



CITY OF BANNING STAFF REPORT

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: David Newell, Community Development Director

PREPARED BY: Mark Staples, Planning Manager

MEETING DATE: September 18, 2025

SUBJECT: Discussion Item – Historic and Cultural Resources Overview and Work Plan Development

PROJECT APPLICANT:

BACKGROUND:

BACKGROUND ON BANNING HISTORIC RESOURCES

On April 9, 2006, the City Council adopted the Banning General Plan, which included Chapter IV, a discussion of environmental resources. Those resources include Water Resources, Open Space and Conservation, Biological Resources, Air Quality, Energy, and Mineral Resources. The Archaeological and Cultural Resources are discussed from pages IV-55 to IV-70.

A summary of key archeological and cultural resources include:

- Ethnohistory is discussed on page IV-56, regarding the Cahuilla and Serrano people and their now affiliation with the Morongo Band of Mission Indians.
- Gilman Ranch having High Sensitivity for archaeological resources.
- The foothills of the San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains are of moderate sensitivity.
- The downtown area demonstrates a moderate sensitivity for archeological resources from the historic period.
- Village of Pihatapa in Banning Canyon, the Pisata Wanakik clan of the Pass Cahuilla, potential cultural significance; also known as Pisatanavitcem, a village group belonging to the Coyote moiety (precise location uncertain).
- Historic sites:
 - The Bradshaw Trail – Also known as the Cocomaricopa Trail connected coastal California through the San Gorgonio Pass to the Colorado River. It was an Indian trade route, revealed in 1821. The trail was discovered by William David Bradshaw as a shorter route for gold miners. It served as primary thoroughfare for stagecoaches between Arizona and California, and with mail delivery to New Mexico. State Highway 111 follows the route.
 - San Gorgonio Pass – Easily passable supply route from Mexico to colonies, on to the Monterey Peninsula. In 1820s, Jose Romero, Jose Paria Estudillo, and Remualdo Pacheco were first Europeans through the Pass.
 - Rancho San Gorgonio – one of 24 principal cattle ranches under control of San Gabriel Mission. In 1845, Powell “Pauline” Weaver and Isaac “Julian” Williams petitioned Mexico for

- a land grant. Never issued, but Weaver and Williams took possession of the land anyway.
- In 1853, first US government surveys of San Geronimo Pass. Banning became transportation hub on the Bradshaw Trail, convergence of stagecoach lines, including Alexander and Company of Los Angeles.
- Adobe house built by Isaac W. Smith and Jose Pope in 1854. Pope's house is now Gilman Ranch, later owned by Newton Noble and James M. Gilman. Smith's ranch became the site of Highland Springs resort.
- In 1870s-1880s, Homestead Act and Desert Land Act opened public lands for claims.
- Southern Pacific Railway completed in 1876-1877, local growth shifted from northern foothills to downtown.
- In 1878, Banning was known as Moore City (named for principal landowner Ransom B. Moore), had 4 houses, a few tents, three saloons, a boarding house, a store/post office operated by Andrew J Worsham at the intersection of San Geronimo and Livingston Streets.
- First school was located at First and Livingston Streets.
- Banning is founded in 1884, established at the intersection of the Bradshaw Trail and Southern Pacific Railway.
- The City of Banning was incorporated in 1913, named for Phineas Banning, a widely known livestock broker, businessman, political figure, and financial contributor to the construction of the Baptist Church.
- Strategic location of Ocean-to-Ocean Highway of US Routes 60, 70, 99, and now Ramsey Street, and Interstate 10.
- 1930s infrastructure projects resulted in economic and population gains, but slowed through World War II.
- Post WWII, in 1945, City issued permits for 163 new businesses and 1,350 new residences.
- In 1940s, downtown was from Eighth Street to Hathaway Street, downtown urbanized, suburban neighborhoods emerged.

Historic Sites in the Planning Area

As mentioned on page IV-61 of the Cultural Resources Element, "a total of 110 historic-period buildings and other built environment features have been recorded within the Planning Area." The original effort to identify the buildings and sites began in 1982-83 with a countywide historic resources "reconnaissance" by the Riverside County Historical Commission. The research looked as far back as the 1880s, including homesteads to mid-twentieth century urban development.

