

5. Environmental Analysis

5.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES

Cultural resources comprise archaeological and historical resources. Archaeology studies human artifacts, such as places, objects, and settlements that reflect group or individual religious, cultural, or everyday activities. Historical resources include sites, structures, objects, or places that are at least 50 years old and are significant for their engineering, architecture, cultural use or association, etc. In California, historic resources cover human activities over the past 12,000 years. Cultural resources provide information on scientific progress, environmental adaptations, group ideology, or other human advancements. This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates the potential for implementation of the proposed La Puerta School Site Specific Plan (Specific Plan) to impact cultural resources in the City of Claremont. The analysis in this section is based in part on the following technical report:

- *Cultural Resources Assessment*, BCR Consulting LLC, August 2022

A complete copy of this report is included as Appendix D of this DEIR.

5.4.1 Environmental Setting

Federal, state, and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines related to biological resources that are applicable to the Specific Plan are summarized below.

5.4.1.1 REGULATORY BACKGROUND

Federal and State Regulations

National Historic Preservation Act

The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) coordinates public and private efforts to identify, evaluate, and protect the nation's historic and archaeological resources. The act authorized the National Register of Historic Places, which lists districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that are significant in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture.

Section 106 (Protection of Historic Properties) of the NHPA requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties. Section 106 Review ensures that historic properties are considered during federal project planning and implementation. The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, an independent federal agency, administers the review process with assistance from state historic preservation offices.

Archaeological Resources Protection Act

The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979 regulates the protection of archaeological resources and sites on federal and Indian lands.

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Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act is a federal law passed in 1990 that mandates museums and federal agencies to return certain Native American cultural items—such as human remains, funerary objects, sacred objects, or objects of cultural patrimony—to lineal descendants or culturally affiliated Indian tribes.

California Public Resources Code

Archaeological, paleontological, and historical sites are protected under a wide variety of state policies and regulations in the California Public Resources Code (PRC). In addition, cultural and paleontological resources are recognized as nonrenewable resources and receive protection under the PRC and CEQA.

PRC Sections 5020 to 5029.5 continued the former Historical Landmarks Advisory Committee as the State Historical Resources Commission. The commission oversees the administration of the California Register of Historical Resources and is responsible for designating State Historical Landmarks and Historical Points of Interest.

PRC Sections 5079 to 5079.65 define the functions and duties of the Office of Historic Preservation (OHP), which administers federal- and state-mandated historic preservation programs in California as well as the California Heritage Fund.

PRC Sections 5097.9 to 5097.991 provide protection to Native American historical and cultural resources and sacred sites; identify the powers and duties of the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC); require that descendants be notified when Native American human remains are discovered; and provide for treatment and disposition of human remains and associated grave goods.

Local

City of Claremont General Plan

The Human Services, Recreational Programs and Community Facilities Element of the City of Claremont General Plan (Claremont 2009) identifies policies pertaining to cultural resources, and the following goals and policies are applicable to the Specific Plan:

Goal 7-8: Preserve and respect important representations of our heritage and the contributions made by the earliest area residents.

- **Policy 1-8.1.** Identify and preserve historic and archaeological sites and their environmental setting, and restore resources where such action will respect the sites and the people who used them, and will enhance appreciation and understanding.

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City of Claremont Historic Landmarks

The City of Claremont's Register of Structures of Historic and Architectural Merit has nine criteria for a property to meet requirements to become listed. A property must be approved by the Claremont Architectural Commission and meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. Buildings, structures or places, including landscaping, are important key focal or pivotal points in the visual quality or character of an area, neighborhood or survey district; or
2. Structures are associated with historic figures; or
3. Structures represent an architectural type of period and/or represent the work of known architects, draftsmen, or builders; or
4. Structures illustrate the development of California locally or regionally; or
5. Buildings remain in good condition and illustrate a given period; or
6. Structures are unique in design or detail; or
7. Structures serve as examples of a period or style; or
8. Structures contribute to the architectural continuity of the street; or
9. Buildings appear to retain the integrity of their original design fabric.

5.4.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Geologic Setting

The Project Area is in the Pomona Valley, which is bounded on the west by the San Jose Hills, on the south by the Chino Hills, on the north by the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains, and on the east by La Sierra and the Jurupa Mountains. Local rainfall ranges from 5 to 15 inches annually. The Project Area containing exhibits a southwesterly slope. Local water drains into Thompson Wash approximately 1.2-miles to the west by southwest, which contributes ultimately to the Los Angeles River and empties into the Pacific Ocean approximately 37.5-miles to the southwest. The Project Area is situated in the Upper Sonoran Life Zone, which is locally present between approximately 500 and 5,000 feet above mean sea level. This zone typically comprises cismontane valleys and low mountain slopes dominated by mixed coastal sage scrub and chaparral vegetation communities.

