# ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES ELEMENT

# PURPOSE

Cultural resources are an integral part of the community and provide residents with an important and meaningful sense of history and heritage. The Archaeological and Cultural Resources Element describes the documented pre-history and history of the City of Palm Desert, including its 20<sup>th</sup> century development. It sets forth goals, policies and programs which preserve the City's cultural heritage and help perpetuate it for future generations.

# BACKGROUND

The Archaeological and Cultural Resources Element is directly related to the Land Use, Open Space and Conservation, and Arts and Culture Elements of the General Plan, and may also influence the policies and programs set forth in the Community Design Element. The issues addressed in the Archaeological and Cultural Resources Element are part of those set forth in California Government Code Section 65560(b) and Public Resources Code Section 5076. Furthermore, Section 21083.2(g) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) empowers the community to require adequate research, documentation and preservation when the potential for significant cultural resources exists.

The City currently reviews development proposals for their potential impacts to archaeologically and historically significant resources and may require additional studies if the potential for damage to resources exists. As future development proposals are received, they will be evaluated, and the need for site-specific cultural resource assessments will be determined. Although Palm Desert is a "new" community, it is part of a region that has seen human occupation for thousands of years. The General Plan study area is also one that has been important in the development of the trans-continental railroad and national highways system, and has important resources documenting this progress.

#### THE PREHISTORIC PERIOD

The "pre-historic" period refers to a time prior to the arrival of non-native peoples, when Native American society, which was based on traditions resulting from thousands of years of cultural development, was intact and viable. In the Coachella Valley, the prehistoric period is generally divided into the Late Prehistoric Period and the Archaic Period.

The Archaic Period is defined as occurring before AD 1000, prior to the introduction of pottery to the region. Important cultural developments during the Archaic Period include the change from burial practices to cremations around 500 BC and the introduction of the bow and arrow, probably around AD 500. It is also believed that a migration of Takic-speaking peoples, from the Great Basin region of Nevada, Utah and eastern California into southern California, occurred sometime between 1000 BC and AD 500.

The introduction of pottery to the Coachella Valley region by Colorado River cultures is believed to have occurred around AD 1000 and marks the transition between the Archaic and Late Prehistoric Periods. Pottery was an innovation of peoples of the Colorado River, and its distribution across the upper Colorado and Mojave Deserts indicates that there was contact and trade between local tribes and those of the Colorado River.



#### In the Coachella Valley, the Late Prehistoric Period is currently defined as occurring after AD 1000 until around the late 1700s, when foreign influences brought profound changes to Native American society and ushered in the "historic period." Archaeological evidence indicates that a large number of settlements and rancherias were established in the Coachella Valley region during the prehistoric period. Such sites included villages, milling sites used on a seasonal basis to process food materials, lithic workshops for making stone tools and weapons, and rock art sites used for artistic and/or religious purposes.

# Cahuilla Culture

The most recent identifiable native culture to evolve in the Coachella Valley region is that of the Cahuilla. The Cahuilla were a Takic-speaking people of hunters and gatherers who are generally divided into three groups by anthropologists, according to their geographic setting: the Pass Cahuilla of the San Gorgonio Pass/Palm Springs area; the Mountain Cahuilla of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains; and the Desert Cahuilla of the eastern Coachella Valley, as far south as today's Salton Sea.

The Cahuilla were not identified by a single name that referred to an all-inclusive tribal affiliation. Instead, membership was in terms of lineages or clans. Each lineage had its own food harvesting areas, ceremonial house and chief. However, a number of lineages are known to have cooperated with one another for trade, intermarriage, and ceremonies.

Although early population data are nearly impossible to obtain, the Cahuilla population is estimated to have ranged between 3,600 and 10,000 persons prior to European contact. A large number of Indian villages, occupied by the Cahuilla, were observed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century throughout the Coachella Valley. The desert environment was often harsh, with extreme variations in rainfall, wind and temperature, and occasional flash flooding and faulting activity that altered available water resources. However, the mountains, canyons and desert floor also provided important sources of food and fiber, water and supplies.

