



Interior, San Gabriel Mission, California, Founded 1771  
*Inside the church at Mission San Gabriel Arcangel, c. 1900*

## A Heritage Worth Preserving

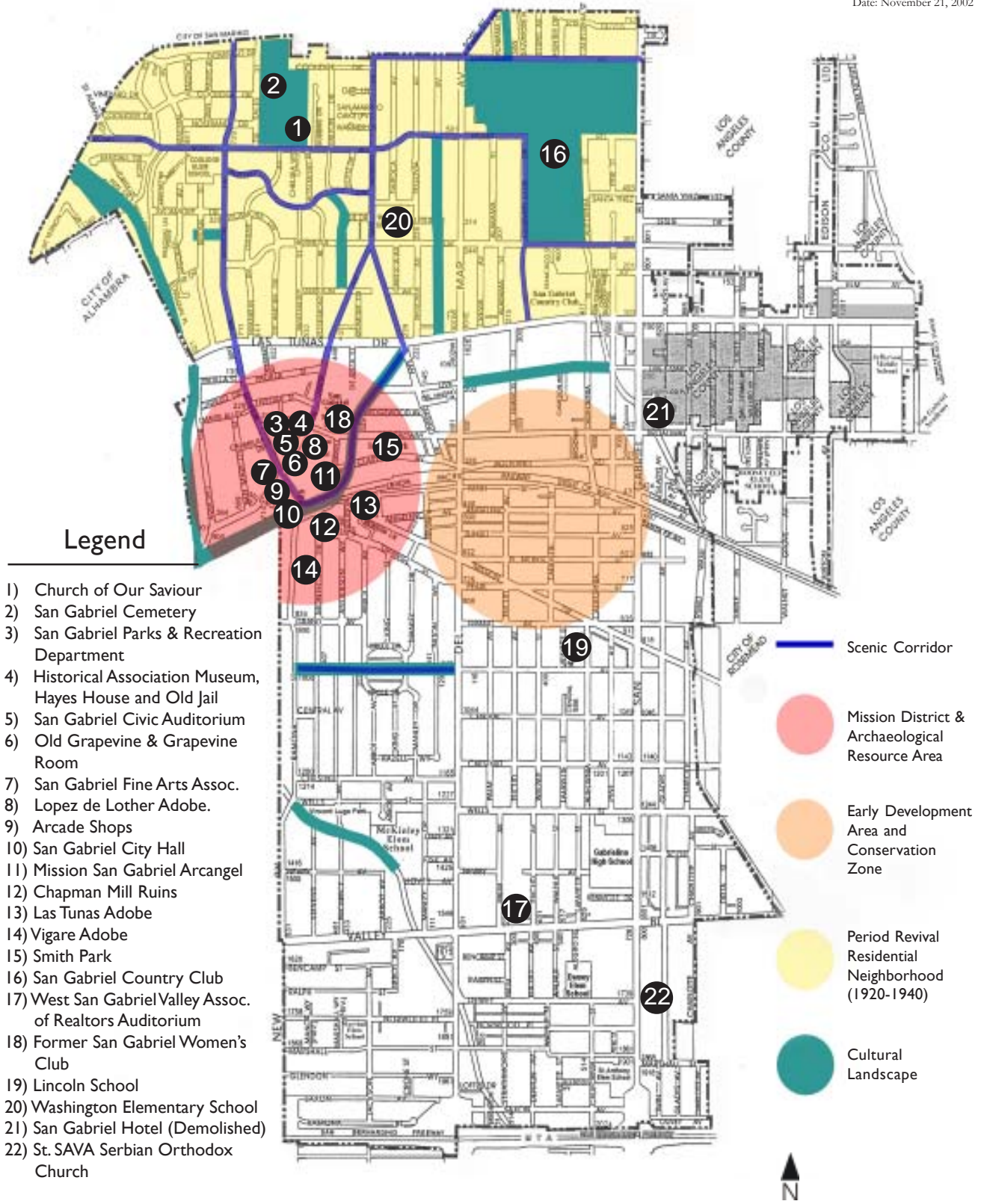
 *We will preserve the treasures in our midst that define our heritage and character.*

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**S**an Gabriel is the birthplace of the region – the settlement from which the *Pobladores*, or founders of the pueblo, departed on their way to establish a settlement at the Porciuncula River – today's Los Angeles. But 200 years have not always been kind to San Gabriel's rich treasure of historic resources, artifacts and neighborhoods.

