

CITY *of* CALABASAS  
**2030 General Plan**

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**XI – Cultural Resources Element**



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## 2030 General Plan



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## 2030 General Plan

### **XI. CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT**

Local history, cultural diversity, and artistic expression play vital roles in establishing identity and enriching human life in communities. Calabasas enjoys a richness in its history that sets the stage for ongoing community development in a way that acknowledges and memorializes the past, while informing decisions about the community's ongoing cultural development. The Cultural Resources Element establishes policies that both lay a foundation to protect and interpret cultural resources (paleontological, archaeological, and historic) and encourage and foster the community's cultural and artistic development.

#### **XI.A Pre-Historic Resources**

##### Calabasas Pre-history

At Spanish Contact, the Calabasas area was occupied by the Chumash, a diverse population living in settlements along the California coast from Malibu Creek to the southeast, Estero Bay in the north, including the islands of San Miguel, Santa Rosa, and Santa Cruz, and as far as Tejon Pass, Lake Casitas and the Cuyama River inland.

Following the 1542 Cabrillo voyage, many small Chumash settlements were abandoned and some of the largest historic towns were founded. This change in population distribution is attributed to growth in importance of trade centers and the development of more integrated political confederations. The Chumash economic system enabled them to make efficient use of diverse environments within their territory.

Acorns and seeds were traded between the islands and mainland, and interior populations who lacked marine resources traded with coastal populations for fish and other seafood.

The Spanish viewed the Chumash as unique among California tribes due to their knowledge of the sea, canoe building expertise, ceremonial organization, their interest in acquiring and displaying possessions, willingness to work, and extensive trade networks. The protohistoric Chumash maintained the most complex bead money



## XI. CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

system documented in the world. The major inland village of Ta'lopop was established just to the southwest of Calabasas along Las Virgenes Creek. Information obtained since the 1870s suggests that the Chumash were divided into political provinces, with each containing a major capital. Numerous place names exist in the region, including the following:

*Huwam*: Village at Rancho El Escorpion, west end of the San Fernando Valley  
*Kaspat kaslo'w*: "nest of the eagle" – Mountain west of San Fernando Valley  
*Kats'ikinhin*: "pine tree" – Village on Las Virgenes Creek, inland from Malibu  
*Ta'lopop* – a village on Las Virgenes Creek

### Objectives

- ❖ Enhance community appreciation for the importance of archaeological and paleontological resources
- ❖ Protect significant archaeological and paleontological resources.

