

# Section Two:

## Historic Preservation

### OVERVIEW OF EXISTING CONDITIONS

Prior to the arrival of the first Europeans in the 16th century, the Los Angeles Basin was occupied by two major Native Californian cultures: the Gabrielino and Chumash.

Native American artifacts have been found in Sierra Madre, and according to the book titled "Southern California Story: Seeking the Better Life in Sierra Madre", "evidence has been found of Indians living in the northwest part of the present-day town adjacent to the mountains around Marlborough Terrace and Vista Circle." (p.7). The more recent history of Sierra Madre dates to the 1880s when the area was first settled by eastern and midwestern families who moved to the Los Angeles basin and purchased land from Nathaniel Carter.

Due to the incorporation of Arcadia and Pasadena to the east, south and west, the growth of Sierra Madre has been limited to three square miles. The development pattern was established early with the commercial area being located in the south central portion of the City and the residential neighborhoods around the core. Sierra Madre has remained a "small town" due to its size and development pattern. This is a quality that is cherished by the Sierra Madre community. The preservation of many original structures has led to a strong sense of place.

The Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society and the Archives at the Sierra Madre Public Library have strived to maintain the City's historical records and work with property owners to preserve historic landmarks within the City. In 1988, the City adopted a preservation ordinance which formalized the process for designating historic properties and reviewing requests for alterations and demolitions of those properties. This ordinance was revised in 1997. (Ch. 17.82 of the Sierra Madre Municipal Code.) An ordinance establishing a Cultural Heritage

Commission was adopted at the same time. (Ch. 2.28 of Sierra Madre Municipal Code.)

Both chapters were amended in 2001 pursuant to Ordinance No. 1134. In 2002, the duties of the Cultural Heritage Commission were transferred to the Planning Commission pursuant to Ordinance No. 1192.

Although a formal survey of historic properties according to the guidelines of the State of California has not yet been conducted, many properties have been designated as historic landmarks by the City of Sierra Madre. Several others were de-designated per request of the property owners pursuant to Ordinance I-97-1, though some arguably have historic value. Many owners of historic properties are also members of the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society, and comprise a group of stakeholders concerned about the City's support and facilitation of historic preservation.

The City owns two historic buildings that are Interpretive Museums: the Richardson House and Lizzie's Trail Inn. Both are maintained and operated by the Sierra Madre Historical Preservation Society, and are important in the settlement and early development of the City. Two other important early buildings are within the development at One Carter/Stonegate: the Macomber Cabin and the Carter Barn. The conditions of approval for the development include measures to afford protection to these buildings. The 1939 Willis Residence, also located on the site, was designated a historical landmark in 2008.

The City of Sierra Madre participates in the Mills Act program, a State program that provides tax incentives to the property owners of designated historic properties for maintenance and improvements.

## CLASSIFICATIONS OF HISTORIC RESOURCES

The following criteria may be used to identify historic resources:

Cultural. It was the site of, or is associated with local, State, or national cultural, social, economic, political, or natural history, events and/or persons significant to the history of Sierra Madre, or, it reflects significant geographical patterns, including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth,

particular transportation modes, or distinctive examples of park or community planning.

District. It contributes to the significance of a historic area, being a geographically definable area or thematically related grouping of historic, architectural or scenic resources which contribute to each other, and are unified aesthetically by plan or physical development.

Architectural. It is representative of the work or is one of a few remaining examples of a notable builder, designer, or architect, or, it embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of architectural achievement or innovation, such as the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.

Scenic. It has a unique location or singular physical characteristics, or is a view or vista representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Sierra Madre. Alternately, it meets the criteria for a Cultural Landscape as defined under The Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

## PRESERVATION BENEFITS

There are several benefits that help to identify the importance of historic preservation in Sierra Madre:

1. The preservation of historic resources act to revitalize and stabilize residential neighborhoods thus leading to improved maintenance and increased property values.
2. The Sierra Madre community will realize greater civic and neighborhood pride and a sense of identity as it gains a greater understanding and appreciation of the City's historic past.
3. The presence of historic resources attracts visitors to the City thereby stimulating commerce.
4. Historic resources can be linked to cultural and recreational activities of the community, such as the use of the Richardson House and Lizzie's Trail Inn at the head of Mt. Wilson Trail, and the viewing of the historic Wistaria Vine each March.

5. The reuse of existing structures helps to conserve building materials and energy resources, and helps to reduce construction waste which occurs when structures are demolished 

6. The retention of existing historic homes and structures to limit redevelopment and reconstruction that would otherwise maximize building floor area, creating a greater demand on the City's water resources and its ability to serve its customers. 

## SUMMARY OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION GOALS

1. The preservation of historic structures in the City.

## OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

The following objectives and policies promote the historic preservation goals of Sierra Madre. The implementation measures are contained in the Implementation Section at the end of the General Plan.

Objective L46: Identifying and encouraging the preservation of significant historic resources.

### Policies:

- L46.1 Complete and utilize a comprehensive survey of Sierra Madre's significant historic resources according to the guidelines from the State Office of Historic Preservation.
- L46.2 Compile and maintain an inventory (historic register) of those historical resources within the City which are identified as significant.
- L46.3 Create a list of potential historic resources (those identified by the comprehensive survey under Policy L46.1) for special consideration under CEQA, to the extent that they would otherwise be exempt.

- L46.4 Establish special zones or districts characterized by the presence of historical structures.
- L46.5 Share historic preservation information with the public.
- L46.6 Develop an information base of preservation techniques and economic incentives for the benefit of historic property owners.

Objective L47: Preserving in the long-term significant architectural and historical landmarks and districts.

Policies:

- L47.1 Consider obtaining Certified Local Government status from the State Office of Historic Preservation.
- L47.2 Encourage property owners to submit applications to qualify appropriate properties and buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, the State Register or the City’s Register of Historic Landmarks.
- L47.3 Remove constraints on the use of historic structures by allowing for adaptive reuse of historic properties, waiving development standards, and through other appropriate means.
- L47.4 Develop guidelines for rehabilitation and new construction, demolition control, and regulation of uses in designated structures. Demolition control to include payment of significant fines and recompense for destroying historic resources without having followed applicable procedures.
- L47.5 Ensure that, if and when landmarks are renovated by the property owner, it is done according to the

Secretary of the Interior’s Standards, which accomplish the following:

- a. Preservation of the distinguishing features or character of the property and its environment;
- b. Allow for compatible uses which provide the maximum appreciation of the resource;
- c. Allow for renovations which complement the neighborhood or historic context within which the resource exists.

L47.6 Consider the relaxation of current building and zoning codes, as necessary, to preserve significant structures, while ensuring that basic health and safety goals are met.

L47.7 Support tax incentives, protective covenants, preservation easements, code modifications, and other methods deemed mutually agreeable by the City and the property owner which will help to preserve historic resources.

L47.8 Allow for adaptive re-use of significant architectural and historical structures provided that the use is compatible with the neighborhood in which it is located and with the approval of the Planning Commission.

L47.9 At such time any loans or grants are made available through public or private agencies for the purpose of renovating landmarks, assist in obtaining the grant or loan on behalf of the property owner.

L47.10 Provide staff with professional historic expertise to support for the preservation program.

- L47.11 Maintain a historic preservation ordinance which has, as its purpose, the voluntary participation of property owners in the preservation of historic resources.
- L47.12 Maintain and enact policies, regulations and programs to facilitate historic preservation.