Even so, San Gabriel is one of the few Southern California cities that can claim such a variety of historical and significant architectural and engineering structures – there is much worth protecting here, and San Gabriel residents have told us they want to see it protected. Here are some of the things we learned in preparing the *Background Report*.

- **Valuable But Threatened Resources:** A significant cluster of pre-and post-American structures, including adobes more than 150 years old, exists in San Gabriel but is threatened. Despite one of the most outstanding collections of pre-1850 structures in California, San Gabriel has faced the loss of innumerable period adobes, Mission-era outbuildings and structures, and other artifacts of the City's cultural heritage (*refer to Figure 11-1*).
- **Tongva People:** Native American peoples, particularly the Tongva (Gabrielino) peoples of the San Gabriel area, have a continuing relationship with the community and the land. San Gabriel retains a small but significant Tongva population that should be documented in the demographic discussion and



Source: Community Development Department

Figure 11-1  
**CULTURAL RESOURCES**

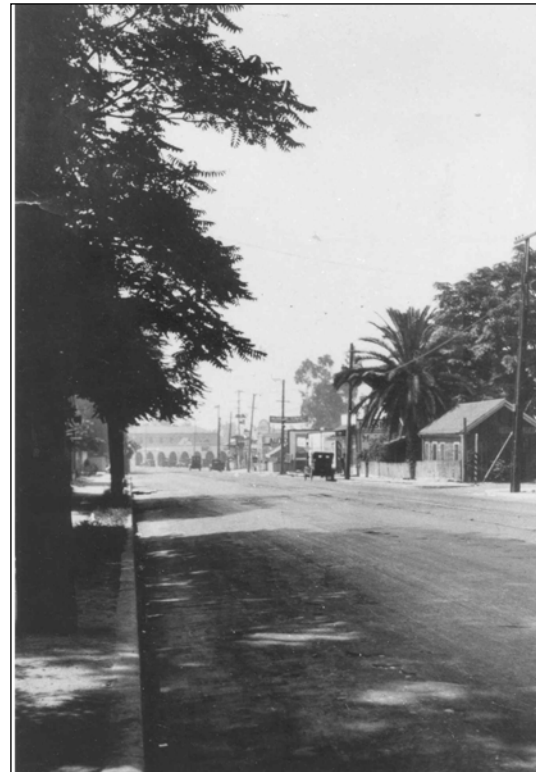




properly discussed with respect to the relationships between these peoples. At the present time, there are no known sites or artifacts associated with the Tongva people that are known to survive in San Gabriel.

- **A Weak Preservation Ordinance:** The existing historic preservation ordinance does not provide incentives to protect buildings, and in an effort to avoid undue burdens, does not adequately protect historic structures against demolition or prevent rehabilitation that significantly alters the original appearance of a building. The ordinance would be strengthened if it were to address “pre-history” (archaeological and paleontological resources).
- **Imminent Threats:** The *Ortega-Vigare Adobe* on Ramona Avenue was recently for sale. Existing City Code provides little protection until a structure is formally placed on the City register, and does not prohibit demolition. An incentive to “do the right thing” would be very helpful. ↻
- **Rancho Las Tunas:** The *Rancho Las Tunas Adobe* on Monson Lane benefits from property owners who have cared for the property, and who have sought the City’s assistance to forge a long-term preservation strategy.
- **Need to Conserve, Protect:** The integrity of other neighborhoods, populated by the style of high-quality period revival homes that make North San Gabriel an attractive environment, should also be protected. ↻
- **No Database:** With the exception of design standards in the Mission District and a very modest preservation ordinance, the City has no organized program to identify, record, and protect cultural resources. The City should have a comprehensive inventory of its resources, which would be helpful in providing protection against demolition.
- **No Oral History:** An ongoing oral history program would be beneficial, as would incentives to encourage protection and preservation of neighborhood character or individual structures of merit. A policy to preserve significant commercial, industrial and institutional structures would also be helpful.

- **Engineering Landmarks:** A program to protect and preserve bridges and other engineering features of merit would be valuable as well as an inventory of these resources.
- **Cultural Landscapes:** A program to preserve or protect historic and cultural landscapes would be worthwhile. (refer to Figure 11-2).