### General Plan Approach

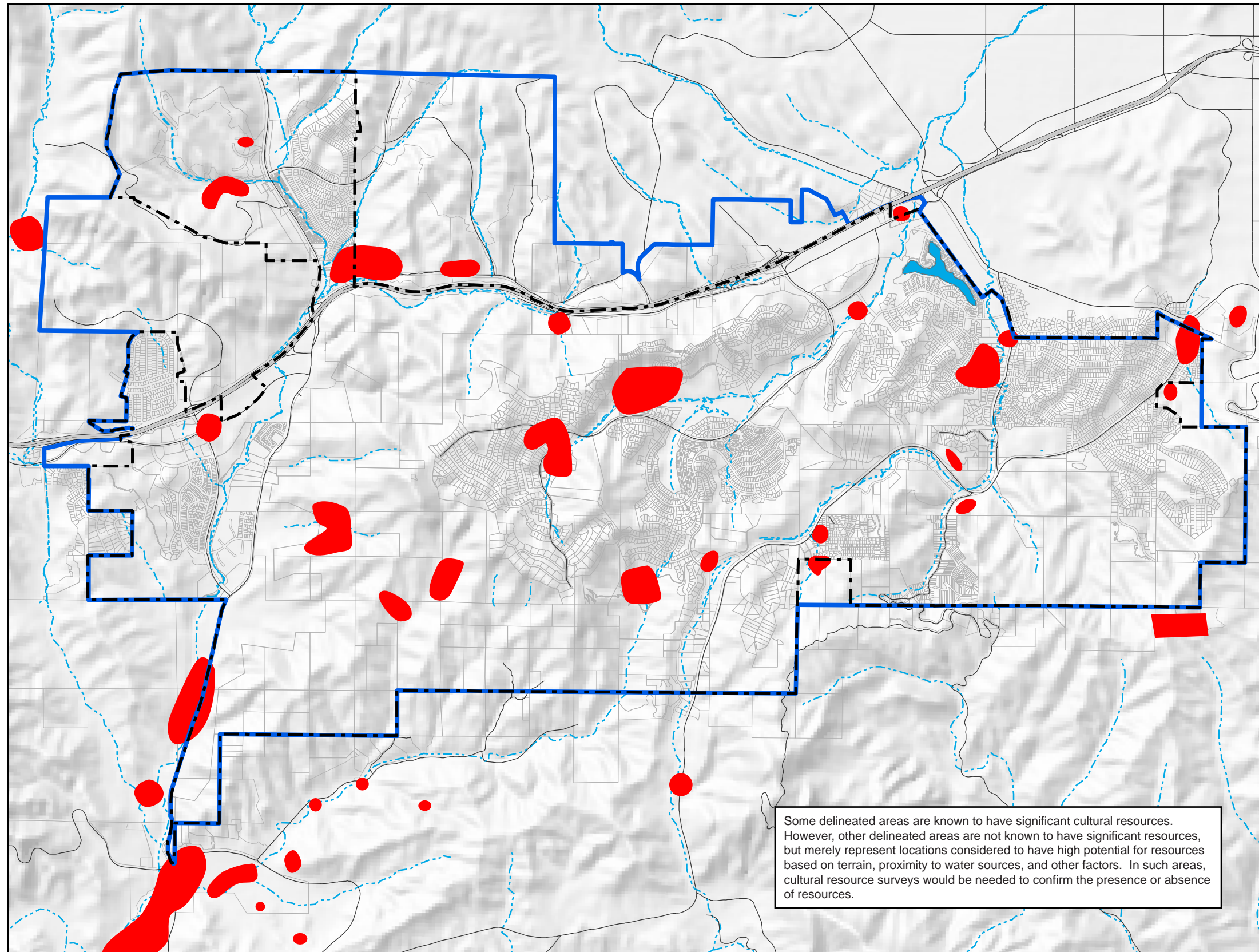
The community's rich history of the Chumash peoples, early Spanish contact, and Mexican land granting patterns continue to be preserved and promoted through education programs and cultural events. The City will continue to work with community groups to identify locations for facilities that celebrate local cultural heritage. Examples include a living history Chumash village and an agricultural history museum. Areas within Calabasas that are of potential archaeological sensitivity are shown on **Figure XI-1**.

Archaeological resources are particularly vulnerable to urban development. Other threats include unrestricted public access to and vandalism of valuable sites. In order to avoid conflicts arising between land-modifying development and the preservation of precious archaeological resources, the incorporation archaeological resources study into the planning process from the earliest planning stages is emphasized through this Element.

Before construction is begun on a project, it must be ascertained what archaeological or paleontological resources are present which might affect or be affected by the project.

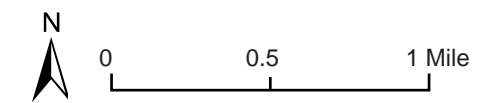
Such planning involves the systematic identification of archaeological and paleontological resources via preliminary site surveys, evaluation of these resources,





LEGEND

- Major Roads
- - - Calabasas City Boundary
- ▭ Plan Area Boundary
- Cultural Resource Sensitivity Areas



Basemap imagery provided by USGS, 2002. Additional data layers from City of Calabasas, 2007, and Rincon Consultants, 2009. Updated March 2014.

Figure XI-1  
Potential Cultural Resource Areas

CITY of CALABASAS



## XI. CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

and formulation of means for their protection, relocation, or their scientific study prior to possible disturbance. Some sites could be preserved entirely to remove the threat of future damage.

### Policies

- XI-1 Ensure proper treatment of archaeological resources before development occurs at a site where such resources are present.
- XI-2 Preserve significant archeological and paleontological resources in-situ, when feasible. When avoidance of impacts is not possible, require data recovery mitigation for all significant resources. All forms of excavation in deposits of Native American origin shall be coordinated and monitored by representatives of the Chumash nation.

