

Key Considerations

Strengths

- + **Rich cultural and architectural history.** Ventura has a rich cultural and architectural legacy and strong sense of place that is an important part of the city's identity. Thus, the preservation of buildings and sites is critical to the overall character of the city.
- + **Policies and regulations.** The City has established a robust historic preservation program to address the identification, designation, and protection of historic resources, along with design guidelines to protect the historic character of specific areas of the city. These policies provide a solid foundation for the protection of historic properties and neighborhoods in the city. However, many existing policies have been in place for decades and should be updated based on current best practices, which will provide for greater clarity in the planning process and more certainty for property owners.
- + **Historic resources studies.** City staff have conducted historic resources studies, including historic resources surveys and the development of historic context statements, dating back to the 1980s. These studies have been critical to the continued identification and protection of historically significant properties in Ventura.
- + **Recognition of historic properties.** To date, the City has designated 119 individual properties and five historic districts that represent significant archaeological resources, the San Buenaventura Mission and related resources, and residential, commercial, and institutional properties that are associated with important people, or reflect important periods of development or architectural styles. Most of the designated historic resources in Ventura are located in proximity to the Mission, and were primarily constructed between the late 19th century and the 1920s. There is currently only one property constructed after World War II that has been designated. City staff could build on its existing preservation program by continuing to study its history and encouraging nominations for resources conducted in the more recent past, or associated with under-recognized aspects of history.
- + **New development in older neighborhoods.** Much of the new development over the past decade has occurred in and around the oldest parts of the city, such as the Downtown, the Westside, and Midtown. The location of new development creates potential conflicts with existing historic and cultural resources. Strong policies and regulations are needed to encourage the identification and protection of historic resources while providing for appropriate growth and development in all areas of the city.
- + **Tribal resources.** The location of the city was once home to Native Americans collectively known as the Chumash. Additional study is needed to identify and preserve tribal resources.
- + **Intangible history.** Part of the city's identity is the people, stories, and intangible aspects of Ventura's history. City staff could conduct additional studies of the social and cultural history of the city to surface under-recognized stories and narratives.

Goals and Policies

Goal HP-1: Maintain and support a comprehensive, citywide historic preservation program to identify and protect Ventura’s historic, cultural and archaeological resources.

- HP-1.1 State and Federal Regulations.** Comply with all City, State and federal historic preservation regulations to ensure adequate protection of the City’s cultural, historic and archeological resources.
- HP-1.2 Historic Preservation Ordinance.** Regularly review, and as needed, update the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance to align with current preservation practices, clarify eligibility criteria and integrity thresholds, and provide greater clarity to property owners on the regulatory requirements for historic properties and cultural resources.
- HP-1.3 Historic designation.** Encourage designation of historically significant properties and districts throughout the city and from all periods of development.
- HP-1.4 Funding.** Allocate sufficient resources to implement the historic preservation program and pursue funding to preserve historic resources.
- HP-1.5 Historic Preservation Committee.** Maintain, and meet regularly with, an Historic Preservation Committee on matters related to the preservation of the City’s cultural and historic resources.
- HP-1.6 Economic Development.** Recognize the economic development benefits of historic preservation through heritage education and the promotion of tourism.

Goal HP-2: Protect historic resources from demolition and inappropriate alterations through the use of the City’s regulatory framework, technical assistance and incentives.

- HP-2.1 Federal Standards for Rehabilitation.** Ensure that the rehabilitation of historic buildings complies with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.
- HP-2.2 Historic Preservation Incentives.** Provide incentives to encourage the retention and continued use of the city’s historic resources, including waiving or modifying design and development standards or supporting reduced application fees for designated or potentially dedicated historic properties.
- HP-2.3 Protecting Resources.** Support development projects that actively protect historic and cultural resources and encourage the consideration of historical resources early in the development review process.
- HP-2.4 Suspension of Construction.** Suspend development activity when archaeological resources are discovered, and require the developer to retain a qualified archaeologist to oversee handling of the resources in coordination with the Ventura County Archaeological Society and local Native American organizations as appropriate.
- HP-2.5 Building Modifications.** Require that modifications to historically designated buildings preserve and protect their character-defining features that contribute to their historic significance consistent with Secretary of Interior Standards.

- HP-2.6 Review by Historic Preservation Committee.** Require a review and recommendations from the City's Historic Preservation Committee on any proposed development that may affect any designated landmark, or a property identified as eligible for historic designation in a City-adopted survey.
- HP-2.7 Reuse of Historic Buildings.** Promote adaptive reuse throughout the city to encourage the conversion of underutilized historic buildings into new housing or other uses.
- HP-2.8 Design Standards.** Update existing design standards for the Downtown Specific Plan Area to address the character-defining features of the Downtown's historic character, including compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation for designated landmarks or a property that is identified as eligible for historic designation in a City-adopted survey. Create design standards for other areas of the city to protect and maintain historic character in historic neighborhoods citywide.

Goal HP-3: Maintain and expand the inventory of historic resources in Ventura.

- HP-3.1 Historic Resources Surveys.** Maintain and regularly update citywide historic resources surveys to account for the passage of time, provide the opportunity to consider new research and information, and provide updated documentation of current conditions.
- HP-3.2 Historic Context Statement.** Utilize the citywide Historic Context Statement (2025) as the framework for historic preservation in Ventura and as a tool for evaluating individual resources and districts in the city.
- HP-3.3 City-owned Properties.** Ensure that all City-owned historic resources are maintained in a manner that is consistent with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

- HP-3.4 Historic Resource Assessment.** For any project in a historic district or that would affect any potential historic resource or structure (as defined in the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance or another ordinance), require an assessment of eligibility for State and federal register and landmark status and appropriate mitigation to protect the resource.
- HP-3.5 Archaeological Assessments.** Require archaeological assessments for new construction projects proposed in the Coastal Zone and other areas where cultural resources are likely to be located.

Goal HP-4: Foster greater opportunities for public awareness, education, and celebration of Ventura's unique history.

- HP-4.1 Public Input.** Use public input to help shape the historic preservation program.
- HP-4.2 Tribal Resources.** Work with local tribal groups to provide the opportunity to participate directly in City processes, including telling their own stories of the Indigenous peoples that originally inhabited the area that would become Ventura.
- HP-4.3 Training and Educational Opportunities.** Provide ongoing training opportunities for City staff, the Historic Preservation Committee, decision-makers, property owners, and the community to promote the stewardship of historic resources and awareness of incentives.
- HP-4.4 Resource Stewardship.** Educate property owners and businesses regarding responsibilities and stewardship requirements for the city's historic resources.
- HP-4.5 Local Partnerships.** Pursue opportunities to partner with local preservation organizations, educational institutions, museums and historical societies, tribal groups, and other organizations to promote and recognize Ventura's history, foster the cultural identity of Ventura, and raise awareness of the city's history.

- HP-4.6 Local Cultural Heritage.** Work with community groups in conjunction with the Historic Preservation Committee and the Arts and Culture Commission to identify locations for facilities that celebrate local cultural heritage, such as a living history Chumash village, an agricultural history museum, and/or appropriate plaques and public art related to historic buildings, landmarks, districts and sites in the community.
- HP-4.7 Public Awareness.** Consider partnerships with local organizations to promote the history of Ventura and strengthen community ties to local history.
- HP-4.8 Promote Economic Incentives.** Promote the Mills Act Historical Property Contract Program to owners of designated historic landmarks to encourage investment in the city's historic building stock and to provide guidance on appropriate rehabilitation plans and other components of the program.