

Spirit of Place

PROMOTING CULTURAL VITALITY IN PHILADELPHIA



OCTOBER 2023



The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Chapter 1: Introduction	3
Expanding the Stories Represented and the Resources Preserved	3
Document Overview	4
Understanding This Moment in Cultural Preservation.....	6
Key Themes	8
Chapter 2: Cultural Landmarking and Districts	13
Purpose and Goals	13
Designation and Administration	18
Impact and Outcomes.....	20
Chapter 3: Business Support Programs	29
Purpose and Goals.....	29
Implementation Examples	29
Key Features	30
Chapter 4: Storytelling and Placemaking	35
Storytelling Goals	35
Placemaking Goals.....	36
Implementation Examples.....	36
Chapter 5: Implementation Considerations	43
Cultural Landmarking and Districts	43
Business Support Programs	47
Storytelling and Placemaking	49
Endnotes	51

FIGURES

Figure 1: Map of Peer Cities Consulted during This Research.....	6
Figure 2: American Indian Cultural District, San Francisco.....	15
Figure 3: Rethinking Historic Resource Types in Portland	17
Figure 4: Highlighting Legacy Businesses in San Francisco.....	33
Figure 5: Storytelling Labs in Denver.....	38
Figure 6: There’s a Story Here, San Antonio	39
Figure 7: Destination Crenshaw Interpretive Nodes	41

ABOUT THE TITLE

The title of this report was taken from an essay written by Claudia Guerra, a cultural historian working in San Antonio's Office of Historic Preservation. Writing in support of landmark designation for 4537 Monterey, a working-class home that is emblematic of Mexican-American culture in San Antonio's Westside neighborhood, Guerra writes: "San Antonio's Westside will not disappear, it will always be a physical place, but if the people who created the Sense of Place, its *Spirit of Place*, can't continue to live there, then it will no longer hold the same significance."¹

This focus on people and the living elements of cultural heritage is at the heart of modern cultural preservation strategies and is one of the central principles animating Philadelphia's Cultural Resources Survey Plan and Pilot.

Executive Summary

Historic preservation is no longer just about protecting old buildings. Today, preservation is also seen as a tool that can empower people, support equitable development, amplify cultural identity, and help create a future that respects and celebrates the past. When successful, preservation tools and policies can celebrate the people and events that shaped the history of a place while also reflecting who lives there today.

The City of Philadelphia is currently conducting the Cultural Resources Survey Plan and Pilot, an effort branded as Treasure Philly!. The goal of this project is to design and test a more inclusive preservation process that can help the City inventory, document, and ultimately protect Philadelphia's rich and varied cultural resources and histories. The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) was asked to assist this effort by conducting research on cultural preservation and inventorying strategies that cities around the country are using to protect the historical, social, and economic value of culturally significant communities and assets.

DVRPC reviewed the historical and cultural preservation programs for numerous cities throughout the United States and Canada as part of this research. The project team also

conducted interviews with representatives from several peer cities engaged in their own cultural preservation initiatives, including: Boston, Massachusetts; Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Portland, Oregon; San Antonio, Texas; and San Francisco, California.

DVRPC's review of literature and conversations suggests that the cultural preservation strategies and policies being used by these cities can be sorted into three primary categories: cultural landmarks and districts, business support programs, and storytelling and placemaking. This report dedicates a chapter to exploring each of these topics, including examples from around the country, and concludes with a series of implementation questions and considerations for Philadelphia.



Introduction

Philadelphia's civic identity is inextricably linked to its unique set of historic resources. The city is home to iconic locations and objects that illustrate the story of America's founding in ways that few other places can match. Beyond its colonial and revolutionary roots, less celebrated sites throughout Philadelphia can also be used to trace nearly every stage in the growth and evolution of the United States.

While these important historical resources are frequently used to tell the story of a nation, another set of cultural resources help to tell the story of Philadelphia itself. Objects and elements representing Philadelphia's cultural heritage and history play a huge role in how residents and visitors experience the city, yet these cultural resources often receive less attention than their historical counterparts, sometimes remaining hidden in plain sight.

Cultural heritage reflects the living history of a place as represented by a combination of tangible and intangible elements. Tangible cultural heritage includes items and spaces that you can see and feel, such as long-standing businesses, monuments, works of art, and cultural spaces that have been recognized by the community.

The non-physical aspects of cultural heritage can include traditions, artistic expressions, language, events, cuisine, and other intangibles (see page 5). Regardless of their form, these elements are typically inherited from the past and viewed as

invaluable to the present and the future. In cities like Philadelphia, cultural heritage is frequently fostered in neighborhoods where groups with similar identities have settled due to factors such as social connections, housing and employment opportunities, and discrimination. Cultural artifacts and activities can be passed down from generation to generation and contribute to a community's sense of identity and continuity even in the face of physical, social, and political change.

Expanding the Stories Represented and the Resources Preserved

Local governments across the country have long used historic preservation programs to protect architectural and archaeological aspects of their history. In recent years, many cities have acknowledged that the traditions, cultural activities, and businesses that contribute to local cultural heritage play an equally important role in shaping the identity of their communities. Accordingly, interest in understanding, inventorying, and protecting cultural resources has grown significantly.

“Cultural heritage is the expression of a way of living. It’s developed by a community through objects, beliefs, traditions, practices, artistic interpretation, and significant places. It helps develop a shared bond and sense of belonging, inspires community pride and awareness, and emboldens a sense of identity and responsibility to society at large.”¹

San Francisco Planning

In May 2021, the City of Philadelphia formally announced its intention to conduct a cultural resources survey and pilot project designed to help celebrate, protect, and conserve Philadelphia’s diverse cultural history. This survey, made possible through a grant from the William Penn Foundation, is part of the City’s efforts to implement recommendations published by the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Task Force in 2019.

In spring 2022, The Mayor’s Fund for Philadelphia and the City of Philadelphia Department of Planning and Development (DPD) retained a consultant team to lead the survey. In 2023, the initiative was rebranded as Treasure Philly!, and it was announced that the project would launch in the neighborhoods surrounding the Broad, Germantown, and Erie intersection in North Philadelphia.²

DVRPC was asked to assist the Cultural Resources Survey effort by conducting research on cultural preservation. This research was undertaken to accomplish three primary objectives:

1. Promote a more comprehensive understanding of cultural heritage,
2. Inventory strategies that cities around the country are using to protect the historical, social, and economic value of culturally significant communities and assets, and
3. Identify and evaluate policies and programs that Philadelphia and its planning partners can enact to protect and celebrate the City’s cultural heritage.

In order to meet these objectives, DVRPC staff worked with representatives from DPD to conduct a literature review and interview representatives from several peer cities engaged in their own cultural preservation initiatives. The cities engaged through this process included Boston, Massachusetts; Denver, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; Minneapolis, Minnesota; Portland, Oregon; San Antonio, Texas; and San Francisco, California (see Figure 1). In some cases, these cities were selected because they are recognized leaders in the field of cultural preservation. In other cases, cities were selected because their preservation efforts are based on goals similar to those identified by the City of Philadelphia.

Document Overview

It is important to note that the field of cultural preservation is young. San Antonio’s Living Heritage Program, widely recognized as a one of the first preservation programs in the United States to focus on intangible aspects of cultural heritage, grew out of work that is less than 20 years old. Representatives from the cities consulted during this research emphasized that their cultural preservation efforts remain a work in progress and that it may be too soon to evaluate the effectiveness of some initiatives. Accordingly, there is no single strategy or best practice presented in this document that will address all the preservation challenges that Philadelphia is facing.

This document summarizes key findings from DVRPC’s research and is intended to serve as a resource to City staff, consultants, and citizens during the Cultural Resources Survey and beyond. The report focuses on describing the principal strategies, policies,

HOW DOES CULTURAL HERITAGE MANIFEST ITSELF?

Cultural Heritage can manifest itself in ways both obvious and subtle. Philadelphia's cultural heritage is on display in landmarks, symbols, shops, public art, and streetscapes throughout the city. It can also be experienced during events that bring people together, in restaurants that keep culinary traditions alive, and through music and musicians that mark important places and moments.



Chinatown Friendship Gate

The China Gate, located at 10th and Arch streets, serves as a symbolic entrance for Philadelphia's Chinatown. The structure was commissioned by the Philadelphia Chinatown Development Corporation and dedicated in 1984 as a commemoration of the friendship between Philadelphia and its sister city of Tianjin, China.



Photo Source: Conrad Benner

El Centro de Oro

The business district surrounding the intersection of North 5th Street and Lehigh Avenue has long been recognized as the traditional center of Latino commerce, cultural, and social activity in the Philadelphia area. The cultural significance of this area, known as El Centro de Oro, was affirmed by a streetscape improvement project completed in 2011 along 5th Street between Lehigh and Indiana avenues. The project included repaving the sidewalks with a distinctive golden swirl design, installing metal palm trees at each corner, as well as improved lighting and waste cans.



Photo Source: VISIT PHILADELPHIA®

Odunde Festival

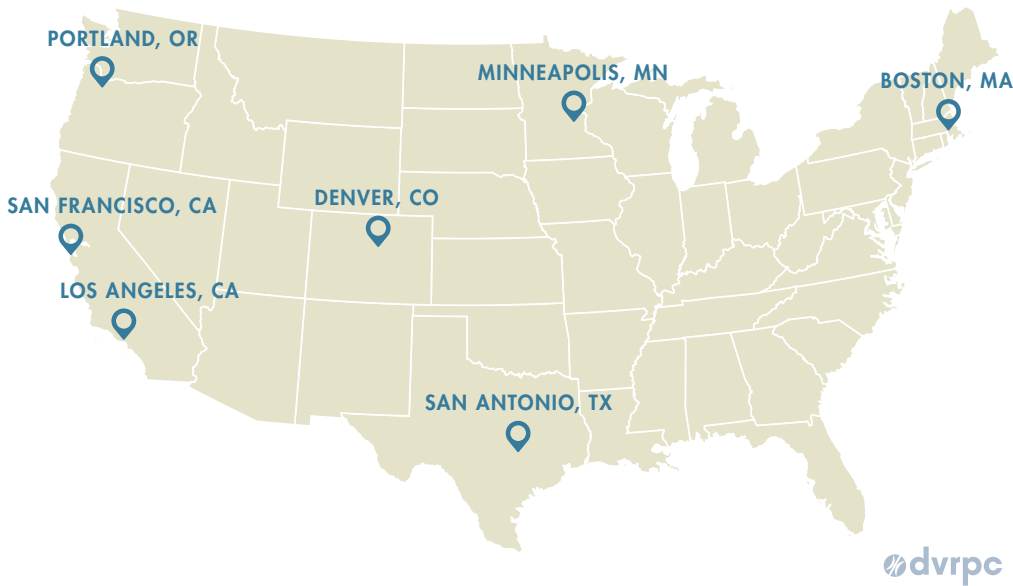
Philadelphia's ODUNDE festival began in 1975 and is one of the largest African American street festivals in the country. Typically held on the second Sunday in June, the festival is based on traditions from the Yoruba people of Nigeria and celebrates the coming of another year for African Americans and Africanized people around the world.



Gayborhood Street Signs

In 2007, the City of Philadelphia dedicated 36 rainbow street signs in Philadelphia's "Gayborhood," an area bounded by 11th and Broad streets, and Pine and Walnut streets. These signs honor the history of the neighborhood and celebrate the contributions of Philadelphia's LGBTQ citizens, businesses, and institutions.

Figure 1: Map of Peer Cities Consulted during This Research



The historical and cultural preservation programs for numerous cities throughout the U.S. and Canada were reviewed as part of this research. DVRPC staff also conducted interviews with representatives from the cities identified here. These cities were selected because they have sought to develop strategies for preserving tangible and intangible cultural assets in their respective cities while striving to ensure that diverse communities benefit from these preservation initiatives.

and programs other cities are using in an effort to protect and celebrate cultural resources. By presenting this information now, as Philadelphia embarks on its own citywide survey, the city and its partners can help to facilitate conversations about how best to preserve various types of cultural resources as they are being catalogued. We hope that the contents of this document can be shared, discussed, and refined collaboratively by all those who participate in the Cultural Resources Survey.

The remainder of this chapter provides additional background on cultural heritage and issues related to its preservation. Chapter 2 discusses the creation and administration of cultural districts. Like historic districts, cultural districts have physical boundaries; however, these designations are primarily designed to recognize and support the unique social and cultural activities and traditions that occur within them. Chapter 3 focuses on programs designed to support businesses and commerce that contribute to

the cultural identity of a community. Chapter 4 explores the ways that storytelling and placemaking are being used to celebrate cultural heritage and reinforce a community's sense of place. Finally, Chapter 5 summarizes a variety of implementation considerations for Philadelphia and its partners to explore during the inventory process and beyond.

Understanding This Moment in Cultural Preservation

Philadelphia's Cultural Resources Survey Plan and Pilot is taking place at time when attitudes toward the larger related field of historic preservation are shifting significantly in response to social, demographic, and economic forces. The following pages briefly describe how some of these forces are influencing conversations around cultural preservation nationally and in Philadelphia. The chapter concludes by summarizing a series of key themes that emerged during the research for this project.

Toward a People-Centered Preservation

Questions about which structures, neighborhoods, and stories should be preserved have taken on a new urgency in recent years based on a heightened awareness of the damage that racial inequities have caused in communities across the country. A 2021 document published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation helps to illustrate how the broader historic preservation profession is responding to calls for change in preservation practice and policy. *Leading the Change Together: A National Impact Agenda for the Preservation Movement* includes a list of 10 shared values that the organization believes are motivating preservationists across the country:

1. Addressing climate change through adaptation and reuse,
2. Advancing racial equity and social justice,
3. Creating healthy and livable communities,
4. Managing change in historic neighborhoods, corridors, downtowns,
5. Mitigating displacement and supporting equitable revitalization,
6. Preserving places of beauty and architectural richness,
7. Preserving personal connections to history and place,
8. Saving historic sites for future generations,
9. Supporting local economic development, and
10. Telling the full American story.

While several of these values echo familiar tenets of historic preservation, others reflect the profession's growing emphasis on racial justice and equitable development. Nationally, there is a movement to refine preservation policies in ways that make them more responsive to local concerns and reflective of a broader spectrum of cultural communities, including communities of color, indigenous communities, and other communities, which have traditionally been

underrepresented in historic preservation. Furthermore, there is growing demand for preservation practices that proactively help enable residents to live, work, and socialize in historically and culturally significant neighborhoods if they choose, regardless of their income.

Efforts to promote racial equity have been closely tied to the profession's growing emphasis on cultural heritage. Cultural significance is frequently identified as principal statutory criteria in the preservation ordinances that guide the work of preservation programs across the country. However, in practice, designation and other protections are much more typically granted based on the architectural or historical significance of a given resource.

Some programs are using increasingly comprehensive definitions of heritage to rebalance the criteria that guide the use of existing preservation tools, such as local landmarks and districts. Other programs have sought to create new, more flexible tools, including various types of cultural heritage districts, which can be tailored to recognize the social significance of a site, rather than its architectural merit. The efforts of several cities to promote a more inclusive interpretation of cultural preservation are documented in Chapter 2.