The first Cahuilla contact with Europeans is believed to have occurred in the 1770s, when Spaniards crossed through Cahuilla territory in search of new land routes between Mexico and northern California. Over time, relations between the Cahuilla and Europeans become strained due to conflicts over land ownership and exploitation, and religious and cultural practices. In the early 1860s, a smallpox epidemic, to which the Cahuilla had no immunity, decimated the Cahuilla population, which declined to about 2,500 individuals.

Reservations were established beginning in the 1870s and allowed the Cahuilla to preserve their cultural traditions in relative isolation from Anglo-Americans. Today, Native Americans of the Pass and Desert Cahuilla heritage are mostly affiliated with one or more of the Indian reservations in the Coachella Valley, including the Torres Martinez, Augustine, Agua Caliente, Cabazon, and Morongo, most of which are in close proximity to the City of Palm Desert.

# Native American Usage of the Planning Area

The first official land survey of the Coachella Valley was conducted by Deputy U.S. Surveyors Henry Washington, James McDonald, and John LaCroze in 1855-1856. The surveyors noted a number of man-made features in the planning area, including the ruins of an Indian village near today's Thousand Palms Oasis. They also identified several trails, one of which crossed the middle portion of the planning area along the Whitewater River, close to the city center of present-day Palm Desert. The trail was part of the Cocomaricopa Trail, which was later "discovered" by Euro-Americans as the Bradshaw Trail.

During the 1855-1856 surveys, no active native or non-native settlements were found in the planning area. The nearest settlement to the planning area was the Palma Seca well, a famed Indian rancheria, which served as an important stop on the Bradshaw Trail during the 1860s and 1870s and is located in the present-day city of Indian Wells.

# Archaeological Resources in the Planning Area

Historical maps, previous cultural resource surveys, aerial photographs, topographic maps and other cultural records were consulted to determine the presence of known archaeological resources in the planning area. A total of 138 archaeological sites have been identified and recorded in the planning area, 125 of which are prehistoric (Native American) sites. Several isolated artifacts have also been identified.

The majority of prehistoric sites in the planning area represent Native American habitation activities, including ceramic and lithic scatters, bedrock milling features, rock cairns, trails, roasting pits, and fire hearths. One quarry site has also been identified. Most of these sites are located along the sides of canyons at the edge of the Santa Rosa Mountains, such as Coyote Creek and Deep Canyon, or in the Indio Hills. These areas would have offered Native Americans access to water and other important mountain and desert resources.

## Archaeological Resources Sensitivity Assessment

Anthropologists and Cahuilla cultural authorities have identified nine locations within or partially within the planning area that are of potential Native American cultural significance. Six of these areas occur within the Santa Rosa Mountains in the southern portion of the planning area, and three are situated in the Indio Hills in the northern portion. Most of them are associated with canyons, which offered water on at least a seasonal basis. These findings suggest that the various canyons in the Santa Rosa Mountains and Indio Hills, and the alluvial fans at the canyon mouths, should be regarded as highly sensitive for prehistoric archaeological resources. These areas are identified in Exhibits IV-1 and IV-2.

# THE HISTORIC PERIOD

Historically significant sites are generally more than forty-five to fifty years of age, but range from the period of the earliest European contact (around the late 1770s in the Coachella Valley) to about the end of World War II. Potentially significant historic sites range from permanent trails and highways to living areas and small-scale remains of single activities.

#### Historic Settlement in the Coachella Valley

By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish explorers sought to colonize California before other European nations and established religious missions and military strongholds along the California coast. Spanish and Mexican explorers entered the Coachella Valley in search of easily passable supply routes from Mexico to colonies on the northern Monterey Peninsula of California. In 1822, Mexico secured its independence from Spain under the Treaty of Cordova, and Spanish forces were driven out of Mexico and California. In 1823-1825, Jose Romero, Jose Maria Estudillo, and Romualdo Pacheco led an expedition in search of a route to Yuma, Arizona and became the first noted European explorers to travel through the Coachella Valley.

