

CITY OF SAN LUIS

# EL CORAZÓN DE SAN LUIS

Cultural & Economic Revitalization Plan

NOVEMBER 2025  
Prepared by Designing Local, Ltd.





# Acknowledgments

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## **SAN LUIS ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Mayor Nieves Riedel, on behalf of City Council  
Salma Pasillas, Vice Chair of San Luis Economic Development Commission  
Armando Esparza on behalf of City Staff

## **SAN LUIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION**

Jesus Carillo, Chair  
Mary Carmen Lopez, Commission Member  
Oscar Franco, Commission Member  
Linda Padilla, Commission Member  
Abraham Andrade, Commission Member  
Eric Jones, Commission Member

## **STAKEHOLDERS**

A special thanks to the numerous stakeholders and community members that participated in the Community Survey and Stakeholder interviews.

## **DESIGNING LOCAL**

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I am truly excited and honored to introduce the San Luis Historic Survey & Public Art Plan, a pivotal step in preserving the heart and soul of our community for generations to come. As Vice Chair of the Economic Development Commission, I've seen firsthand how deeply rooted San Luis is in its history, and how vital it is that we protect and celebrate the stories that have shaped our city's unique identity.

This initiative is not just about cataloging historic buildings or envisioning public art installations; it's about building a sense of pride and belonging for everyone who calls San Luis home. By documenting our community's historic resources and creating a vision for public art, we're taking an important step toward a future that is more connected, vibrant, and sustainable.

The collaboration between the City of San Luis, Designing Local, and countless community members has been nothing short of inspiring. From the passionate conversations during public surveys to the invaluable contributions. This project stands as a testament to the power of community-driven action. Together, we are laying the foundation for a future where history and culture are not only celebrated but also woven into the daily life of our city. It's a place where future generations can walk through San Luis and feel the richness of our shared heritage.

I'm incredibly proud of what we've accomplished so far, and I look forward to seeing how these efforts continue to grow. This project isn't just for us; it's for those who will inherit our city and its stories long after we are gone. With every step we take, we're ensuring that San Luis remains a place where culture, history, and community thrive together, side by side.

Thank you to everyone involved in this important work. Together, we are shaping the future of San Luis, and I couldn't be more excited about what's to come.

Sincerely,



Salma Pasillas, Vice-Chair of the Economic Development Commission



Preserving the stories and spaces that shaped San Luis is more than a cultural priority; it's an economic development strategy.

This Historic Preservation and Public Art Plan lays the groundwork for how our community unlock new opportunities for growth. Even with a modest number of historic structures, we have the chance to revitalize key sites, spark reinvestment, and celebrate the character that makes San Luis unique.

Across Arizona and the nation, cities that invest in preservation, arts, and culture see real returns: stronger property values, increased local spending, greater resilience during downturns, and thriving small business ecosystems. These districts consistently outperform conventional development when it comes to attracting residents, entrepreneurs, and visitors. And in a community like ours, rich with culture, border identity, and entrepreneurial spirit, that impact can be even more powerful.

Public art plays a critical role in this strategy. By activating historic spaces with murals, sculpture, and storytelling, we can drive foot traffic, support our creative economy, and make San Luis a destination. This plan outlines how small, targeted steps, such as adaptive reuse, art installations, and preservation programs, can help us retain our heritage while building economic momentum.

Importantly, this plan does not propose broad regulation. Instead, it focuses on a small, clearly defined part of the city where preservation and public art can have the most impact. The goal is not to freeze the past in place, but to invite our residents and business owners to shape a future that's rooted in pride, creativity, and opportunity.

Sincerely,



Armando Esparza, Director of Economic Development and Government Affairs  
City of San Luis







CHAPTER 01

# PROJECT INTRODUCTION

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# Project Introduction

This project was spearheaded by the City of San Luis Economic Development Commission and Staff, and kicked off in April of 2025. The primary objectives were to document and inventory historic buildings within Downtown San Luis and to develop a vision for revitalizing the historic core of San Luis through preservation, adaptive reuse, public art, and placemaking. The plan - broken into two components: historic preservation and revitalization, and public art and placemaking - aims to give the city a blueprint for enhancing the built environment of the historic core by building off the City's culture and legacy. By utilizing the results of the historic survey, more revitalization strategies can be developed to promote adaptive reuse, infusing new life into vacant buildings, bringing outside funding to the community, and identifying potential historic districts in the community to promote continued preservation of the City's history. The goal of the public art & placemaking vision is to build a strong foundation for recommendations for public art and placemaking opportunities as the enhancement of the built environment, as well as policy framework and potential funding.

## Plan Goals

Rooted in community engagement, the El Corazón de San Luis plan unites national best practices, site-specific recommendations, and actionable strategies to support San Luis' creation of an authentic destination through preservation, revitalization, and public art. This Plan aims to achieve the following goals:

1. to identify historic and cultural resources that can be used as the foundation for revitalization;
2. to create a dynamic destination that draws visitors;
3. to tell the story San Luis and its people, past present and future;
4. to reaffirm the city's welcoming and inclusive spirit through vibrant, creative public spaces; and
5. to leverage public art and placemaking to enhance local identity.



# Project Approach

Through the foundation of community engagement, stakeholder input, best practices, and actionable items, this plan will assist the City of San Luis in creating an authentic destination through preservation, revitalization, and public art.



## 01

### Community Engagement & Stakeholder Input

The engagement efforts, between community engagement and reaching out for stakeholder input, were instrumental in developing the overall plan including the vision and priorities for placemaking, public art, and revitalization. The team was also able to gain some perspective of what the community considers historic and culturally significant. Engagement efforts included a large-scale community survey, in-person participation at “Arte en la Calle,” and one-on-one conversations with community stakeholders.



## 02

### Best Practices

By examining best practices in preservation, community revitalization, public art, and placemaking in similar communities around the country, the team is able to ensure that this plan can be successfully implemented in San Luis, creating an even more vibrant community.



## 03

### Actionable Items

Focusing on actionable projects was a key perspective of the team. By focusing on recommendations of impactful projects that promote revitalization through public art, placemaking, and historic preservation, this plan ensures that the City has the tools it needs to create an authentic, vibrant, thriving destination that goes far beyond the Port of Entry.

# Key Project Components



## Key Components of this Plan

By utilizing the feedback from the community engagement efforts and nationwide best practices, this plan has determined action items centered around two key components: Community Revitalization and Public Art. Both of these components were inspired by the historic context of the City and community engagement conducted in early 2025. The recommendations for Community Revitalization for San Luis are driven by historic preservation tools and adaptive reuse, and how these ventures can be funded. These recommendations are inspired by the existing built environment in the City as determined through a preliminary historic resource survey. The recommendations for Public Art in San Luis are driven by stakeholder engagement and best practices at the regional level, outlining approaches and projects that are best suited to the City of San Luis that honors both the history and the values of the community.





CHAPTER 02

# HISTORIC CONTEXT

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# Historic Narrative



*Customs Gate at San Luis, Arizona – Sonora*



## San Luis: A Border Town's Rich History

San Luis, Arizona, established by the U.S. government in 1930, sits directly across the border from San Luis Río Colorado, Sonora, Mexico. Before these cities emerged, indigenous groups like the Quechan, Maricopa, and Cocopah tribes called this land home. San Luis Río Colorado was settled earlier, in the 1900s, with its residents often traveling by stagecoach into Yuma County to work in the agricultural fields.

The strategic location of San Luis, with its close ties to the Mexican city and surrounding farmland, led the U.S. government to open the Port of Entry and Customs Station in its current spot in 1930. The American town grew gradually, with about 200 residents living within a two-block radius of the port by the 1950s. The 1960s saw a population boom, thanks in part to the Bracero program, a post-World War II program meant to address labor shortages by bringing in Mexican workers on temporary labor contracts. The town welcomed more businesses, including its first locally owned gas station in 1961 and a Chevron service station in 1965—the first major chain to arrive.

In 1979, San Luis local officials petitioned the county to get the City officially incorporated, becoming the youngest city in Yuma County, and Josefina Rodriguez was elected as its first mayor. The first City Hall was located in the building that is home to the Courthouse today on Main Street. The Port of Entry underwent significant upgrades in the 1980s and 1990s, with a new customs station completed in 1984. By 2010, a second port of entry opened to handle commercial vehicles, freeing up the original port for private vehicles and pedestrians.

Today, San Luis boasts a population of approximately 40,000. In 2023, the Port of Entry welcomed around 2.3 million northbound pedestrians, 3.3 million northbound private vehicles, and processed an impressive \$115.3 million in imported goods.

## Farm Workers: The Agricultural Engine of San Luis

The fertile soil of San Luis and the surrounding Yuma County is a direct result of the Colorado River, which flows to the west. Annually, the river's floods deposited rich soil and minerals into the floodplains, creating ideal conditions for agriculture. After the river was dammed in the early 1900s, canals were built to efficiently route water to the agricultural lands.

Agriculture has since become the dominant industry in the region, generating about \$2.3 billion annually. This area now supplies an incredible 90% of all winter leafy greens to the United States and Canada. Over 150 different crops are grown year-round, including lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, kale, root vegetables, wheat, cotton, Medjool dates, watermelons, cantaloupes, and lemons, among many others.

A large group of the labor force that grows and harvests these crops are seasonal and migrant labor workers that cross the border at the San Luis Port of Entry from Mexico to come work in the fields. Many of these workers work the fields from November through April, able to come into the US to work through H-2A visas, green cards, or dual citizenship. It is estimated that anywhere from 8-10,000 workers cross the borders to work between the months of November to April, and make up approximately 25% of the farmworkers that work in Yuma County.





## Cesar Chavez & the UFW: A Legacy of Activism

Cesar Chavez, born near Yuma, Arizona, on March 31, 1927, experienced the hardships of migrant farm work firsthand after his family moved to California during the Great Depression. From a young age, he was exposed to labor movement efforts before joining the Navy at 19. Through organizations like the Community Service Organization (CSO) and the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), later known as the United Farm Workers Organizing Committee (UFW), Chavez and other activists sought to improve working and living conditions for farmworkers through nonviolent methods.

Chavez's work with the CSO focused on voter registration, housing discrimination, civil rights, and police brutality. With the UFW, he championed fair wages, adequate living conditions, and access to medical protection for farmworkers. These organizations employed boycotts, strikes, marches, and fasts to advance their cause.

While much of Cesar Chavez's work took place in California, Arizona was also deeply involved. The UFW opened a field office in San Luis in the 1970s, leading to annual melon strikes. In 1972, Chavez undertook a 24-day fast in Phoenix in response to the anti-union Farm Bureau bill passed that year. Dolores Huerta, a New Mexico native, and co-founder and vice-president of the UFW, also played a crucial role in the movement.

On April 21, 1993, Cesar Chavez made his final journey to Yuma to testify for two days against a lawsuit filed by the lettuce industry giant, Bruce Church Company. After testifying, he drove to San Luis, to the home of his friend and former farmworker, Dofla Maria Hau. Chavez and other UFW leaders were staying at Hau's home, discussing the trial, before he went to sleep around 10 PM. Tragically, he passed away in his sleep in the early hours of April 22, 1993.

Cesar Chavez's legacy as a champion for farmworkers in Arizona, California, and beyond continues to thrive in San Luis. A visitor's center has been established to honor his life and mission, offering programs that connect the struggles of past farm workers with today's labor movements, and providing a space for education and reflection. Streets, schools, and the cultural center in San Luis are named after him, and city offices close in observance of Cesar Chavez Day in March.





# Historic Timeline

## 1930

The San Luis Port of Entry was founded by the United States Government San Luis Rio Colorado, Sonora, Mexico. This location was chosen due to its proximity to San Luis Rio Colorado, and the existing number of border crossings of Mexican farm workers coming to the United States for work. At this time, only a few small buildings existed along what is Main Street today.

## 1950

The population of the city began to steadily increase, and by 1950, the population of San Luis was around 200 people.

## 1961

As the city continued to grow and residents began to settle down, the first locally owned gas station opened on Main Street about a block north of the border in 1961 by Jose Urtuzuastegui.

## 1962

Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta founded the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA). The mission of this organization was to use nonviolent organizing methods, such as marches, boycotts, and fasts, to defend the rights of all farmworkers, with goals that include fair wages, adequate living conditions, and access to medical protection. The NFWA reorganized as the United Farm Workers (UFW) in 1971.



## 1965

San Luis welcomed their first major business chain to set up shop when Chevron opened a new service station in town.

## 1979

San Luis officials requested that Yuma County formally incorporate the town into an official city. They agreed, making San Luis the youngest city in Yuma County with Josefina Rodriguez elected as the first mayor.

## 1984

The new San Luis Port of Entry I completed construction and reopened for private and commercial use.

## 1993

Cesar Chavez visited Yuma to testify against a lawsuit filed by Bruce Church Company, which was a major player in the lettuce industry. After testimony, he drove to the home of Dolfa Maria Hau in San Luis, a friend and retired coworker. It was in Hau's home that he passed in his sleep on the morning of April 23, 1993, at the age of 66.

## 2010

San Luis Port of Entry II opened as the acting commercial port with dock space and expedited crossings for approved vehicles.



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## CHAPTER 03

# ENGAGEMENT REPORT

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Community engagement for the El Corazón de San Luis Plan took place between late April 2025 and early June 2025. Several different methods of engagement were leveraged to ensure broad outreach with as many community members as possible.