Many of the historic-period buildings are concentrated in the central core of the City along Ramsey Street and San Geronimo Avenue. A list of the historic resources in Banning can be found on Table IV-11, on pages IV-62 to -64, of the Cultural Resource Element. Seven of the resources have been officially proclaimed as significant heritage properties by the federal, state, or county governments.

Gilman Ranch is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Six sites have been designated as California Points of Historic Interest and Riverside County Landmarks. *(still researching to confirm which six)*

In the late 1800s, a road extended north through an Indian Village, into Banning Canyon, known as Cummings Canyon. The Cummings house is along this road (house not on list) near the northern edge of planning area. Other homesteads included White's cabin, the JH Dixon house, and the JC Hannon cabin and orchard (none on the historic list).

In 1885, the Bryant house was constructed, later called the San Geronimo Inn. In 1889, the Bureau of

Catholic Indian Missions built the St. Boniface Indian School (not on historic list). In 1911, the Banning Sanitarium opened marketing the health benefits of the area's dry climate.

Historic structures dating from the 1900-1930s are concentrated in the core of the City. This area is bounded by Wilson St on the north, Sixth St on the west, Williams and Hays St on the south, and Hargrave on the east.

At the time of the writing of the Cultural Resources Element, neighborhoods to the north and east of the core area, and around Sylvan Park, featured a high percentage of residences from the mid-20th century and reaching the age to be considered historic.

The segment of Ramsey Street between 3rd Street and Murray Street features a corridor of historic-period commercial buildings. This can be considered a business district of distinctly historical character.

Some historic resources no longer exist, but are on the 2006 list:

Henderson Building, 54 S. San Geronimo Ave

Holcomb Building, 40 S. San Geronimo Ave

San Geronimo Inn, 150 E. Ramsey St

Vollaro House.JR Fountain, 270 E. Wesley

Mason Moore Building, 185 (or 161) W. Ramsey St

Single Family Home, 59 Lancaster Rd

Banning City Hall (Old), 169 (or 161) W. Ramsey St

Single Family Home, 116 N. 4th St

There are some listed resources that are in unincorporated Riverside County along Bluff Street. The City has no authority over historic preservation decisions related to those properties. They were most likely included on the list as the Planning Area of the General Plan includes reviewing areas within the City boundary and out to the Sphere of Influence (and sometimes beyond). Staff can separate out the historic resources that are not within the City limits and the Commission may direct staff on how to address those resources with Riverside County.

Historic Preservation Programs

National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 mandated preservation responsibilities of historic properties owned or controlled by the U.S. government. There may be local government programs providing technical assistance, information exchange, and small grants for historic preservation purposes. The National Register of Historic Places is maintained by the Secretary of the Interior.

The California Register of Historic Resource was established in 1992, which maintains a listing of California Historic Landmarks beyond that is listed on the National Register. The landmarks include properties of statewide, countywide or regional importance. Properties on these registers are eligible for incentives, including property tax reductions, alternative building regulations, special bond measures, and seismic retrofit tax credits. Properties may qualify for Mills Act for incentives for rehabilitation and maintenance of property for ten (10) years.

"Historic Resources"

Include but are not limited to an object, building site, area, place, record, or manuscript which is

historically or archaeologically significant, according to the Archaeological and Cultural Resources Element (pg IV-67). This includes architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California.

The relevant criteria for determining significance are:

1. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage.
2. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past.
3. 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.
4. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Every reasonable effort should be made to locate, identify, and evaluate archaeological, historical and cultural sites within a jurisdiction.

DESCRIPTION:

THE COMMISSION WORK PLAN

Goals, Policies, and Programs

The Archaeological and Cultural Resources Element outlines a primary goal, seven policies, and twelve programs to encourage the effective application of historic preservation actions in the City of Banning. The goal and policies are listed below:

Goal 1. Document, maintain, preserve, conserve, and enhance archaeological and historic sites, artifacts, traditions, and other elements of Banning's cultural heritage.