The United States defeated Mexico in 1848 in the Mexican-American War and gained control of California. At the same time, the discovery of gold and the appeal of cattle ranching led to an influx of new settlers to the state. California was admitted to the Union in 1850. The first U.S. Government surveys were conducted in the Coachella Valley in 1855-56 by Henry Washington, John La Croze and James G. McDonald, who observed a number of trails and roads crossing the Valley.

#### The Bradshaw Trail

The Cocomaricopa Trail passed through the Coachella Valley along the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains, and connected the coastal region of California with the Colorado River. The trail was originally an Indian trade route and was revealed by the Maricopa Indians to the Europeans in 1821. In 1862, the trail was "discovered" by William David Bradshaw as the shortest route between the California coast and gold mines near the Colorado River, and it became known as the Bradshaw Trail. The trail served as the primary thoroughfare for stagecoaches traveling between coastal southern California and the gold fields near present-day Ehrenberg, Arizona. It also became part of the U.S. Mail route between Los Angeles and Santa Fe, New Mexico.

By the late 1876-77, however, the completion of the transcontinental railroad and the depletion of the La Paz gold mines brought an end to the heyday of this historic wagon road. Traffic declined to nearly nothing by 1880, but ranchers and miners continued to use it for local transport. Today, State Highway 111 closely follows the course of the Bradshaw Trail.

# Ocean-to-Ocean Highway

In the early twentieth century, with the coming of the automobile age, the role of the Bradshaw Trail was revived in the form of the Ocean-to-Ocean Highway. Although the exact date of construction is unclear, archival records indicate that the road was built in the late 1930s. The federal government granted rights-of-way for the highway in 1938 and designated it U.S. Route 60/70/99. Segments of present-day Varner Road were part of the original Ocean-to-Ocean Highway.

# Regional Twentieth Century Development

Non-Indian settlement in the Coachella Valley expanded during the 1870s and 1880s, with the establishment of railroad stations along the Southern Pacific line and the implementation of the Homestead Act and Desert Land Act, which opened public land for claims. With the utilization of underground water sources, farming became the dominant economic activity in the Coachella Valley. The date palm, the region's main agricultural staple, was first introduced around 1900, and by the late 1910s the date palm industry had firmly established itself in the region. Starting in the 1920s, however, a new industry featuring equestrian camps, resort hotels and eventually country clubs began spreading throughout the Valley.

The planning area remained unsettled and devoid of any evidence of land development until the turn of the twentieth century. The only features recorded during that time were the Southern Pacific Railroad, Bradshaw Trail, and another trail near the northern tip of the planning area at the mouth of West Wide Canyon. Several railroad construction workers' camps were present by the early 1900s.

During the 1910s, the County of Riverside improved the Bradshaw Trail into a county trail (the forerunner of today's Highway 111), which further paved the way for settlement and growth in the "cove communities" region of the Coachella Valley. By 1914, a railroad station named Edom, which contained a post office, was established in the planning area. In 1939, the post office was moved to the nearby community of Thousand Palms and renamed for that community, which by that time, had a population of about 20 permanent residents and 15 to 20 winter residents.

The construction of the Colorado River Aqueduct by the Metropolitan Water District, between 1933 and 1939, brought a number of permanent and temporary features to the northernmost portion of the planning area. Among these were roads, power transmission lines, waterlines, and construction camps. The remains of one of eight construction camps, Camp Thousand Palms, have been discovered at the mouth of East Deception Canyon in the foothills of the Little San Bernardino Mountains.

By 1941, several rural settlements had been established in the area between the Southern Pacific Railroad (now Union Pacific) and the Indio Hills. Among these were Thousand Palms, Edom, Myoma, the Ferguson Ranch, the Thousand Palms Oasis, the Bar Bell Ranch, the Chuckwalla

Ranch, and the Hunter Palms Ranch. The small community of Palm Village was established south of the railroad, on the north side of Highway 111. General George S. Patton selected Palm Village as the site for his motor pool during World War II, as it was in close proximity to the Desert Training Center used for military training during the war.