Engagement Methods:

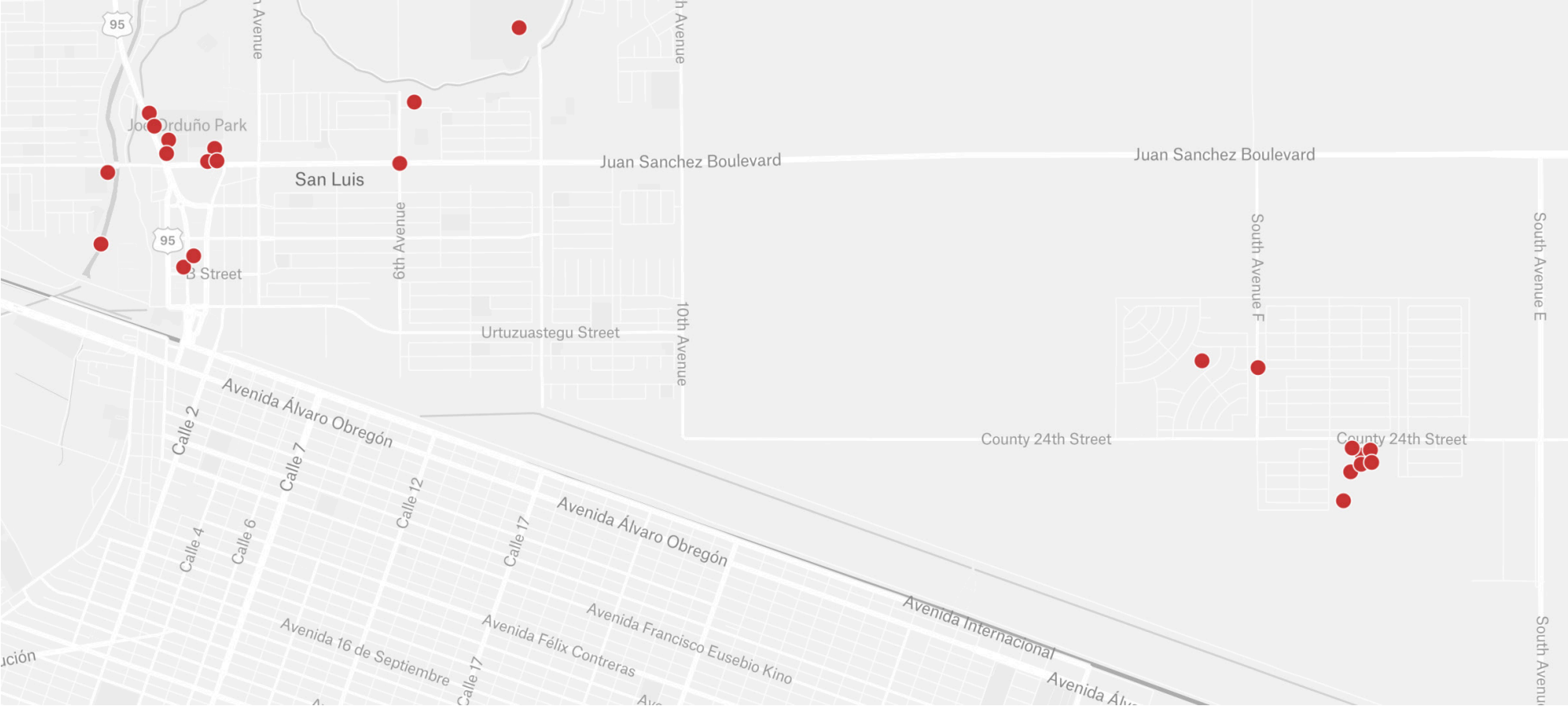
- “Arte en la Calle” Engagement
- Community Survey
- Stakeholder 1-on-1s

# “Arte en la Calle”



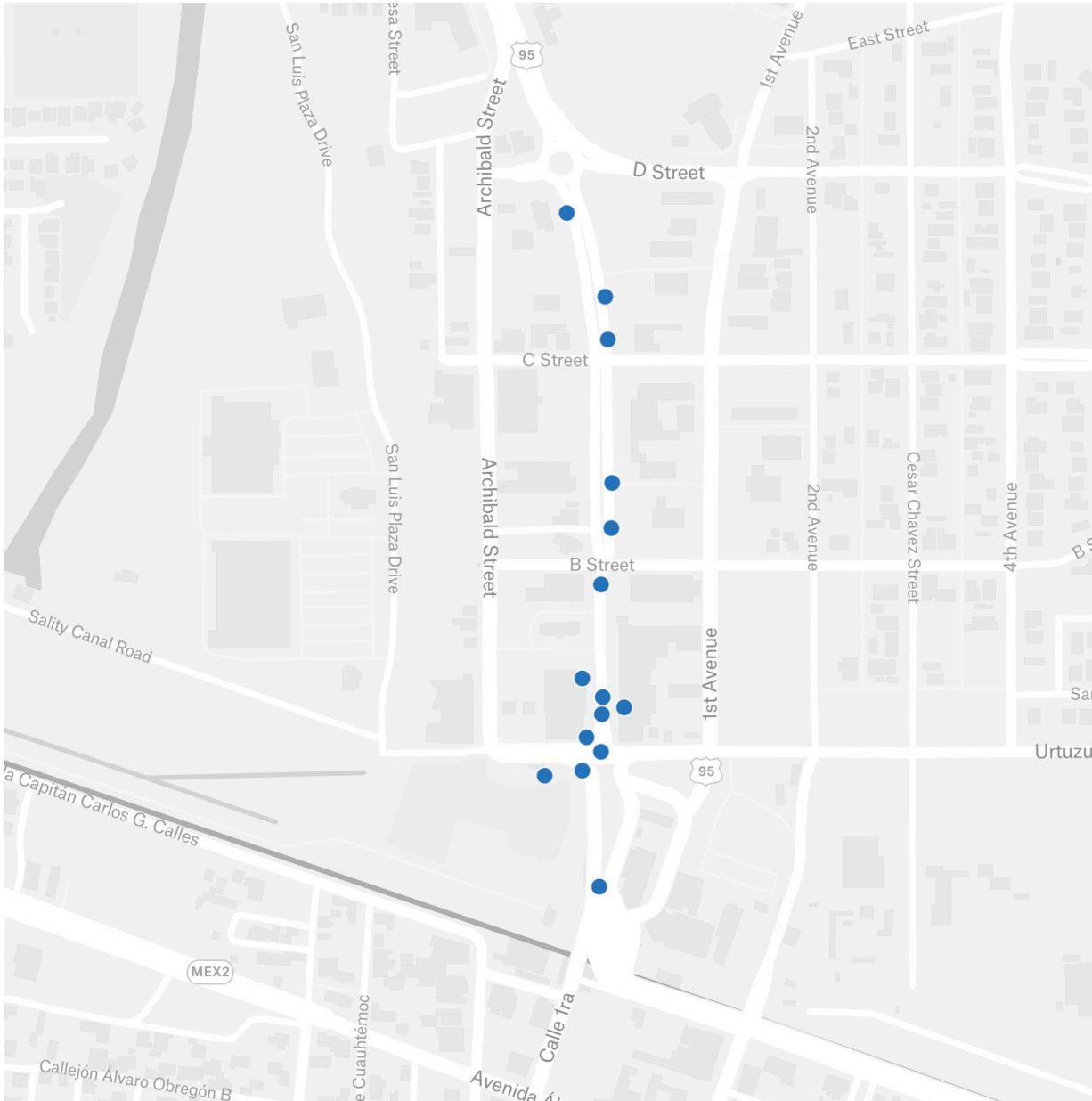
On April 25, 2025, the City of San Luis and the Parks & Recreation Department held their annual “Arte en la Calle” event for the public. At this event, six (6) boards were set up to encourage community members to interact with and offer their feedback for preferred types of public art, preferred locations for future public art, and locations of possible historic buildings. The results are summarized below.





### Where would you like to see Public Art in San Luis?

For this inquiry, participants were asked to place a sticker on a map of the city to indicate where they'd like to see public art placed in San Luis. Many of the stickers were placed near San Luis Community Park, Joe Orduño Park and its adjacent buildings, and on Main Street.



## Where are the historic buildings & areas in San Luis?

For this inquiry, participants were asked to place a sticker on a map of Downtown San Luis to indicate where they believe the historic buildings and areas of downtown are located. The stickers were only placed along Main Street.

This prompt was also found in the online community survey, and participants were asked to write-in locations and buildings that they believed were historic. These answers were put into a word cloud, placed on the next page.

### Where are the historic buildings & areas in San Luis?

This prompt was also found in the online community survey , and participants were asked to write-in locations and buildings that they believed were historic. Only a small handful of the buildings submitted are considered historic based on the 50-year rule, but many of the buildings listed are important fixtures to the community. The most popular responses were:

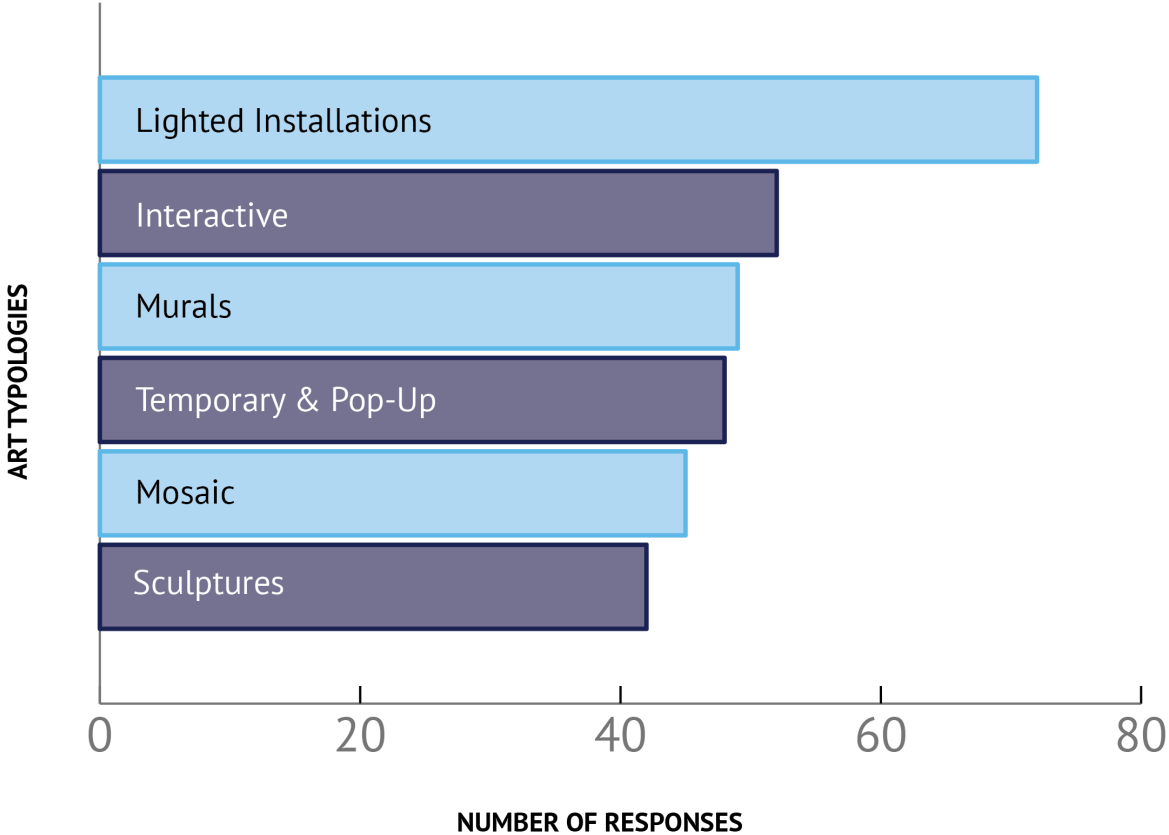
- Library
- Cultural Center
- Post Office
- Cesar Chavez Hall
- Senior Center

Other responses were:

- Main Street Hotel / Museum
- Courthouse
- Cesar Chavez House
- NW Corner of Main Street and Urtusuastegui Street
- Joe Orduno Park
- San Judas Tadeo Church
- Main Street storse
- Town Hall
- Money Exchange Building
- Hospitals
- Parque de La Amistad
- Park
- El Sol Mark
- Padilla
- Police Office
- Walmart
- King Market



PREFERRED PUBLIC ART TYPOLOGIES - "ARTE EN LA CALLE"



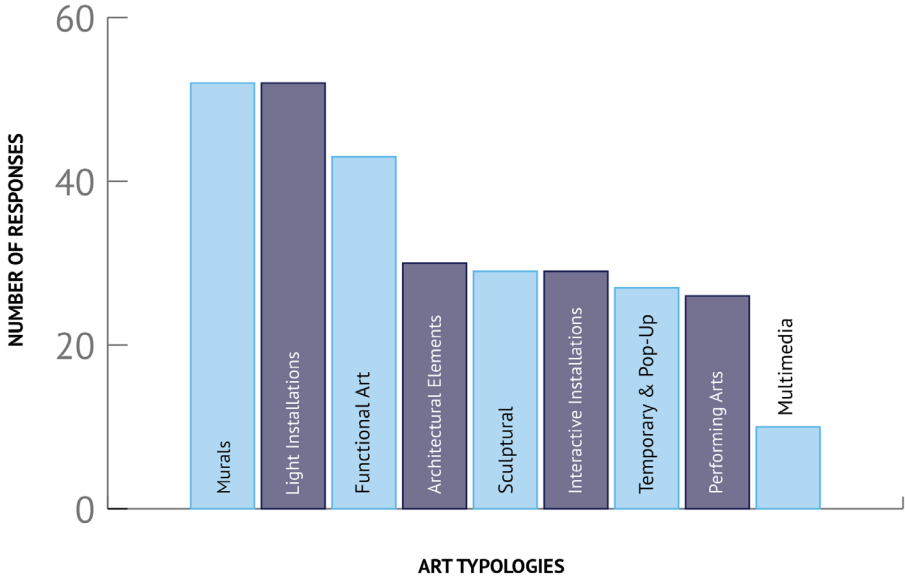
**What types of Public Art would you like to see more of?**

- The top responses were:
- Lighted Installations - 72 votes
  - Interactive Art - 52 votes
  - Murals - 49 votes

# Community Survey

The community survey was open to the public online from April 24, 2025 until May 30, 2025. The survey was also available on paper for those who preferred it. The survey was taken by 59 people online and 36 on paper. The results are summarized below.