*Mission Drive, shortly after the turn of the century, presents an almost bucolic appearance.*

## Goals

Incorporated in 1913, the City of San Gabriel is the oldest settlement in Los Angeles County and second oldest community in all of California (after San Diego). Considered the birthplace of the Los Angeles region, the City takes its name from the “Mision de San Gabriel Arcangel”, one of twenty-one missions, established by the Spanish in 1771.

During the past decades, many of the historical and cultural resources in San Gabriel have been lost, and those resources that remain are being threatened. San Gabriel adopts the following goals as part of its strategy to protect and nurture its past, focusing first and foremost on



Figure 11-2  
**CULTURAL LANDSCAPES**

Source: Community Development Department



voluntary strategies that can preserve the City's resources through incentives, technical support and community action.



*Ramona's Birthplace, now the site of the Adult Recreation Center, was a popular tourist attraction through the 1920s. There is no evidence to suggest that the Ramona of legend actually existed, nor is there evidence to suggest she was born in San Gabriel.*

**Goal 11.1      Preserve and protect valuable but threatened resources.**

- Target 11.1.1      Preserve existing historically significant structures, i.e., pre- and post-statehood artifacts, adobes, Mission-era outbuildings and structures ☞
- Target 11.1.2      Study existing public policy and practice to determine their effect on preservation goals and, where existing policy conflicts, work to effect necessary changes.
- Target 11.1.3      Use the principles and practices of land use planning, historic preservation, archaeology, art history, anthropology and history to promote preservation and adaptive reuse of cultural resources.

**Goal 11.2      Celebrate San Gabriel's connection to the culture of the Tongva People.**

- Target 11.2.1      Document and enhance the continuing relationship between the Tongva people and the community. ☞

- Target 11.2.2      Create an oral history to tap into the historical experiences of the Tongva/Gabrielino people.
- Target 11.2.3      Inventory structures, palaeontological sites, archaeological sites, cultural landscapes, artifacts and documents in San Gabriel and institutions associated with the Tongva/Gabrielino people.
- Target 11.2.4      Create a bibliography of primary and secondary books and reports concerning the Tongva/Gabrielino people in San Gabriel.
- Target 11.2.5      Create an archive in association with the San Gabriel Historical Society, the San Gabriel Mission and the local community to preserve photographic, written, oral and iconographic material related to the Tongva/Gabrielino people.

**Goal 11.3      Improve a weak preservation ordinance**

- Target 11.3.1      Adopt an effective preservation ordinance that protects all structures, archaeological sites, cultural landscape, artifacts and documents from the period of settlement by native peoples, the Mission Period (1771-1834) and the Rancho Period (1835-1887).
- Target 11.3.2      Adopt an effective preservation ordinance that protects selected structures, archeological sites, cultural landscape, artifacts and documents of cultural value that are more than fifty years old.
- Target 11.3.3      Create a Cultural Resources Commission to serve as an agent for ordinance administration.

**Goal 11.4      Diminish imminent threats to San Gabriel's heritage**

- Target 11.4.1      Create an ordinance that provides protection against demolition
- Target 11.4.2      Conduct a comprehensive inventory of San Gabriel's cultural resources and landscapes. ☞



- Target 11.4.3 Determine the rules for selecting and regulating landmarks and cultural resources identified through survey work.
- Target 11.4.4 Amend existing procedures to reflect historic preservation goals and to develop new approaches to influence private sector practices.
- Target 11.4.5 Locate within existing funding programs opportunities to underwrite preservation activities.

## FAST FACTS

- *In 1776, the mission was moved to its current site. This new site was so prosperous that the mission became known as "The Queen of the Missions".*
- *San Gabriel possesses perhaps the finest collection of mission relics in existence. Its hammered copper baptismal font was the gift of King Carlos III of Spain in 1771. The six priceless altar statues were brought around the Horn from Spain in 1791 .*

*The California Mission Site.  
Ed. The Civic Group, 24 Sept. 1998  
For more information, go to:  
<<http://www.californiamissions.com/cahistory/sandiego.html>>*

### Goal 11.5 Protect and conserve our historic adobes

- Target 11.5.1 Provide assistance to property owners of historic buildings or structures to develop a long-term preservation strategy. ↻
- Target 11.5.2 Provide incentives for the maintenance and restoration of historic properties.

