

Reconnecting people, place and culture in Altadena: A community-based recovery framework
after a natural disaster

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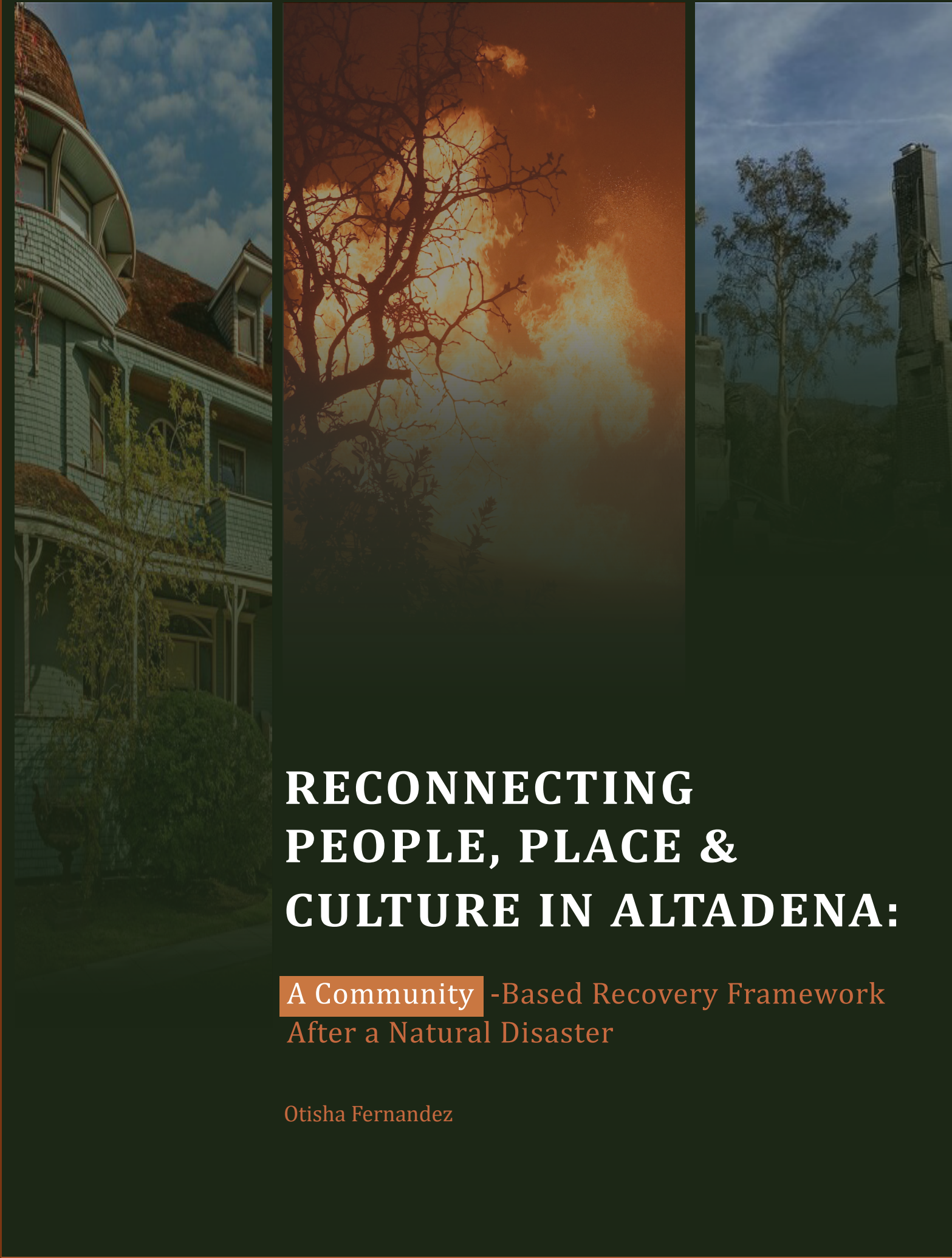
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RECONNECTING PEOPLE, PLACE & CULTURE IN ALTADENA:

A Community -Based Recovery Framework
After a Natural Disaster

Otisha Fernandez

Abstract

Natural disasters and urban crises are on the rise in both frequency and severity, posing threats not only to cities' physical structures but also to communities' cultural identities. The number of people displaced by wildfires, floods, earthquakes, storms, cyclones, and urban crises is in the hundreds of millions, and these crises have damaged both tangible and intangible forms of heritage. Communities with significant historical relevance or that have been historically marginalized bear a disproportionate share of these losses. While increasing evidence indicates that culture is essential for rebuilding resilience after a disaster, most post-disaster recovery and redevelopment frameworks still focus primarily on rebuilding infrastructure without accounting for cultural continuity; thus, communities are at risk of displacement and/or gentrification. Furthermore, communities risk losing their collective identity through culture (UNESCO & The World Bank, 2018; GFDRR, 2019).