PREFERRED PUBLIC ART TYPOLOGIES - COMMUNITY SURVEY

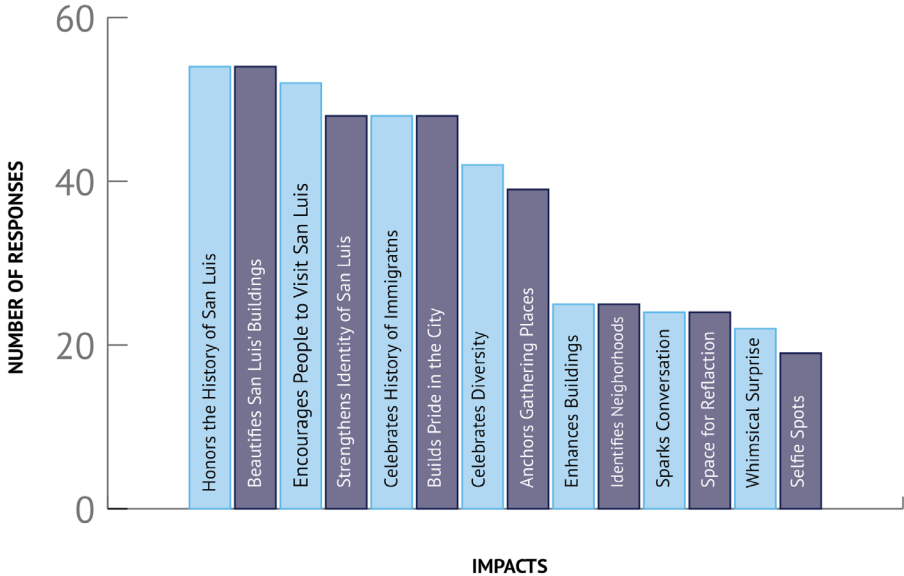


## What types of Public Art would you like to see more of?

The top responses were:

- Murals, with 52 votes
- Lighted Installations, with 52 votes
- Functional Art, with 43 votes, and,
- Architectural Elements, with 30 votes

WHAT IMPACT SHOULD PUBLIC ART HAVE ON A COMMUNITY?



## What impact should Public Art have in the Community?

The top responses were:

- “Beautifying San Luis,” with 54 votes
- “Honoring the History of San Luis,” with 54 votes
- “Encourages the People to Visit San Luis,” with 43 votes

## What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of San Luis?

The most common answers for this question were:

- The border
- Agriculture
- Culture
- Growth

Other answers include:

- People
- Farm Workers
- Veggie Planting
- Cesar Chavez
- Tranquility
- Family
- Change
- Friendship Park
- Sister city across the border
- Community
- Port of Entry
- Young population
- Rural area
- The heat and climate
- Safety of the city
- New construction set away from the city center
- Diverse political views
- Continuous growth
- Calm environment



## What city have you visited, or that you know of, has a notable public art program?

The most common answers for this question were:

- Yuma
- Mexico / Pueblos Magicos
- San Luis, Mexico

Other answers include:

- Tuscon
- Phoenix
- Puerto Vallarta
- Sedona
- Tempe
- Tolleson
- San Diego
- Scottsdale
- Guadalajara
- Oro Valley
- Los Angeles
- Las Vegas
- Seattle
- Gilbert
- Sacramento
- Coachella
- Algodones

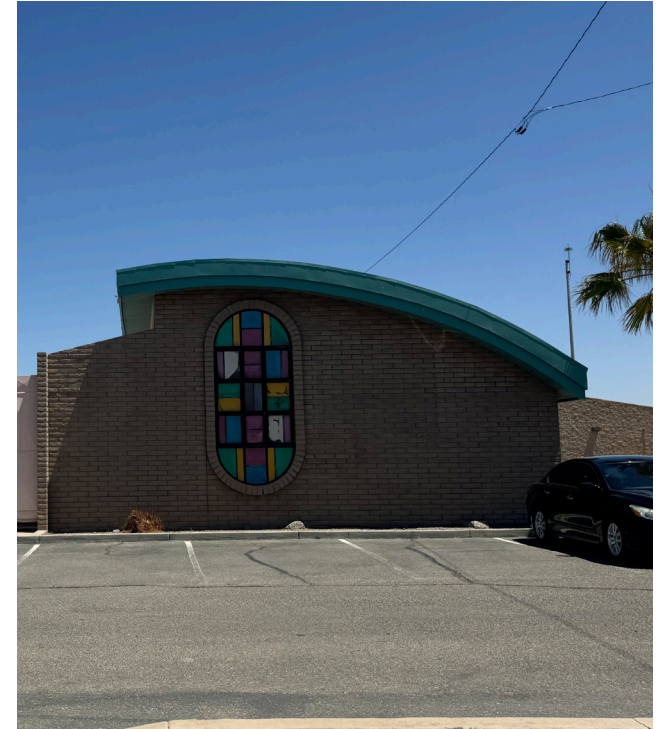
## What Locations in San Luis would be ideal for Public Art?

The most common answers for this question were:

- Main Street
- Parks
- Cultural Center
- Senior Center

Other answers include:

- The library
- Archibald Street
- Cesar Chavez Street
- City Hall
- Historic Buildings
- Recreational Areas
- The Port of Entry
- Williams Avenue
- Urtusuastegui Street
- River / Canal



# Stakeholder Engagement

Seven (7) members of the community were engaged in 30 minute one-on-one conversations with the planning consultants. Participants in these conversations included residents, workers, commission members, town leaders, and local business owners. The following are some themes from these meetings.

## 01 – Historic Buildings & Events

Many of the discussions had about the historic buildings and areas of San Luis largely centered around Main Street, Urtuzuastegui “U” Street, and the two buildings that center around Cesar Chavez, his union movement, and his death. The Port of Entry was also brought up in discussions and how the relationship between the United States and Mexico, and the opening of the port, plays a large role in the development and history of the City of San Luis.

## 02 – Successes & Challenges of Historic Preservation & Revitalization

Stakeholders believe that the community would be open and receptive to proposed historic preservation efforts as long as the reasons for undertaking a project are explained and thorough plans for project execution are presented before a project begins. It is hoped that any preservation efforts would benefit the community by way of economic improvements and increased tourism. Concerns about funding for city-wide projects as well as the funding for rehabilitation projects were brought up, as well as concerns that there will be varying public opinions regarding any potential projects.

## 03 – Values in Public Art

Stakeholders hope that any future public art projects should reflect the local culture (Hispanic and agricultural themes), family, unity, and the relationship between the US and Mexico. The hope is also that the art will inspire reflection, pride, and inclusion through murals, metalwork, and painted benches. Stakeholders believe that education and promotion are needed to gain public understanding and support.

### Historic Locations

- Border Port
- Main Street
- Cesar Chavez Hall
- Joe Orduño Park

### Public Art Vision Goals

- Enhance public spaces
- Bring the community together
- Preserve history of San Luis
- Opportunities for children and families
- Keep San Luis relevant
- Attract new businesses
- Improve public perception







## CHAPTER 04

# COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION

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Within this chapter are the methodology and research methods used to conduct a preliminary historic survey as well as the results of the survey and recommendations for future work. This survey is meant to act as a starting point for the City of San Luis to plan future work to advance the community's historic preservation goals.

## What is a Historic Resource Survey?

A historic resource is an aspect of architecture that is valued or is a significant representation of a culture or community's history. These resources can be tangible things, such as buildings, landscapes, sites, structures, objects, or districts, or they can be intangible, such as cultural practices like art, music, and religion.

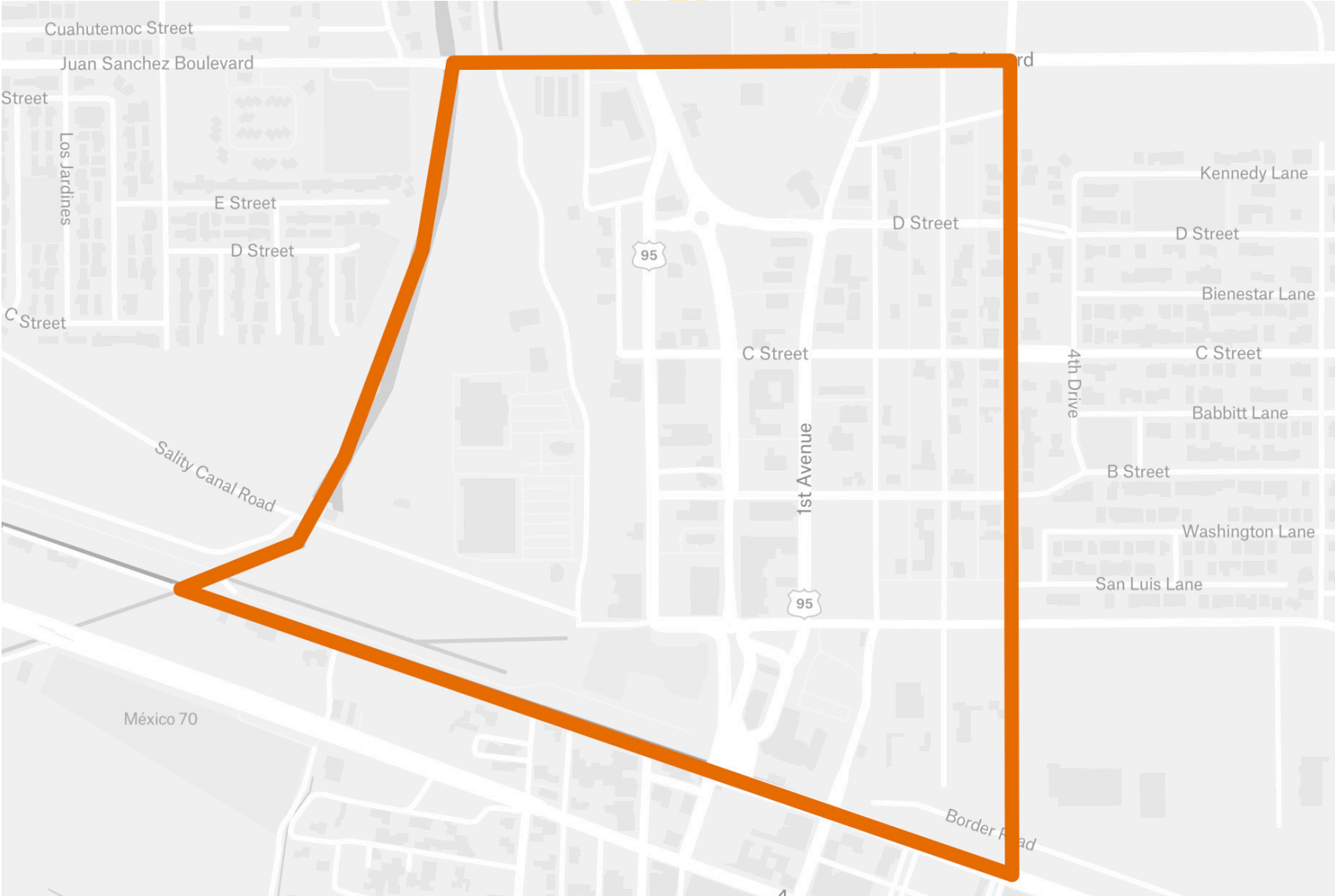
A historic resource survey is the investigation and documentation of these significant pieces of architecture. Documentation methods include photo documentation, sketches, field notes, and conducting historical research into a specific property or neighborhood. Historic resource surveys are often undertaken to not only identify and create an inventory of historic properties and resources within an area, but also to provide insight into a community's past, answer questions about a community's history and development, and to also identify the significant subsections of a neighborhood to determine boundaries for historic districts.

## Methodology

To conduct this survey, the planning team first defined a project area. The boundary was determined after discussions between City Staff and the Designing Local team. Ultimately, the survey area is bordered by East Cesar Chavez Boulevard to the north, the irrigation canal to the west, the United States-Mexico border to the south, and North 4th Avenue to the east. From the predetermined project boundary, the project area was narrowed down even further based on conversations with city leadership and stakeholders. It was determined that many believe that the most historically significant area of San Luis was located adjacent to Port of Entry 1, so the final survey area is bound by Urtuzuastegui "U" Street to the south, Main Street to the west, 2nd Avenue to the east, and D Street to the north.

Once the project area was set, we created a list of properties eligible for the survey. Using the Yuma County GIS Map and data from the Yuma County Tax Assessor's website, we identified properties over 50 years old, as required by the National Park Service, meaning any eligible property needs to be built before January 1, 1976. A separate list of properties between 40-50 years old was also created for future consideration and can be found in the Appendix. Those properties that are at least 50 years old were documented and mapped using Felt, an online mapping software to identify any potential historic districts that could be further defined through a local historic preservation zoning ordinance or even a national historic district.