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Prehistoric Context

The Project Area is in the traditional boundaries of the Gabrielino. The Gabrielino probably first encountered Europeans when Spanish explorers reached California's southern coast during the 15th and 16th centuries. The first documented encounter, however, occurred in 1769 when Gaspar de Portola's expedition crossed

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Gabrielino territory. The Gabrielino name has been attributed by association with the Spanish mission of San Gabriel and refers to a subset of people sharing speech and customs with other Cupan speakers (such as the Juaneño/Luiseño/Ajachemem) from the greater Takic branch of the Uto-Aztecan language family. Gabrielino villages occupied the watersheds of various rivers (locally including the Santa Ana) and intermittent streams. Chiefs were usually descended through the male line and often administered several villages. Gabrielino society was somewhat stratified and is thought to have contained three hierarchically ordered social classes which dictated ownership rights and social status and obligations. Plants utilized for food were heavily relied upon and included acorn-producing oaks, as well as seed-producing grasses and sage. Animal protein was commonly derived from rabbits and deer in inland regions, while coastal populations supplemented their diets with fish, shellfish, and marine mammals. Dog, coyote, bear, tree squirrel, pigeon, dove, mud hen, eagle, buzzard, raven, lizards, frogs, and turtles were specifically not utilized as a food source.

History

Historic-era California is generally divided into three periods: the Spanish or Mission Period (1769 to 1821), the Mexican or Rancho Period (1821 to 1848), and the American Period (1848 to present).

Spanish Period

The first European to pass through the area is thought to be a Spaniard called Father Francisco Garces. Having become familiar with the area, Garces acted as a guide to Juan Bautista de Anza, who had been commissioned to lead a group across the desert from a Spanish outpost in Arizona to set up quarters at the Mission San Gabriel in 1771 near what today is Pasadena. Garces was followed by Alta California Governor Pedro Fages, who briefly explored the region in 1772. Searching for San Diego Presidio deserters, Fages had traveled through Riverside to San Bernardino, crossed over the mountains into the Mojave Desert, and then journeyed westward to the San Joaquin Valley.

Mexican Period

In 1821, Mexico overthrew Spanish rule and the missions began to decline. By 1833, the Mexican government passed the Secularization Act, and the missions, reorganized as parish churches, lost their vast land holdings, and released their neophytes.

American Period

The American Period, 1848–Present, began with the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo. In 1850, California was accepted into the Union of the United States primarily due to the population increase created by the Gold Rush of 1849. The cattle industry reached its greatest prosperity during the first years of the American Period. Mexican Period land grants had created large pastoral estates in California, and demand for beef during the Gold Rush led to a cattle boom that lasted from 1849–1855. However, beginning about 1855, the demand for beef began to decline due to imports of sheep from New Mexico and cattle from the Mississippi and Missouri Valleys. When the beef market collapsed, many California ranchers lost their ranchos through foreclosure. A series of disastrous floods in 1861–1862, followed by a significant drought further diminished the economic impact of local ranching. This decline combined with ubiquitous agricultural and real estate developments of the late 19th century, set the stage for diversified economic pursuits that continue to this day.

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Project Area

Los Angeles County parcel 8670-003-900 constitutes the entire Project Area. The land was originally patented to James L. Howland, which he purchased along with the rest of the southeast quarter of Section 33 on March 23, 1901. The Project Area was used as a citrus grove as early as 1928. The grove was removed between 1964 and 1965. In 1967 the Project Area was purchased by the Claremont Unified School District, and La Puerta Intermediate School was constructed at the site to mitigate overcrowding at El Roble Intermediate School. The school originally comprised three buildings, athletic fields, a parking lot, and game courts. Principal Alexander Hughes and Assistant Principal Ronald D. Meyer were the first to hold the leading administrative positions at the school. After a few years of operation, district officials determined that the campus was economically infeasible. One of the buildings was demolished and the school closed in 1979 as a money saving measure. Plans to convert the property for use as an elementary school never materialized and it was leased for 99-years to the City of Claremont. Historic aerial photos show that the parking lot was subject to maintenance and expansion after closure and the Project Area remained sporadically in use for other purposes until at least 2016, after which the two remaining buildings were demolished and the Project Area was fenced off.

5.4.2 Thresholds of Significance

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5 provides direction on determining significance of impacts to archaeological and historical resources. Generally, a resource shall be considered “historically significant” if the resource meets the criteria for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources:

- Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California’s history and cultural heritage;
- Is associated the with lives of persons important in our past;
- Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
- Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. (PRC § 5024.1; 14 CCR § 4852)

The fact that a resource is not listed in the California Register of Historical Resources, not determined to be eligible for listing, or not included in a local register of historical resources does not preclude a lead agency from determining that it may be a historical resource.