Policy 1. The City shall exercise its responsibility to identify, document and value archaeological, historical and cultural resources that may be affected by proposed development projects and other activities.

Policy 2. The City shall expand and enhance its historic preservation efforts.

Policy 3. Establish and maintain a confidential inventory of archaeological and historical resources within the City, including those identified by the Easter Information Center (EIC) at the University of California, Riverside and in focused cultural resources studies.

Policy 4. Sensitive archaeological historic resources shall be protected from vandalism and illegal collection to the greatest extent possible.

Policy 5. Encourage public participation in and appreciation of the City's cultural heritage.

Policy 6. Support the listing of eligible structures or sites as potential historic landmarks and their inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

Policy 7. The City shall consider offering economic or other incentives, such as direct subsidies or application/permitting fee reductions or waivers, to property owners to encourage the maintenance and enhancement of significant cultural buildings and sites.

The Element is attached and may be referenced for the twelve programs. As the programs are adopted per the General Plan adoption, but historic preservation activities and norms may have changed since 2006. Staff encourages the Commission to review the adopted policies and programs. Staff also recommends alternative approaches to accomplishing the outlined policies and programs to further historical preservation activities in the City of Banning.

California's Statewide Historic Preservation Plan and Recommended Action Items

The State of California has prepared a Statewide Historic Preservation Plan Update for 2019-2023 as required by the National Park Service (NPS). Further the state has provided suggested activities in support of the State Plan. Below is Staff's list of action items that the Commission and City should focus to further solidify the identified list of historic resources in the City of Banning:

Conduct surveys that focus on resource types that haven't been adequately identified and evaluated in the past.

Provide up-to-date information about built environment resources online at no cost.

Celebrate and provide examples of successful "outside the norm" nominations and adaptive re-use projects that can serve as models for others.

Get involved as early as possible to work with community groups to identify options for adaptive re-use of a resource.

Create communications/outreach plans in order to strategically use various communications methods, avoid duplication of efforts, and maximize the reach and impact of messages.

Issue press releases that highlight successful preservation projects and focus on the larger community the resource serves and benefits.

Invite public officials to ribbon-cutting ceremonies and other events where historical resources are being honored.

Focus preservation awards programs on projects that have made significant contributions to their communities.

Use various communication methods and media to put forward examples of approaches and projects that can serve as models for future preservation efforts and focus on these specific successful examples in newsletter articles, training, and conferences.

Develop educational and outreach materials in languages other than English.

[Encourage and permit] events and activities at historical and cultural resources that are specifically designed to make the resources a part of the community's everyday life (e.g., farmers markets, neighborhood meetings, outdoor concerts, community gardens).

Provide training for local government historic preservation commissioners, planning staff, and officials in historic preservation goals and practices.

Educate property owners about historic preservation incentives available to them at the federal, state, and local levels; and consider new local incentives that could be put in place.

Work on achieving Certified Local Government status, address cultural resources in general plan updates, and adopt comprehensive cultural resource ordinances and processes for CEQA compliance.

Staff will refine the suggested work plan activities and seek direction from the Commission. Staff will continue its work in reviewing potential best practice historic preservation activities and present them at the meeting.

FINDINGS:

None at this time.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

None at this time.

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION:

None at this time.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. [5.1a Banning General Plan Archaeo and Cultural Resources Element IV-55 to IV-70.pdf](#)
2. [5.1b Map of BanningHistoricEraBuildingsandSites 9-10-25.pdf](#)
3. [5.1c CA Office of Historic Preservation - Local or Regional Government Employees Elected Officials or Commissioners.pdf](#)
4. [5.1d OHP Statewide Historic Preservation Plan.pdf](#)
5. [5.1e CA Statewide Historic Preservation Plan 2019-2023 Update.pdf](#)
6. [5.1f Banning Municipal Code - Ch 2.46 Historic Preservation Commission.pdf](#)
7. [5.1g Banning Municipal Code - Ch 17.58 Historic Preservation.pdf](#)