# Survey Area Map



## Surveyed Properties

Address	Construction Date	Resource Type
503 N Main Street	1964	Retail
522 N Main Street	1962	Retail
534 N Main Street	1962	Retail
541 N Main Street	1963	Retail
542 N Main Street	1959	Retail
588 N Main Street	1970	Retail
654 N Main Street	1969	Retail
661 N Main Street	1969	Retail
554 N William Brooks	1964	Retail
522 N Cesar Chavez St	1960	House
532 N Cesar Chavez St	1973	House
537 N Cesar Chavez St	1961	Professional
543 N Cesar Chavez St	1972	Mobile
610 N Cesar Chavez St	1972	House
617 N Cesar Chavez St	1974	Mobile
618 N Cesar Chavez St	1971	House
643 N Cesar Chavez St	1972	House

Address	Construction Date	Resource Type
644 N Cesar Chavez St	1949	Mobile
655 N Cesar Chavez St	1961	House
656 N Cesar Chavez St	1945	Mobile
667 N Cesar Chavez St	1952	Mobile
673 N Cesar Chavez St	1974	House
684 N Cesar Chavez St	1940	House
707 N Cesar Chavez St	1940	House
713 N Cesar Chavez St	1967	House
720 N Cesar Chavez St	1957	House
733 N Cesar Chavez St	1973	Mobile
738 N Cesar Chavez St	1960	Mobile
741 N Cesar Chavez St	1971	Event Space
746 N Cesar Chavez St	1972	House
772 N Cesar Chavez St	1975	House
837 N Cesar Chavez St	1971	Mobile
859 N Cesar Chavez St	1975	Restaurant
508 N Archibald St	1973	Retail

Address	Construction Date	Resource Type
552 N Archibald St	1967	House
576 N Archibald St	1973	House
710 Urtuzuastegui St	1950	Retail
722 Urtuzuastegui St	1950	Retail
533 N 2nd Ave	1974	Mobile
629 N 2nd Ave	1970	Professional
643 N 2nd Ave	1970	Retail
655 N 2nd Ave	1971	Restaurant
773 N 2nd Ave	1974	House
823 N 2nd Ave	1950	House
835 N 2nd Ave	1940	House
847 N 2nd Ave	1967	Retail
860 E B St	1974	House
865 E B St	1971	House
871 E B St	1971	House
879 E B St	1971	Restaurant
859 E C St	1974	House

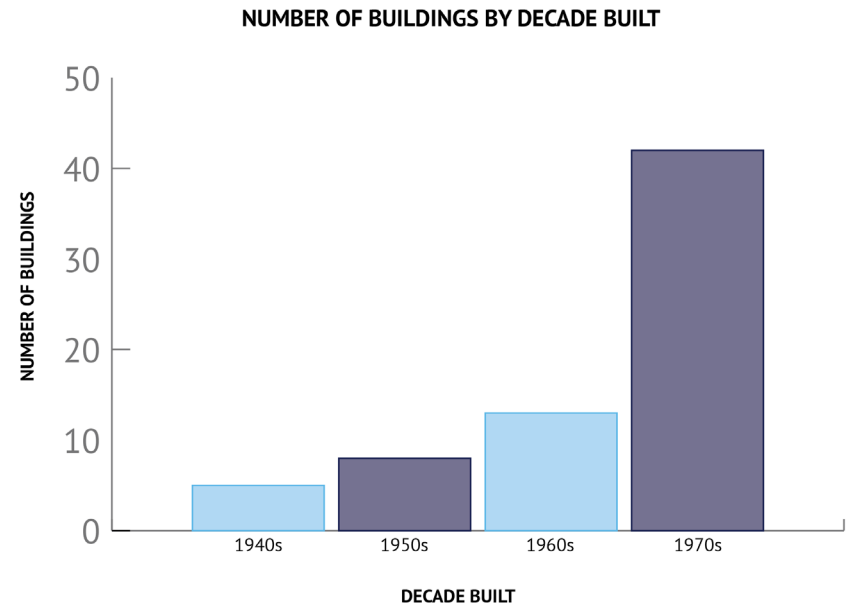
Address	Construction Date	Resource Type
840 E D St	1971	Restaurant
863 E D St	1971	Home
890 E D St	1965	Mobile
875 E E St	1974	Mobile
612 N 4th Ave	1975	House
628 N 4th Ave	1973	House
636 N 4th Ave	1974	House
648 N 4th Ave	1971	House
652 N 4th Ave	1974	House
658 N 4th Ave	1973	House
664 N 4th Ave	1972	House
676 N 4th Ave	1974	House
683 N 4th Ave	1973	House
700 N 4th Ave	1974	House
718 N 4th Ave	1974	House
756 N 4th Ave	1972	House
844 N 4th Ave	1956	House

## Survey Results Summary

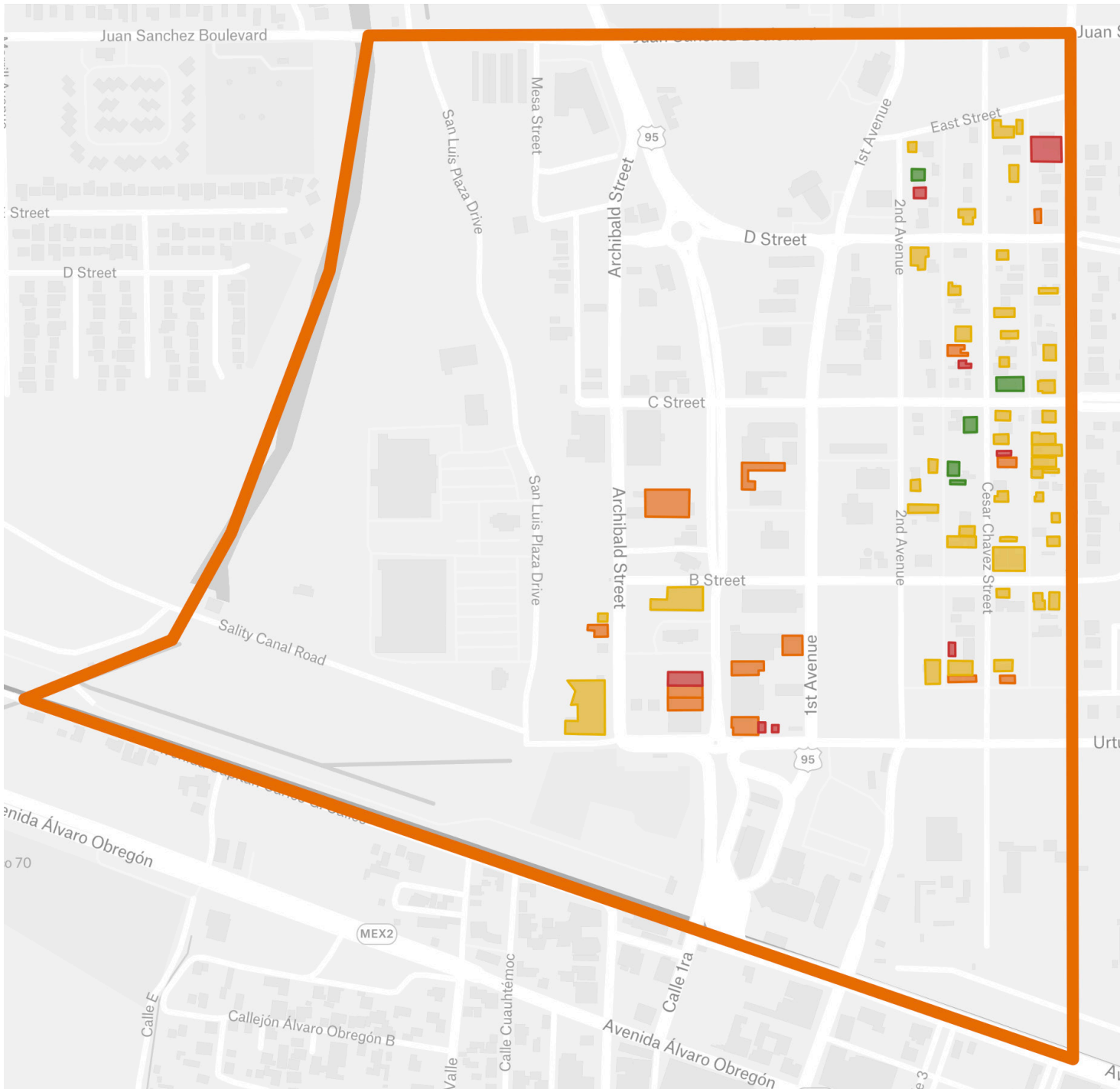
Within the survey boundary, 68 properties were found to be eligible for survey based on the 50 year minimum age requirement as set by the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Office. The majority of these buildings were located on Main Street and North Cesar Chavez Street. The other eligible properties were located on North 4th Avenue, North 2nd Street, Archibald Street, North William Brooks Street, Urtuzuastegui “U” Street, B Street, C Street, and D Street. 47 of the buildings are residential, with 36 single family homes and 11 mobile homes. The other 21 buildings are primarily used for retail or restaurant services, with some professional businesses and one event space. The commercial buildings are found primarily on N Main Street, Urtuzuastegui “U” Street and Archibald Street, closer to the Port of Entry, with six (6) others located on N 2nd Avenue, B Street, and D Street.

Five (5) buildings were built in the 1940s. All five (5) of these properties are found in the residential portion of the surveyed area along North Cesar Chavez Street and N 2nd Ave. Eight (8) buildings were built in the 1950s. Three (3) are residential properties along Cesar Chavez Street, and the other five (5) are commercial buildings found in the commercial area of downtown. 13 buildings were built in the 1960s. Eight (8) of those buildings are found in the commercial area of downtown San Luis on Archibald and Main Streets, and the remaining three (3) are found in the residential area surveyed along North Cesar Chavez Street. 42 buildings surveyed were built in the 1970s. Three (3) of those buildings were built in the commercial area on Archibald and Main Streets, and the remaining 16 are found in the residential area of the project.

The prominent style of architecture in the project area is Vernacular with characteristics of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture. Features of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture are low-pitched roofs finished with red tile and little to no eave overhang, arches at the windows, doors and porches, walls finished with stucco, and asymmetrical building plans. The buildings in the commercial area along Main Street and “U” Street near the port of entry are examples of early-twentieth century commercial buildings.



▲ GRAPH INDICATING NUMBER OF BUILDINGS BY THE DECADE THEY WERE BUILT, WITH THE NUMBER OF BUILDINGS IN THE 1970S BEING THE MOST COMMON.



**LEGEND**

**CONSTRUCTION DATE**

- 1940 - 1949
- 1950 - 1959
- 1960 - 1969
- 1970 - 1979

Survey Area Boundary

# REVITALIZATION RECOMMENDATIONS



This section outlines several community revitalization tools that can enhance and highlight the built environment in San Luis broadly. These recommendations support the City's goal of utilizing and advocating for the existing building stock while still providing opportunities for new development in the community.

## Adaptive Reuse as a Development Strategy

One tool often utilized to revive an underutilized district or neighborhood is adaptive reuse. Adaptive reuse is the practice of refurbishing and restoring a historic building to be used in a way that it was not originally intended to be used. On a small scale, this could be the conversion of a single dwelling home into a medical office, a retail space, or even a coffee shop. On a larger scale, this could be the conversion of an old warehouse space into a multi-unit apartment building.

### Benefits of Adaptive Reuse

#### Eco-Friendly Construction

There's a saying that goes, "The greenest building is the one already built." By cutting back on the mining & transportation of new materials for construction and reducing the number of demolitions to make room for new buildings, whether they're sustainably designed or not, carbon emissions are reduced. Reusing materials also cuts down on demolition waste that often lessens the amount of materials that head to a landfill.

#### Revitalized Communities

By participating in adaptive reuse practices, communities have the chance to revitalize their blighted areas and buildings. Through preserving historic buildings, communities can retain their local character and identity while creating new opportunities. These historic buildings, even after being adapted into new use, have the opportunity to be a tangible example of the priorities of preserving culture and history in the community. By investing in structures that already exist, a community can create a distinct sense of place while also investing in newer developments, continuous change, and growth.

## Adaptive Reuse Case Studies



### Roosevelt Row Arts District

The Roosevelt Row Historic District is a historic neighborhood that sits on the northern edge of downtown Phoenix, Arizona. This was one of the first suburbs of the city and indicated the beginning of northward settlement of the city. The neighborhood was recognized as a historic district by the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. The City then established the Roosevelt Neighborhood Special Planning District within the historic district in 1989 to preserve the built environment and promote adaptive reuse in the area in order to revive dilapidated buildings. Today, it is home to art galleries, restaurants, bars, boutique shops, and apartments, and developers are drawn to the area because of the history and the art and artists that have made it home.



### The Farish House

Located in Roosevelt Row in Phoenix, Arizona, the Farish House is a Victorian style home that was built in 1899. It was the home to the first City Manager of the City of Phoenix, William Farish. It was a single family home before it eventually was converted into a restaurant. It was first home to a tavern called the Roosevelt Tavern that closed in 2012 before remaining vacant for many years. It was purchased and restored by Chef Lori Hassler to bring back the original charm of the home. Hassler restored the floors and trim, added vintage furniture, art, & tapestries. It reopened in 2019 and now operates as a French restaurant, named after the original home name.



### Songbird Cafe

Also located in Roosevelt Row in Phoenix, Arizona, the Songbird Cafe is located in a historic house reportedly built in 1904. It was a single family home until it was converted for commercial use. The Songbird Cafe opened in 2012 and is a spot for the community to grab a drink, work, or gather with friends and family. The Cafe also hosts musicians, poets, writers, and more in the cafe and outside where the front porch serves as a stage.

