and its residents. Institutions such as the Los Angeles Public Library, African American Museum, Automobile Club, the Japanese American National Museum, the Southwest Museum, and others have interpreted various aspects of the city's history in their collections. These repositories reflect the diversity of the city and the depth of its resources

Among the recommended strategies for implementation are to engage in a program to record oral histories; to develop a central archive for historically important documents and artifacts; to institute a calendar or other database to publicize preservation and historical events; and, to encourage public donation of memorabilia to appropriate repositories.

GOAL 6 Promote recognition and appreciation for the many cultural heritages that have shaped and continue to shape the City of Los Angeles.

From its earliest days, Los Angeles has been a city of diversity. Today, Los Angeles is one of the most ethnically diverse metropolitan areas in the world.

Recommended strategies for implementation are to identify cultural and language barriers to preservation; to recognize individuals, as well as structures and buildings, for their cultural significance; to coordinate preservation programs in neighborhoods; and to develop contexts which reflect the diverse development patterns of the city.

GOAL 7 Identify, establish, and support economic development efforts, cultural tourism, and neighborhood revitalization and identify programs that protect cultural, historic, landscape, architectural, and archaeological resources of the City of Los Angeles.

The preservation of historic environments as a catalyst for, and a major

component of, economic development has been recognized for decades.

Recommended strategies for implementation are supportive of heritage tourism efforts; promotion of special events and festivals; utilization of historic buildings and structures as catalyst projects for economic revitalization; and, provision of incentives to developers through grants, loans, and technical assistance.

GOAL 8 Promote the preservation, maintenance, and reuse of historic, architectural, landscape, and cultural resources through use of financial and technical assistance.

Financial and regulatory incentives have been found to be an important element of any preservation program.

Among the recommended strategies for implementation are a rebate of business tax license fees; distribution of educational and promotional materials that describe the benefits of the Rehabilitation Investment Tax Credit, Mills Act, and other local, state, and national incentives; encouragement for private lenders to establish a loan pool for reduced interest rate rehabilitation loans; and promotion of existing conservation easement programs.

GOAL 9 Protect historic resources through the consistent use of appropriate legislative and legal measures.

The City's ordinances should reflect its policy for protection of historic resources. Therefore, it should undertake an expanded program for designation of significant buildings and sites. Development of a menu of financial and regulatory incentives will help to offset any of the perceived or real costs of the rehabilitation.

Recommended strategies for implementation are: to facilitate General Plan Revisions consistent with the Cultural Heritage Masterplan; to revise conflicts in ordinances and procedures; to rectify inconsistencies in city codes and ordinances in particular the Cultural Heritage and HPOZ ordinances; to revise the city's permitting process for adaptive reuse; and to modify Historic-Cultural Monument status criteria and integrity to address modern architecture, as well as thematic signage.

GOAL 10 Maintain and strengthen preservation partnerships with neighboring cities, county, state, and federal government agencies, and organizations.

In order for the City of Los Angeles to develop a comprehensive approach to historic preservation, it must acknowledge the importance and opportunities for all historic resources within its borders. The City cannot effectuate change alone. Throughout the city, regionally, and at the federal and state level, there are various agencies which control property within City boundaries. Many believe in historic preservation and its value to the community and the individual. Their assistance in preserving historic buildings should be encouraged.

Among the recommended strategies for implementation are: to explore the establishment of an Office of Historic Preservation within the City; to form partnerships with the County of Los Angeles to review projects which would affect historic resources; and to form partnerships with professional associations for programming and projects using Los Angeles resources as case studies or laboratories.