### **XI.B Historic Resources**

#### Calabasas History

From Spanish contact (voyages of Cabrillo in 1542 and Vizcaino in 1602), through the Mexican and American Periods, land use patterns changed little in the Santa Monica Mountains. The Portola-Crespi Expedition of 1769 passed through Calabasas, while returning to San Diego. Juan Bautista de Anza (1773-1775/1776) helped establish the Franciscan missions and Spanish settlements in the region, and opened the door to future development. A branch of the El Camino Real passed through Calabasas after leaving the San Fernando Valley, a route that was frequently traveled by Native Americans, soldiers, explorers and civilians alike. Today, the Ventura Freeway (U.S. Highway 101) follows the former alignment of the El Camino Real. Additionally, Malibu Canyon was not only a major Native American trade corridor to the Pacific Ocean, but early settlers also used the route and connecting trails to access Stokes, Piuma, Liberty, and other canyons.

During the Mexican Period, large land grants dominated the region. Prior to this time, the Spanish Crown permitted settlement and allotted certain land concessions, but the deed remained in their possession. These Spanish entitlements were actually no more than permits that allowed people to graze the land. One concession under the Spanish rule and District of Santa Barbara was made in the vicinity of Calabasas and granted under the name of *El Paraje de Las Virgenes*. It was not until the Mexican Period however, that the basic tenants of the Land Grant system and ultimately, the land use-



## XI. CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

settlement pattern for the area changed. The project area was sandwiched between Rancho Las Virgenes on the north and Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit to the south.

By the 1840s and 50s, cattlemen, sheepherders, squatters and ranch owners were acquiring portions of former Mexican land grants in the region. Legendary landowners such as Miguel Leonis, the co-owner (along with his wife Espiritu) of Rancho El Escorpion, Domingo Carrillo and Nemisio Dominguez of Rancho Las Virgenes, and Matthew Keller of Rancho Topanga Malibu Sequit, owned much of the property in and around Calabasas. Just to the west, Don Pedro Alacantara Sepulveda built an adobe (which still stands, and is under the jurisdiction of the State Park system) for his wife Maria Magdalena Soledad Dominguez circa 1853.

After the Mexican American War and statehood, land use and ownership patterns evolved slowly. Leonis remained a major local ranch owner, and he enlarged and remodeled his Monterey-style house. The Leonis Adobe remains the most enduring historic example of this period of Calabasas history and serves as an anchor for Old Town Calabasas.

After the turn of the century, several select spots in the Calabasas area developed into weekend respites from the city. Crater Camp in Monte Nido was opened in 1914 as a year-round picnic ground. The Calabasas Highlands community was subdivided in the 1920s, and reflects a development style that links Calabasas to its neighbor Topanga in style and parcel pattern.

Unreliable water sources remained a constraint to larger scaled subdivision and development in Calabasas through the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. With the founding of the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District in 1958, a consistent water supply was obtained. This development coincided with the state's investment in the freeway system. These two structural events led to a sustained development boom as the rapidly urbanizing San Fernando Valley pushed westward along the U.S. 101 corridor. In 1969, Warner Ranch was purchased and subdivided, ushering in the master planned Calabasas Park area. The upgrading of U.S. 101 (the Ventura Freeway) to a full freeway occurred in the 1960s and developers began subdividing communities in proximity to freeway interchanges at Valley Circle/Mulholland Drive, Parkway Calabasas, Las Virgenes Road, and Lost Hills Road. Residents were not the only newcomers to Calabasas. Corporations also decamped to Calabasas, to new office parks attracted corporate clients, particularly in the 1980s. Lockheed Corporation moved from its historic Burbank "skunkworks" location to a new corporate headquarters in Calabasas Park in the early 1980s. The building was later occupied by Countrywide Financial. Other



## XI. CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

corporations set up headquarters along the Agoura Road corridor between Las Virgenes and Lost Hills Road.

After cityhood, a concerted effort was made to better regulate development and a number of regional landscaping and urban design projects were initiated. Notable among these are streetscape improvements in Old Town Calabasas and the restoration of Las Virgenes Creek in the Ventura Freeway corridor.

The development of the Civic Center at the Commons in 2008 marks a milestone in the City's cultural development. In January 2008, the City adopted the Historic Preservation Ordinance, further pursuing protection of the community's cultural heritage. This General Plan Element supports and builds on desires to sustain and develop a cultural heritage in Calabasas.

### Objectives

- ❖ Preserve the special historical features within Old Town as a focal point for community life.
- ❖ Extend the historical, old west character of existing buildings within Old Town to adjacent properties.
- ❖ Enhance community appreciation for the importance of historic resources and protect significant resources.