## Facade Improvements

The revitalization of historic neighborhoods and commercial areas often starts with renovations or improvements to a single building's facade. These changes can be as simple as a fresh coat of paint or a new sign, and can be as complex as returning a storefront to its original design after years of modernization. As simple or complex as these updates can be, facade improvements often start a chain reaction that inspire other building owners following suit, creating a vibrant and welcoming commercial area or neighborhood with economic benefits for a community. These benefits include attracting new shoppers to the area, profit increases for businesses, and filling vacant storefronts with new businesses. Seeing the success of a renewed and vibrant commercial area has the potential to attract new business owners to fill vacant storefronts to be a part of the action, so that they in turn could be just as successful and contribute to the ongoing regrowth of the area.

Facade improvement programs can be created at a municipal level voluntarily as part of a downtown revitalization strategy or historic preservation plan. These plans can create incentives such as matching grants, loans, tax incentives, or providing design assistance, which encourages community participation.



## More In Depth Survey and Property Evaluation

The survey conducted was a preliminary survey that identified potential historic structures and historic districts. The only area of history that was analyzed was the age of the buildings, identifying the buildings that were built in the year 1975 or earlier. It was based on this information, the local significance, and the clustering of these buildings that preliminary structures and districts were identified. Additional evaluation and documentation should be done to inventory any historic properties in San Luis by using the State of Arizona’s Historic Property Inventory Form, found [HERE](#) on the Arizona State Parks and Trails website. When determining eligibility for a site or district to join a National, State, or Local register, it is important to evaluate the building or district’s significance and history integrity. More information on significance and integrity evaluation can be found below.

### Significance and Integrity

When surveying a historic building, another important aspect of the survey is determining a building’s historic significance and whether or not the building retains any kind of historic integrity. Significance and integrity often go hand-in-hand, as a building hoping to qualify for the National Register of Historic Places must have historic significance that falls under one or more criteria category, AND retain historic integrity to convey that significance.

#### Significance

A building must be determined to be significant under one or more of the four National Register Criteria, defined by the National Park Service, to be eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The Criteria categories are:

- Criteria A: A property must be associated with one or more events important in the defined historic context.
- Criteria B: A property must be associated with a person significant to America’s past.

- Criteria C: A property must display distinctive characteristics in its architecture or construction, be that related to artistic value or being the work of a master.
- Criteria D: A property must have information that contributes to the understanding of human history or pre-history.

There are other criteria that could be applicable in San Luis, such as moved buildings, religious properties, cemeteries, and reconstructed properties.

#### Integrity

Integrity, as defined by the National Park Service, is the ability of a property to convey its significance. There are seven aspects used to evaluate if a property has retained its historic integrity. A property that retains its integrity will possess several of the aspects, though it is sometimes a subjective judgment.

- Location: the place where the historic property is located was constructed or where the historic event occurred
- Design: the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of the property
- Setting: the physical environment of a historic property
- Materials: the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property
- Workmanship: the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or pre-history
- Feeling: a property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time
- Association: the direct link between an important historic event or person and historic property

# Local vs State vs National Designations

Buildings and districts with historic significance and integrity can be designated on the Federal, State, or Local historic register. This page breaks down the differences between what being designated on these historic registers means for a property owner and the building. It is also worth noting that Federal and State governments do not dictate local preservation policy. Despite the perception, decisions around development intensity or maintaining existing character ultimately rest at the local level.



## 01

### Federal

- Designation through the National Park Service on the National Register of Historic Places
- Recognizes the historic significance
- Provides some protection from federally funded projects
- Doesn't restrict alterations or new developments unless federal funds or federal historic tax credits are being used
- Eligible for Federal & State Historic Tax Credits
- Designation as a Historic District at the Federal level can serve as a marketing tool through branding and as a draw for tourism.



## 02

### State

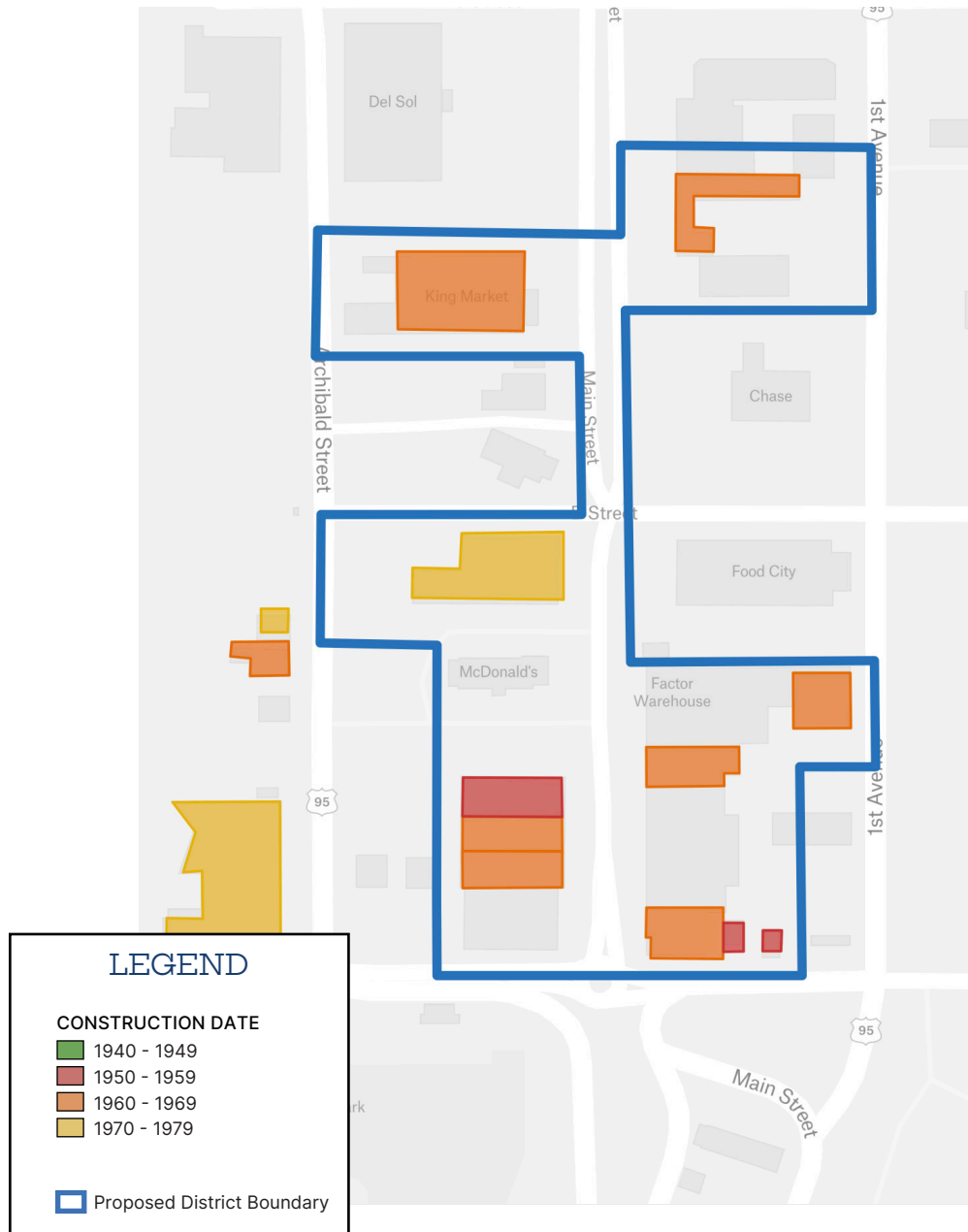
- Designation through Arizona State Parks and Trails on the Arizona State Register of Historic Places
- Managed by state registers, likely with the State Historic Preservation Office
- Eligible for state funding, grants, tax credits, etc.
- Meant to follow any state government actions, ordinances, policy, etc.



## 03

### Local

- Designation through local historic preservation ordinances or zoning laws
- Protects the historic character of a district to maintain appearance and architectural integrity
- Protects properties from incompatible alterations to exteriors, demolition, and incompatible new construction, as well as requiring the work to be reviewed and approved by a local historic commission through a local design review process
- Some incentives and/or financial assistance, if available, at the local level
- Regulation of what property owners can and cannot do based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation through Design Guidelines



## Historic District on Main Street

Based on the survey, a potential historic district could be identified using the buildings in the commercial downtown area of San Luis, bound by C Street to the north, North William Brooks Avenue to the east, Urtuzuastegui “U” Street to the south, and Archibald Street to the west. This area was primarily developed in the 1950s-early 70s, during the population boom when San Luis really started to grow in population.

26 buildings are within this boundary, and of those buildings, 10 would be considered contributing within this period of significance:

- 710 and 722 Urtuzuastegui “U” Street
- 503, 522, 534, 541, 542, 588, 654, and 661 Main Street

This district may be eligible under Criteria A: properties that are associated with events that have made contributions to broad patterns of our history. This area is a collection of buildings that signify the beginning of commercial growth and development in San Luis as the city became a proper township.

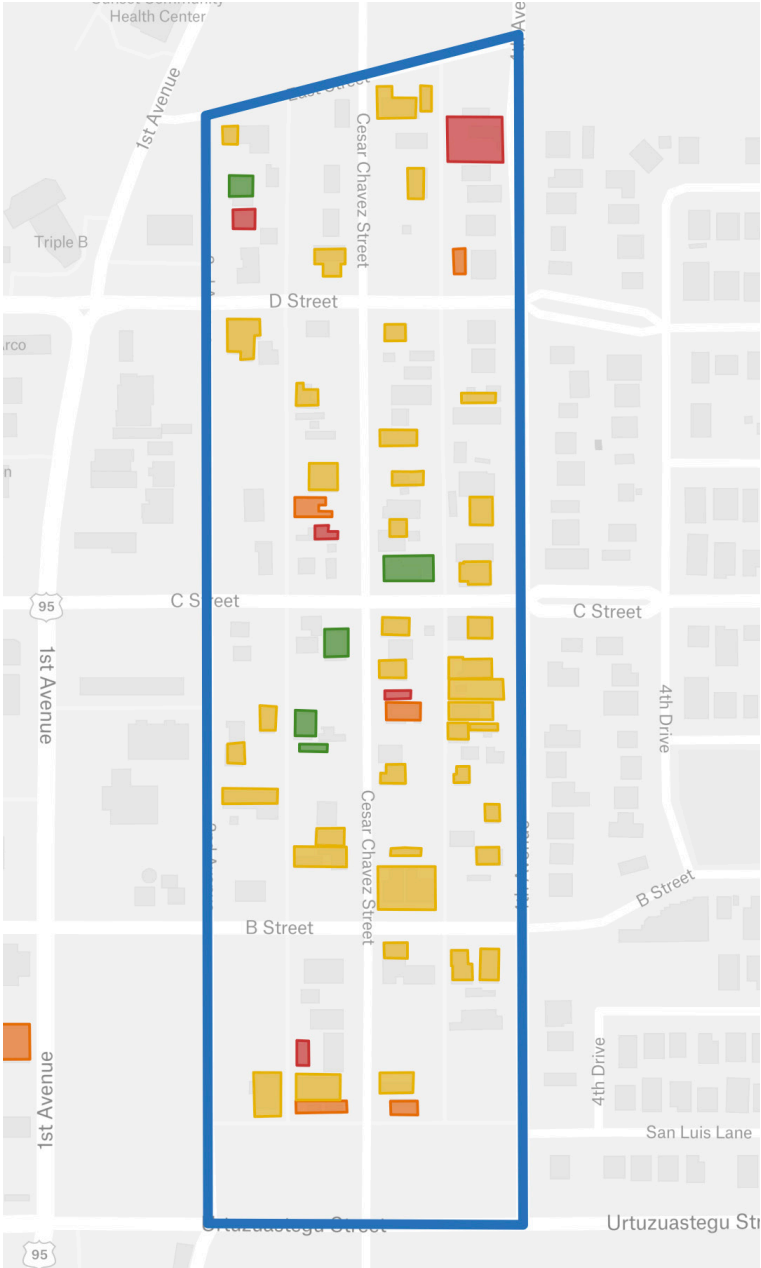
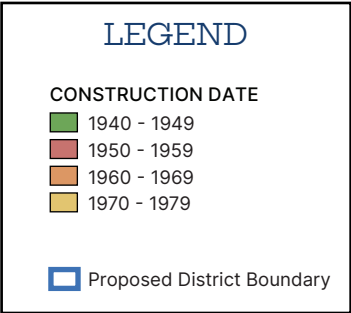
The buildings within this area along Urtuzuastegui “U” Street are two vernacular rectangular commercial buildings with features similar to those of false-front buildings. These buildings are one-story in height with a flat roof, but the front facade has a parapet that extends above the building’s roof line, giving it a false sense of being taller. The parapets on these buildings feature signs advertising the businesses at these locations the full height of the parapet. False-front commercial buildings have a lot of the same features as these two buildings, however, traditional false-front facades have front gable roofs, where these buildings do not.

This area also features early-twentieth century commercial buildings typical of the time period along Main Street. These buildings use lighter materials, have flush and/or slightly recessed entrances, large glass storefronts, and little to no ornamentation.