Philadelphia's Preservation Context

The discourse about cultural preservation in Philadelphia mirrors conversations taking place in other cities and across the profession. Like their peers around the country, Philadelphia's preservation community is evaluating the role that existing and new strategies can play in protecting cultural vibrancy while preventing the displacement of residents and businesses in gentrifying areas. As in other cities, new interest in cultural preservation is being fueled by development pressure on culturally significant neighborhoods and calls to further social justice and racial equity.

Philadelphia's ongoing building boom reflects a decade and a half of population growth and resurgent economic fortunes in Center City and some neighborhoods. However, as the construction boom has matured and residential development has radiated out from Center City, some neighborhoods are experiencing development pressures strong enough to erase elements of local history and cultural heritage. One example of cultural displacement that resulted from this type of development is discussed on page 9.

As the rate of development has quickened, city officials have recognized that growth is outpacing efforts to preserve aspects of the city's historic built environment and its cultural heritage. Philadelphia possesses a strong historic preservation ordinance, yet the city's historical resource inventory is limited, leaving many significant individual and neighborhood resources unprotected.

These gaps are particularly evident in Philadelphia's historically Black neighborhoods. The systematic lack of recognition and protection of important places in these communities means that the cultural histories of these neighborhoods are especially vulnerable to threats. However, the first historic district focused on Black history and the historic contributions of Black Philadelphians was recently created.

In July 2022, the Philadelphia Historical Commission approved a special designation for six blocks of Christian Street known as Black Doctors' Row in Graduate Hospital, a gentrifying neighborhood that has seen several notable demolitions. The district was home to many prominent Black doctors, pastors, architects, small business owners, politicians, and institutions during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The official designation was preceded by a one-year demolition moratorium that was designed to slow development while advocates and local stakeholders compiled nomination materials that highlighted both the cultural heritage and architectural style of the area.

Key Themes

Four straightforward, yet important, themes emerged from the literature reviewed and the interviews conducted for this project. These themes are summarized here to help establish a basic shared foundation for city staff, consultants, and community members who may be involved in Philadelphia's Cultural Survey process.

Preserving cultural heritage is complex and will require tools and strategies that extend beyond those traditionally used in historic preservation.

To date, raising awareness of the value of cultural heritage has outpaced the development of specific new regulatory tools designed to help preserve it. Historic preservation's traditional focus on the importance or integrity of individual works of architecture, rather than the events that took place or the people that inhabited a building, means that many of the profession's conventional tools, including landmarking and designation, demolition delay, and financial incentives may be ill-suited for preserving cultural heritage.

This realization is inspiring many practitioners and community organizations to explore creative strategies that expand the preservation toolkit in new directions. An examination of the root causes of cultural heritage erosion, including demographic changes, development incompatible with current community needs, under-resourced community organizations, and lack of support for small businesses, suggests that successful cultural preservation strategies will necessarily require broad coalitions between a range of city departments and partner organizations.

HOA BINH PLAZA AND CULTURAL DISPLACEMENT

Long-standing businesses catering to specific communities contribute to the culture of a place and can become a symbol that holds significant memories and meaning for groups of people. The case of Hoa Binh Plaza, a shopping center located at 16th Street and Washington Avenue in South Philadelphia, illustrates how new development that displaces long-standing businesses can contribute to cultural displacement.



Photo Source: Molly Des Jardin³

The Plaza, which was home to 10 independent Asian-American businesses employing roughly 50 individuals, served as a commercial and social hub for Vietnamese and Cambodian communities from its opening in 1990 until its closure in 2019, when the building was sold.

The initial development proposal for the site called for nearly 200 housing units and approximately 20,000 square feet of retail space. Although the Philadelphia City Planning Commission opposed the variance that was needed to include residences on a site zoned for industrial uses, the city had few options to support the preservation of heritage retail at this location.

Effective preservation requires clear communication and honest dialogue to avoid ambiguity and alienation.

In the field of historic preservation, it is common to hear words, such as culture and heritage, that can possess multiple meanings, evoke many interpretations, and even elicit strong and sometimes negative reactions.

For example, in this report, the word culture is primarily used to denote the traditions, practices, and social behavior that are significant to a particular group of people. This people-centric definition differs from references to culture that are rooted in the arts and/or entertainment industry. In many cities, cultural districts may be most closely associated with concentrations of institutional anchors such as museums, theaters, and concert halls that serve as a destination for residents and visitors. Historically, the creation and promotion of these types of arts and entertainment districts has proven to be a popular economic development strategy.

Cities interested in prioritizing people-centered cultural preservation strategies, including the creation of districts or landmark programs designed to protect local cultural heritage, will need to be clear about the goals and projected outcomes of these strategies in order to avoid confusion.

The word heritage presents a somewhat different challenge because it can be divisive. In certain forms of political rhetoric, heritage may be presented as the language, social norms, values, and histories that are shared solely by the dominant culture group. By seeking to link the identity of a place to certain ethnic and cultural characteristics, this rhetoric may paint individuals from outside groups as a threat. Despite these potential associations, the word heritage is used frequently in this report and in professional preservation literature. Cities seeking to preserve their plural cultural identities and multiple histories may need to acknowledge how racial and cultural divides can manifest themselves in language.

“Philadelphia is a dynamic city with a built record of several centuries of change. Thus, we recognize that creating a historic resource inventory is not a discrete, one-time project, but rather an ongoing effort.”⁴

Key Recommendations of the Philadelphia
Historic Preservation Task Force

Preservation efforts should amplify the voices of community members, especially those whose stories haven’t been told.

Protecting a city’s cultural heritage can help sustain the traditions, arts, and businesses that constitute the city’s social and economic fabric. An equally important component of cultural preservation is its ability to inspire a sense of belonging among all of a city’s residents. Some communities have opposed historic preservation protections because they can be seen as a burden on residents and businesses and as an agent of gentrification.

Today, new development itself, rather than historic designation, may be viewed as a more critical harbinger of gentrification and cultural displacement. Cultural displacement occurs when residents who have lived in an area for a long time feel a sense of exclusion and isolation despite physically remaining in a neighborhood due to the erosion of cultural norms, the demolition of community spaces, and the closure of long-operating businesses.

Accordingly, communities around Philadelphia will seek to use preservation for different purposes. To be successful, Philadelphia’s cultural preservation initiatives should seek to use high-quality data that demonstrates the value of various practices and intentionally engages all interested groups, potentially those whose history has been marginalized.

Preserving the history and culture of dynamic cities requires ongoing effort.

Preserving and sharing the multi-layered narratives of dynamic cities is a challenge. Philadelphia’s built and social environment has evolved over centuries in response to cycles of growth and contraction, technological changes, and waves of immigration, among other forces.

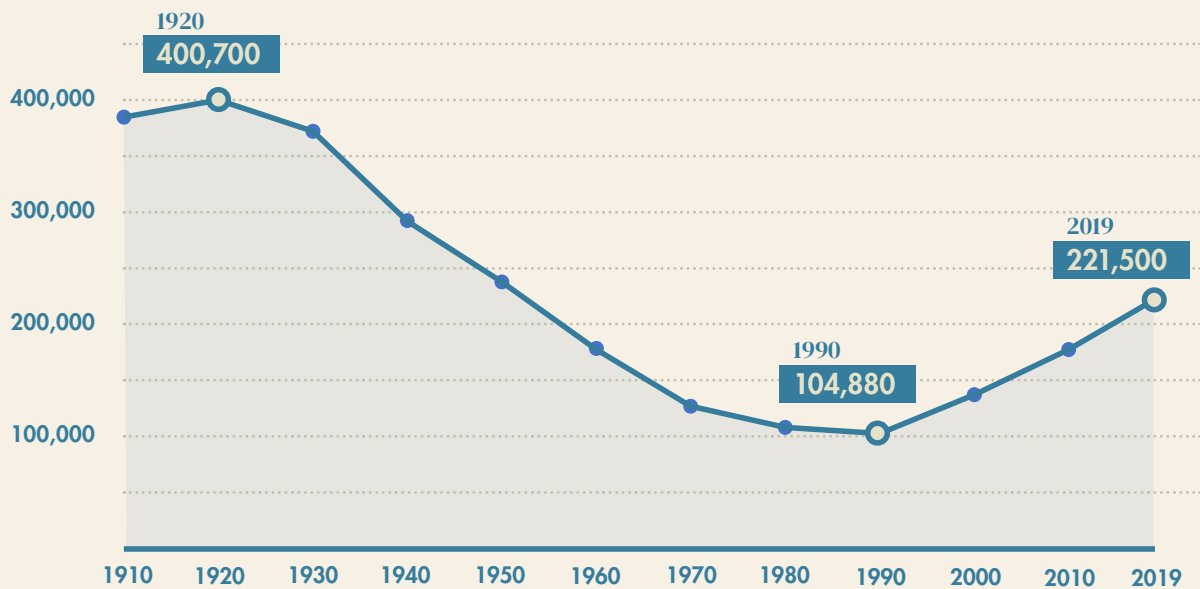
Preservation professionals are uniquely qualified to document and share these tangled overlapping histories; however, long-term, sustained efforts that incorporate coordinated engagement are needed to understand the City’s ever-changing histories and address the interwoven issues facing neighborhoods today. As such, practitioners need to set realistic expectations for the time, resources, and coordination that is required to develop community-driven approaches to addressing systemic challenges to the built and social environment.

IMMIGRATION IN PHILADELPHIA

Cultural preservation seeks to celebrate a city’s past while also reflecting the stories and practices of those who live there today. For older cities like Philadelphia, preservation efforts will need to be informed by an understanding of historic and recent immigration patterns. At different periods of time, groups with similar cultural backgrounds have settled in Philadelphia neighborhoods out of a combination of opportunity and necessity. In addition to contributing to the economy and vitality of the city, the cultural legacy of these groups has been imprinted on some neighborhoods through architectural styles, business types, and cultural activities.

Philadelphia’s Immigrants: Who they are and how they are changing the city, a 2018 report from the PEW Charitable Trusts, traces the flow of immigrants to Philadelphia.⁵ Immigration was a prime driver of Philadelphia’s population growth in the 19th century. However, as shown in the chart below, a long period of decline began in 1920. Philadelphia began to shake its status as a “low immigration” city in the 1990s as the city again became a growing U.S. destination for immigrants. Although historic waves of immigration may have been dominated by European migrants, Philadelphia’s more recent immigrant population is relatively diverse with no single nation constituting a majority. According to the Census Bureau’s American Community Survey, China was the country of origin for about 11 percent of the city’s immigrants—the single largest group by country of origin. India, Vietnam, and the Dominican Republic each accounted for between six and seven percent. Mexico, Ukraine, Haiti, and Jamaica each had around three or four percent.

Philadelphia’s Foreign-Born Population, 1910–2019



Source: Pew Charitable Trusts, U.S. Census Bureau (decennial censuses and American Community Survey one-year estimates, 2019)

Note: Population numbers are rounded to the nearest hundred



Cultural Landmarking and Districts

Over the last decade, the designation of cultural landmarks and districts has become one of the most common tools associated with cultural heritage preservation. Many U.S. cities have created new types of designation, or modified traditional historic designations, as a way of broadening the kinds of sites, properties, resources, and community assets that are eligible for official recognition.

Where they have been established, these “tiered” or “partial control” districts are generally viewed as more flexible than other types of solutions available through conventional historic preservation programs. Some cities have implemented cultural districts in an attempt to protect vulnerable communities from the forces of neighborhood change while others have sought to correct a more general imbalance among historic designations that has favored Euro-American culture and history.

The motives, enabling mechanisms, and organizing principles behind various cultural designation programs vary in significant ways. For example, while most programs open their designees to new and exclusive channels of funding and technical assistance, these programs may or may not be housed within municipal preservation offices.

These programs also differ based on the way in which they interact or overlap with state and national historic preservation efforts. This chapter explores the purpose, administration, and preliminary outcomes for cultural landmark and district programs that have been established in five cities: Boston, Denver, Minneapolis, Portland, and San Francisco.

Purpose and Goals

Communities that have implemented cultural designations—most often in the form of “cultural districts”—have often done so to advance multiple overlapping goals. Some were explicitly developed to combat the displacement of marginalized groups and insulate their neighborhoods from gentrification and similarly harmful externalities associated with urban growth and development. Others evolved from

Cultural landmarks and districts are often established to help cities recognize dynamic and “ordinary” aspects of local culture, like where people shop or congregate, rather than only places of seemingly “momentous” history.

a need to provide innovative and flexible ways to preserve certain neighborhood conditions without tangling communities up in regulatory red tape. Some link culture to promoting the arts or tourism, or fostering economic development, while others remain more firmly rooted in the world of design and physical development.

Certain cities make cultural designations through novel programs that operate outside of a traditional historic preservation framework, while others have expanded or refined their existing historic preservation policies to incorporate a unique avenue for cultural heritage preservation. The examples introduced in this section help to illustrate this range, as well as some shared characteristics and distinctions between them.

San Francisco and Minneapolis: The Interdisciplinary Approach

In cities that have launched new cultural district programs, municipal employees often work in an interdepartmental capacity, as opposed to strictly through planning or preservation offices. In these locations, city staff collaborate with local legislators, community members and organizations, small businesses, and other partners to identify areas with a recognizable shared heritage that may be threatened by challenges like housing affordability and business retention.

As the examples of San Francisco and Minneapolis show, mayors and public servants can initiate novel efforts to combat these trends using local government funding, staff capacity and expertise, and community advocacy.

San Francisco started designating cultural districts in 2013. The city defines a cultural district as a geographic area that embodies a unique cultural heritage, or a concentration of cultural and historic assets; culturally significant enterprise, arts, services, or businesses; and members of a specific cultural community or ethnic group that historically has been discriminated against, displaced, or oppressed. The initiative began as an honorary recognition overseen by the Planning Department’s preservation staff, though a successful ballot initiative helped to codify it as a fully funded program in 2018. Now coordinated by the Mayor’s Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD), the program’s annual funding has been apportioned from the municipal hotel tax at a baseline of \$3 million.

The Cultural Districts Program is branded as a long-term “place-making” and “place-keeping” effort, employing city officials and resources to assist vulnerable communities and to support legacy businesses, nonprofits, community arts, and traditions. As of 2022, the city’s nine designated neighborhoods include communities such as Japantown, the Calle 24 Latino Cultural District, a Transgender Cultural District, and the Castro LGBTQ Cultural District. Other technical support is provided by the city’s Office of Economic and Workforce Development (OEWD), Planning Department, and Arts Commission.

