Planning and Implementation: Pima County Historic Preservation Bond Program

Purpose of the Program

Historic preservation, like any system of values, has a philosophical basis or ethic. It presumes that historic properties and cultural places have value as expressions of a community’s cultural heritage, living traditions, and sense of place, and therefore merit protection and preservation for the benefit of the community.

The Pima County Historic Preservation Bond program includes both archaeological and historic properties located throughout Pima County and reflects those places that are important to many stakeholders in the greater community. These projects for the most part derive from the analyses and results of preparing the Cultural Resources element of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan that reviewed cultural and historic resources in all jurisdictions, including all those properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This resulted in more than 200 “Priority Cultural Resources” being identified for conservation and preservation.
Funding

This preservation ethic was enthusiastically endorsed by voters in 1997, and again in 2004. A total of $26 million was approved for these various historic preservation projects, and supplemental funding and grants of $4.5 million were subsequently obtained for a total of more than $30 million. Grants were obtained from both state and federal sources including the Arizona Heritage Fund, Arizona Growing Smarter Fund, Community Development Block Grant program, Transportation Enhancement Fund, National Park Service and others. The 1997 program is essentially concluded, and the 2004 program is actively underway.

Accomplishments

Voter-approved bond funding and grants have allowed the development of a diverse and comprehensive historic preservation program focusing on the acquisition, protection, and preservation of many of the “last of the best” prehistoric and historic resources in the County.

The range of projects spans the County’s cultural landscape, with preservation efforts in urban and rural settings at prehistoric and historic archaeological sites, historic buildings and structures, and historic ranches and ranchlands. Of the various projects, 10 prehistoric and historic sites were acquired for conservation purposes. These properties are either currently owned by Pima County or owned by another local jurisdiction with the County holding a preservation easement. These historic properties include:


Archaeological sites acquired for preservation purposes and considered ancestral sites by the Tohono O’odham Nation include:

Coyote Mountains, Dakota Wash Site, Honey Bee Village, Los Morteros, Tumamoc Hill, and Valencia Site.

To date, the Pima County Historic Preservation Bond Program has enabled the acquisition, conservation, restoration, rehabilitation, adaptive use, and protection of a diverse set of historical, cultural and archaeological sites so important to our community’s historical and cultural identity. Not only are these non-renewable historic properties protected, but the greater community benefits from the preservation and continued and enhanced use of these historic places. These places provide all of us with a sense of place, community identity and stability, civic pride, cultural awareness, and opportunities for heritage education, heritage tourism, and related economic development – all public benefits.