# The Founding of the City of Palm Desert

The City of Palm Desert was founded on the south side of Highway 111 in 1945-1946. It was founded by four brothers, Randall, Carl, Clifford, and Phil Henderson, who hoped to follow in the footsteps of neighboring communities, such as La Quinta, Rancho Mirage and Palm Springs, and establish a winter resort for Hollywood celebrities. The Henderson brothers were involved in early development, and organized the Palm Desert Corporation to promote their new desert town, and by 1947, the population was sufficient to establish a post office. Randall donated land for the community's first library on Portola Avenue. Phil and Clifford donated the land for the first fire station on El Paseo, which currently (2003) serves as the home of the Historical Society of Palm Desert. Clifford was also the developer of the Shadow Mountain Club on San Luis Rey, which attracted movie stars and tennis pros.

In 1951, Palm Village and Palm Desert merged into a single community, forming the present urban core of the city. Around that time, the community of Cahuilla Hills emerged on the west side of Highway 74, just southwest of Palm Desert. In addition, several tracts of land south of the railroad and in the area between the Little San Bernardino Mountains and the Indio Hills were settled. After four unsuccessful attempts, the City of Palm Desert was incorporated in 1973 and became the 17<sup>th</sup> incorporated city in Riverside County.

# Historic Sites in the Planning Area

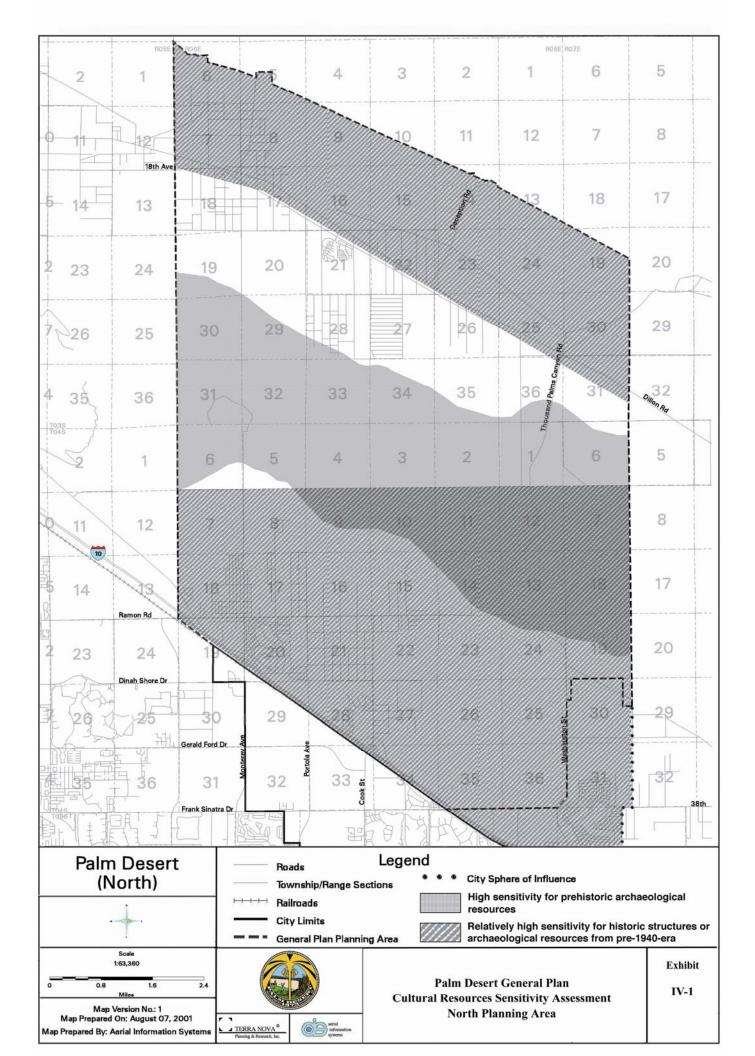
Analysis of previous cultural resources studies indicates that, of the 138 archaeological sites recorded in the planning area, 13 are historic-era sites. These are primarily comprised of trash scatters, although structural foundations, a road, and a water conveyance system have also been recorded. Among the historic sites are the Southern Pacific Railroad and other nearby features associated with the railroad. Several sites associated with the construction of the Colorado River Aqueduct in the 1930s have been recorded in the vicinity of the Little San Bernardino Mountains.