Although San Francisco’s Cultural District Program lacks specific regulatory authority, it benefits from the statewide California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Passed in 1970, CEQA requires a thorough, public review of the potential environmental impacts for many proposed development projects. It

Figure 2: American Indian Cultural District, San Francisco

- 1 **Chutchi**
Original Yetamu Ohlone Village Site
Currently named Mission Dolores Park
- 2 **The Village**
80 Julian Avenue
Future home of:
San Francisco American Indian Cultural Center
San Francisco American Indian Cultural District
Native American Health Center
Friendship House Transitional Housing
Friendship House Women's Lodge
- 3 **Friendship House**
54 Julian Avenue
- 4 **Mission Dolores**
First colonized native land in what is now San Francisco.
Constructed in 1793 using forced American Indian labor.
- 5 **Indian Education Program**
Sanchez Elementary School
- 6 **American Indian Cultural Center, 1969 - 1986**
225 Valencia Street
- 7 **Native American Health Center**
140 Capp Street
- 8 **Redstone Labor Temple**
2940 14th Street
International Indian Treaty Council
American Indian Film Institute
500 Years Coalition
Big Mountain Support Group
- 9 **16th Street BART Station**



Source: American Indian Cultural District, City and County of San Francisco, 2020

The American Indian Cultural District (AICD), pictured here, is currently one of nine cultural districts that have been established in San Francisco. Founded in 2020, the AICD is the first cultural district of its size in the United States dedicated to recognizing, honoring, and celebrating the American Indian legacy, culture, people, and contributions.

also requires government agencies to avoid or minimize these impacts to the extent feasible by examining alternative approaches to the project. In practice, CEQA serves an important form of development regulation and the primary legal tool that many communities use to protect historic resources in California.

Minneapolis modeled its Cultural Districts initiative on a framework used by local Indigenous leaders to create the American Indian Cultural Corridor in 2010. One such leader was Robert Lilligren, president of the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) and the first Native American to sit on Minneapolis City Council. Lilligren’s fellow council members took interest in replicating this blueprint within their own wards, anticipating that it could be used “to prevent displacement of residents in gentrifying areas while at the same time supporting the unique cultural history of the neighborhoods.”¹

The city enshrined its cultural district policy in the “Minneapolis 2040” comprehensive plan, adopted in 2019. The department for Community Planning and Economic Development (CPED) collaborated with community leaders and organizations on forming the details of the initiative, and City Council approved an ordinance in August 2020, establishing seven cultural districts. Their stated objective is to “strengthen neighborhoods by prioritizing and accelerating economic development, public transit, and affordable housing policies, practices, and resources to ... areas where a significant portion of the population is comprised of people of color, Indigenous people, and/or immigrant (POCII) communities” with the intention to “protect the racial diversity and uplift the cultural identity” of said neighborhoods.

In addition to the American Indian Cultural Corridor on Franklin Avenue East, Minneapolis’s cultural districts include

Cedar Avenue South, also known as Little Mogadishu due to a large presence of Somali and other African immigrants, and West Broadway, a notable Black entertainment corridor where the musical artist Prince had his first live solo performance. Another district was formed along 38th Street in Southside, once among the few neighborhoods where Black people could own property and the current site of George Floyd Square, commemorating the killing there of an African American man by a Minneapolis police officer.

Denver and Portland: The Preservationist Approach

Some cities are finding ways to protect cultural assets using their existing historic preservation framework, albeit by developing new policy tools or leveraging underutilized alternatives. By broadening the definitions and criteria that local governments use to designate historic resources, they can open their landmarking processes to many tangible and intangible sources of cultural pride and at least partially decouple preservation from its more typical focus on architectural significance. The examples in Denver and Portland illustrate how doing so can also help governments respond to communities that may eschew traditional, restrictive preservation regulations and instead favor something more honorary and flexible.

In **Denver**, planners and preservationists have noted that just a small percentage of its historic landmarks and districts reflect underrepresented groups. Before 2019, none of the designation criteria in the municipal ordinance referred explicitly to culture. By request of City Council, the planning office updated the landmark criteria with the goal of improving diversity and equity among local landmarks while also streamlining designation eligibility generally. The city also decided to formally define culture as “the traditions, beliefs, customs, and practices of a particular community... [which] can encompass structures, businesses, institutions, organizations, events, arts, and crafts.”

Shortly after these updates, Denver also formalized its Historic Cultural District policy. Though these districts follow familiar procedures for designation and design review, they differ from traditional historic districts by explicitly honoring cultural heritage and adopting customized, and often less stringent, design guidelines for preservation and development activity. To date, Denver has designated two Historic Cultural Districts. The Five Points Historic Cultural District is oriented around an historic African American business corridor. La Alma Lincoln Park is a primarily residential area home to many important events and leaders connected to the Latino community and Chicano Movement.

Though **Portland, Oregon**, lacks an explicit cultural district designation, its preservation model is also potentially instructive. In the early 1990s, Portland’s Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (BPS) developed a distinct preservation classification known as the Conservation District. Somewhat similar to Philadelphia’s Neighborhood Conservation Overlays, Portland’s conservation districts and landmarks are regulated with more flexible historic resource protections than historic districts or landmarks, as illustrated in Figure 3.

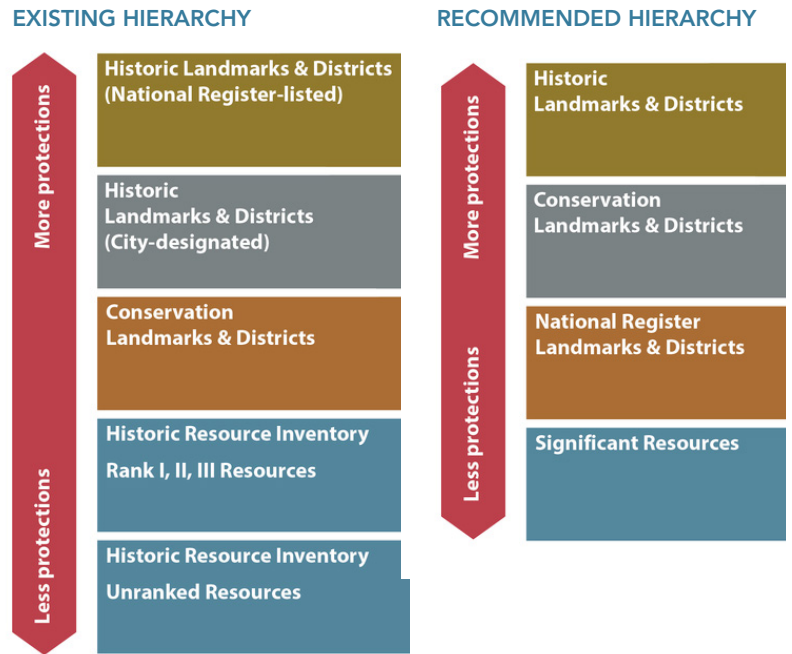
Conservation districts consist of resources deemed significant at the local or neighborhood level, as opposed to the state or national level which might warrant the more protective “historic” designation. Conservation districts emerged from a community plan developed for the neighborhood of Albina, an area where many African American residents were displaced by new development.

The designation has not been used extensively since Albina’s six districts were formed, but, in recent years, Portland has been working to modernize and make its approach to preservation more equitable. In 2018, a report developed for BPS recommended ways to advance a more

Figure 3: Rethinking Historic Resource Types in Portland

The City of Portland recently adopted zoning changes for buildings in certain historic areas. These changes were based on the recommendations of the Historic Resources Code Project, a multi-year effort launched in 2017. In addition to loosening the regulations governing the construction of accessory dwelling units, the installation of solar panels, and the replacement of certain types of windows, the project recommended a new framework for the designation and protection of historic resources (right).

According to city staff, the recommended hierarchy can be thought of as three tiers of designated resources: Historic (gold standard), Conservation (silver standard), and National Register (bronze standard). The framework also includes a “Significant Resources” classification available to resources determined eligible for future Historic, Conservation, or National Register designation. Proposed listing and removal criteria would allow designated resources to move up or down the hierarchy based on the resource’s historic significance and the appropriateness of protections when considering other community values.



Source: City of Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability

inclusive, diverse, and accessible historic preservation program beginning with a comprehensive update to the Historic Resource Inventory (HRI), produced in 1984.

Similar to Philadelphia, most older buildings in Portland are not historically designated and many are not in the HRI. Moreover, designated or documented properties are “largely located in the central city and inner ring neighborhoods” and more heavily reflect a Euro-American heritage. The city’s rapid growth, development, and densification has brought with it the demolition of “landmark worthy buildings” and displacement of underrepresented communities and their cultural resources.

In response to these trends, both the 2018 HRI report and Portland’s recently updated comprehensive plan advocate for reviving conservation districts, especially since

recent rule changes reduced the designation threshold from unanimous to majority owner consent. Future updates to the HRI will prioritize surveying underrepresented communities and areas experiencing growth and change, both of which could benefit from greater protection under the conservation designation.

Boston – The Adaptive Approach

Boston’s Cultural Districts program emerged as an adaptation of a state initiative, authorized by the Massachusetts Legislature in 2010 with the purpose of stimulating arts and cultural activity and attracting creative businesses, often in urban centers, industrial enclaves, and fishing ports. Each designation offers special access to grants and state-sponsored aid, and a mention on the state’s tourism website.

Recognizing that communities define culture in different ways, the agency that oversees the program—the Mass Cultural Council—stipulates only that proposed districts have a density of cultural facilities, activities, and assets in a compact, walkable area that is easily identifiable by visitors and residents.

Thus, many cities throughout Massachusetts use cultural districts to promote the arts, tourism, and historic districts. Boston has partly kept with this trend: the city’s initiative is administered by the Mayor’s Office of Arts and Culture and includes the Fenway Cultural District, where many museums and performing arts venues are located. However, Boston’s other three districts were primarily designated for the purpose of cultural preservation in immigrant neighborhoods that are experiencing development pressure. They are known as the Latin Quarter Cultural District, Little Saigon Cultural District, and Roxbury Cultural District, the latter of which is a center for African American culture in Boston.

Designation and Administration

The processes for receiving and maintaining a cultural district designation, including eligibility criteria and oversight requirements, vary considerably by city. Most cultural districts begin their paths to designation through grassroots organizing by local organizations or resident groups, often followed by a formal approval process by a municipal body or authority. Although all of the case studies examined here required some form of legislative authorization, only some call for day-to-day supervision by municipal staff or neighborhood organizations.

The definitions and criteria used to qualify cultural districts also have a wide range of specificity across these example cities. In addition, some locations mandate strategic plans or progress reports for all cultural districts, whereas others give designees the freedom to generate programming and resources in a more customized and self-directed manner.

San Francisco

San Francisco’s cultural districts are established by ordinance, which can be introduced by any city legislator—known as a Supervisor—as well as by the mayor or a city department. To date, all nine cultural districts were self-nominated with ordinance language drafted by the local district Supervisors’ offices.

Their geographic boundaries are determined by steering committees of appointed business owners, community leaders and property owners, and the area Supervisor. The full Board of Supervisors must approve the legislation. To lead each cultural district, MOHCD selects a community-based group which must select an executive director and advisory body. Advisory committee members are nominated by their Supervisor and are expected to monitor and provide advice on the distribution of city funds.

All districts are required to create a three-year plan, known as the Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategies (CHHESS) Report, which serves as a roadmap for stabilizing the cultural community. Municipal staff support this process by conducting research and compiling recommendations on programs, policies, and funding sources. Progress reports are used to adjust and improve the CHHESS approach after each three-year period.

Minneapolis

In Minneapolis, all seven cultural districts were created by the single ordinance that established the initiative in 2020. To be eligible for the designation, district properties must be contiguous, oriented around a commercial corridor accessible by walking and public transportation, located within an “Area of Concentrated Poverty” (as defined by the regional planning agency, the Metropolitan Council), and be in communities with greater than 50 percent immigrants or Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents.

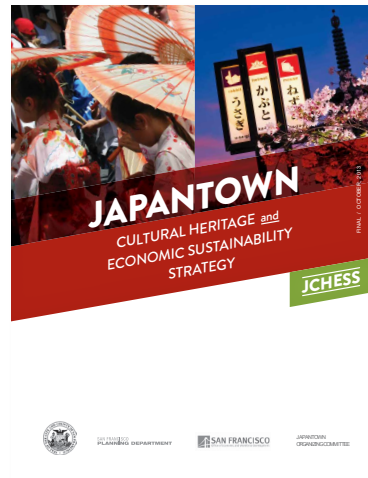
Unlike San Francisco, Minneapolis does not require cultural districts to be managed by a neighborhood organization with pre-existing programs, funding, and staff, opting for a less formal organizational structure and more flexible funding process. For example, in some districts, area business associations and chambers of commerce have been tapped to disburse interior improvement grants to business owners therein.

Other districts have executed more concrete planning endeavors in partnership with their local legislators and other neighborhood groups. Franklin Avenue continues to see cultural activism and investment stemming from NACDI's 2010 American Indian Cultural Corridor Community Blueprint. A Strategic Development Plan called "38th Street Thrive!" was produced for the Southside cultural district in 2021, led by the local City Council member with input from residents, business owners, community partners, and other government officials.

Denver

The formation of Historic Cultural Districts in Denver typically begins with a resident-driven designation process. Local organizers are expected to catalog resources, marshal community support, prepare an application, and work with the city's preservation planners to conduct public hearings and meetings and draft custom design guidelines for each new district. The proposed district ultimately undergoes review and recommendation for adoption by Denver's historic commission, planning board, and city council.

For La Alma Lincoln Park, residents and neighborhood leaders worked over a multiyear period with a local nonprofit—Historic Denver—to research the district's history, conduct listening sessions and interviews with community members, and develop a historic context and property inventory. Having evolved from a working-class industrial community in the 1870s and 1880s, Lincoln Park later became a vital hub for Denver's Chicano community during periods of immigrant activism and



Source: San Francisco Planning

Cultural districts in San Francisco are required to complete a three-year plan published in a Cultural History, Housing, and Economic Sustainability Strategies (CHHES) report. The Japantown CHHES (pictured here) was published in 2013 and outlines economic development, preservation, and physical improvement goals for the district.

related social tension in the 1970s. The area's architecture and sense of place have undergone many changes over time, but with cultural heritage now formally incorporated into the city's Landmark Designation criteria, La Alma Lincoln Park met the qualifications for a Historic Cultural District in spite of—and perhaps because of—its legacy of change.

A slightly different approach was used for the Five Points Historic Cultural District, as its initial designation in 2002 predated Denver's updated landmark criteria. Five Points was renamed in 2014, over a decade after first becoming a traditional historic district. At the time of the update, local stakeholders had worked with the city to establish customized design guidelines for the neighborhood, setting the groundwork for what is now an integral component of the city's approach to Historic Cultural Districts.

Portland

Though used sparingly, conservation districts in Portland are reviewed using the same approval criteria and land use procedure as local historic districts. Landmark designation requires the consent of the property owners prior to listing, while district designation now requires consent of just a majority of property owners in the boundary area. Local designations are authorized by the Portland Historic Landmarks Commission either

through a quasi-judicial Historic Designation Review process, usually initiated by the property owner, or by a legislative procedure led by BPS.

The approval criteria are the same for historic landmarks, conservation landmarks, historic districts, and conservation districts, spanning architectural values; historical associations; physical integrity; contributions to the area's or city's character; and contribution to a grouping of related resources. A "Level of Protection" criterion determines which type of designation is applied (i.e., historic or conservation district), based on the historic value and nature of the resource.