Altadena suffered greatly as a result of the Eaton fire, which destroyed many buildings in one of the most culturally and historically significant unincorporated regions of Los Angeles County, including the famous Bunny Museum, Zorthian Ranch, Zane Grey Estate, and many local businesses along Lake Avenue. The loss of these places has disrupted the social networks and institutions that help create the community's unique character and its many rituals.

This research examines the influence of culture on recovery after disasters by exploring the question: What community strategies should be used to enhance cultural identity in Altadena's neighborhood disaster recovery? The researcher uses a qualitative comparative case study methodology to determine how three unique community examples used culture to support post-disaster recovery planning and compare them with respect to each example's scale, cultural heritage, and experience of disaster or systemic disruption, given that each community is

historically marginalized and of color. The comparison of the examples (Claiborne Avenue Corridor of Treme in New Orleans; Sankofa Wetland Park in the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans; Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park) is based upon the community's integration of culture into their planning for recovery after being affected by a disaster or other systemic point of disruption. CURE provides an analytical framework for reviewing all cases, considering both tangible and intangible cultures, in four phases: Damage and Needs Assessment, Policy and Strategy, Financing, and Implementation.

The findings indicate that resilient recovery outcomes result from embedding culture throughout all planning phases (not as an afterthought). The example of Treme shows that recovery efforts that prioritize using culture as branding without protection against displacement are at risk. The example of Sankofa Wetland Park is a model of community- and citizen-driven, ecology-based place-making that empowers communities and fosters stewardship for future generations. The example of Allensworth demonstrates that while the state's investments in preserving heritage are important, those efforts will not achieve meaningful impact without also including a commitment to investing in environmental justice and the long-term viability of the communities being served.

To support Altadena's efforts to recover culturally from the disaster, this report puts forward recommendations to guide implementation. The research challenges traditional economic recovery paradigms that prioritize physical rebuilding over cultural continuity, proposing an alternative approach in which culture is understood as both, and from the perspective of an organizing framework for an equity-based recovery process, with a particular emphasis on building and maintaining long-term community and cultural resilience.

The result of Altadena's recovery should have a framework similar to CURE's four-phase model overall and ensure that community members have majority control or ownership of the recovery, alongside government officials and planners. Altadena's recovery will depend largely on whether residents, practices, and cultural identity are restored once rebuilding is complete.

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Chapter One – Introduction

Introduction to Research

When focusing on recovery from a disaster, recovery efforts typically involve physical tasks such as removing debris and restoring essential utilities. While these physical efforts are quite important, there is usually little or no emphasis placed on the cultural heritage of the affected area, and it is not usually addressed until after the physical infrastructure has been repaired, and often not at all. Therefore, if recovery efforts emphasize rebuilding (infrastructure) over rebuilding (community), there is no doubt that the affected communities will remain in despair, even after the rebuilding is complete. This will be true for those communities whose resilience is founded upon relationships across generations, grass-roots traditional practices, and a strong community-based culture; this disparity in what recovery means could be just as harmful as the disaster itself. How communities define themselves and establish their sense of identity is greatly influenced by their cultural heritage; however, many communities are unaware of its value. Cultural heritage comprises not just physical assets such as historic buildings, significant landmarks, and tangible cultural items, but also the communities' shared beliefs and ideas, living traditions, memories, history/storytelling, and the fabric of relationships that create bonds within that community.

The word "massive displacement" is used to describe instances where there has been a change over time, like gentrification or a demographic shift, and ultimately the community's identity has disappeared after reconstruction has occurred (UNESCO & The World Bank, 2018, p.28). This type of displacement can change the value and/or meaning of some of your cultural

assets, as there are both positive and negative aspects to updating or altering them. Some cultural assets may take on entirely new values or meaning for someone else. In contrast, others may be gone permanently, thus erasing the diversity, plurality, and cultural rights of individuals whose cultural assets have been removed, destroying a fundamental freedom for all victims of massive displacement (UNESCO & The World Bank, 2018, p. 11).

The Altadena, California, fire in January 2025 destroyed intangible heritage and presents challenges to researchers, practitioners, and planners alike. But it presents an important research opportunity to explore alternative methods to support the intangible aspects of identity for the community and ultimately help rebuild it (physically as well as culturally). This method can help preserve Altadena's culture for generations to come, even amid the effects of fire.