### General Plan Approach

Calabasas will continue to facilitate the preservation and protection of historic resources. These efforts will be implemented through the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance, which requires the creation of a Historic Preservation Commission and creates a process by which the City can evaluate potential historic resources and, as appropriate, designate historic landmarks, districts, and landscapes.

Old Town Calabasas is the historical and cultural heart of the community. As such, preservation of historical features within Old Town is a pivotally important part of Calabasas' vision. In addition to preserving actual historic buildings within Old Town, the City has adopted design guidelines that will ensure that future development in and adjacent to Old Town is compatible with its historic community character. Streetscape design features and building facade modifications will be applied to newer structures adjacent to Old Town to address design incompatibilities where modern architectural adversely clashes with Old Town's historic character. In this regard, the General Plan





## **XI. CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT**

reinforces the goals and policies of the Old Town Calabasas Master Plan and Design Guidelines adopted in 1994.

The ongoing protection of Old Town will benefit from a unique cooperative effort with the City of Los Angeles, as a significant portion of the Old Town area is within that city. This effort includes the continued pursuit by Calabasas of the program to detach Old Town from the City of Los Angeles and annex it into Calabasas. If detachment and annexation is not forthcoming, Calabasas will continue to pursue other cooperative programs with Los Angeles to ensure consistent, compatible development standards in the area.

### Policies

- XI-3 Ensure proper treatment of historic resources before development occurs at a site where such resources are present, through enforcement of the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance.
- XI-4 Emphasize preservation and adaptive reuse as the preferred approach to the management of historic properties. Where preservation or adaptive reuse are not possible, require that new development reflect the character and historic/cultural references of the original features in their site context. Finally, facilitate the relocation of historic features if the preferred preservation in place is not possible.

## **XI.C Cultural Amenities**

### Objective

Build the cultural foundations of Calabasas by involving broad segments of the community in the production, support, and presentation of art and cultural programs, installing art in public places, providing working and display space for local artists, and identifying a site for an arts and cultural center.

### General Plan Approach

Calabasas recognizes that its residents desire opportunities to build community values. Since incorporation, the City has attempted to build a variety of community programs to cater to the residents' need for cultural amenities. The City sponsors and organizes local art exhibits, performances, festivals, cultural events, and forums for local arts



## XI. CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

organizations and artists. For example, the Calabasas Fine Arts Festival has been held annually since 1997 and attracts over 15,000 thousand collectors & art buyers each year. Seasonal festivals such as Egg-Stravaganza, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, Pumpkin Festival, Halloween Carnival, and Snow, Snow, Snow offer cultural opportunities for residents of all ages. The Calabasas Orchestra brings music to the community by catering to numerous styles of orchestral music, ranging from Bach and baroque era to Gershwin and contemporary. Through the Park and Recreation Department, a number of classes are offered to residents, including courses in music, arts & crafts, acting, and theater.

The City's Art in Public Places Ordinance provides aesthetic enhancement and enrichment of the community through the inclusion of fine art throughout Calabasas. The goal of the Ordinance is to provide a collection of nationally recognized, permanent outdoor sculpture to be enjoyed by all. To accomplish this, the Ordinance requires any person constructing or reconstructing a commercial building to either: (1) provide a sculpture or other art work; or (2) pay a fee that can be used to purchase art for other public places in the City.

Promotion of cultural amenities will remain a priority for the City. The City will continue to implement its Art in Public Places program and to sponsor and organize local art exhibits, performances, festivals, cultural events, and forums for local arts organizations and artists. Promoting locally produced art and local cultural programs will expand outreach and publicity. The City's website and quarterly "Class Catalog" produced by the Community Services department will continue to be used as a way to update residents about the diverse cultural amenities available to them.

The City will also pursue the development of venues for cultural events such as live music and dance. The "Craftsman's Corner" area north of the Ventura Freeway, currently located in unincorporated Los Angeles County, has been specifically identified as a possible location for future annexation and development of a performing arts venue.

### Policies

- XI-5 Promote and develop cultural programs for residents of all ages, including theatrical, musical, dance, and other performing arts activities.
- XI-6 Promote the establishment of venues for theater, dance, music, and children's programming.



**XI. CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT**

- XI-7 Increase public art and cultural expression throughout the community.
- XI-8 Provide for cultural additions to the City through art work, sculptures, murals, etc. using guidelines for commercial, residential, and other development.
- XI-9 Promote coordinated cultural and arts programs with museums, the Las Virgenes Unified School District, and libraries.