Portland preservationists have recently been working to make historic preservation more equitable and culturally inclusive. A Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) produced in 2020 has expanded the number of properties associated with the Black experience in Portland that can be designated based on their cultural—rather than architectural—significance. This not only streamlines the process to nominate such resources to the National Register of Historic Places but can also simplify and expedite the research needed for making local designations like conservation districts. Efforts to produce the African American Resources in Portland MPD were led by BPS and a local non-profit and drew on the expertise of Black community advisors. The city is now working with nonprofit organizations to produce a similar MPD oriented around Portland's LGBTQ community.

Boston

Boston's cultural districts are largely self-determined, but the city's dedicated Arts and Culture planner has been an important factor in stewarding them through the state's approval process. Massachusetts cultural districts are proposed by municipalities and designated by the Mass Cultural Council on a rolling basis. The designation stands for five years and can be renewed.

Boston's Arts and Culture office has submitted applications on behalf of neighborhood groups who proposed establishing their respective cultural districts, each of which needed to receive a stamp of approval by local legislators to then proceed to the Mass Cultural Council. Hearings for new districts are held before the City Council's Committee on Arts, Culture and Special Events. As the applicant city, Boston helps coordinate the required partnership group comprising local organizations and stakeholders—including municipal staff, at least two artists, and creative businesses—for each district.

Neighborhood organizations in Roxbury, Little Saigon, and the Latin Quarter handle the day-to-day management. This arrangement leverages community development infrastructure that is already strong while giving each district the flexibility to respond to their individual challenges and pursue the outcomes most desired at the local level. As of 2021, the city was exploring what a municipally funded cultural districts program could look like under a model like San Francisco's.

Impact and Outcomes

Cultural district designations offer a range of potential benefits, and in practice, their accomplishments and outcomes to date have differed based on their policy objectives.

Where anti-displacement is the primary goal—in San Francisco, Minneapolis, and Boston for example—such designations lend municipal backing to marginalized groups so they can stake a more official claim to their neighborhoods and mark their presence in a variety of ways. In these cities, cultural districts also provide a fairly flexible policy mechanism by which to channel government and philanthropic investments and respond to the needs of priority populations in targeted geographies.

CUSTOMIZING HERITAGE PROTECTION IN SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco’s cultural districts leverage city funding to engage in programming and achieve goals that address their individual needs (see focus areas chart below). In some districts, urban design regulations evoke the approach taken in traditional historic districts. Calle 24 established a Special Use District that sets height limits and other design guidelines to preserve the neighborhood’s character. The regulations attempt to maintain a balance between food establishments and retail by establishing conditions that must be met before any property can change from retail to food service.

Cultural districts have also helped secure protections for resources associated with underrepresented groups. Leaders of the Leather & LGBTQ District compelled city legislators to create plaques recognizing important sites and rallied support to designate a historic landmark at the SF Eagle, just the third LGBTQ bar site to receive that local distinction. An adjacent street is also being transformed into Eagle Plaza, a public gathering space and shared pedestrian way. The American Indian Cultural District has also worked to broaden the scope of the city’s historic preservation efforts, partnering with the Planning Department to develop an American Indian Historical Context Statement and with the nonprofit SF Heritage to create new cultural resources criteria and document cultural sites for local nomination.

Other districts have prioritized preserving small businesses, affordable housing, and open space. The SOMA Pilipinas district has worked with a local nonprofit to organize an accelerator program to seed Filipino-owned businesses that can locate in their new commercial corridor. They also backed the purchase of a historic rooming house once occupied by a Filipino Masonic organization, which has since become 100 percent affordable rental housing and been nominated to the National Register. The Transgender District developed the Housing Opportunities for Trans Tenants (H.O.T.T.) Program, which offers housing subsidies for transgender, gender non-conforming, non-binary, and intersex individuals. Its Entrepreneurship Accelerator program aims to help queer and transgender people start business projects, offering free business tax filings, coaching, branding and marketing support, and seed grants.

FOCUS AREA	CULTURAL DISTRICTS							
	African American	American Indian	Calle 24	Castro LGBTQ	Japantown	Leather & LGBTQ	SOMA Pilipinas	Transgender
Economic Development	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Arts & Culture	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Placemaking, Tourism & Events	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Land Use & Design		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Safety & Beautification	●	●	●	●	●	●		●
Racial & Social Equity	●	●		●	●	●	●	●
Housing			●	●	●	●	●	●
Workforce Development			●	●	●		●	
Environmental Stewardship	●	●			●			
Health	●	●				●		
Transportation			●			●		
Youth Empowerment		●						

On the other hand, where cultural and conservation districts focus more on preserving physical resources, urban form, and sense of place, like Denver and Portland, they tend to offer more regulatory instruments that are generally applicable to individual properties but also serve to maintain the cultural character of a neighborhood at large.

San Francisco

Having perhaps the most well-established and well-funded program, San Francisco's cultural district communities engage in highly customized programming, and city funding is used to address each district's individual needs. Program funds are used to pay an executive director and small staff for each district, along with consultants who develop a strategic plan, and to cover other startup investments to establish sound fiscal and operational systems.

Once up and running, districts may apply for exclusive city grants to help pay for other projects and programs. A scan of each district's website shows that their respective staff, committee members, and volunteers work on a diverse range of policy topics and projects. These activities are summarized in the sidebar on page 21.

Nearly all districts devote resources to issues like land use and urban design, housing, economic development, arts and culture, social equity, and tourism. Other topics, like environmental concerns, transportation, public health, and youth empowerment, appear to be of select interest to just a few districts. San Francisco's cultural districts are equipped to act flexibly to tackle challenges on a somewhat ad hoc basis as well. For example, they became one of the primary ways to target recovery efforts and resources in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Minneapolis

Since Minneapolis established its cultural districts in 2020, the administration has allocated funding to each of the seven areas for street clean-up, improved lighting, building facade improvements, murals and arts events, the establishment of business co-ops, and marketing support. The mayor and a council member also proposed a new \$2.5 million fund from which entrepreneurs can request no-interest construction loans—\$2 million of which would be set aside for business owners of color within the cultural districts.

Moreover, the city partnered with the Minneapolis Convention & Visitors Association to help promote cultural districts to tourists. The "Meet Minneapolis" website features blog-style entries spotlighting each district, written by local residents who comment on the cultural significance of the neighborhoods while also pointing out destinations for dining, entertainment, shopping, nightlife, and other leisure activities. In addition, the website maintains a calendar of events spanning all seven districts (see page 23 for more information).

Cultural districts are seen as a way to pilot city programs across Minneapolis, with City Council members looking to test incentives for residential and commercial development that would repurpose vacant buildings and create affordable housing. Many of the business owners in each district are represented by business associations or chambers of commerce who have provided them exclusive access to grants for facade or interior improvements. The Minneapolis Foundation, a local nonprofit, gives priority to organizations located in cultural districts for its racial and economic justice grant program.

Moreover, cultural district areas were used as part of the recovery strategy from 2020's civil unrest, with several million dollars in state aid going to Lake Street, West Broadway, and 38th Street, the latter of which was where

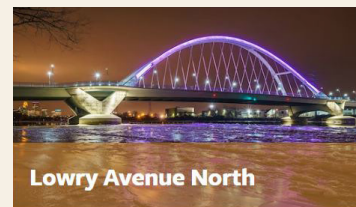
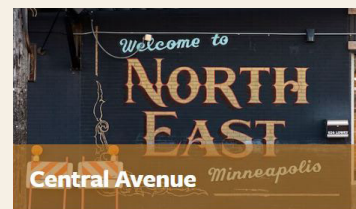
DEFINING ROLES AND LEVELS OF SUPPORT IN MINNEAPOLIS

The City of Minneapolis identifies itself as a “leading partner” in the city’s Cultural District program. Minneapolis published a three-page policy document in March 2020 that outlines five roles that the city will play within the program. These roles include:

- Certifying districts and establishing guidelines,
- Providing technical business and planning assistance,
- Enhancing the visibility of cultural districts,
- Offering incentives to encourage business development, and
- Ensuring equitable program benefits.

In addition to outlining these roles, Minneapolis has established three different levels of support for Cultural Districts: Consult, Curate, and Catalyze. These levels of support are assigned to each district by the Cultural District working group based on the individual needs and capacity of community stakeholders in each district.

- **Consult:** This level is designed for the most stable districts and offers promotional efforts and a waiver on municipal permit fees for one event each year.
- **Curate:** In addition to the services listed above, this level reduces match requirements for city grants, and gives the district higher priority for small business assistance and other technical assistance.
- **Catalyze:** This designation targets communities with the strongest need and offers funds that can be used for key building projects as well as lighting and sanitation improvements.



In an effort to market the Minneapolis’s Cultural Districts, the City partnered with Meet Minneapolis to create a “Meet the Districts” promotional website: www.minneapolis.org/cultural-districts.

Source: Meet Minneapolis

George Floyd was killed. Funding could be used for property repair and construction, engineering, design, and site amenities.

Minneapolis's cultural districts have further helped community groups to marshal support for and advance goals that improve neighborhoods for residents and visitors alike. The Cedar Avenue South District, for example, has been chosen for the site of a public market called Africa Village, which seeks to make the Cedar-Riverside neighborhood as recognizable as New York City's Chinatown and Miami's Little Haiti.

One of the more robust cultural district planning efforts to emerge has occurred on 38th Street, where the local council member worked with community members to produce the "38th Street Thrive!" Strategic Development Plan. Thrive recommends 21 specific actions with clear implementation timelines, including launching a business association, hosting signature street festivals, financing a capital fund, finding a location for the Minnesota African American Heritage Museum and Gallery, and establishing a land trust and other initiatives geared toward increasing homeownership and business formation by African Americans. It includes maps citing the district's major cultural assets as well as its land use and development opportunities, along with a table of fiscal resources.

One large-scale project being undertaken by neighborhood leaders is the creation of a business, culinary, and community hub called Dreamland on 38th. Named after a historic business that once welcomed travelers and entertainers who were unable to stay, eat, or perform in downtown Minneapolis due to widespread racial discrimination, the endeavor is partly funded by \$250,000 in legislative bonding.

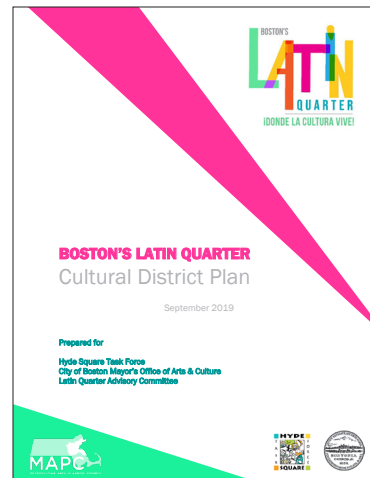
Boston

Boston's cultural districts have also proven to enhance operational capacity for neighborhood organizations and help them to align efforts to improve local planning, community development, and the small business environment. Though the state's cultural district program offers no regulatory protection, Boston has followed a model similar to San Francisco by providing a mechanism to organize and empower individuals and groups with a shared ethnic heritage. In general, the program emphasizes support for commercial properties over residential, since housing resources are administered more directly through other city departments. Since being designated, each district has attempted to address a diverse array of challenges and produced some notable accomplishments.

For instance, the establishment of the Roxbury Cultural District (RCD) in 2017 brought a more cohesive organizational structure to a network of over 40 local partners, who can now more deliberately "activate and market Roxbury's arts and cultural assets" and expand economic opportunities for residents, artists, business owners, and entrepreneurs. RCD and city leaders were also able to coordinate their work with other planning endeavors, including the Whittier Choice Neighborhoods Initiative funded by HUD.

The district was an inaugural grantee for the National Trust's African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund, and was awarded \$50,000 to help preserve, interpret, and share the story of Boston's African American community. RCD generated a cultural assets map that identifies key institutions and resources within the district to guide residents and visitors alike to celebrate and protect Roxbury's heritage. Among other recent accomplishments is the Nubian Nights jazz series, which became the vehicle to activate Roxbury's main public space—Nubian Square—during the pandemic.

In Boston’s Latin Quarter, the closure of anchor businesses amid rising rents and shifting demographics is partly what drew local leaders to create a cultural district in the area of Hyde and Jackson squares. In one high profile example, a Latin grocery store was replaced by a Whole Foods in 2011. Establishing the district in 2018 opened the neighborhood to special federal funding streams as well as technical assistance from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), Greater Boston’s regional planning agency, which has a dedicated department for Arts and Culture.



Source: MAPC

Boston’s Latin Quarter Cultural District Plan is one of three planning documents created through a partnership between MAPC, the Hyde Square Task Force, and Boston’s Office of Arts and Culture.

The Hyde Square Task Force and the City of Boston were awarded grant funding from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which was used to support long-term planning in partnership with MAPC. The *Latin Quarter Cultural District Plan* offers strategies that can help the district grow and flourish, establish a coherent and lasting brand and identity, engage diverse residents in creative programming, and resist displacement and destabilization, complete with detailed guidance for phased implementation.

Little Saigon is centered around Fields Corner, Dorchester, where 75 percent of the city’s Vietnamese Americans live. Led by the Networking Organization of Vietnamese Americans (NOVA), the cultural district’s primary goals include boosting tourism, economic development, and community pride and engagement, with programs that particularly benefit local immigrant families. Boston and NOVA were also awarded an NEA grant to support this programming.

The organization hired its first full-time employees to manage the district and its branding, small business directory, and business and language services. Among its offerings is the Boston Little Saigon Community Program, which is designed to support neighborhood enterprises and organizations by providing collaborative opportunities, marketing assistance, and resource sharing.

As in other cultural districts, the financial resources and additional capacity that came with the designation helped community leaders respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to many business disruptions and closures. To support business owners, NOVA began offering restaurant workers health certification courses in English and Vietnamese and provided assistance to owners with maintaining their business licensure. In addition to technical support and services, the district has also organized festivals and a fundraising gala, commissioned public art, and procured new signage to enhance Little Saigon’s sense of place.

Denver

Denver’s Historic Cultural Districts offer many of the benefits of historic preservation, like access to grants and tax credits and more local control over neighborhood development patterns. Each district is expected to establish an inventory of “Character-Defining Features,” as well as “Contributing” and “Non-Contributing Buildings” within their boundary areas and corresponding design guidelines for development and alterations. Character-defining features must be honored and reinforced, and contributing buildings are expected to be rehabilitated and restored for reuse and protected from deterioration. However, these features and resources are

intended to convey cultural value as much as, if not more than, they evoke architectural significance.

Generally, Historic Cultural District regulations can be more flexible and impose less restrictive requirements and economic burdens on property owners and residents than traditional Historic Districts. For each of Denver's cultural districts, local planners partner with the community to adapt the citywide Design Guidelines for Denver Landmark Structures and Districts, so that they suit the individual character of the neighborhood and the changes that have occurred there over time.

Some projects in Historic Cultural Districts are still subject to design review—including exterior alterations and additions, demolition, new construction, signs, landscaping or site work requiring city permits and approvals, and improvements in public rights-of-way. But the custom design guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive and are applied on a case-by-case basis to allow for flexible, context-sensitive solutions. Minor repairs, in-kind replacements, and interior remodeling are not subject to review. The city also provides flexibility for creative or innovative designs that may not comply with a cultural district's specific design guidelines, but that show consistency with the district's relevant guiding principles.