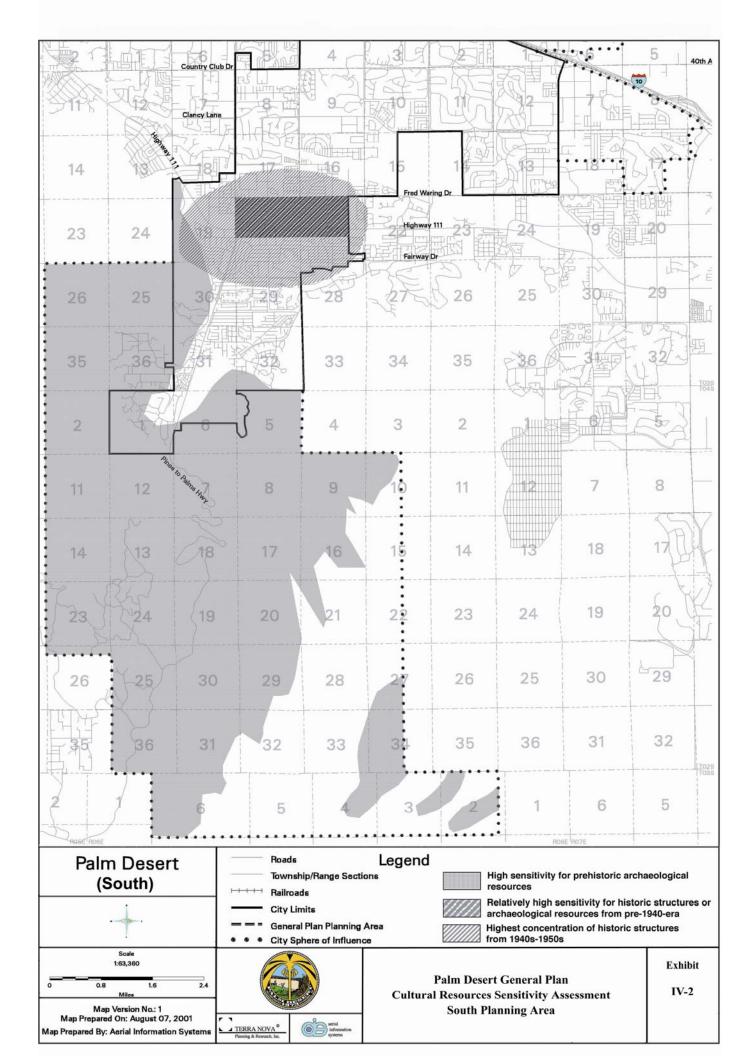
From 1981 to 1983, the Riverside County Historical Commission coordinated a countywide historical resources reconnaissance, which led to the recordation of 30 historic sites in the planning area. These include a well site that dates back to 1912, the Cavanagh Adobe building that was built in the 1920s, and single-family residences constructed in the 1930s and 1940s. Most of these sites are located near the city center of Palm Desert, although several are near the community of Thousand Palms.

Although the City of Palm Desert does not maintain a list of officially recognized or designated local historical landmarks, the Historical Society of Palm Desert has compiled a list of 21 sites of local historical significance. The list includes sites ranging from early homesteads to mid-twentieth century urban development. They are concentrated in the central urban core of the City, and only a few are located in outlying areas. The majority of the sites were recorded on the California Historical Resource Information System during the countywide survey in the 1980s.

#### Historic Resources Sensitivity Assessment

Historic structures dating from the late 1940s and early 1950s are concentrated around the urban core of the City, and structures of similar vintage are likely to be found in outlying communities, such as Thousand Palms and Cahuilla Hills. For historic structures, or historic-period archaeological remains dating before 1940, the most sensitive areas in the planning area are along the Colorado River Aqueduct, between the Indio Hills and the Southern Pacific Railroad, and around the original community of Palm Village north of Highway 111. Nonetheless, the possibility of finding historic resources in other areas cannot be ruled out. Potentially sensitive areas are identified in Exhibits IV-1 and Exhibit IV-2.





# HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAMS

#### Federal Programs Available to the City

The National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966 mandates that all federal agencies assume responsibility for the preservation of historic properties owned or controlled by the U.S. government. Local governments may take the lead in enforcing the NHPA when involved in federal projects, such as some programs funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Certified Local Government (CLG) program, a joint federal-state initiative administered by the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Officers of each state, provides technical assistance and small grants to local governments for historic preservation purposes that meet certain requirements. CLGs can benefit from historic preservation expertise, technical assistance, information exchange, special grants, and statewide preservation programs coordinated by the State Office of Historic Preservation (OHP). In California, CLGs are encouraged by the OHP to play an active role in the Section 106 (NHPA) process within its jurisdiction.

The National Register of Historic Places, maintained by the Secretary of the Interior, is a nationwide inventory of sites, buildings, districts, structures, objects or other features with national, state, or local historical significance. At present, the planning area does not contain any properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places; however, some of the previously recorded sites in the planning area may be eligible for listing.



#### **State Programs Available to the City**

The State of California's counterpart to the National Register of Historic Places is the California Register of Historic Resources, which was established in 1992. It includes all properties listed in or officially determined to be eligible for the National Register. The OHP also maintains a listing of California Historical Landmarks, which designates properties of statewide importance, and a listing of Points of Historical Interest, which identifies properties of countywide or regional importance. Properties included in these registers are eligible for a number of state historic preservation incentives, including property tax reductions, alternative building regulations under the State Historic Building Code, benefits provided by the California Heritage Fund, special historic preservation bond measures, and seismic retrofit tax credits. Currently, none of the properties listed in these registers in located within the planning area.

# Programs Administered by the City

A four-member Historical Commission was appointed by the City of Palm Desert in 1978 and was responsible for coordinating and preserving memorabilia associated with the founding and development of the City. This led to the incorporation of the Historical Society of Palm Desert in March 1979, which has played an important role in the City's historic preservation efforts since then.

Today, the Historical Society maintains numerous archival records pertaining to the City's development, is staffed by approximately 38 volunteers, and is housed in the City's historic fire station at 72-861 El Paseo.



**FUTURE DIRECTIONS** 

In 1984 the Palm Desert City Council formally adopted an historic preservation ordinance (Ordinance 401), that defines the terms "historic site" and "historic district" and provides for a seven-member Historic Site Preservation Board to identify and protect properties meeting these definitions and criteria. The Board also has the authority to initiate the designation of historic sites and districts, review projects that may affect such sites, and issue temporary stays on demolition or exterior alterations of potentially historic structures. Through the Historical Society and other vehicles, the City shall be pro active in efforts to protect important historic resources

According to Public Resources Code Section 5020.1, "historical resources" include but are not limited to an object, building site, area, place, record, or manuscript which is historically or archaeologically significant. This definition also applies to architectural, engineering scientific, economic agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California.

The California Environmental Quality Act identifies the manner in which the City must review and address issues related to archaeological and historic resources. The CEQA Guidelines state that the term "historical resources" applies to any such resources listed in or determined to be eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources. The relevant criteria for determining significance are briefly described below.

- 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.

As the lead agency, the City of Palm Desert is obligated to assure that every reasonable effort is made to locate, identify, and evaluate archaeological, historical and cultural sites within its jurisdiction. The City must determine which development activities have the potential to adversely impact known or suspected sites of significance. Projects involving a federal agency, federal funding or other federal assistance must conform to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966.

Cultural resources management need not be a roadblock to future development. If carried out properly and creatively, the preservation of cultural resources actually enhances the value of a place, and the City benefits from the wise management of its historical heritage. As the community continues to develop, opportunities for documenting and preserving archaeological and historic sites and artifacts will decrease. The City should encourage the research and registration of appropriate sites and structures within its jurisdiction, and rededicate itself to passing on its important traditions and heritage to future generations.