### Historic District on North Cesar Chavez Street

A potential residential historic district was identified on the east side of the survey area. Within this potential district, 51 properties were determined to be historic and being at least 50 years old on North Cesar Chavez Street and North 2nd Avenue between East Street and Urtuzuastegui "U" Street. These properties range in construction from 1940 to 1975 and are all residential, single dwelling homes. The buildings on this street are primarily residential with some commercial buildings on the corners of the blocks. As a historic district, the district would be eligible under Criteria A: properties that are associated with events that have made contributions to broad patterns of our history. This district contains a collection of buildings that are examples of the homes built during the establishment and continuous development. The architecture in this area is one-story homes or mobile homes, and predominantly Spanish Colonial Revival styled, or vernacular with features of Spanish Colonial architecture. These features include tiled roofs, stucco'd walls, low pitched roofs, and arches.

Through the new City-proposed mixed-use zoning overlay, a pathway can be made to gradually introduce adaptive reuse to this area, which, as previously mentioned, is largely residential. The new zoning overlay could allow the residential properties within this area to remain as residential single family dwellings, or the owners could make the decision to change the use of the building from residential to commercial, and adapt the space for a new commercial use, such as a bookstore, or coffee shop.





## Individual Historic Nomination: 707 North Cesar Chavez Street

An individual listing on a local or state registration could be considered for 707 North Cesar Chavez Street under Criterion B: Significance of a Person with Criteria Consideration G: Properties that have achieved significance within the last fifty years. The building at 707 North Cesar Chavez street was built in 1940, with additions or alterations in the early 1970s, making it eligible by age standards. For the Criteria of Significance, this property could be eligible through Criterion B, Significance of a Person. This was the home of Doña Maria Hau, a farmworker, active participant in the activities of the UFW, and friend of Cesar Chavez. It is also the location of the death of Cesar Chavez, after he and other UFW leaders met to debrief after Chavez testified in court against a lawsuit, directly correlated to his work with the UFW and working for farmworkers rights. This property had no significance prior to the evening before and the death of Chavez, but Chavez's death was felt across Arizona, California, and the rest of the country, making it potentially eligible through Criteria Consideration G: Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Last Fifty Years.

Agriculture is one of the primary industries in San Luis, and Cesar Chavez and his work with the UFW made a direct impact on the people in San Luis, and the greater Yuma area. It is because of this that the building at 707 North Cesar Chavez Street has a good chance of being nominated to a Local or State Historic Register, with the possibility of nomination at the National level.

### Individual Historic Nomination: 741 North Cesar Chavez Street

An individual listing on a local or state register could be considered for 741 North Cesar Chavez Street, more locally known as Cesar Chavez Hall. This building was built in 1971, making it eligible by age standards. For the Criteria of Significance, this property could be eligible through Criterion C: displaying distinctive characteristics in architecture & construction. This building is an excellent example of Spanish Eclectic style architecture. Most notable architectural characteristics displayed on this building are the low-pitched, red rounded tile roof with little to no overhang, the covered front porch with arched entries, and decorative window grille covers. Similar to 707 North Cesar Chavez Street, the relationship between the building and Cesar Chavez was likely established after the death of Chavez in the early 1990s. It is in this way that the property also has potential to be eligible through Criteria Consideration G: Properties that Have Achieved Significance Within the Last Fifty Years.

Today, this building is designated as a meeting place for events such as remembrance days for Cesar Chavez, support meetings for groups like Narcotics and Alcoholics Anonymous, lending to its significance to the community.



# Funding Opportunities

## 01 – Historic Tax Credits

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One of the concerns had by stakeholders was about increasing costs to manage and maintain historic buildings along Main Street. One of the ways these property owners could look into funding their rehabilitation projects would be considering historic tax credits. There are two Historic Tax Credit programs that property owners in Arizona can apply to earn funds for appropriate rehabilitation work: the Federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit and the Arizona State Historic Property Tax program.

Properties applying for the Federal Historic Tax Credit Program must be 50 years or older, and must be eligible for individual listing or contribute to a historic district on the National Register of Historic Preservation. If a property meets the criteria for evaluation, is the right age, and retains enough historic integrity and significance, the owner is eligible to receive a 20% income tax credit after the rehabilitation project is completed, so long as the scope of work adheres to best practices put forth by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Applications are then reviewed by staff members of the National Park Service and the State Historic Preservation Office. ([Source](#)) To receive Federal Historic Tax Credits, the building owner/developer must first prove that the building has retained its historic integrity and significance. The project scope of work must then be provided to show that as little historic fabric will be demolished, and any new development does not detract attention from the existing building.

The Arizona State Historic Property Tax program is managed by the State Historic Preservation Office and offers a reduction in state property taxes for eligible property owners. This program is limited to non-income producing properties, and those who apply are considered eligible must then enter into a 15-year agreement with the state, agreeing to maintain the property and to preserve the integrity of its historic features, materials, appearance, workmanship, and environment. The program reduces property taxes between 35-45%, but the figure depends on assessments specific to the area, and questions can be answered by the Yuma County assessor's office. ([Source](#))

## 02 – Certified Local Government Grant

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Certified Local Government (CLG) Grants are only available to qualified CLGs. These funds come from the U.S. Department of the Interior's Historic Preservation Fund (HPF), which is administered by the National Park Service. These grants are reserved for historic preservation planning projects, such as historic surveys, and often vary in award amount given. For more information, visit the link [HERE](#).

### 03 – Arizona Preservation Foundation Jumpstart Grant

This grant helps non-profit preservation organizations “jumpstart” the historic preservation efforts in their communities. This grant can be applied for at any time and can be applied for 2x per calendar year. This grant provides funds up to \$2,000. It could be used to help kickstart a new non-profit organization after formation or smaller restoration and rehabilitation projects.

[\(Source\)](#)

### 04 – Backing Historic Small Restaurants Grant

The National Trust for Historic Places has partnered with American Express to supply \$50,000 in grant money to support historic small restaurants. The owners of these restaurants must apply for the grant themselves, and the restaurant must make a positive impact on the community, contribute to the history and/or identity of the surrounding community, have a compelling historic or cultural significance narrative, tell a story about cuisine and community, and be disproportionately affected by economic hardship. The aim of the grant is to help business owners improve their businesses and continue to positively contribute to their community.

[\(Source\)](#)

### 05 – Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Brownfields Assistance Grant

The Arizona Department of Environmental Quality Brownfields Assistance Grant is aimed to help local governments, non-profits, and other organizations revitalize abandoned or underutilized properties where clean up is complicated due to hazardous materials, mine-scarred land, or leftover petroleum. Eligible properties must be an underutilized commercial or industrial site, have redevelopment potential, and have complications in the clean up efforts.

[\(Source\)](#)

## Future Considerations

A historic architectural resource survey is an ongoing endeavor to ensure that a city has the most up-to-date inventory of their historic structures. Within the survey area, it is determined that there are 35 buildings within the final survey area that would be eligible for investigation if a survey were to be completed by San Luis in 10 years. Any potential historic district eligible to be on the National Register of Historic Places could expand or adjust each time the survey is updated to include newly eligible buildings.

Additional future historic preservation initiatives that San Luis could consider would include creating a local historic preservation ordinance, becoming a Certified Local Government, joining the Arizona Downtown Alliance Main Street program, and recommending State or Federal Historic Tax Credits to property owners.

## Joining the Arizona Downtown Alliance Main Street Program

The Arizona Downtown Alliance Main Street Program is a program that helps support communities through a four-point approach. This four-point approach looks to support preservation efforts in communities through Design, Organization, Promotion, and Economic Development. The Arizona Downtown Alliance program provides communities with technical assistance, networking opportunities, information, and other services to help communities revitalize their historic downtowns and neighborhoods. Main Street America, the national Main Street organization, offers competitive grants for communities within the Main Street Program.

[\(Source\)](#)

## Additional Historic Preservation Overlay

A new mixed-use zoning overlay is being proposed by the City of San Luis to steer away from single use zoning areas throughout the City. An additional historic district overlay could be built into the City Code to identify the potential historic districts identified on the following pages. A historic zoning overlay is a tool that is used to identify specific boundaries in which additional regulations would be enforced on top of the base zoning rules. A historic preservation zoning overlay often goes hand in hand with historic preservation ordinances, in that they are local measures taken to preserve a historic area from inappropriate alterations and new construction that does not honor the existing character.



## Creating a Local Historic Preservation Ordinance

A local Historic Preservation Ordinance is local legislation that protects historic buildings, sites, and districts from demolition or remodeling projects that do not do the area justice. These ordinances are part of a city's zoning ordinance, or historic preservation overlay, that identifies the boundaries of any historic districts, which protects historic features from zoning and development laws or projects. Ordinances also establish designation procedures and create a design review board or preservation commission to review the resources up for designation or renovation. The end goal of Historic Preservation Ordinances are to protect historic resources and ensure that any changes or new developments complement the existing character of the community. A draft historic preservation ordinance can be found in the Appendix.

## Becoming a Certified Local Government

The Certified Local Government (CLG) Program is run with cooperation between the state and local governments and Federal partners to promote historic preservation across the country. By becoming a CLG, the local government and community make a commitment to historic preservation in their city and commit to adhere to national standards of practice in order to preserve, protect, and advocate for cultural heritage across the country. No matter the size of the community, any local government can become a CLG, whether it's a small village or a major urban center. Once approved, a CLG has the opportunity to compete for CLG grants.

[\(Source\)](#)



PLACEMAKING





## What is Creative Placemaking?

Creative placemaking is the bridge between art, artists, art organizations, and the built environment that helps transform communities into vibrant, beautiful places. By weaving arts into revitalization programs, placemaking can be the physical expression of what a community is, what it represents, what it strives to be, and how it wants to be experienced. Through projects such as streetscape or building improvements, community programming, site fixtures and furnishings, and public art, placemaking supports a local community's efforts to create an enhanced quality of life, create a distinct sense of place, and create opportunities for current residents to embrace and enjoy the lively community in which they live.

## Placemaking Types



### Parklets & Seating Areas

Parklets are sidewalk extensions that are installed in parking lanes and use several parking spaces to provide more space and amenities for people using the street. Parklets typically extend out at the level of the sidewalk to the width of the adjacent parking space, providing a designated seating area for public use, or for restaurants and bars to have additional seating for patrons. The benefit is that they don't disrupt foot or vehicular traffic and they create more lively streets.



### Food Truck Areas

Designated areas on streets, parking lots, or public spaces provide opportunities for food trucks or restaurant pop-ups to park, encouraging visitors to utilize existing public spaces. Food trucks offer low-cost entry into the food and beverage industry and create opportunities for these restaurateurs to bring their food and culture to the community. Additional seating options can be added to provide a space for visitors to stay and enjoy the space with their food.



### Alley Enhancements

Alleys are often a downtown's most underutilized asset, for these spaces can be vibrant spaces with seating, artwork, and other elements that can enhance a neighborhood. These alleys, when properly utilized, can also become destinations in their own right. They are low cost, easy to maintain, and can support nearby businesses, as long as services to adjacent buildings are not impacted.

### Creative Parking Lot Screens

Parking lot screens are a fundamental part of urban design that can be made of plant material, placemaking features, or public art. Parking lots can have a negative impact on streetscapes and can detract from a vibrant street life. Screens can be costly and require maintenance but they can also positively impact the street by dressing up the landscape or, in the case of plantings, provide greenery in otherwise dense urban areas.



### Existing Curb Extension Murals

Curb Extensions, or bump outs, are extensions of the curb that visually and physically narrow the roadway, creating safer and shorter crossings for pedestrians, and creating available space for street furniture, plantings, benches, and street trees. These can be created using low-cost materials, such as bollards or planters, and can be enhanced with murals. Painting murals in these bump outs gives local artists an opportunity to showcase their art in a highly visible location, create a sense of place and create local interest, and studies show that these murals painted on asphalt improve safety performance on the roads.