The *Five Points Historic Cultural District Design Standards and Guidelines* help to illustrate the flexibility offered in Denver. The Guidelines permit features like non-historic storm doors and painted brick on residential properties, irregular street trees and lighting, and a variety of permissible sign types and fencing materials. In addition, the design guidelines include Character-Defining Features specific to culture, referring to topics like Black businesses and community institutions, jazz music, and African American pride celebrations within the corridor. Five Points is relatively compact, with just nine Contributing Buildings said to “[convey] the

story of African Americans within the district and [help] to define the district geography.” Although they are not designated strictly for their architectural significance, they do retain architectural integrity which must be preserved. In addition, the guidelines have a distinct subcategory of non-contributing buildings called Main Street Character Buildings—commercial properties constructed during the period of significance that are also urged to be retained and reused.

In the La Alma Lincoln Park district, many of the citywide guidelines still apply, particularly those that address building massing or form, but others were modified to better fit the neighborhood. The district's period of significance stretches from 1873 to 1980, meaning alterations to structures that occurred during this timeframe are reflective of the culture and history therein. As such, many buildings qualify for preservation and the district lists 175 Contributing resources. Although many historic homes have undergone cosmetic changes, there have been few demolitions in the neighborhood. The resulting “style and rhythm” of the streetscape has been recognized for its cultural significance.

Certain adaptations are indicative of this significance, such as enclosing porches and adding dormers in order to expand living space for large families and provide gathering spaces for organizers and mutual aid societies created by Mexican immigrants. Front yards were typically enclosed by iron fences, though many were later replaced with more readily available material, such as chain link.

Other character-defining features include murals and the park space itself, which holds importance as the site of marches, events, and activities that have “made the La Alma Lincoln Park neighborhood an incubator for the Chicano Movement.” In one local modification to citywide design guidelines, no requirements are made for door or window materials, since few historic doors

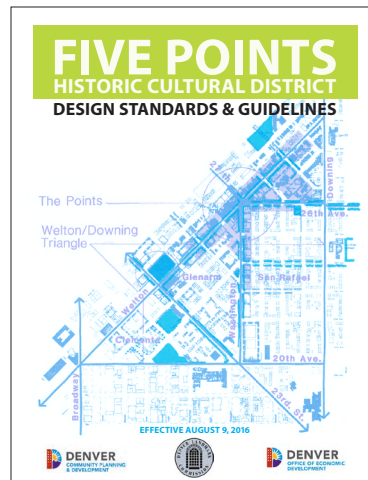
and windows remain in the district. Instead, the only features owners must retain are their opening size, position, pattern, and proportion. Likewise, while most historic districts indicate a preference for wooden porches, repairs made to La Alma Lincoln Park's porches can use composite materials.

Overall, Denver's Historic Cultural District approach uses similar procedures to a traditional historic district, but it has helped the city work around common obstacles to formalizing preservation efforts in locations where cultural characteristics take precedence to structural and architectural details. Because properties are designated "as is," owners do not need to make costly improvements if they do not want to. Those that do seek improvements are given more flexibility since the design guidelines emphasize many character-defining features that are intangible or that accept structural change as a facet of the neighborhood's heritage in itself.

Portland

Within Portland's Conservation Districts, development activity is subject to a two-track design review system. Most projects that would alter a Conservation Landmark or contributing resource in a Conservation District have the option of following clear and objective Community Design Standards—found in the city's zoning ordinance—as an alternative to the more rigorous historic resource review. The standards "impose a reduced requirement for compatibility with the historic character of the District," though development must also adhere to any custom design guidelines created for a given conservation district. If there are none, then the city's Community Design Guidelines apply, which encourage, but do not mandate, features that reinforce historic significance.

Though these guidelines are largely oriented around the physical characteristics of contributing resources, they do refer to cultural significance in some cases. For



Source: City and County of Denver

The Five Points neighborhood in Denver has been referred to as the "Harlem of the West" due to its long jazz history. In 2016, the city published *Design Standards and Guidelines* that are intended to promote the area as a mixed-use entertainment and business district while keeping its cultural and historic memories intact.

example, in the Woodlawn and Mississippi Avenue conservation districts, Portland urges developers to "[preserve] buildings that have cultural significance such as schools and churches." In the Kenton Conservation District, the guidelines stipulate that some "cultural or architectural resources built after the original period of development" are to be protected, citing as precedent a statue of Paul Bunyan erected for the 1959 Oregon Centennial Exposition.

All of Portland's current conservation districts also fall within the Albina Community Plan area. At the time of the plan's publication in the early 1990s, 55 percent of the city's nonwhite population lived in this area. The plan's supplemental design guidelines urge development to "respect and emphasize the aspects of the culture of Portland that are unique" and to promote the identity of this community in design. Proposals that do not meet the Community Design Standards—or where the applicant prefers more discretion—must go through historic resource review. Community Design Standards may not be used if a proposal exceeds certain size thresholds (e.g., 10 dwelling units in a multi-dwelling zone or 20,000 square feet of floor area in a commercial zone).

Portland's conservation designations also come with some demolition controls. Before 2022, all individually listed Conservation

Landmarks and contributing properties in Conservation Districts were subject to a 120-day demolition delay. During this nondiscretionary administrative process, alternatives to demolition must be considered, such as restoration, relocation, or salvage. Photographic documentation of the resource and evidence that an applicant responded to any relocation or salvage offers is required. However, the city has no authority to deny demolition after the delay.

In 2021, Portland BPS undertook the Historic Resources Code Project, an effort to update and improve the processes, regulations, and incentives that apply to historic places by making amendments to the zoning code. Among the adopted recommendations was extending full demolition review to conservation landmarks and districts, instead of only the 120-day delay. The new rules granted the City Council more authority to extend protections to individual landmarks or neighborhoods that were previously conferred only to properties listed on the National Register. Proponents of the change said it would allow the city to better recognize and protect landmarks significant to underrepresented communities.

Business Support Programs

While independent, community-serving, locally owned, “mom and pop” businesses are not traditionally thought of as something to formally “protect,” the closing, sale, or relocation of such businesses is often felt as a significant loss to the fabric of the community. Traditions, foodways, and relationships are lost. Thus, small business preservation is one tool to maintain a place’s cultural identity, while also helping to provide local residents with employment.

Purpose and Goals

Several cities in the United States and globally have adopted business support programs, specifically legacy business programs or registries, to recognize long standing small businesses as cultural assets. These businesses can be retailers, restaurants, bars, manufacturers, and services that are a part of the identity of the city and neighborhood. These businesses serve the community, often above and beyond the simple sale of goods and services, many as gathering spots and hubs of social capital. Because they contribute so much to the character of a neighborhood, they also frequently draw tourists.

By qualifying businesses to be included in a registry, a city can offer technical assistance and grants to the businesses themselves, while also promoting them as community assets. The goal is to see these businesses continue to be viable and successful, even as neighborhoods can change around them. Some cities also use the business registries as steps along the way to landmark designation.

Implementation Examples

The first municipally led program in the United States began in San Francisco in 2015, but was preceded by the nonprofit San Francisco Heritage’s Legacy Bars and Restaurants Initiative. San Francisco’s current program is generally considered one of the most robust and well-supported programs. Other programs in the United States include San Antonio; Los Angeles; New York City; Missoula, Montana; and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Note, many cities also have programs supporting small businesses, just not with the legacy focus.

Internationally, Buenos Aires’s program, Barres Notables (Notable Bars) was established in 1998 and has since designated 73 bars, cafes, billiard halls, and confectioners worthy of preservation. London has a designation program for pubs, begun in 2019, that has designated 100 of them as “Assets of Community Value” to help protect from their loss.

One of the main challenges with legacy businesses is often the business owner does not own the property where their business is located, or does not have a long-term lease. Thus, they are vulnerable if the property owner/landlord decides to sell, which is often the case in neighborhoods where land and property values are rising. There is frequently little incentive for the property owners to retain long-standing tenants. Accordingly, San Francisco decided to provide incentives for both businesses to stay in the community, and for landlords/property owners to enter into long-term leases with legacy businesses.

Seattle prepared a study on legacy businesses in 2017, in order to determine the viability and need for such a program in their city. They also looked at methods, priorities, and systems that have been used to support legacy businesses in other cities. They found several key themes affecting legacy businesses in Seattle, including:

- A changing marketplace, namely from online sales competition, has drastically affected the way consumers buy books, music, and watch movies.
- The food service industry has seen many new fast-casual chains and large grocers enter the market.
- Narrow profit margins mean businesses have a hard time weathering recessions, investing in improvements and inventory, obtaining loans, and finding buyers should they want to sell the business.
- Rising commercial rents mean business owners who rent their buildings have less control, making landlord relationships crucial to business stability. For business owners who also own their building, a developer may offer to buy the building at a very attractive price, particularly for a long-term business owner looking to retire.
- Exposure to labor costs affects businesses that offer higher than minimum wages or benefit packages as part of their community-minded spirit.

Seattle analyzed five types of legacy businesses to better understand the challenges and changing market conditions faced by legacy businesses: ethnic grocery store, independent bookstore, independent record store, neighborhood bar, and cafe/deli. While Philadelphia may not have the same market conditions as Seattle, much of the research is applicable, as the study contained national data on these types of legacy businesses. More on this analysis can be found on page 31.

Key Features

Eligibility

Most programs have a time requirement based on the number of years the business has been in existence. San Antonio's and Los Angeles's programs are 20 years, while Cambridge uses a 25-year threshold, and San Francisco's is 30 years with no break exceeding two years. An exception may be made in San Francisco for businesses at least 20 years old if they have significantly contributed to the history or identity of a particular neighborhood, and if not being included in the registry would cause them to face a significant risk of displacement.

Other programs, like Missoula's, recognize businesses that are over 50 years old, significantly reducing the pool of eligible businesses. In some places, businesses must also meet one or more other criteria. San Antonio's criteria include being located in a historic or landmark district; owned by generations of the same family; providing authentic goods and services; cultivating tradition and culture; or being eligible and willing to become a landmark. San Francisco's legacy businesses must commit to maintaining the defining physical features or traditions, including craft, culinary, or art forms.

FIVE TYPES OF LEGACY BUSINESSES IN SEATTLE

Ethnic Grocery Stores: Challenges include competition from larger grocers, farmers' markets, and restaurants. Profit margins are low in the grocery industry, with average profit margins at only about 2.5 percent of revenue. As Asian and Hispanic populations have grown in size and spending power nationally, however, so too have ethnic grocery store revenues. As neighborhoods change and gentrify, these ethnic businesses are often threatened by the residential displacement of their loyal customer base. They tend to also be more susceptible than others to rent and property tax increases as a share of their uncontrolled business costs.

Independent Bookstores: Challenges include competition from online sales, with more than 40 percent of new books bought online. Industry-wide profit margins are only about 1.6 percent of revenue on average. Most independent bookstores are managed by owner-operators with just one location. Many try to fill a niche by offering book signings and community events. Other challenges include labor costs: bookstores prefer knowledgeable staff, but hiring them requires paying above minimum wage. Like ethnic grocers, bookstore owners have a hard time meeting rent or property tax increases without raising prices or cutting costs in other areas.

Independent Record Stores: Similar to bookstores, most independent record stores are managed by owner-operators with one location. They also carry high volumes of inventory and require knowledgeable staff making above minimum wage. Profit margins are likewise low, about 1.2 percent of revenue. Competition comes from online music piracy, downloadable services like Apple Music, and streaming services like Spotify. Rent and property increases are as hard to manage as for other legacy business types. Record stores also try to compete by holding events to draw shoppers.

Neighborhood Bar: A major challenge for bars and restaurants is higher labor costs than in the past, when many paid relatively low wages and workers relied on tips. Nationally, neighborhood bars spent 25 percent of their operating expenses on wages. If the neighborhood gentrifies, often the regular customer base may leave the neighborhood, or owners are reluctant to raise prices. Similar to the other types of legacy businesses, with average profit margins of 5.7 percent of revenue, neighborhood bars also find rising rents and property taxes difficult to cover. The competition for these types of establishments is often new coffee shops and fast casual restaurants. Products growing in popularity, like craft beer and wine, often cost more, which presents further obstacles. Rising legal and insurance costs also cut into profit margins. Finally, many owners lack succession plans, and the bar's value can often be closely tied to the owner-operator's presence.

Cafe/Deli: Challenges include competition from grocery stores, farmers' markets, and chain restaurants, with location a key success factor. Labor costs are a large share of expenses, and staff turnover is high in this low-wage and low upward mobility industry. Cafes and delis need to respond to changing consumer tastes for higher quality ingredients and balance that with food waste and overstocking costs. Rent and property tax increases can disrupt low profit margins of 5.2 percent of average annual revenue. Of these five business types, cafes and delis pay the largest share of their operating expenses on rent, at 12 percent, and the largest share on wages, at 35 percent.

Nomination and Administration

Legacy business programs often have either a nomination or application process, or both. In San Antonio, anyone can nominate a business by filling out an online nomination form, though the applicant must prove that nomination has support from the business to nominate them. A nominator can also simply tag the business on social media using the hashtag #legacybizsa, and the city will follow up with a letter to that business. In San Francisco, the mayor or a member of the Board of Supervisors nominates a business, which then fills out an application, followed by an advisory recommendation by the city's Historic Preservation Commission, and approval by the Small Business Commission.

Applications vary from short and fairly easy, asking for a short historical narrative, to more in-depth, as is the case with the more established programs, like San Francisco. The San Francisco application indicates that city staff can assist with its preparation. Applicants must provide a written narrative and documentation on such questions as: ownership history; displacement risk; contributions to the history of the neighborhood; how the community would be diminished if the business were to be sold, relocated, or shut down; how the business demonstrates a commitment to maintaining the historical traditions that define the business; which of these traditions should not be changed in order to retain the historical character; and how has the business maintained the special physical features (signage, murals, neon signs, architectural details) that define the business, among others.

City offices usually run these programs, including San Antonio's Office of Historic Preservation, San Francisco's Office of Small Business, New York City's Department of Small Business Services. In some cases, they are administered by nonprofit organizations, like the Los Angeles Conservancy, though the City of Los Angeles has just authorized a city-led program, based on the Conservancy's advocacy.

Benefits

Benefits to businesses include promotional support, business and educational technical assistance, direct grants, tax benefits, and land use regulations or covenants to maintain current uses (which may require legislative changes). There is no level of protection granted in the programs researched, unless legacy businesses seek designation as a landmark except in the case of London's designated pub program.