### Goal 11.6 Need to conserve and protect

- Target 11.6.1 Foster a neighborhood conservation ethic. ↻
- Target 11.6.2 Ensure that other community policies and plans should complement community conservation goals.
- Target 11.6.3 Create awareness programs to publicize survey findings.

- ↻ Target 11.6.4 Develop complementary programs, both public and private, to promote the preservation of cultural resources.
- ↻ Target 11.6.5 Develop educational programs to stimulate public interest in historic preservation.
- Target 11.6.6 Create ongoing training programs in restoration crafts and skills.

### Goal 11.7 Create a database documenting the breadth and wealth of San Gabriel's cultural resources

- Target 11.7.1 Document and recognize buildings and structures that have historic value. ↻
- Target 11.7.2 Compile a full inventory of community cultural resources to guide future planning and decision-making.
- Target 11.7.3 Partner with community organizations such as the San Gabriel Historical Association, California Preservation Foundation, Los Angeles Conservancy and Pasadena Heritage.

### Goal 11.8 Establish a permanent, ongoing oral history program

- Target 11.8.1 Engage community organizations in the oral history effort, including churches, the Chamber of Commerce, the San Gabriel Unified School District, La Casa, Asian Youth Center and others. ↻
- Target 11.8.2 Use Service Learning Grants for this purpose, by which high school students learn to perform certain tasks. ↻

### Goal 11.9 Preserve and protect our cultural landscapes from damage and degradation.

- Target 11.9.1 Protect and preserve bridges and other engineering features of merit.
- Target 11.9.2 Protect and preserve historic and cultural landscapes ↻

## Implementation Plan

**B**y 2006, San Gabriel shall undertake the following actions:

- Implement the existing *Historic Preservation Ordinance* and establish a City register
- Mark all building permit jackets of potentially historic or architecturally significant structures with sufficient documentation in order to ensure that proper review occurs before demolition or alteration permits issue.
- Modify the Building, Fire, and Zoning codes so that they reflect policies of the Cultural Resources element and programs promoting historic preservation while protecting public health and safety

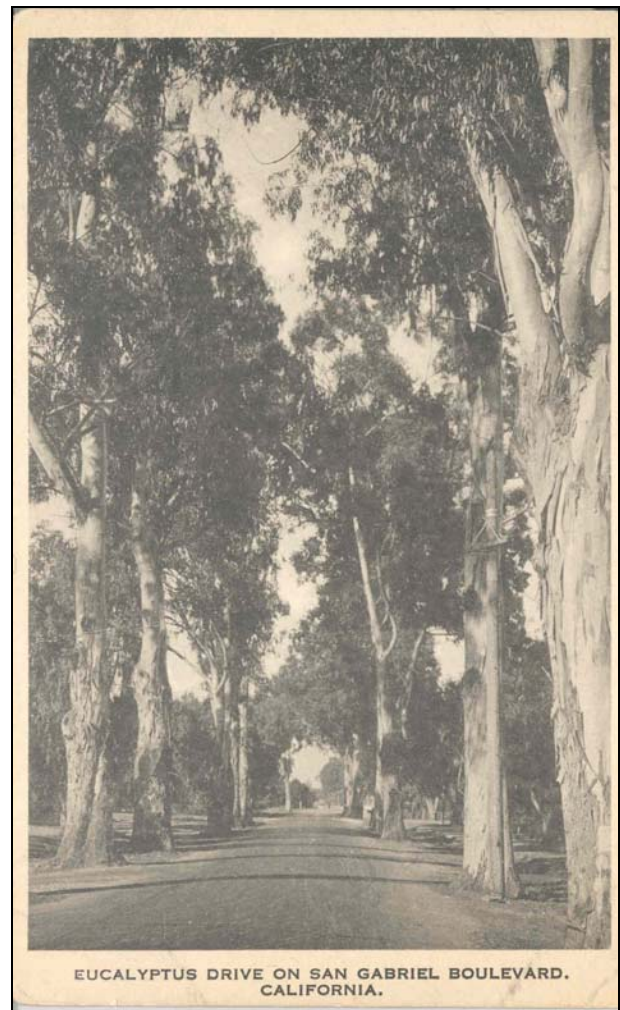
### FAST FACTS

*The City of San Gabriel passed a resolution recognizing "the Gabrielino-Tongva Nation as the aboriginal tribe of the Los Angeles Basin" on Aug. 24, 1994.*