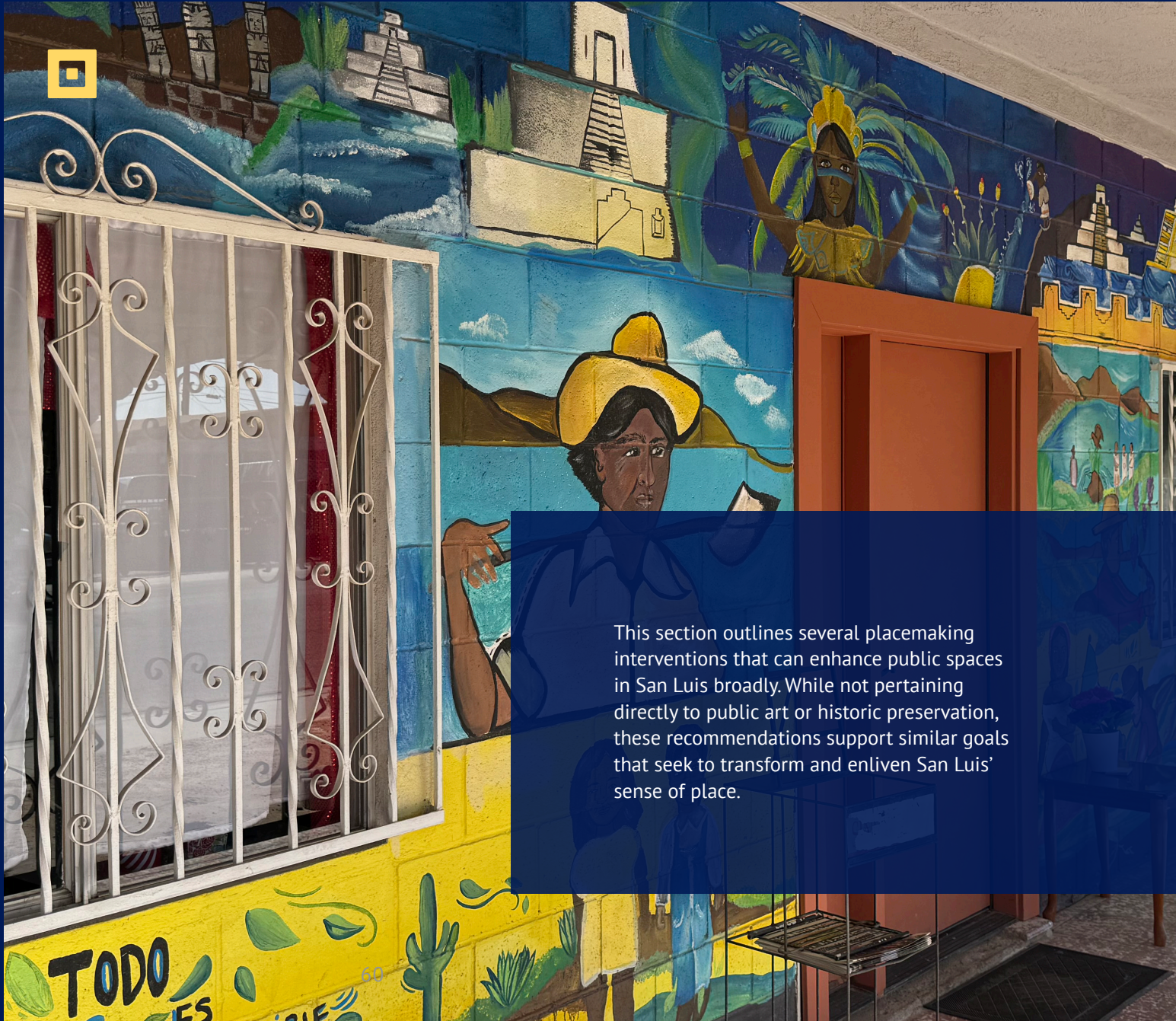


### Creative Crosswalks

By installing art treatments at intersections and pedestrian crossings, cities can create a highly visible, walkable, active, and shared use environment between vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Not only are these art-infused crosswalks more vibrant and create a lively intersection, but they are also more noticeable to drivers, improving safety performances, studies show.



# PLACEMAKING IDEAS



This section outlines several placemaking interventions that can enhance public spaces in San Luis broadly. While not pertaining directly to public art or historic preservation, these recommendations support similar goals that seek to transform and enliven San Luis' sense of place.



## Plaza

Central gathering plazas are ideal places for community events, gatherings, and public recreation. Transforming an underutilized space in downtown San Luis into a nimble setting for both events and everyday entertainment can maximize community programming year-round, in addition to providing an enhanced civic space that could provide dynamic opportunities for public art. This space could also help to spur the development of nearby real estate and encourage new businesses. Additionally, this space could create a gateway for visitors near the border crossing.



### CASE STUDY: HENDERSON WATER STREET (HENDERSON, NV)

- Plaza & Amphitheater
- Hosts festivals, concerts, sports watch parties, and other community related programs
- Located outside City Hall

## The Creation of an Arts Space Downtown

A multi-disciplinary space for visual and performing arts could transform San Luis' arts and culture landscape, as well as serve as a beacon for community members of all ages. Various scenarios should be considered in order to design a space that meets community needs. Programming supported by specific facility offerings could include a makerspace, visual arts studios, a black box theatre, multimedia studios, and beyond. San Luis would be a key driver of economic development in the community. This may be accomplished at a lesser cost to the city by partnering with a non-profit partner to program an empty, city-owned space, such as the municipal court building.



### CASE STUDY 1: WHAM! (SURPRISE, AZ)

- \$310,000 annual budget
- City-owned facility that is rented to WHAM! for \$1 annually
- Wide-ranging visual arts offerings
- Former health clinic turned arts facility

### CASE STUDY 2: OTIS S. JOHNSON CULTURAL ARTS CENTER (SAVANNAH, GA)

- Facility was funded through a Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax
- Two theatre facilities and visual arts studios
- Rental capacity for third party events





## Matching Mural Grant Program

In order to encourage the installation of privately-funded murals in the City of San Luis, the City should implement a one-to-one matching grant program for privately-funded murals on private property, up to \$5,000 per project, and up to \$60,000 annually. Murals on private property receiving grant dollars would need to be approved by the Economic Development Commission and San Luis City Council. As a kickstarter program, the Matching Mural Grant Program will be subject to annual review.

### CASE STUDY 1: STUART, FL

- 50% artwork reimbursement up to \$3,000 per project
- Funded through Community Redevelopment Area (CRA) funds, and administered by CRA Board
- Limited to eligible properties located with the CRA district

### CASE STUDY 2: FLAGSTAFF, AZ

- Grants of up to \$7,500 per project are available
- Funded through a Bed, Board, and Beverage excise tax and administered by the City's Beautification and Public Art Commission
- Murals and other beautification measures are eligible







CHAPTER 05

# PUBLIC ART

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## What is a Public Art Plan?

A Public Art Plan serves many purposes. It can be a roadmap for how to implement new and exciting public art projects; a menu of different public art typologies and approaches; and, above all, a snapshot of what the community desires for its public art to express, celebrate, and honor. The San Luis Historic Survey & Public Art Plan Outline is also a catalyst for collaboration and connection across City administration, neighborhoods, and cultures.



# STRATEGIC VISION



## **STRATEGIC VISION:**

San Luis' vision is for public art to be a vibrant reflection of our local cultures, celebrating our rich Hispanic and agricultural heritage, while embodying the shared spirit between the U.S. and Mexico. Public Art & Placemaking in San Luis will inspire reflection, instill community pride, and foster a deep sense of inclusion for all. We believe that meaningful public spaces can encourage a truly welcoming and dynamic place to live. A public art plan policy can be formalized by the City to steward and administer the public art and placemaking vision for the community. A draft public art policy can be found in the Appendix of the document.

## Funding Public Art

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In order to achieve the vision of the community for public art in San Luis, sustainable funding is needed. There are many options for funding a municipal Public Art Program and several factors were considered when determining the best mechanism for San Luis. Considering a single traditional funding mechanism would likely not yield the funds necessary to achieve the vision set forth in this Plan, therefore a series of funding mechanisms are recommended to establish a Program that has lasting impact.

## Funding Recommendations

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### General Fund Allocation

In order to jump start the program until permanent funding is secured, at minimum a General Fund Allocation of \$60,000 should be budgeted annually for each of the next 5 fiscal years to fund projects outlined above.

### Grants

Grant funding is just one of the many mechanisms available for funding public art. San Luis should look for grant opportunities that:

- Address several key areas identified in this Plan
- Focus on using public art to improve certain gathering nodes, such as plazas or pedestrian areas
- Build on existing philanthropic partnerships between the City and non-profit organizations

### Approach

Employing multiple funding options over time achieves a number of goals: provides funding in the early years of the program projecting success early in the Program's existence, engages the private development community, proposes a future percent for art in all large public projects, and recognizes potential contributions achievable through grant funding (many grants require a contribution, or matching dollars).

Having a multi-pronged approach shares responsibility for funding, and targets investment to well-used public spaces and to specific projects and makes the vision outlined in the Plan more likely to be achieved through a variety of partnerships.

## Establishing a Public Art Program

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In order to formally establish a public art program, San Luis may decide to create a Public Art Ordinance, which will formalize the following components necessary for a sustainable program. A Public Art Policy, which is not part of the Ordinance, is named in the Ordinance as the guiding document for public art processes and activities. Key staff to support the creation of the Ordinance include staff that would be facilitating the public art program, Planning staff, and City leadership.

### **Purpose and Vision**

The ordinance outlines the goals for public art, such as enhancing the aesthetic environment, promoting cultural understanding, fostering economic development, celebrating local identity and history, and enriching the lives of citizens.

### **Funding Mechanisms**

Clarity for public art funding. This section includes provisions for public art funds from private development, grants, donations, the general fund, or other sources. Additionally, the ordinance will establish a separate fund for public art, whose appropriate and inappropriate uses are outlined in detail. Finally, if a city is seeking percent for art funding (for capital projects and/or private development), this section will outline those elements.

### **Definition of Public Art**

The ordinance defines what qualifies as “public art,” often broadly to include sculptures, murals, integrated architectural elements, digital media, and even temporary installations or performances, while excluding things like mass-produced decorations or purely functional elements, including elements designed by architects.

### **Governing Body and Process**

If a governing body has not been previously established, the ordinance formalizes the official board or commission that advises on public art matters, including policy development, artist selection, and project approval. The ordinance also details the procedures for commissioning, acquiring, installing, and deaccessioning (removing) public art.

### **Criteria for Art and Donation Process**

This section establishes criteria for evaluating public art projects proposed for accession into the City’s Public Art Collection, which is also applicable to donation proposals.

## Public Art Approaches and Typologies

Public art projects can have a range of positive, impactful outcomes in public spaces and communities. This section outlines different types of public art interventions, engaging opportunities for public involvement in art, and strategies to select public art sites. ea quidelest dem aut as rero velloreiu.



## Public Art Approaches

### Interactive

Interactive art is not a medium but rather a way for artwork to be designed with people in mind. Artwork can be defined as interactive if it aims to create a dynamic experience, where the public are not just onlookers but they can experience the artwork through senses beyond sight. Interactive art may use traditional media or new technology but either way interaction is always at the center.



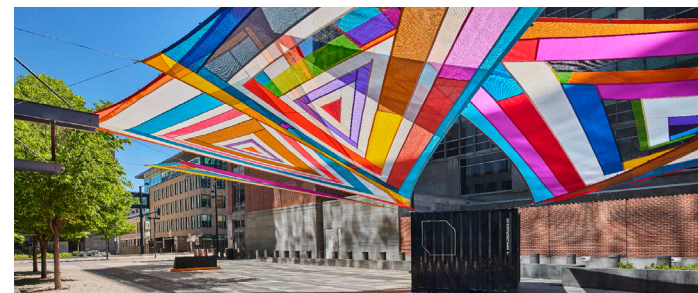
### Pop-Up & Temporary

Temporary art, though fleeting, can leave a lasting impact by bringing surprise and joy to unexpected places like construction sites, sidewalks, and empty storefronts. This accessible art form offers a low-cost, high-impact way to energize spaces, engage artists, and foster community collaboration.



### Site-Specific

Site-specific art is artwork that is aesthetically, conceptually, and/or thematically connected to the unique circumstances, culture, history, and environment of a particular site. Site-specific art can take many forms, and may be permanent or temporary. In this approach to art-making, artists extensively research the place, site, or area where the site-specific artwork will be placed. Site-specific art tells the story of a place through its surroundings, enriching the experience of the place itself.

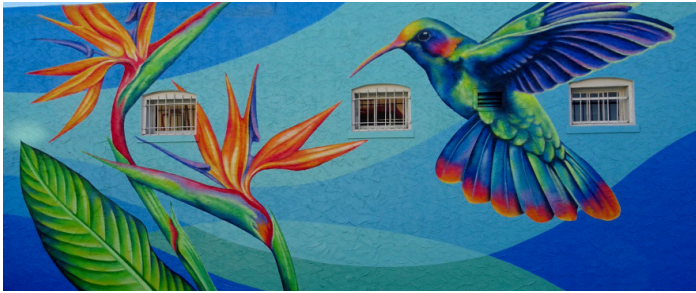


### Community Participatory

Participatory art involves the community or a public group in the process of art-making, as guided by an artist. Artwork that emerges from a participatory experience enhances and celebrates its process and participants over short or long periods of time. Collaborative art pieces engage people and generate feelings of community pride and ownership.



## Public Art Types



### Murals

While building a collection of permanent artworks is essential, incorporating ephemeral works like murals provides a valuable counterpoint. Murals offer a dynamic platform for showcasing a wide range of artistic voices within a shorter time frame. This approach not only diversifies the artistic landscape but also allows for a more inclusive representation, ensuring a broader spectrum of styles and perspectives.

### Functional Art

San Luis has a unique opportunity to transform ordinary infrastructure into distinctive works of art. Imagine artistic bike racks, benches, play areas, and even decorated storm drains. This approach offers an affordable way to create a major visual impact and enhance civic identity, turning everyday elements into memorable experiences for residents and visitors.

### Mosaics

Mosaics, with their versatile application and vibrant colors, enrich the built environment. From functional benches to intricate floor inlays and striking exterior installations, mosaics enhance spaces with artistic expression. Their durability and weather-resistance make them ideal for public art, adding a touch of timeless beauty and cultural richness.

### Textile

Textile art encompasses a vast spectrum, from intimate wall hangings to monumental installations that transform public spaces. These vibrant textured works can breathe new life into existing public buildings or add a captivating dimension to new constructions. Beyond their visual appeal, textiles can introduce warmth, comfort, and a sense of human connection to sterile environments.

### Sculpture

Sculptures are often the focal points of civic art, commemorating history, expressing civic pride, and serving as culturally-defining showpieces. Their diverse forms fit well in gateways, parks, and gathering spaces. Sculptures are especially appropriate in parks and downtowns, where they celebrate and enhance civic identity.



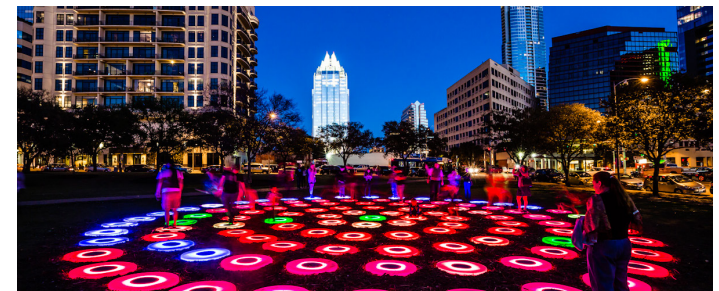
### Light Installations

Contemporary artists harness light in innovative ways, transforming the built environment with minimal physical impact. Light installations can illuminate existing buildings, highlight landscape features in parks, or enhance sculptures. Their adaptability makes them particularly effective for infrastructure projects, adding dynamic and captivating dimensions to public spaces.