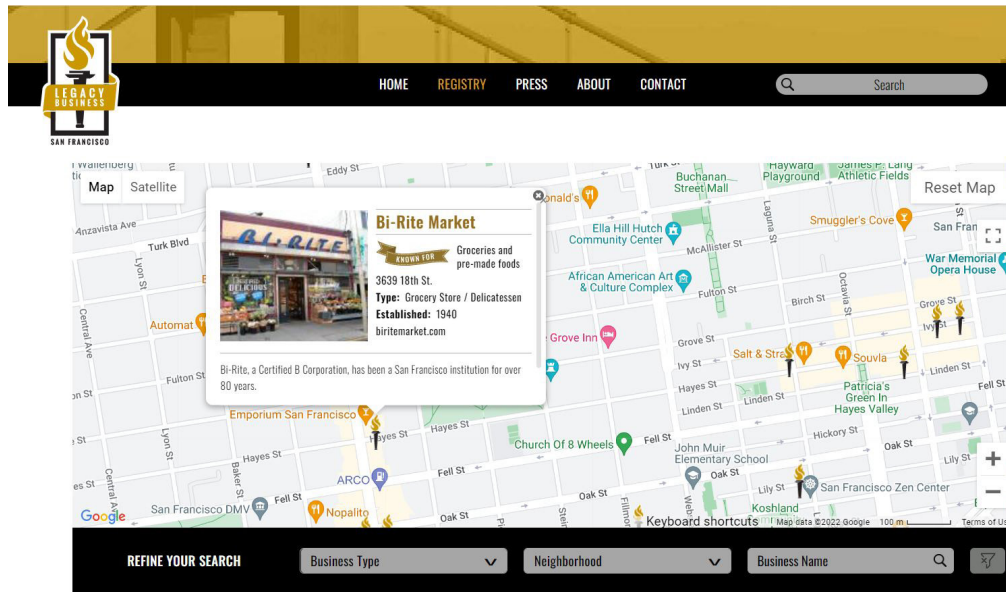
Promotional support can be in the form of social media campaigns, window decals, events/tours, online mapping of businesses, and online story maps.

Business and educational technical assistance is often offered around legal, marketing, real estate, and succession planning issues. San Francisco has produced a Legacy Business Program Resources Handbook and a Small Business Toolkit for Transitioning to Employee Ownership. San Francisco also lists legacy businesses in their city-compliant suppliers on their website. In London's designated pub program, the city offers technical assistance to pubs that wish to convert to a cooperative ownership model, if that would help the pub owner save the pub from conversion to other uses. Given London's high land values, many pubs have been demolished to make way for higher end housing.

Direct grants are offered by San Francisco, which has one of the most robust programs. They offer a Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund that provides grants to both Legacy Business owners and property owners/landlords who agree to lease extensions with Legacy Business tenants. It was the first legislation in the nation to recognize notable small businesses as historic assets and incentivize their preservation. The legislation, Proposition J, was placed on the November 2015 ballot and was approved by voters with 57 percent in favor.

The Fund is administered by the city's Office of Small Business. For legacy business owners, the Fund's Business Assistance grants

Figure 4: Highlighting Legacy Businesses in San Francisco



San Francisco's Legacy Business Program seeks to maintain and promote small businesses that contribute to the city's cultural identity. As part of this effort, the city maintains a promotional website, www.legacybusiness.org, that includes an online map highlighting legacy businesses.

Source: San Francisco Office of Small Business

offer up to \$500 per full-time equivalent employee per year, capped at \$50,000 per year. Grants can be used for rent, supplies, equipment, marketing, tenant improvements, and facade improvements. For landlords, the Fund provides Rent Stabilization grants to landlords that lease to legacy businesses. The landlord must lease to the business for a term of at least 10 years, or extend an existing lease to at least 10 years. The annual grant covers each year of a lease or each year that was added to an existing lease. Landlords receive up to \$4.50 per square foot of space leased per year. The landlord grants are capped at \$22,500 annually.

Preservation tax credits and grants are another concurrent benefit, if the building owner chooses to landmark the building; however, legacy businesses that are primarily culturally significant may have a harder time making the case for landmark designation. Other tax benefits are available in London's designated pub program, where the city lowers the beer tax and doubles the small business tax relief program for designated pubs.

In terms of land use regulations, in London's designated pub program, the city gives community organizations the opportunity to bid for them if they are put up for sale. While designation does not restrict the owner's use of the business, the local planning board must consider this designation if any change of use is proposed by the owner. It does not restrict the final sale of a designated pub in any way; however, it attaches a Right to Bid which puts a six-month moratorium on the sale of the pub, to allow time for the community to develop a takeover proposal and their own bids. The pub owner can file a claim over any losses to the local authority/government unit.

A separate national program, More Than a Pub, in England, provided technical business development support and funding via grants and loans to enable 63 pubs to transfer to community cooperative ownership, across rural and urban communities, between 2016 and 2021. It was funded by Power to Change, a charitable trust whose funding is used to strengthen community businesses, and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), and was led by the Plunkett Foundation.

Regarding community ownership, cities can assist with setting up community land trusts or condominium-ization of retail space. Community land trusts can be set up by a nonprofit or city to acquire or facilitate the preservation of targeted properties, to have long-term control of a commercial district. Condominium-ization or joint ownership of retail space is a way for legacy business owners to own and control their space, insulating them from rapid increases in rent or physical displacement.

Obligations of Businesses in the Program

In San Francisco, all applicants must agree to maintain the historical name and essential business operations, physical features, craft, and traditions of their businesses. In London, designated pub owners must agree to a six-month moratorium on the sale of their pub, and the local planning board is alerted to any change in use. In other cities the obligations are less clear or non-binding.

Funding

San Francisco's Legacy Business budget was \$2.2 million for FY19–20, of which \$296,000 paid for staff, \$45,000 for marketing/branding, and the remaining \$1.8 million was given out in grants via the Legacy Business Fund. This budget was reduced to \$1.3 million for FY20–21 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with a reduction of \$800,000 less available to disburse as grants to legacy businesses. Businesses pay an application fee to join the program that also contributes to the budget. Staff consists of a program manager, an assistant program manager, and a business advisor.

The National Endowment of the Humanities provided a grant to San Antonio's program to create a website and online story map.

Los Angeles Conservancy began a Legacy Business Initiative and Network in 2019, which has since prompted the City of Los Angeles to develop a program, announced in July 2022. Using up to \$5 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, they will use

\$4 million for Legacy Business Assistance Grants to help legacy businesses negotiate long-term lease agreements with their landlords.

The city will use \$500,000 for developing technical assistance, marketing (contracted out), and community engagement. The remaining \$500,000 will be used to develop and administer the program by hiring a new position of Project Coordinator for two years within the city's Economic and Workforce Development Department. The Department of City Planning and the city's Cultural Heritage Commission will help develop the program. The program will prioritize designating legacy businesses that face an imminent threat of displacement and those in low-income communities.



Storytelling and Placemaking

One of the best ways to preserve cultural heritage is to share it with others. This chapter focuses on strategies that are designed to describe and elevate the cultural heritage of a community through storytelling and placemaking. These terms, described in more detail below, represent broad categories of complementary tools that cities and their planning partners are increasingly employing in the name of cultural preservation.

Storytelling Goals

Neither storytelling nor placemaking are new to historic preservation. Interpretation and education resources at historic sites are a form of storytelling that provide context and shape the experience of visitors. As such, Pennsylvania's iconic blue historical markers may be one of the most visible forms of preservation storytelling. Each of the more than 2,500 cast aluminum markers present bite-sized stories about the historic people, places, events, and innovations that have affected the lives of Pennsylvanians over the centuries.

Storytelling is a social activity that helps to sustain cultural heritage by establishing and transmitting information, shared values, practices, objects, and identities important to a community. In this way, storytelling can foster pride among residents, while also generating wider awareness of and appreciation for a community's cultural heritage among outsiders. Although the role

of storytelling has remained largely the same, the increasing availability of new technologies has given rise to new forms of storytelling that are relevant to cultural preservation.

Storytelling can also be a useful tool in instances when different communities have different interpretations of the heritage and meaning of specific places and neighborhoods. In these cases, storytelling strategies can be used to help establish shared histories while also illuminating the individual branching narratives that help connect a neighborhood's past to its present.

Some of the practitioners consulted during this study emphasized that storytelling already plays a central role in some components of more formal preservation planning, including historic context statements. Historic context statements are planning documents that provide a foundation for the identification, evaluation, and protection of historic resources within

“Storytelling is an act of engagement. The best stories engage their readers, listeners, viewers, and participants with opportunities to make meaning and find points of connection to their everyday lives, or relevance within larger, collective narratives, such as family, cultural, and national histories.”

Boston’s Latin Quarter Storytelling Strategy

a city’s regulatory framework. In addition to serving as a community planning tool, these documents can provide legitimacy and recognition for community groups attempting to establish their own storylines against the backdrop of a city’s history.

San Francisco and Los Angeles present useful examples of how context statements can be used to provide a more inclusive landscape for preservation. San Francisco has adopted or initiated cultural context statements focusing on the cultural identity of specific neighborhoods (Japantown, 2014) and cultural currents that extend across the entire city (LGBTQ, 2015; Latino, African American, American Indian, all in-progress). Similarly, Los Angeles has used historical context statements to establish a nuanced preservation agenda for the city that blends historic development patterns and architecture with ethnic, social, and cultural histories. Los Angeles’ preservation framework consists of nine contexts, encompassing over 200 themes and sub-themes, including Filipino American, Jewish History, Latino Los Angeles, LGBT, and Women’s Rights in Los Angeles.

Placemaking Goals

The historic preservation profession is already deeply concerned with placemaking. The drive to protect historically significant buildings, districts, neighborhoods, and parks acknowledges the central role that the built environment plays in a community’s sense of place. Placemaking can be described as the deliberate shaping of an environment to facilitate social interaction and improve a community’s way of life. Contemporary

placemaking initiatives are often now framed as creative placemaking. This distinction is used to emphasize the role of community members and local artists in shaping the physical and social character of a place in a way that reflects and celebrates local culture and heritage.

Residents in historically marginalized communities may have significant concerns about placemaking initiatives focused on their neighborhood. Despite the potential benefits, new interest in placemaking in the name of neighborhood revitalization may be viewed as a harbinger of gentrification and real estate speculation that can displace existing residents and visitors. For some, the term itself may imply that valuable places do not already exist within a community. In response to these concerns, the term “creative placekeeping” has arisen as a more intentional alternative to creative placemaking. Placekeeping actively seeks to protect a community from displacement and complements cultural preservation efforts designed to engage the residents who already live in a space about how best to preserve the stories and culture of their communities.

Implementation Examples

Although storytelling and placemaking each encompass a variety of distinct strategies, they are discussed together in this chapter because they are frequently employed in tandem to help achieve a common set of preservation goals: reinforcing cultural identity, promoting cultural awareness, and supporting local businesses. The examples presented below highlight other similarities between the two.

STORYTELLING IN PHILADELPHIA

Every neighborhood has a history, and sometimes multiple histories. Some of the examples cited on page 5 describe ways that physical placemaking has been used to celebrate the cultural heritage of Philadelphia neighborhoods. Two local examples of storytelling that emphasizes cultural heritage are described below.

Experience Eastern North

Residents and local organizations have worked together to create a tour program designed to amplify the arts, culture, and history of Philadelphia's Eastern North neighborhood, a place that is home to several Latinx communities. The tours created through this effort are led by neighborhood residents themselves and seek to bring participants into the life of the neighborhood through activities that may include eating at a local restaurant, creating art in a community garden, or participating in a neighborhood service project. Residents participating in the program received a series of storytelling lessons in preparation.

Precious Places Community History Project

The Precious Places Project is an oral history project that enables community members to plan, shoot, and edit a documentary video about the people, buildings, public spaces, parks, and landmarks that help to define their neighborhood and heritage. The program, which uses foundation funding and is free to participating community groups, pairs residents with humanities consultants and experienced filmmakers from the Scribe Video Center to document their neighborhoods. To date, the program has produced 86 neighborhood histories.

- **Indirect role of government:** Unlike more formal aspects of preservation planning, local governments more typically facilitate or coordinate storytelling or placemaking efforts designed to promote cultural heritage. These types of initiatives frequently seek to engage and empower community members as leaders.
- **Potentially lower costs:** Less formal storytelling and placemaking activities may require less time and money to realize than other more formal preservation activities. Furthermore, funding from non-governmental sources may be available to support the community organizations participating in these efforts.
- **Holistic approach:** Traditional preservation efforts may feel somewhat removed from the physical neighborhoods they are seeking to protect. Storytelling and placemaking activities represent an opportunity to embed preservation activities in the everyday life of a community. In doing so, these initiatives can help create a more immersive experience of heritage that complements more formal preservation tools.

Latin Quarter Storytelling Strategy, Boston

Preserving the heritage and business of Latinx residents in Boston’s Hyde/Jackson Square neighborhood was one of the primary objectives behind the creation of the Latin Quarter Cultural District in May 2018 (also discussed in Chapter 2). One of four cultural districts in Boston, this designation enabled the City of Boston to collaborate on preservation and community development issues with the Hyde Square Task Force, a nonprofit organization focusing on youth services in the larger Jamaica Plains neighborhood. District stakeholders used an Our Town grant from the National Endowment for the Arts to support cultural district planning activities, including the creation of a Storytelling Strategy.

The *Storytelling Strategy* was developed with assistance from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC), the regional planning agency for metropolitan Boston, and was intended to help educate the district stakeholders on how to “use storytelling and heritage to engage residents and visitors in creating a dynamic public realm that elevates the story of how the Latin Quarter became a hub for Latinx culture in greater Boston.”

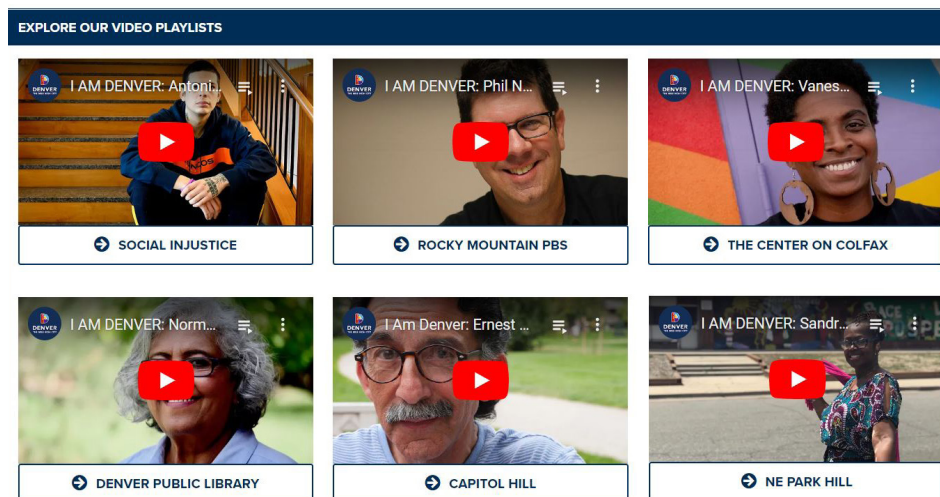
A summary report produced by MAPC uses case studies to help illustrate three types of storytelling activities that can help achieve the district’s goals. The document prioritizes leveraging existing assets and content, including a documentary film about the neighborhood that was created by a local artist during their artist residency with the Hyde Square Task Force.

Regional Immigrant Entrepreneur Storytelling Project, Quincy, Massachusetts

During the COVID-19 pandemic, MAPC initiated a regional storytelling project that focused on the stories of resilient Asian immigrant entrepreneurs in Quincy. The goal of this project was to provide a platform for Asian immigrant entrepreneurs to share their experiences as a small business owners both before and during COVID-19.