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment if the project would:

- C-1 Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to Section 15064.5.
- C-2 Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to Section 15064.5.
- C-3 Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries.

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5.4.3 Environmental Impacts

The following impact analysis addresses thresholds of significance for which the Notice of Preparation disclosed potentially significant impacts. The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

Impact 5.4-1: Development accommodated by the Specific Plan would not result in an impact on historic resource. [Threshold C-1]

Impact Analysis: As shown in Figures 3, *Aerial Photograph*, the Project Area is vacant and void of any buildings or structures. The Project Area contains undeveloped, disturbed land with some vegetation including shrubs and trees. There are also patches of worn and dilapidated asphalt along the northern end of the site. Additionally, imported materials (mostly sand, gravels and cobbles, and scattered boulders) have been stockpiled over time in the southwest quadrant of the Project Area.

Prior to its vacant condition, the Project Area was the location of a public intermediate school. After the closing as an intermediate school in 1979, the school facility was used for adult school classes that were operated by the CUSD system. In 2018, all buildings and structures onsite were demolished. The only remaining improvement of that school is an area of asphalt paving, which is associated with the prior schools parking areas and play courts.

As concluded in the cultural resources assessment conducted for the Project Area (Appendix D), the Project Area is not identified on any of these historic resource lists/databases—National Register of Historic Places; California State Historical Landmarks, Points of Historical Interest, and Register of Historic Places; and City of Claremont Register of Sites of Historic and Architectural Merit. Additionally, prior to fieldwork being conducted for the Project Area, BCR Consulting requested an archaeological records search from the South Central Coastal Information Center (SCCIC) at California State University, Fullerton (Appendix C). The records search completed a review of all recorded historic and prehistoric cultural resources, as well as a review of known cultural resources, and survey and excavation reports generated from the Project Area and sites within one mile of the Project Area. BCR Consulting also performed additional research through the Los Angeles County Assessor and through various internet resources. The records search did not reveal any cultural resources studies for the Project Area.

An intensive pedestrian survey of the Project Area was conducted by BCR Consulting staff in June 2021. The survey did not yield any historic resources. The Project Area has been subject to disturbances related to the prior school operating onsite.

Therefore, no impact to historical resources would occur as a result of development that would be accommodated by the Specific Plan and no mitigation measures are necessary.

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Impact 5.4-2: Development accommodated by the Specific Plan could impact unknown subsurface archaeological resources. [Threshold C-2]

Impact Analysis: As shown in Figures 3-1, *Aerial Photograph*, the Project Area is located in a developed, urbanized area of the City. The Project Area is surrounded by developed land that has been permanently altered due to the construction of below and aboveground improvements (i.e., buildings, driveways, hardscapes, and utilities). The Project Area was previously occupied by a school by 1967 and closed in 1979. The school buildings originally were comprised of three buildings, athletic fields, a parking lot, and game courts. These were demolished in 2018.

Given the disturbed condition of the Project Area and its surroundings, the potential for development accommodated by the Specific Plan to impact an unidentified archeological resource is considered low.

Additionally, a cultural resources assessment was conducted for the Project Area by BCR Consulting (Appendix D). The purpose of the assessment was to determine the presence or absence of and potential impact to archaeological resources as a result of implementation of the Specific Plan. As noted above, BCR Consulting requested an archaeological records search from the SCCIC. The records search completed a review of all recorded historic and prehistoric cultural resources, as well as a review of known cultural resources, and survey and excavation reports generated from the Project Area and sites within one mile of the Project Area. The records search did not reveal any cultural resources studies for the Project Area.

Furthermore, an intensive pedestrian survey of the Project Area was conducted by BCR Consulting staff in June 2021. The survey did not yield any archeological resources. The Project Area has been subject to disturbances related to the prior school operating onsite.

However, while unlikely, the presence of subsurface archaeological resources in the Project Area remains possible and could be affected by ground-disturbing activities associated with grading and construction of development accommodated by the Specific Plan. It is possible subsurface disturbance might occur at levels not previously disturbed (e.g., deeper excavation than previously performed in certain locations), or may uncover undiscovered archeological resources onsite. Also, the results of the Sacred Lands File search conducted through the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) was positive (Appendix D).

Therefore, potential impacts to archeological resources could occur as a result of project-related construction activities. However, with implementation of Mitigation Measure CUL-1, impacts to archeological resources would be reduced to a level of less than significant.