A fire recently ravaged Altadena, which destroyed or damaged over 1,200 buildings and over 9,000 structures — including homes, schools, and landmarks alike. More than 14,021 acres were burned, making the fire's destruction very visible (CAL FIRE). The residents of Altadena not only face a tremendous loss of their physical surroundings but also lose their traditions that formed the foundation of their community, the memories they shared as families, and historic documentation. This cultural loss may prove almost impossible to quantify and may take longer to repair than the physical damage caused by the fire (Lau, 2025).

The current ethnic diversity within the unincorporated community of Altadena developed significantly during the turbulent 1960s and 1970s, driven by the Civil Rights Movement and the political upheaval of the era. The Civil Rights Movement, along with the political unrest of that time, changed the region's demographics. Additionally, as new freeways were built, they divided established neighborhoods. As people experienced redevelopment conflicts in the nearby city of

Pasadena, many people began to leave and did so through the act of White flight. As such, during these same years, many people of color began moving into Altadena, creating a dynamic shift in the community as these new residents joined the growing number of diverse populations in the city. Over the next 40 years or so, Altadena developed into a rich tapestry of ethnicities. Today, all neighborhoods throughout the Altadena reflect a diverse racial mix, with the west side being predominantly different ethnicities and lower-income "working" class populations; however, the integrations that exist within the different neighborhoods are seen throughout the community, reflecting one of the most racially integrated communities located in Southern California (Altadena Heritage).

Understanding Altadena's cultural history in its proper context reveals the full extent of damage from the Eaton Fire. Historically, Altadena is one of the oldest African Americans suburbs. Today, the suburb has also established sizeable Latino and Asian populations over the years, with ties to the San Gabriel Valley area. The identity of this area is also built on its sense of community; the relationships formed between its residents; the history of the area; and the many culturally, recreationally, and religiously important places of interest; the array of community service organizations that are based locally; and the overall numerous events that are focused on promoting or celebrating the cultural heritage of all residents (The Guardian; Altadena Heritage). It is not simply a typical suburban area where loss can be repaired through normal construction. This is an area that has maintained its unique character over time, with the community continuing to protect it from outside influence; therefore, now that we are witnessing the destruction of that character, it would seem this reality poses a very serious threat to its continued existence.

While this cultural fabric is important, recovery efforts after disasters tend to focus primarily on rebuilding physical infrastructure rather than accounting for the cultural and social aspects of the recovery process (Monteil et al., 2019; GFDRR, 2019). There are serious problems associated with this planning gap. Without intentional strategies in place for the cultural aspects of the recovery effort, the recovery process often leads to increased gentrification, the displacement of long-time residents, and the eventual dismantling of the community identity that creates the cohesive nature of a neighborhood and a sense of belonging. For communities without their own municipal government, such as Altadena, the risks are even higher. Since Altadena does not have its own city government, it lacks zoning authority, a municipal planning department, and locally elected officials who directly control land-use decisions. Instead, recovery planning is carried out by Los Angeles County, which represents several dozen communities and lacks the structural capacity to prioritize Altadena's cultural needs. In Altadena's case, it is not just desirable to have community-driven intentional strategies but rather necessary from a practical standpoint.

The existing body of research on cultural recovery from disasters suggests that planners are increasingly aware that incorporating culture into the post-disaster recovery process leads to stronger, more equitable, and more stable communities over time. The literature review conducted in Chapter 2 summarizes this growing body of literature. The first thing that is abundantly clear is that the Altadena community has a significant disparity between traditional disaster recovery and culturally based recovery practices. As a community with abundant cultural richness, no organized governance structure, and a recovery landscape lacking effective, community-oriented recovery interventions, it may not be able to sustain its distinctiveness.

1.1.1 Research Question and Sub-Questions

This study therefore addresses the following question:

What community strategies should be used to enhance cultural identity in Altadena's neighborhood disaster recovery?

Three sub-questions guide the comparative analysis:

Sub-Question 1: What was Altadena's cultural identity before and after the natural disaster?

Sub-Question 2: What strategies have communities used to enhance cultural identity and placemaking following post-disaster recovery?

Sub-Question 3: What can Altadena learn from other communities that have effectively incorporated culture into their disaster recovery?

To answer these questions, this report applies the Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery (CURE) Framework — developed jointly by UNESCO and the World Bank — to a qualitative, comparative case study of three communities with comparable experiences of cultural disruption: the Claiborne Avenue corridor in Treme (New Orleans), Sankofa Wetland Park in the Lower Ninth Ward (New Orleans), and Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park in Allensworth, California. The chapters that follow review the relevant literature, present the methodology, examine each case, synthesize findings, and conclude with six actionable recommendations for Altadena's recovery.