Working with a local non-profit and a filmmaker, MAPC was able to document many of the challenges faced by Quincy’s business community, including a wave a xenophobic responses to East Asian businesses that were already struggling with social distancing and operating challenges dues to the pandemic. The project helped to

Figure 5: Storytelling Labs in Denver



Denver’s Office of Storytelling was launched in 2019 with the goal of rewriting the city’s history “one untold story at a time.” As part of this effort, the Office hosted a series of Storytelling Labs designed to engage various communities around story. City staff would facilitate these events and record the stories told in video, audio, and photos to be shared on the City’s website and social media channels.

Source: City and County of Denver, Office of Storytelling

highlight some of the persistent barriers that prevent immigrant businesses from receiving small business assistance offered by the government and helped create a framework of recommendations for municipal and state governments to more effectively support the Asian immigrant small business community in Greater Boston.

I Am Denver

I Am Denver is a storytelling project designed to highlight and celebrate Denver’s residents, neighborhoods, and history while facilitating conversations about contemporary issues facing the city. The project is managed by the Office of Storytelling, a department that was launched in 2019 by the City and County of Denver. The three-person office collaborates with community organizations, nonprofits, foundations, and local businesses to produce Feature Stories, short videos that typically highlight a single Denver resident, feature-length documentaries, and neighborhood origin stories referred to as Neighborhood Stories. Prior to the pandemic, the Office hosted a series of in-person Storytelling Labs designed to engage specific communities on issues and topics of interest to them.

Preservation Storytelling in San Antonio

Storytelling strategies and programs figure prominently in the activities supported by the San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation (OHP) and their efforts to promote economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability.

In 2015, OHP launched the Con Safo social media campaign to provide a way for people to share their favorite places and stories. According to OHP staff, con safos is a term used to mean “this is protected, don’t mess with it.” In addition to raising awareness, this social media campaign inspired the designation of a new local landmark, the Delgado Homestead, also known as 4537 Monterey. 4537 Monterey, a modest home that serves as a representation of San Antonio’s multi-ethnic working-class Westside neighborhood prior to Urban Renewal and more recent development, is the first property to be landmarked through consideration of social heritage.

In 2016, OHP held several “cultural mapping” workshops for residents living in the neighborhoods surrounding the San Antonio Missions, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Figure 6: There’s a Story Here, San Antonio



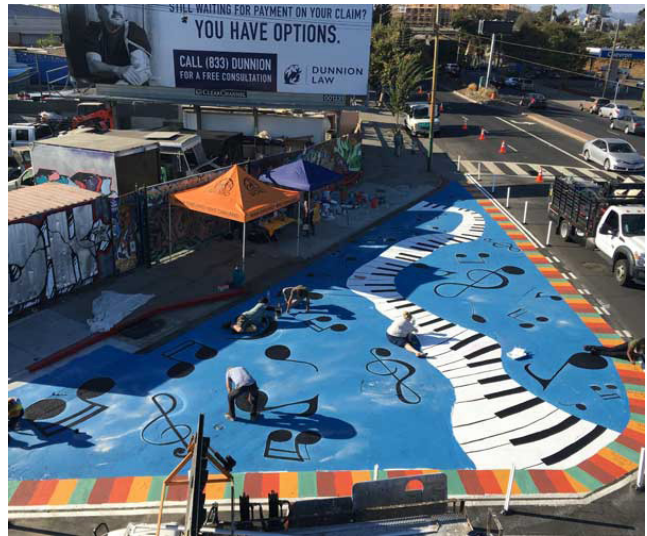
Source: San Antonio Office of Historic Preservation

San Antonio’s There’s a Story Here initiative invites residents to share stories about the places, people, and events that have shaped their experience in the city. Citizens are encouraged to submit their story on the Discovery Map, an online map maintained by San Antonio’s Office of Historic Preservation. Storytellers have the option of receiving a sticker or sign emblazoned with a QR code that will allow others to hear their story. OHP also partnered with Texas Public Radio to produce a web series based on submissions received through the There’s a Story Here program.

These workshops included oral history and community mapping exercises designed to emphasize these resources as living historic sites with critical current connections to the surrounding community, including descendants of the native population of South Texas.

In the years since, OHP has created additional ways for residents to share stories that celebrate the built environment, diverse communities, and unique traditions. There's a Story Here is a crowd-sourced initiative that is designed to help city staff and residents discover culturally significant assets. The online component of this initiative is the ScoutSA Discovery Map, a mapping application that serves as a repository for stories about places, people, or traditions submitted by residents. As part of the nomination process, residents have the option to request a sticker containing a QR code that can be placed at or near a physical location associated with their story. These stickers enable passersby to learn more about their surroundings and connect with other stories featured on the webmap.

San Antonio also maintains the History Here Local Markers Program dedicated to highlighting undertold and geographically diverse stories about the city. To participate in this program, residents use an online nomination form to describe the significance of a site based on research, embedded community knowledge, and/or other nontraditional approaches to public history. The nominations are reviewed by community members representing neighborhoods and organizations across San Antonio, and nominations that are accepted result in the installation of a weather-grade plastic sign. There is no fee to nominate; however, the resulting marker will cost the nominator \$250.



Source: Oakland Fund for Public Innovation

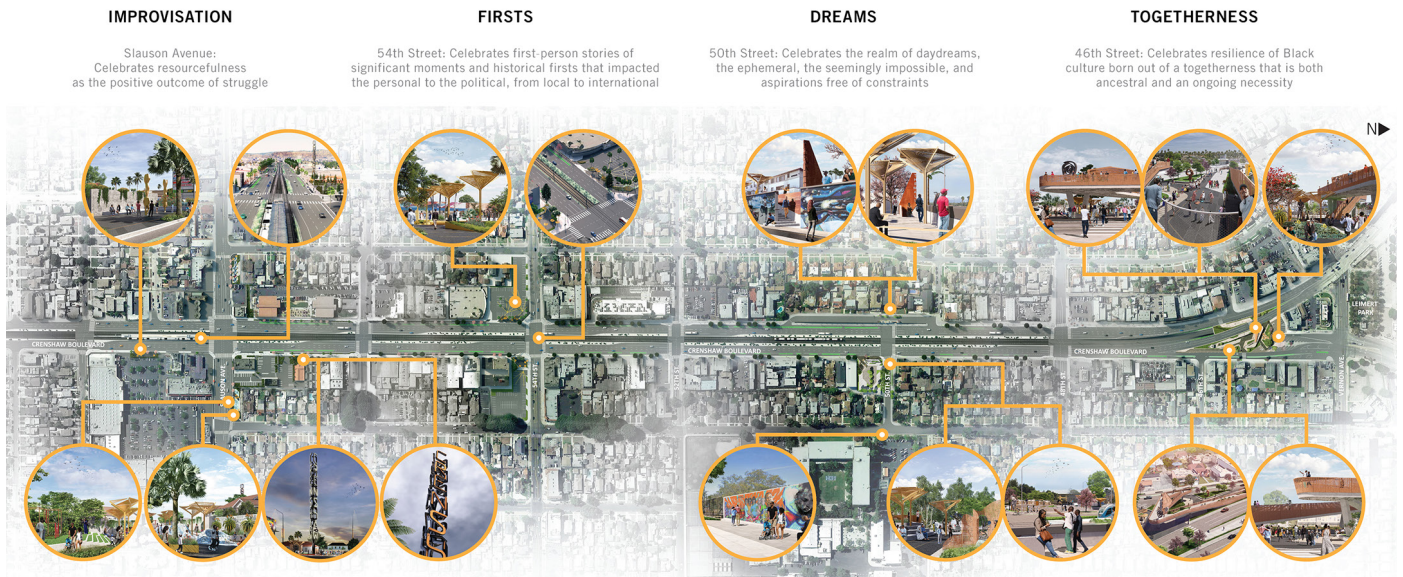
Oakland's Paint the Town program is designed to help foster a sense of ownership in neighborhoods throughout the City by showcasing the features and histories that make these places unique.

Paint the Town, Oakland, CA

Paint the Town is a program run by the Oakland Department of Transportation in coordination with local arts and community organizations that invites residents and community groups to paint temporary murals on local streets. Beyond promoting beautification and neighborly interaction, the program allows the city to support placekeeping in the face of growing development pressure.

In describing Paint the Town, former Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf stated, "It's a way to make sure that longtime residents know that the city still belongs to them, and they belong to the city." Funding from the program covers community outreach, mural design, street closure permits, and supplies. The mural selection process seeks to incorporate equity considerations by prioritizing applications from neighborhoods defined as mid- to highly disadvantaged by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the transportation planning, financing, and coordinating agency for the San Francisco Bay Area.

Figure 7: Destination Crenshaw Interpretive Nodes



Destination Crenshaw is an outdoor gallery and series of public spaces designed to celebrate Black Los Angeles and the contributions of African Americans to world culture. The physical organization of the corridor is intended to reflect four thematic lenses: Improvisation, Firsts, Dreams, and Togetherness.

Source: Perkins&Will

Destination Crenshaw, Los Angeles, CA

Destination Crenshaw is an ambitious “cultural infrastructure” project currently being constructed along 1.3 miles of Crenshaw Boulevard, in the Crenshaw neighborhood in South Los Angeles. The project, described as an open-air museum dedicated to preserving the history and culture of Los Angeles’ Black community, is bringing public art, pocket parks, and small business investment to the corridor.

Destination Crenshaw is being spearheaded by a nonprofit organization of the same name along with an extensive list of partner organizations and advisory committees and is using a combination of public and private funding to realize the \$100 million project. The idea for Destination Crenshaw took shape after the Metropolitan Transportation Authority announced plans to build the portion of the Crenshaw/LAX light rail line between Hyde Park and Leimert Park

at-grade, rather than underground for cost-saving purposes. Many residents and community organizations objected to this proposal because it would bisect Crenshaw Boulevard in two, reduce walkability, require the removal of trees, and negatively impact local businesses. The design plans for Destination Crenshaw were informed by research conducted by UCLA graduate students on the Black experience in Los Angeles between 1850 and 2015.



Implementation Considerations

Successfully implementing some of the strategies described in this report will require thinking about how new tools or policies could mesh with existing programs, how new partnerships can be established, and how preservation activities can support broader equitable development goals. This final chapter presents a series of implementation considerations and questions that the City of Philadelphia and its planning partners can use to help evaluate, prioritize, and adapt these strategies in Philadelphia.

Cultural Landmarking and Districts

Chapter 2 examines how five cities are utilizing different models of tiered or partial control landmark and district designations to preserve culturally relevant sites and resources. DVRPC’s research suggests that there is no clear one-size-fits-all approach to creating or expanding designation programs. Staff from peer cities emphasized the need for cultural preservation districts to incorporate flexibility and leave room for evolution. The following questions can help Philadelphia stakeholders explore the potential purpose, structure, and administration of a program specifically geared toward protecting cultural resources.

1. Should new or modified cultural designations focus on place, people, property or something in between?

The five case study programs described in Chapter 2 all developed cultural district designations that prioritize protecting places. However, they differ in how their programs choose to emphasize people or property. Where the approach seems to focus on people—San Francisco and Boston—cities are investing in the organizations and leaders who occupy their cultural districts and boosting their capacity and capital to take on projects and programming of their choice.

Where the focus leans more toward property—Denver and Portland—cultural groups have been empowered by the historic preservation apparatus to seek out protections for important buildings and sites. Conserving the physical and built attributes

of cultural districts is treated as a conduit to maintaining their demographic composition as well.

Sitting somewhere between these is Minneapolis, which has prioritized making physical neighborhood improvements at the same time as it fosters customized cultural protections and programming in each of its corridors. Each city is explicit in its aim to safeguard and invest in neighborhoods known for large populations of immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ people, or other underrepresented groups.

2. Which department(s) should oversee a cultural district program?

There are numerous factors to consider when deciding which city department(s) should be involved in administering a cultural district program. In cities with programs that operate outside of their historic preservation divisions, cultural districts are overseen by a variety of different departments, and in some cases they are coordinated by cross-disciplinary teams.

Initiating a distinct cultural district program in Philadelphia would likely require blending the expertise from several divisions within the existing Department of Planning and Development. Depending on a program's ultimate focus, other departments that could potentially play a role include Commerce; Law; Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy; Diversity, Equity and Inclusion; Immigrant Affairs; and the Mayor's Office of Public Engagement. Given the potential need to develop enabling legislation or designation ordinances, Philadelphia City Council may also need to be involved.

Often the specific goals of a program and its approach to decision making can help dictate where a program should be housed in an organizational sense. In Boston, Minneapolis, and San Francisco, cultural district programs have been established distinctly from concurrent historic preservation work. All three cities have used cultural districts to

channel municipal funds or other government capacity into targeted geographic areas. Districts in these cities are typically enabled to develop programming that is customized to their individual needs as determined by stakeholders within the community.

One potential downside of this grassroots approach is that decentralized decision making may lead to uneven or duplicative work across districts within the program. In Boston, both city and district staff expressed a desire for more coordination between the designated cultural districts and existing Main Street and other programs geared toward commercial corridors.

3. How would the program be funded? Would the program require dedicated staff?

Initiating a new cultural district program will likely require generating new sources of revenue or making other budget adjustments. San Francisco's program is supported by the city's hotel tax. In Minneapolis, budgetary set-asides for cultural districts were seen as an important response to the civil unrest associated with George Floyd's death in 2020. Other funding sources could potentially include state governments, local foundations and philanthropic entities, and federal and national organizations like the National Trust and NEA.

In addition to baseline funding, cities also need to decide how best to equitably allocate funds and staff time across multiple cultural districts, especially since each district's needs and capacity may vary. Representatives from San Francisco have noted that funding has not grown proportionally as more districts have been added. Their Planning Department is exploring ways to add capacity that can be used to support the program's expansion and the implementation of district strategies. This will likely necessitate extensive funding increases, new philanthropic partners, major legislation, and/or deepening interagency collaboration. In Boston, limited funding has also created angst about the pace of work that can be done.

The programs examined in this report exhibit varying staffing levels. At the time of publication, San Francisco has at least two employees, and Boston one, whose work focuses extensively on coordinating cultural districts. Minneapolis's program appears to be more loosely organized under the direction of planning staff and individual city council members. All three programs empower neighborhood organizations with funding and technical assistance that helps them guide heritage preservation and community development in their districts via custom programming.

San Francisco appears to be the only city that has strict rules governing how cultural districts themselves are staffed, requiring them to select an executive director and advisory committee through which funding and strategic decisions are made. The city notes that its nine districts differ in terms of their staff and volunteer capacity and the cohesion they can cultivate among disparate organizational members.

Boston's Arts and Culture Planner mostly assists existing neighborhood organizations with meeting the Mass Cultural Council's partnership and reporting requirements, as well as securing and appropriately spending outside funding. Minneapolis does not require cultural districts to be managed by a single neighborhood organization with pre-existing programs, funding, and staff. Instead, the program seeks to support multiple groups within its designated areas on a somewhat ad hoc basis and at the discretion of ward leaders.