*The Gabrielino / Tongva Nation is headquartered in San Gabriel. San Gabriel remains the area where the Tongva people have maintained their community and culture. There are more than 300 enrolled members in the Gabrielino / Tongva Nation.*

*"Tongva" means "people of the earth" in the native language.*

Source: [www.tongva.com](http://www.tongva.com)



*San Gabriel Boulevard at the turn of the century was a captivatingly rural, tree lined boulevard.*

- Implement the State Historic Building Code, which is applicable statewide
- Participate in the national or California "Main Street" program
- Establish an in-house library of publications to assist homeowners
- Maintain a database of contractor firms that specialize in architectural salvage, planning, architecture, landscape design, interiors, furnishings, repair and trades
- Adopt specific guidelines to assist homeowners with modernization and replacement

- Continue and expand the P.A.T.H. (Progress and Accomplishments Through History) Program of local history to include an oral history program
- Establish tours and/or events centered around historic buildings, including adobes, expanding beyond the Mission District into lesser known, but equally valuable, areas of San Gabriel
- Initiate steps to develop a comprehensive survey that will result in an inventory of cultural resources and historical sites.
- Establish a Community Awareness Program that includes opportunities for speaking engagements throughout Southern California to promote the history of San Gabriel
- Create apprenticeship programs that provide ongoing training programs in restoration crafts and skills.
- Establish standards for review of archaeology and paleontology, particularly with respect to State and Federal law requirements
- Identify oral and ethnic history opportunities
- Provide historic area signs, both directional signs and signs that serve as markers
- Establish historic districts, including standards for residents seeking to establish such districts in their neighborhood
- Create public art programs
- Establish the defining criteria that characterize historic and cultural resources
- Host workshops and make information available to assist property owners in researching and preparing Local Register, California Landmark and/or National Historic Register applications
- Prepare and publish manuals to address appropriate and inappropriate types of modifications to historic buildings and to public areas in historic districts

- Make information concerning appropriate remodeling and rehabilitation techniques available to homeowners and business people, i.e., "Rehab Right" strategies.

#### Policies and Implementation Strategies:

- Use of the Mills Act: A Mills Act contract under State law is an agreement between the City of San Gabriel and the property owner of a City-designated historical building. The property owner benefits from a reduction in property taxes, and the City is ensured that the historic building is preserved.
- Use of Federal tax credits for preservation efforts
- Use of conservation easements, i.e., "historic façade easements" program
- Provide limited hours of free architectural assistance by a qualified historic preservation architect
- Use of fee waivers for reconstruction of historic resources that were damaged by earthquake, fire or other natural disaster
- Use of fee reductions for preservation of historic structures on a City register
- Use of existing federal, state, regional or local public funding opportunities to underwrite preservation activities
- Coordinate preservation activities with other public programs in order to tap new public monies

#### **FAST FACT**

*With the arrival of Juan Bautista de Anza's party on March 22, 1774, the first land link with Mexico City was established and the San Gabriel Mission became the chief point of contact with Mexico.*

*Wright, Ralph, B. Ed. California's Missions. Arroyo Grande, CA.: Hubert A. Lowman. 1992.  
Reported on The California Mission Site. 24 Sept. 1998.*

*For more information go to:  
<http://www.californiamissions.com/morehistory/sandiego.html>*



By 2010, the City of San Gabriel shall develop programs to:

- Direct capital improvement programs and public services toward the preservation and enhancement of cultural resources
- Encourage lending institutions to offer low-interest mortgage and home improvement loans in areas of cultural and historical significance
- Apply CDBG monies to 10% rebates for home improvement expenses for preservation of historical properties.

## **FAST FACT**

*There are many popular preservation tools available, such as the Historic Building Code. Other available resources include the State Office of Historic Preservation, the L.A. Conservancy and the Pasadena Heritage, the California and National Main Street Programs, tax credits, façade easements, etc.*

*For more information on these and other programs, go to [www.laconservancy.org](http://www.laconservancy.org); [www.pasadenaheritage.org](http://www.pasadenaheritage.org); [www.mainstreet.org](http://www.mainstreet.org); [www.californiamainstreet.ca.gov](http://www.californiamainstreet.ca.gov); [ohp.parks.ca.gov](http://ohp.parks.ca.gov); [http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/tax\\_p.htm](http://www2.cr.nps.gov/tps/tax/tax_p.htm)*