Clean-Up Debris Process

It's critical to clean up debris from one of the largest disasters to hit Altadena; it helps people rebuild their lives equitably and safely. When a major natural disaster occurs, the number of debris generated and the types of debris throughout the Altadena community create a large volume of waste. For example, there will be residential, commercial, and open space waste.

Natural disasters of this magnitude produce multiple types and lines of debris, and each type must be treated and disposed of differently.

According to Lynn (2023), clearing debris is necessary to allow for environmental restoration and enable a successful recovery after a disaster. Without an established means to clear debris from the impacted area, access to the area will be limited, ongoing public health risks will remain, and the ability to begin reconstruction and cultural recovery will be nonexistent, as this research prioritizes.

Types of Debris Generated by Natural Disasters

Natural disasters generate several categories of debris, each with distinct safety implications and disposal requirements. The following table summarizes the primary debris types relevant to wildfire and earthquake events such as those that have historically affected Altadena:

Debris Type	Description and Hazard Profile
Structural Debris	Debris from damaged buildings and infrastructure, including concrete, steel, wood, and contents, requires sorting for safe disposal and recycling following the Eaton Fire.
Vegetative Debris	Organic materials like fallen trees, stumps, and limbs can block power lines as well as waterways; they can also lead to further hazards, including excessive flooding and increased likelihood of a secondary fire/launch. (Lynn, 2023). FEMA cannot reimburse for any debris that had a pre-existing hazardous situation before the occurrence of the disaster; however, if the fallen debris is located in a natural area without developed use for aliens or the public, then that debris will not be considered as having had a pre-existing hazardous condition regardless of what time it fell (FEMA, pg.3)
Hazardous Materials	Hazardous substances such as oil spills, asbestos, contaminated soils, burned structural chemical residues, and other poisonous materials can commonly be found in wildfire debris. In addition, the hazardous liquid or solid waste found at a burned debris site may contain hazardous ash and or chemical compounds from burned building materials, all of which require a separate method of disposal from the general debris stream.

Gravel, Mud, and Sediment	Rock, sand, and sediment displaced by fire suppression water, post-fire erosion, or associated storm events. Common in hillside communities such as Altadena given its position at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains.
Household and Personal Property	Personal belongings, furniture, appliances, and other residential contents. Requires sensitivity in handling given the emotional significance of personal property to displaced residents.
Vehicle and Equipment Wreckage	Burned or damaged vehicles, trailers, and equipment. These items require separate removal and disposal protocols from structural debris.

Table 1. Primary debris types generated by wildfire and natural disasters, including hazard profile, disposal requirements and description

Federal Eligibility: FEMA Public Assistance Category A

FEMA's Public Assistance Program (Category A) may cover debris removal costs if it is shown that the work is in the public interest. The types of work that will qualify for reimbursement in this category include removal of debris, clearance of property, recycling, and disposal of debris when one or more of the following apply to the work collected:

FEMA Guidance: Debris Removal (Category A)

- *Eliminate immediate threats to life, public health, and safety; or*
- *Eliminate immediate threats of significant damage to improved public or private property; or*
- *Ensure economic recovery of the affected community to the benefit of the community at large; or*
- *Mitigate the risk to life and property by removing Substantially Damaged structures and associated ancillary facilities as needed to convert property acquired using Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) funds compatible with open space, recreation, or wetlands management practices. Such removal must be completed within two years of the declaration date unless extended by the Assistant Administrator of the Recovery Directorate at FEMA Headquarters.*

Source: FEMA Public Assistance Category A, p. 3

For Altadena members, property owners, and local organizations to successfully engage in the debris removal effort, they must understand FEMA eligibility criteria. The public interest standard will determine whether some costs are eligible; for example, the removal of debris from

private property will not qualify unless it meets certain requirements, as well as other options for alternative/community funding.

Contractor Pricing and Cost Structures

There is standardized pricing structures used for debris removal contracting. Therefore, people in communities should know how to work together with service providers to remove debris. Most contractors will charge a fee that is determined by one of two basic methods:

Pricing Method	Application
Unit Price — Volume	Priced per cubic yard. Most common for bulk structural debris, vegetative material, and household contents. Rates vary by debris type and local market conditions.
Unit Price — Weight	Priced per ton. Typically used for heavy materials such as concrete, metal, and soil. Weight-based pricing is common for hazardous materials requiring specialized transport and disposal.
Per-Item — Hazardous Trees	Hazardous trees are collected individually; contractors typically charge a price per tree or stump based on diameter and condition (FEMA, p. 3). Residents should obtain multiple quotes for large-volume tree removal.