In Denver and Portland, it does not appear that additional staff capacity has been needed to administer their Historic Cultural District and Conservation District programs, respectively. Each city's planning and preservation employees work with related neighborhood groups to oversee the designation process. In Denver, residents do much of the background research and engagement work that is required to qualify a neighborhood to become a Historic Cultural District.

4. What criteria makes a neighborhood eligible to be a cultural district? How would these districts be established?

Despite their frequent focus on the intangible aspects of cultural heritage, the process of identifying new cultural districts often begins with a discussion of potential boundaries. Most cities adopt cultural districts that form contiguous polygons, perhaps bounded by streets or water bodies, defined by a collection of specific contributing buildings or sites, or extending from a well-recognized commercial corridor.

Unique neighborhood or structural qualities that are often used to characterize traditional historic districts can also be useful benchmarks for designating a cultural district. This is most clear in Denver, which asks its Historic Cultural Districts to identify a period of significance and character-defining features that are recorded in a detailed context statement or design guidelines.

San Francisco and Minneapolis have sought to create cultural districts that capture specific demographic thresholds. Other cities have opted to identify enclaves of underrepresented groups by examining historical trends and patterns of neighborhood change.

It should be noted that San Francisco has expressed concerns about using explicit district borders to define cultural districts because these boundaries limit their ability to support businesses and endeavors beyond the official boundaries. Meanwhile, Portland has questioned the role that cultural designations can play for populations who have historic ties to a neighborhood, but have already been displaced or relocated.

However, cultural designations that effectively apply labels to neighborhoods can potentially create tension between disparate demographic groups with different local histories and who may be experiencing contrasting forces of change. In Boston, renaming neighborhoods and public

spaces has been called a “positive counter response” to the threat of gentrification and displacement. But this has created a need to dispel perceptions of exclusion felt by long-term residents who may represent earlier waves of immigration from Europe, or other minority groups that may not have as robust of a presence. A representative from Boston’s Latin Quarter indicated that some older community members were not supportive of recognizing it as such despite the neighborhood’s roughly 60 year legacy as a hub of Latinx culture. The task remains for district leaders to continue resolving these criticisms through effective engagement.

In terms of a designation process, some cities have used a procedure that largely follows the process of a traditional historic district. Other cities have developed a distinct protocol that includes completing applications, drafting ordinances, conducting hearings and other public meetings, documenting the historic and cultural significance of the nominated neighborhood, and more. In some places, such as Minneapolis, multiple districts have been designated under one piece of legislation. Most other cities with cultural districts establish them on more of an individual basis, some on rolling timelines or as pilot projects.

Cities creating new cultural district designations will also need to decide whether these designations and the potential resources they offer are permanent or renewable, whether district boundaries can change over time, and how progress toward desired goals will be monitored and/or reported.

5. Would new or modified cultural designations need to include physical protections in order to be effective in Philadelphia?

The physical protections embedded in local historic preservation ordinances are among the strongest preservation tools available to local governments. In Philadelphia, making changes to or demolishing any property that appears on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places requires approval from the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

As such, pursuing a more conventional preservation-oriented approach to cultural resources may help Philadelphia protect sites and structures that have local significance but may not be suited for traditional historic landmark designation. As illustrated by the examples in Denver and Portland, city officials can nest new procedures and policy instruments within their preservation program that carry some of the same physical protections enabled by their existing preservation ordinances. Following this approach in Philadelphia could result in the creation of a cultural district program that includes some level of demolition review and/or uses more flexible versions of design review and guidelines than typically employed in historic preservation.

If such an approach is taken, it becomes important to clarify what advantages a less stringent designation can offer to stakeholders, how extensively the significance of cultural landmarks or districts must be documented, and how rigidly property owners must subscribe to any relevant standards and guidelines. The city must be careful not to be perceived as denigrating a cultural site and its associated community of interest by recommending it for a designation that ultimately offers less protection from the forces of neighborhood change. If a perception forms that cultural designation is less prestigious or beneficial than historic designation, it could reinforce perceptions of inequity within the field of preservation.

Conversely, a cultural landmark or district designation that focuses too closely on structural or other physical site qualities may inhibit the city's ability to seek out flexible ways to protect more intangible aspects of a site. As examples have shown, an interdepartmental initiative can include housing affordability measures, small business supports, or other considerations that a more conventional preservation program might lack.

Cities establishing standalone or interdisciplinary cultural district programs will need to think about how any new program may function without the "stick"-wielding authority of a local ordinance and a body to enforce it. In these cases, the key to success may be finding ways to ensure that new cultural district programs complement and/or expand the array of tools available to cities. Boston officials noted that they would like cultural districts to carry more regulatory powers in the future. As such, Boston was exploring ways it can make land acquisitions in coordination with local land trusts in areas with strong cultural identities. Seizing on strategic opportunities like these can enhance cultural districts' generally effective ability to foster "placekeeping" by extending "carrots" to property owners and empowering marginalized groups to maintain their physical presence in a growing and changing city.

Business Support Programs

Chapter 3 explores how various cities are using Legacy Business Programs to recognize and preserve long-standing businesses that contribute to a neighborhood's history, identity, and character. These programs vary considerably in terms of their origination, administration, funding, and benefits. Some cities have taken a more studied approach before launching their program, while others decided to just do it because they believed it would be worthwhile. The following questions and observations can help city staff evaluate the potential advantages and challenges of establishing such a program in Philadelphia.

1. Should a legacy business program be citywide in scope or focus on specific neighborhoods?

The scope of any new legacy business program in Philadelphia would partially depend on the objectives of the program and the amount and types of assistance that participating businesses may receive through the program. A more generalized program that is primarily designed to recognize legacy businesses should theoretically be less resource intensive than a program designed to deliver more concrete forms of technical assistance. The latter type of program might initially be best suited for specific neighborhoods or pilot areas. Some cities have specifically designed their legacy business program to focus on businesses in low-income communities and/or those in imminent threat of displacement.

Philadelphia stakeholders can get a sense of the potential scope of a citywide legacy business program by determining how many businesses in Philadelphia would qualify for the program based on common "years in business" parameters. Seattle undertook a similar task and determined that roughly 1,100 businesses (five percent of businesses) would meet a base time requirement of 10 years.

Conversely, Philadelphia can potentially identify focus areas by studying recent business trends. Are there neighborhoods that have seen an uptick in the closure or anticipated closure of long-standing community-serving businesses? Based on the reasons for closure and the context of these neighborhoods, they may represent areas that a legacy business program could target.

2. Which city department or nonprofit would be best suited to administer the program?

In Philadelphia, a program could potentially be staffed through the Historical Commission; however, partnering with the city's Commerce Department would make sense based on the Department's potential staff capacity and existing familiarity with Philadelphia's commercial corridors and business owners. Explicitly promoting legacy businesses could be viewed as a natural outgrowth of the Commerce Department's existing business support programs that already provide one-on-one guidance on operations, various forms of financial support, and location-based incentives.

The Commerce Department also manages several initiatives designed to enhance neighborhoods and create healthy economic centers, including the Storefront Improvement Program. This program offers grants to business and property owners on approved pedestrian and transit-oriented commercial corridors, for storefront improvements such as masonry, windows, doors, lighting, signage, cornice, painting, and see-through security grills. The program can reimburse up to 50 percent of the cost of eligible improvements, up to \$10,000 for a single commercial property, or up to \$15,000 for a multiple-address or corner business property. This program could be further enhanced, for instance, by offering larger grants to legacy businesses, or extending the program to a legacy business not on an approved corridor, or some other preferential treatment.

Alternatively, nonprofit organizations like the Preservation Alliance or Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations (PACDC) may be interested in playing a role in the administration of a legacy business program based on their overlapping interests in preservation and commercial corridors. Some Business Improvement Districts might also be interested in creating a legacy business

program, though this would not be citywide. Other potential local partners could include Visit Philadelphia, Reinvestment Fund, and PIDC.

3. How should businesses be selected to participate in the program?

Chapter 3 outlines several programs that can potentially serve as a model for Philadelphia. Some cities offer a relatively simple nomination process while others require a more involved nomination then application process. San Antonio initiated their program by selecting one business in each council district plus one additional business selected by the mayor. Although they originally envisioned self-nominations, they now allow anyone to nominate a business. Upon receiving this nomination, the city notifies the business. San Antonio reports that most businesses are happy to be part of the program, which included 90 businesses as of 2022.

As of 2022, San Francisco's program had 239 businesses enrolled and required a two-step nomination then application process. San Francisco reports that about 90 percent of businesses nominated go on to submit applications and about 80 percent of those applications are recommended by the Historical Preservation Commission and then approved by the Small Business Commission.

4. How could the program be funded? What benefits can the city offer?

It is likely that Philadelphia would have to reallocate existing funds or seek new forms of funding or incentives to support a legacy business program, particularly if the program included financial benefits for participants.

For reference, San Francisco allocates around \$350,000 per year to staff their program, including three staff members as of 2022. The program distributes another \$1.8 million in grants to qualifying businesses. San Francisco has indicated that their grant program is oversubscribed and that the grant review

process is labor intensive. Furthermore, marketing materials and graphic design services are outsourced.

A new legacy business program in Philadelphia could offer an array of benefits that include promotion, expanded technical assistance, direct grants, preferential tax treatment, and/or right of first refusal for qualifying tenants to buy a property they are leasing before it is placed on the open market.

Since legacy business programs are a relatively new concept, there is not much formal research on their efficacy. In terms of direct grants, San Francisco's Office of Small Business specified that the Rent Stabilization grants offered through their Legacy Business Historic Preservation Fund have been the most effective at preserving businesses. These grants provide a maximum of \$22,500 to landlords that lease space to legacy businesses. During fiscal year 2019–2020, San Francisco reports that 37 rent stabilization grants, averaging \$14,927, were awarded. The city also awarded 136 Business Assistance grants (average \$8,039) and five Accessibility grants (average \$1,399) during the same period.

Those interviewed for this report stressed that participating businesses receive value simply from the recognition itself. Creating such a program acknowledges the important role these businesses play in neighborhood preservation. Even though participating businesses are not protected per se, their enrollment in a legacy business program sends a message that the community values this business and may improve future negotiations between the business and property owner.

If a stand-alone program is not feasible in Philadelphia at this point, city staff should consider how existing programs or incentives could potentially be tweaked to more directly support legacy businesses. For example, there may be ways to expand the focus of

existing technical assistance programs to cover challenges commonly faced by legacy businesses such as succession planning and lease education. Furthermore, perhaps entrepreneurship programs could potentially seek to match participants with legacy business owners looking for a successor.

Storytelling and Placemaking

Chapter 4 details storytelling and placemaking initiatives that are taking place in cities across the country. These activities were grouped together because they can both be used to leverage community voices and social activity in ways that bring cultural heritage to life.

1. How can Philadelphia expand support for storytelling and placemaking efforts that transmit information, values, practices, and identities that are important to Philadelphia communities?

Those interviewed for this report primarily described the municipal role in grassroots storytelling and placemaking as one that emphasizes coordination, facilitation, and funding. Within this framework, city departments should continue to prioritize efforts that may make it easier for individuals and community organizations to contribute to preservation goals.

Recent work in Los Angeles highlights the key role that historic context statements can play in documenting key themes, trends, and interrelated patterns in ways that promote a more holistic understanding of the city's history and development. These types of documents can help individuals and groups outside of the historic preservation profession situate themselves within a larger cultural and historical context if they include content or formats that are accessible to ordinary citizens. Documentation that is designed for a more general audience by presenting expert information in less formal ways may help empower residents to tell their own stories.

Philadelphia may be able to bolster its preservation agenda and raise awareness, particularly among younger residents, by further embracing new technologies that can be used to gather and share stories about cultural heritage. The recently launched Treasure Philly! Survey and Community History Message Board are good examples of how the city can use crowdsourced cultural mapping and story gathering to raise awareness of cultural resources. Philadelphia can consider building on these types of efforts by developing partnerships with nonprofit organizations and/or educational institutions that can provide training and/or resources to community organizations interested in using digital storytelling and other methods that facilitate heritage education.

Philadelphia can also consider more explicitly connecting its existing public space development programs with its cultural preservation objectives. This concept is central to the Treasure Philly! Survey plan that seeks to pair cultural preservation with improvements designed to enhance driver and pedestrian safety, create new public spaces, and support local businesses. Local businesses and community organizations are already key partners in the City's parklet and pedestrian plaza programs. Perhaps these programs can be more proactively offered in culturally significant districts and/or tailored to help community organizations showcase aspects of local cultural heritage.

2. How can placemaking efforts in Philadelphia celebrate cultural heritage without leading to displacement?

While there are numerous examples of placemaking activities resulting in positive outcomes, the physical improvements associated with placemaking may trigger fears of real estate speculation and gentrification in some neighborhoods. These concerns may be minimized by finding ways to support community-initiated placemaking efforts rather than government or developer sponsored plans.

When city staff are involved, they should focus resources on building relationships between diverse groups of local stakeholders and artists that can help connect local history with the present and bring cultural influences and traditions into the spotlight. The length of the project will often help dictate what can be implemented. Oftentimes, creative placemaking will activate public spaces or create a short-term opportunity to connect residents around arts and culture.

ENDNOTES

Executive Summary

¹ For more information on 4537 Monterey, please see the SApreservation Stories website: www.sapreservationstories.wordpress.com/2015/08/27/meditations-on-4537-monterey.

Chapter 1: Introduction

¹ More information on San Francisco Planning's Cultural Heritage program and resources can be found at: www.sfplanning.org/cultural-heritage.

² For more information on the Broad, Germantown, and Erie (BG&E) Pilot Project please visit: www.phlpreservation.org/pilot.

³ "RIP Hoa Binh Plaza" by [Molly Des Jardin](#) is licensed under CC BY 4.0.

⁴ The full report produced by the Historic Preservation Task Force can be viewed by visiting: www.phlpreservation.org/reports.

⁵ *Philadelphia's Immigrants: Who they are and how they are changing the city* can be viewed by visiting Pew's website:

www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/reports/2018/06/07/philadelphias-immigrants.

Chapter 2: Cultural Landmarking and Districts

¹ For more information on Cultural Districts in Minneapolis, please visit: www.minneapolis.org/cultural-districts/overview.

² For more information on how Denver amended their Landmark Designation in 2019, please visit: www.denvergov.org/content/dam/denvergov/Portals/646/documents/landmark/Ordinance_task_force/landmark_ordinance_update_handout-culture.pdf.

Spirit of Place

PROMOTING CULTURAL VITALITY IN PHILADELPHIA

Publication Number	22260
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Key Words	Cultural Preservation, Historic Preservation, Heritage, Cultural Districts, Legacy Business, Placemaking, Placekeeping, Storytelling
Abstract	<p>Cities across the country are renewing efforts to understand, inventory, and protect the cultural resources that contribute to the identity and vitality of their communities. This report summarizes research conducted by DVRPC on the strategies, policies, and tools that cities are using to protect the historical, social, and economic value of culturally significant communities and assets. This work was undertaken to assist the City of Philadelphia as it launches its Cultural Resources Survey Plan and Pilot, a multiyear effort designed to celebrate and protect Philadelphia’s rich and varied cultural resources and histories.</p>
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