Impact 5.4-3: Grading activities associated with development accommodated by the Specific Plan could potentially disturb unknown subsurface human remains. [Threshold C-3]

Impact Analysis: There are no known human remains in or near the Project Area, and there are no cemeteries in the vicinity of the Project Area. Additionally, and as shown in Figure 3, *Aerial Photograph*, the Project Area is in an urbanized area of the City and has already been previously disturbed and developed; it has already been subject to similar construction and ground-disturbing activities associated with the proposed development under the Specific Plan. The Project Area is surrounded by residential uses and a sports park. Therefore, the

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likelihood human remains may be discovered during site clearing and grading activities is considered extremely low.

However, development accommodated by the Specific Plan would involve ground-disturbing activities that could have the potential to disturb previously undiscovered sub-surface human remains, if any exist. For example, Implementation of the Project would involve excavation activities over the entire Project Area.

In the unlikely event that human remains are uncovered during ground-disturbing activities, California Health and Safety Code Section 7050.5 requires that disturbance of the site shall remain halted until the Los Angeles Coroner has conducted an investigation into the circumstances, manner and cause of any death, and the recommendations concerning the treatment and disposition of the human remains have been made to the person responsible for the excavation or to his or her authorized representative, in the manner provided in Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code. The coroner is required to make a determination within two working days of notification of the discovery of the human remains. If the coroner determines that the remains are not subject to his or her authority, or if the coroner recognizes or has reason to believe the human remains to be those of a Native American, he or she shall contact, by telephone within 24 hours, the Native American Heritage Commission.

Compliance with existing law regarding the discovery of human remains would reduce potential impacts to human remains to less than significant levels. No mitigation measures are necessary.

5.4.4 Cumulative Impacts

Implementation of the Specific Plan in conjunction with other planned projects in other areas of the City could unearth unknown significant archeological resources. Other planned development projects in the City would involve ground disturbance and could damage archeological resources that could be buried in those project sites.

However, as with the Specific Plan, other development projects in the City would be required to undergo discretionary review and would be subject to the same resource protection requirements and CEQA review. For example, other development projects would require the preparation of site-specific cultural resource assessments, which would include some degree of surface-level surveying. As a part of the assessments, a cultural resources records search of the SCCIC and a Sacred Land Files search would also be required. Additionally, as with the Specific Plan, other development projects would similarly be required to comply with all applicable existing regulations, procedures, and policies that are intended to address archeological resource impacts. They would also be required to demonstrate their consistency with applicable archeological resources goals, objectives, and policies of the Claremont General Plan.

Furthermore, as demonstrated above, with mitigation, impacts on archeological resources as a result of implementation of the Specific Plan would be reduced to a level of less than significant.

In consideration of the preceding, contribution to cumulative archeological resource impacts as a result of development accommodated by the Specific Plan would be rendered less than significant, and therefore, impacts would not be cumulatively considerable.

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5.4.5 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Upon implementation of regulatory requirements, the following impacts would be less than significant: 5.4-1 and 5.4-3.

Without mitigation, these impacts would be **potentially significant**:

- **Impact 5.4-2:** Implementation of the Specific Plan could result in the unearthing and impact of an unidentified archeological resource.

5.4.6 Mitigation Measures

Impact 5.4-2

CUL-1

Prior to the issuance of grading permits, and for any subsequent permit involving excavation to an increased depth, the project applicant shall retain a Los Angeles County-certified archaeologist who shall be on call during all grading and other significant ground-disturbing activities. Additionally, a certified aboriginal tribe of the Los Angeles basin Native American Monitor shall be onsite during any and all ground disturbances (including but not limited to pavement removal, post holing, auguring, boring, grading, excavation, and trenching). The purpose of the onsite certified Native American Monitor is to protect any cultural resources that may be affected during construction or development. Evidence of the contracted professionals retained by the project applicant shall be provided to the City of Claremont Community Development Department. In the event archeological or Native American resources are discovered during ground-disturbing activities, a professional archeological or Native American monitor shall have the authority to halt any activities adversely impacting potentially significant cultural resources until they can be formally evaluated. Suspension of ground disturbances in the vicinity of the discoveries shall not be lifted until the archeological or Native American monitor has evaluated discoveries to assess whether they are classified as significant cultural resources, pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act. If archeological or Native American resources are recovered, they shall be offered to a repository with a retrievable collection system and an educational and research interest in the materials, such as the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History or the University of California at Riverside, or any other local museum or repository willing to and capable of accepting and housing the resource. If no museum or repository willing to accept the resource is found, the resource shall be considered the property of the City of Claremont, and may be stored, disposed of, transferred, exchanged, or otherwise handled by the City at its discretion. The archaeologist or Native American shall prepare a final report describing all identified and curated resources (if any are found) and submit the report to the City's Community Development Department.

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5.4.7 Level of Significance After Mitigation

The mitigation measures shown above would reduce potential impacts to cultural resources to a level that is less than significant. Therefore, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts to cultural resources have been identified.

5.4.8 References

BCR Consulting LLC. August 2022. Cultural Resources Assessment.