Table 2. FEMA debris removal contractor pricing methods: unit price by volume and weight, and per-item pricing for hazardous trees

The Five-Step Debris Removal Process

This section provides a broad overview of FEMA recommendations and industry standards for the operational phases of debris management. Each operation includes a variety of assessments, planning, and execution processes, with all actions executed cooperatively as part of the overall debris management effort.:

Cultural Sensitivity in Debris Removal for Altadena

In Altadena and other affected communities, fires have caused the destruction of homes and other properties; the debris must be removed from the area. The removal of debris will include some consideration for the cultural significance of each item. The contractor or agency responsible for overseeing this process will need specific guidelines:

- Pause and document** prior to removing materials from properties with known historic or cultural significance (including those identified in the LA Conservancy's post-fire cultural resources survey AND any properties flagged by Altadena Heritage or community cultural mapping initiatives).

- Work closely with residents** to enable salvaging of their own belongings, family archives, and items of cultural importance before debris is cleaned up, which usually requires notification beforehand and scheduling that is not typical for contractors.

- Coordinate with organizations** like Altadena Heritage and the Altadena Historical Society to determine which properties and/or items will require special handling before commencing debris clean-up operations in specified zones.

- Should treat removing debris** from the site as one last chance to account for all of your tangible cultural losses before the site is cleared and create a final inventory of those through systematically collecting data about any material loss as part of your cultural asset mapping project (see Chapter 6).

Step	Phase	Description
1	Initial Assessment	Assess the extent and types of debris present in affected areas. This evaluation determines the scale of resources, equipment, and personnel required for removal operations, and identifies any immediate public safety hazards requiring priority response.
2	Prioritization and Planning	Prioritize debris removal based on factors such as severity of safety hazard, access to critical infrastructure (hospitals, utilities, emergency routes), and vulnerability of the affected population. Develop a comprehensive operational plan ensuring efficient sequencing and coordination among removal teams.
3	Clearing and Transportation	Deploy coordinated teams — including government agencies, licensed private contractors, and trained volunteers — to collect, sort, and transport debris to designated staging or disposal sites. Heavy machinery is required for large structural debris and downed trees; specialized equipment is needed for hazardous material streams.
4	Disposal and Recycling	Route debris to appropriate end-of-life facilities: landfills for non-recyclable material, recycling facilities for metals and concrete, and specialized facilities for hazardous waste. Maximize recycling and material diversion to reduce environmental impact and disposal costs where operationally feasible.
5	Monitoring and Follow-Up	Conduct ongoing inspections to verify that affected areas have been fully cleared and to identify any remaining hazards or residual debris requiring additional attention. Maintain documentation for FEMA reimbursement purposes. Ongoing monitoring informs the final closeout and transition to recovery phase operations.

Table 3. Five-step debris removal process: from initial assessment through monitoring and follow-up, consistent with FEMA guidance and industry practice

Sources: FEMA. Public Assistance Category A: Debris Removal, p. 3. Lynn, C. (2023). Clearing the Path to Recovery: The Vital Role of Debris Removal in Post-Disaster Emergencies. Mosaic51.

CURE Framework

UNESCO and the World Bank developed the Culture in Urban Reconstruction and Recovery (CURE) Framework as a practical tool for integrating culture across all phases of post-crisis urban reconstruction and recovery. The framework provides a systematic analytical tool for

understanding how culture (both tangible and intangible) is integrated into urban reconstruction and recovery processes and serves as the primary analytical lens of this research. Rather than treating cultural heritage/identities as secondary to other issues, the framework identifies culture as one of the foundational pillars of a resilient recovery. It must be woven into each step of the planning/financing/implementation stages of recovery from a crisis. The CURE Framework integrates culture across all sectors and phases of the reconstruction and recovery process (need assessment, scoping, planning, financing, implementation). This research utilizes the CURE Framework to explore the culture of Altadena, which has received limited attention under the framework, given that much has not been studied within the context of unincorporated communities in the US, making Altadena a unique and timely case.