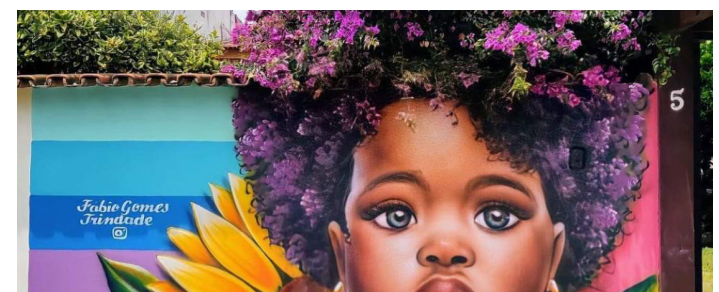
### Multimedia

Multimedia installations may combine many other art types in ways that expand the imagination. Video, lighting, sculpture, murals, and more can be combined to make multimedia installations some of the most interesting around. Multimedia installations are especially useful for temporary or pop-up installations.



### Environmental

Environmental art is any kind of outdoor public art that uses materials with a direct connection to nature, landscaping, or organic materials. Environmental art can be temporary or permanent, and its scale can vary. Its thematic context addresses environmentalism and sustainability.



# PUBLIC ART PROJECT IDEAS



As San Luis develops its public art program in its initial years, the City should balance large-scale, high-impact projects with more locally-scaled projects that could be prime opportunities to engage with San Luis' local artist network. Before projects take shape, San Luis should establish project goals, which may overlap with other projects.

Goals for public art & placemaking projects include:

- Desire for placemaking, either to establish, reimagine, or amplify gathering spaces;
- Leverage public art to celebrate history or honor underrepresented narratives;
- Foster community identity or build local pride;
- Stimulate economic development;
- Engage the community, or encourage youth participation; or,
- Enhancing walk-ability, or creating more welcoming, vibrant streetscapes.



## Art Integrated into Infrastructure

Art that is integrated into infrastructure can take many forms including sandblasted or inlaid concrete sidewalks, mosaic walls, and artist-designed architectural features. These larger-scale permanent investments can elevate downtown's walkability, visual interest, and distinction among neighboring towns. These eye-catching, unique projects are also an exciting catalyst for economic development and tourism.

### PROJECT COST

- Good \$50,000
- Better \$150,000
- Best \$200,000 +

### PROJECT TIMELINE

The overall project will require 3-4 months for selection and planning; fabrication and installation could require an additional 12-18 months.



## Painted Fire Hydrants

Painting Fire-Department approved fire hydrants is an excellent way to highlight local artists and bring immediate vibrancy to ordinary settings. This is an also cost-effective project that can replace regularly-scheduled fire hydrant painting for maintenance purposes.

### PROJECT COST

Up to \$1,200 per fire hydrant

### PROJECT TIMELINE

3-6 months for selection and implementation. Fire hydrants should be repainted as recommended by the City's Fire Department.





## Functional Public Art

A historic City with a dynamic downtown requires civic fixtures that are anything but ordinary. From artist-designed benches to elaborate, whimsical play structures, artist-designed fixtures have the presence of permanent sculptures, but the durability and function of traditional city furniture. Ideal options for San Luis include artist-designed benches, shade structures, and painted planter projects.

### PROJECT COST

- Good \$30,000
- Better \$75,000
- Best \$100,000+

### PROJECT TIMELINE

The overall project will require 3-4 months for selection and planning; fabrication and installation could require an additional 12-18 months.



## Interactive Pop-Up Art

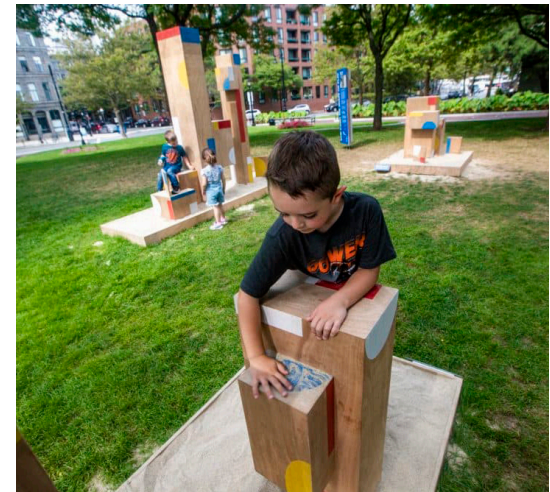
Pop-up Public Art experiences assume many forms, ranging from multi-media light and sound installations, to playful, otherworldly sculpture. These short-term experiences are ideal in large greenspaces or other public gathering spaces with clear sightlines for maximum visibility.

### PROJECT COST

- Good \$15,000
- Better \$50,000
- Best \$75,000+

### PROJECT TIMELINE

Depending on the intention of each project, these pop-up experiences can last anywhere from a few days to up to a few months.





## Murals

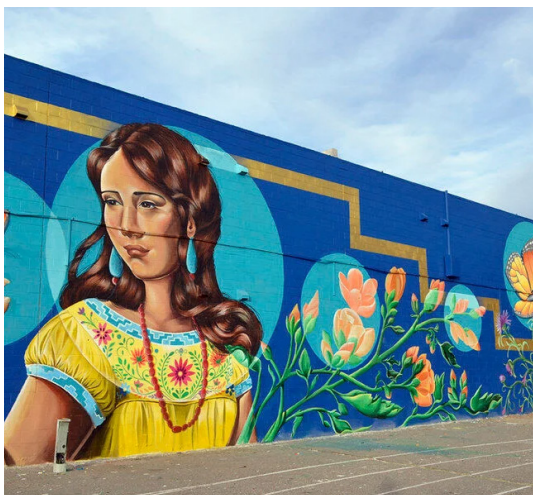
Murals are an efficient, flexible way to reflect a City's history, characteristics, and diverse backgrounds. San Luis's murals can proudly represent the many cultures that have shaped the community, sparking conversation and connection to San Luis's diverse population.

### PROJECT COST

- Good \$25,000
- Better \$50,000
- Best \$75,000

### PROJECT TIMELINE

3-6 months. Well-maintained murals can last up to 10 years.



## Projection Mapping

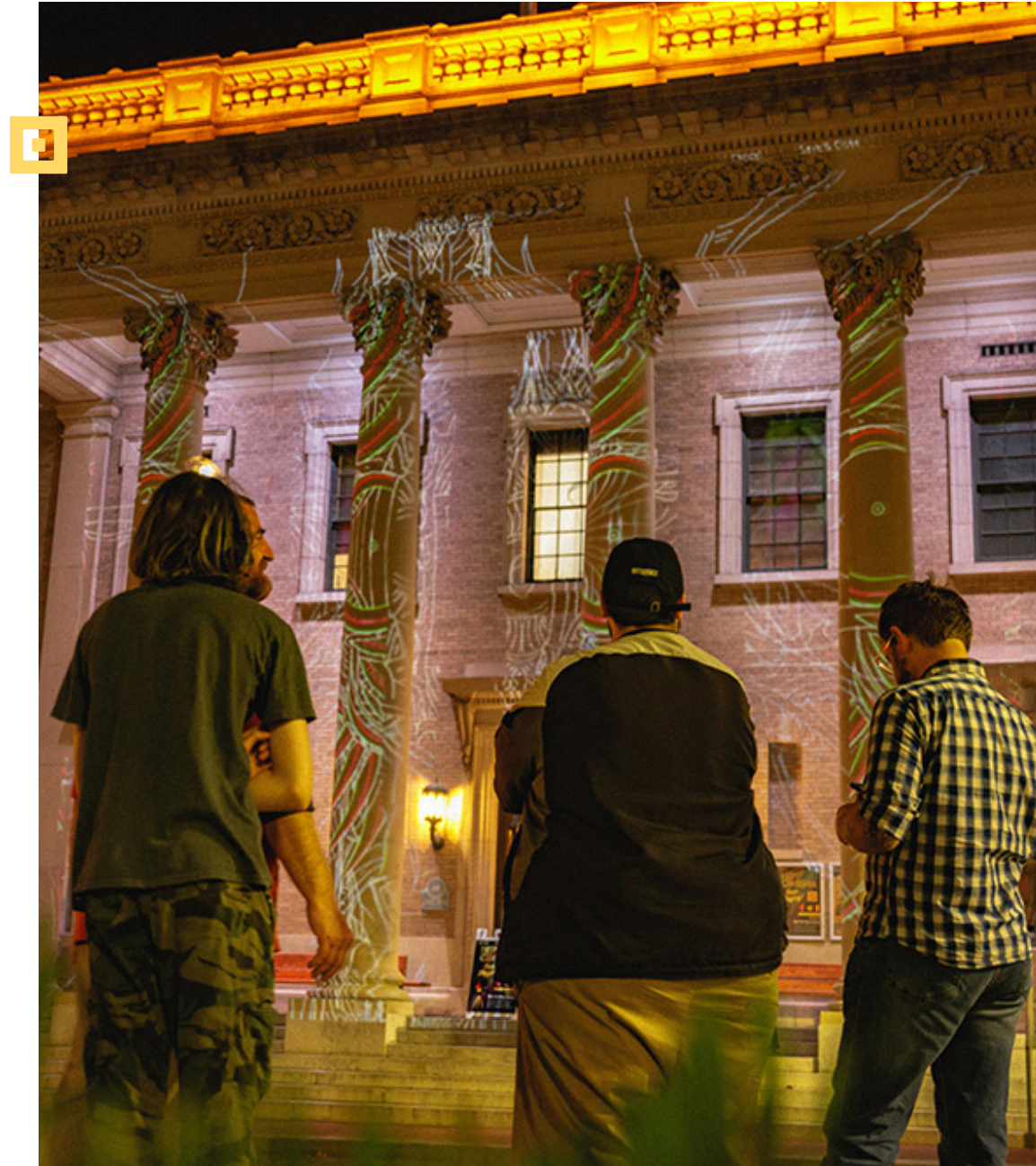
Temporary light projections onto San Luis's buildings will further emphasize the City's unique history and charm. Light projections can include static, two-dimensional images, or they can be an opportunity to project video or moving images onto the bridge, allowing for a more artistically diverse pool of public artists to be represented in the project.

### PROJECT COST

\$25,000 - \$300,000, based on duration, location, rental and artist fees

### PROJECT TIMELINE

Projection Mapping events last anywhere from a few days to two weeks





## Tree Guard Projects

Tree Guard interventions through public art are a high-impact strategy for improving downtown walkability and showcasing San Luis' vibrant culture. From painted tree guards to installing artist-designed, heavy duty railing, these enhancements can transform ordinary civic fixtures into extraordinary, iconic local landmarks.

### PROJECT COST

\$15,000 - \$30,000

### PROJECT TIMELINE

The overall project will require 3-4 months for selection and planning; fabrication and installation could require an additional 6 months.



## Utility Box Projects

Utility Box art remains one of the most high-impact, cost-effective approaches to public art and placemaking. There are many city-owned utility boxes that are prime opportunities for public art. Printing artworks on large-scale vinyl offer a greater range of project possibilities, while also offering maintenance.

### PROJECT COST

- Good - \$750 per utility box
- Better - \$1,000 per utility box
- Best - \$2,000 per utility box

### PROJECT TIMELINE

3-6 months; Utility Boxes should last from 3-5 years, with regular maintenance



Fiscal Year	Project Recommendations	Cost
FY 2026	Annual Maintenance Allocation	\$2,000
	Save 2% of remaining budget for large-scale project (reserved carryover)	Varies
	Temporary, interactive pop-up experience	\$15,000
	Shade Structure	\$50,000 *Strong candidate for CIP funding, or blended funding streams
	Small-scale mural in a priority location	\$20,000
	<b>FY 26 Total</b>	<b>\$87,000+</b>

### Sample Public Art Implementation Matrix

The following implementation matrix provides recommendations for possible public art projects in San Luis, based on the recommendations above. Availability of funds is subject to change year over year, and the guide below is intended to be used as a sample roadmap for the next three years. While the chart provides approximate project totals, projects may be funded through multiple or overlapping funding streams from grants, City departments, and/or public-private partnerships. This plan encourages creative and resourceful collaboration across departments to maximize San Luis' capacity to fund public art.

Fiscal Year	Project Recommendations	Cost
FY 2027	Annual Maintenance Allocation	\$2,000
	Save 2% of remaining budget for large-scale project (reserved carryover)	Varies
	Painted Fire Hydrant project, pilot 5 priority locations	\$5,000
	Utility Box projects, pilot 4 priority locations	Up to \$10,000
	Artist-Designed Benches in strategic locations	Up to \$30,000
	Small-scale mural in a priority location	\$20,000
	Temporary project mapping experience, in collaboration with a historic property	\$25,000
<b>FY 27 Total</b>	<b>\$92,000+</b>	

Fiscal Year	Project Recommendations	Cost
FY 2028	Annual Maintenance Allocation	\$2,000
	Save 2% of remaining budget for large-scale project (reserved carryover)	Varies
	Tree Guard projects	\$20,000
	Small-scale mural in a priority location	\$20,000
	Pilot Matching Mural Grant Program	\$30,000
<b>FY 28 Total</b>	<b>\$72,000+</b>	