# GOALS, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

#### Goal

Documentation, maintenance, preservation and enhancement of archaeological and historic sites, artifacts, traditions and other elements of the City's cultural heritage.

#### Policy 1

The City shall exercise its responsibility to identify, document and evaluate archaeological, historical and cultural resources that may be affected by proposed development projects and other landscape-altering activities.

#### Program 1.A

Development or land use proposals, which have the potential to disturb or destroy sensitive cultural resources, shall be evaluated by a qualified professional and, if necessary, comprehensive Phase I studies and appropriate mitigation measures shall be incorporated into project approvals.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, Native American Tribes **Schedule:** Immediate; continuous

#### Program 1.B

Establish a transmittal system with the Eastern Information Center (EIC) in which the City may send a location map to the EIC for a transmittal-level records search when a development proposal is in its initial review phase. The transmittal shall identify the presence or absence of known cultural resources and/or previously performed studies in and near the project area. The EIC shall also offer recommendations regarding the need for additional studies, where necessary. **Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, Eastern Information Center,

Native American Tribes

Schedule: Immediate, ongoing

# Policy 2

The City shall expand and enhance its historic preservation efforts.

# Program 2.A

Prepare a historic preservation plan, which outlines the goals and objectives of the City's preservation programs and serves as an official historic context statement for the evaluation of cultural resources within the City boundaries.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department **Schedule:** 2004-2005

#### Program 2.B

The City shall consider participating in the Certified Local Government program so that it may benefit from historic preservation expertise, technical assistance, special grants, information exchange, and statewide preservation programs coordinated by the State Office of Historic Preservation.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, City Council, Native American Tribes

Schedule: Ongoing

#### Program 2.C

Historic preservation concerns shall be incorporated into the City zoning ordinance. **Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department **Schedule:** 2005-2006

#### Policy 3

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

#### Program 3.A

Expeditiously conduct a citywide cultural resources survey to inventory all cultural resources within the City's jurisdiction.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, with the assistance of the Palm Desert Historical Society

Schedule: 2004-2005

#### Policy 4

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

#### Program 4.A

Mapping and similar information, which identifies specific locations of sensitive cultural resources, shall be maintained in a confidential manner, and access to such information shall be provided only to those with appropriate professional or organizational ties.

Responsible Agency: Community Development Department

Schedule: Immediate; continuous

# Program 4.B

In the course of reviewing development proposals and cultural surveys that identify sensitive resources, the City shall, where appropriate, encourage in-place preservation or the recovery and preservation of materials for later study and/or display.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, Native American Tribes Schedule: Immediate; continuous

# Policy 5

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

# Program 5.A

Encourage property owners and other citizens to nominate qualified properties to the City's inventory system and/or any federal and state registers.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, Palm Desert Historical Society, Native American Tribes

Schedule: Ongoing

# Program 5.B

Implement a systematic program to enhance public awareness of the City's heritage, generate broad support for its preservation, and enhance community pride.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, City Council, Palm Desert Historical Society, Native American Tribes

Schedule: 2004-2005, continuous

#### Program 5.C

Support the efforts of the Palm Desert Historical Society and other local cultural associations to acquire historical materials and artifacts, and to educate the public about the City's and region's cultural heritage.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, City Council, Palm Desert Historical Society, Native American Tribes

Schedule: Continuous

# Policy 6

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

#### Program 6.A

Consult and cooperate with the Palm Desert Historical Society and other appropriate cultural organizations to periodically identify and prioritize sites for possible application for status as a historic landmark or inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, Palm Desert Historical Society, Native American Tribes

Schedule: Periodically

#### Program 6.B

Develop procedures for the designation of local landmarks and historic districts. **Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department, Palm Desert Historical Society, Native American Tribes **Schedule:** 2004-2005

# 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.

#### Program 7.A

Develop an application process for City-sponsored incentives to maintain and enhance significant buildings and sites, and provide property owners with information and guidance on eligibility requirements.

**Responsible Agency:** Community Development Department **Schedule:** Ongoing