1.3.1 Origins: Gaps in Prior Framework

Developed to address ongoing gaps in disaster risk reduction policy frameworks over the past 30 years, the CURE Framework focuses on including culture as an integral part of recovery, not just a side note to the more physical or economic factors that usually dominate recovery planning:

Framework	Year	Cultural Gap
Yokohama Strategy	1994	Focused on disaster prevention and preparedness; culture not addressed
Hyogo Framework for Action	2005–2015	First global DRR strategy; culture remained peripheral to physical resilience goals
Sendai Framework	2015–2030	Deepened people-centered commitments but intangible heritage still largely absent
Historic Urban Landscape	2011	Advanced urban heritage protection but did not integrate community-driven recovery
Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)	Ongoing	Acknowledged intangible needs but lacked methodology to assess or fund them
CURE Framework	2018	Directly addresses all prior gaps by centering culture across all four recovery phases

Table 4. Prior international frameworks and their cultural gaps, from the Yokohama Strategy (1994) through the CURE Framework (2018).

Even though progress has been made, there is still a substantial difference between these frameworks. Culture has often been overlooked in the equation. The lack of an integrated, cohesive strategy that connects place-oriented and people-oriented strategies has made it very difficult to create positive, integrated changes in communities. Many communities have also been unable to develop a sense of community identity because many of the "soft" aspects of their culture (such as memories, traditions, and social networks) have been neglected in favor of a focus on physical and economic rebuilding.

1.3.2 The Four Phases of the CURE Framework

The CURE Framework consists of four iterative phases, each with distinct components. (UNESCO & The World Bank, p. 35).

1

Damage & Needs Assessment

The foundational phase: systematically evaluate losses to both tangible and intangible cultural assets, assess economic disruption caused by interrupted cultural industries, and begin the community scoping process.

- Inventory tangible heritage: buildings, landmarks, cultural institutions, public spaces
- Inventory intangible heritage: traditions, rituals, social networks, oral histories
- Assess economic losses from disrupted cultural and creative industries
- Connect historic area data to broader city development patterns (micro + macro scale)
- Asset mapping using GIS and community input; stakeholder identification and engagement
- Vision development: inclusive coalition of residents, youth, women, and marginalized groups

2

Policy & Strategy

Translate damage assessment findings into actionable plans, regulatory mechanisms, and governance processes. Recovery planning must be inclusive, transparent, and community driven.

- Develop strategic plans, master plans, and specialized recovery plans integrating cultural assets
 - Establish land use regulations and zoning that protect cultural corridors and heritage districts
 - Create civic engagement processes ensuring all stakeholders shape recovery priorities
 - Build back better: use reconstruction as opportunity to strengthen cultural infrastructure
 - Coordinate multiple sectoral plans through a central cultural recovery framework
- Sarajevo 2003-2023 Spatial Plan is a great example of a master plan that includes historic reconstruction.

3

Financing

Identify and deploy a combination of public and private funding that bridges immediate emergency relief with medium- and long-term cultural development.

- Begin with public-sector investment to stabilize infrastructure and create conditions for recovery
- Leverage public investment to attract philanthropic and private-sector capital
- Use indirect incentives, block grants, and cultural district tools to stimulate recovery in corridors
- Ensure intangible cultural programming — festivals, organizations, stewardship — is explicitly funded
- Apply land readjustment with anti-displacement protections for original owners and occupants

4 Implemen tation

Establish governance structures, risk management strategies, and communication plans that sustain community engagement and balance preservation with adaptation.

- Create governance structures that give genuine authority to community organizations
- Integrate public-private partnerships where appropriate while maintaining community oversight
- Balance immediate recovery needs with long-term preservation of historic character
- Sustain iterative engagement: implementation is not a one-time event but an ongoing process
- Monitor cultural resilience indicators alongside physical reconstruction metrics

PHASE 1	Damage and Needs Assessment	Component 1.1: Tangible Cultural Heritage Component 1.2: Intangible Cultural Heritage Component 1.3: Creative and Cultural Industries Component 1.4: Cultural Tourism Component 1.5: Historic Housing Stock and Land Resources
	Scoping	Component 1.6: Data Collection and Analysis Component 1.7: Asset Mapping Component 1.8: Stakeholder Mapping Component 1.9: Vision Development
PHASE 2	Setting Policy and Strategy	Component 2.1: Designing a Planning Process Component 2.2: Regulatory Mechanisms Component 2.3: Civic Engagement
PHASE 3	Financing	Component 3.1: Identifying Funding Resources Component 3.2: Management of Land Resources Component 3.3: Land Value Capture Component 3.4: Land Readjustments Component 3.5: City-led Financing Tools
PHASE 4	Implementation	Component 4.1: Institutional Arrangements Component 4.2: Risk Management Component 4.3: Communication and Engagement Strategy

Figure 1. The four phases of CURE Framework, with the components, illustrating the iterative integration of culture across all phases. Source: Culture in the City Reconstruction and Recovery, p. 36

Key Principle: These four phases are iterative, not sequential. Each city's recovery proceeds through them in a manner tailored to its unique socio-economic, cultural, and governance context. Culture must be present in all four phases simultaneously — not added after physical rebuilding is complete.

1.3.3 Seven Principles of the CURE Framework

The CURE Framework is guided by seven core principles originating from analysis of global post-disaster and post-conflict recovery case studies, knitting together people-centered and place-based approaches into policies that share a common cultural thread. (UNESCO & The World Bank, p. 8).

#	Principle	Application in Altadena Context
1	City as Cultural Construct	View Altadena not merely as a physical settlement but as a cultural landscape shaped by its multiracial history, grassroots traditions, and place-based identity. Recovery must reflect this understanding.
2	Reconstructing Cultural Landmarks	Prioritize the rebuilding of culturally significant places. Lake Avenue corridor businesses, faith institutions, and historic structures — as anchors of community identity.
3	Foster Cultural Expression for Trauma	Support festivals, art, music, oral history, and community rituals as essential healing infrastructure — not optional add-ons but core components of recovery programming.
4	Integrate Culture Early in Planning	Culture must enter the recovery plan at the damage assessment stage — not after physical plans are drafted. Cultural asset mapping must precede, not follow, rebuilding decisions.
5	Community Engagement at Every Step	Altadena's recovery must involve residents, community organizations, faith leaders, youth, renters, and historically marginalized groups in every phase of decision-making.
6	Balanced Financing	Recovery financing must explicitly fund intangible cultural programming alongside physical infrastructure, using hybrid models that blend public, philanthropic, and community capital.
7	Manage Preservation and Development	Balance the urgent need to rebuild housing and infrastructure against the imperative to protect Altadena's cultural character, prevent gentrification, and preserve historic fabric.

Table 5. Seven principles of the CURE Framework and their application in the Altadena recovery context.

The CURE Framework and its seven guiding principles reflect a shared commitment by the World Bank and UNESCO to place culture at the forefront of post-disaster, post-conflict, and

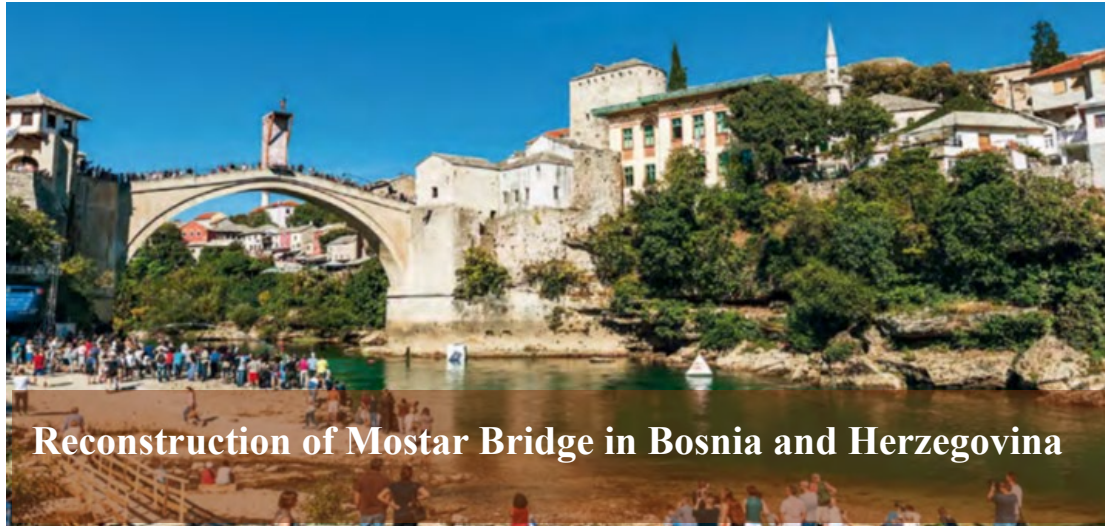
urban recovery processes. At its core, the framework highlights culture plays a critical role in reconstruction and should serve as the recovery requires culture to be systematically embedded across all phases, including damage and needs within sustainable urban development, the CURE Framework aims to support more inclusive, and resilient cohesive cities (UNESCO & The World Bank, p. 9)

1.3.4 Global Examples of the CURE Framework in Practice

These are global case studies in which culture played a decisive role in recovery outcomes. Five international examples illustrate different dimensions of the framework.:

Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina	Beirut, Lebanon	Lijiang, China
Mostar Bridge <i>Post-Bosnian War (1990s)</i> Residents prioritized rebuilding the Stari Most bridge before housing — asserting that the bridge symbolized collective identity. Rebuilt using original materials, it embodied CURE Principle 2: reconstruction of cultural landmarks as community healing.	Beirut Central District <i>Post-Civil War reconstruction</i> Private-sector-only reconstruction produced exclusive luxury spaces that excluded original communities. The cautionary lesson: without community engagement and balanced financing (Principles 5 and 6), recovery serves development interests over cultural continuity. Cultural events help reactivating the district.	Lijiang Old Town <i>7.0 Earthquake, 1996</i> World Bank funded \$37M for culturally sensitive reconstruction: earthquake-resilient homes preserving historic character, restored heritage sites, and community-evaluated rehabilitation schemes. Inscribed as UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1997.

Figure 2. Global examples of the CURE Framework



Reconstruction of Mostar Bridge in Bosnia and Herzegovina

Figure 3. . Reconstruction of the Stari Most (Old Bridge) in Mostar, Bosnia & Herzegovina, illustrating CURE Principle 2: cultural landmark reconstruction as community healing. Source: Culture in the City Reconstruction and Recovery



Public-private partnerships: Need for a balanced approach in Beirut, Lebanon

Figure 4. Beirut Central District post-civil war reconstruction showing the risks of private-sector-only recovery without community engagement. Source: Culture in the City Reconstruction and Recovery



Figure 5. Lijiang Old Town, China, showing World Bank-funded culturally sensitive reconstruction following the 1996 earthquake, later inscribed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Source: Culture in the City Reconstruction and Recovery

More Global Examples of the CURE Framework in Practice

Kobe, Japan	Kathmandu, Nepal
Hybrid Governance Structure <i>Great Hanshin Earthquake, 1995</i> National recovery headquarters coordinated cabinet ministries while implementation was decentralized by local government. A community-inclusive planning council evolved throughout the process — demonstrating that governance structures must balance institutional capacity with grassroots authority (Principle 7).	Heritage as Unifying Force <i>Earthquakes, April–May 2015</i> Recovery of Durbar Square and other heritage assets became a communal focal point, particularly for youth, creating collective hope. However, emergency responders prioritized people over structures — highlighting the need for dedicated cultural heritage protocols within civil protection agencies.



Figure 6. Kobe, Japan: hybrid governance structure established after the Great Hanshin Earthquake (1995), illustrating CURE Principle 7 balancing institutional capacity with grassroots authority. Source: Culture in the City Reconstruction and Recovery



Figure 7. Kathmandu, Nepal: recovery of Durbar Square heritage assets following the 2015 earthquakes, illustrating the need for dedicated cultural heritage protocols within civil protection agencies. Source: Culture in the City Reconstruction and Recovery

Conceptual Framework

The research presented in this paper investigates how the concept of “culture” can be seen as an important factor in determining how society and specific locations bounce back after a disaster. The act of recovering or rebuilding encompasses not only the physical, social, and economic components of a community but also the creation and reconstruction of your personal identity based on what you define as “cultural.” As identified by Fabbri et al. (2020), it is of great importance to ensure that the focus of all development policies is on culture. It is important to remember that culture is both an ongoing process and an end product; it is built around the shared values, beliefs, symbols, and practices within a particular community that aid in developing its identity as well as assisting in developing new ways of achieving transformation (Pillai, 2022; Suryandari, 2020).

Functional culture in disaster contexts refers to how cultures serve as a lens through which people understand their risks, cope with challenges, and derive meaning after experiencing crises (Bankoff et al., 2015, p. 5). The interplay between culture and risk also shapes behavior or actions taken as well as decisions made regarding the risk posed by specific situations, such as the location of one's residence, home construction practices, perceptions of health, methods and sources of income, and the way in which individuals interact socially in high-hazard locales. Cultural variables significantly influence how people respond to the hardships brought about by disasters. By viewing our community as vibrant relational entities rather than singular objects, we can identify the shared experiences and the individual histories of each member of the community. Thus, the development of culturally competent and representative post-disaster recovery plans will be a fundamental principle for any community that aspires to achieve resiliency.

Cultural Heritage (definition) refers to cultural heritage and can be classified as either tangible or intangible. The tangible aspect of cultural heritage comprises the material characteristics of cultural heritage, including (but not limited to) the physical characteristics of buildings, other structural features of built environments, and places where the public congregates (e.g., public squares, historic landmarks, and monuments). Intangible cultural heritage comprises elements that are not physically present, including the following: religion, traditional practices, folklore (i.e., memory), language(s), values, traditional oral stories, local knowledge, and customs. Together, these two types of cultural heritage provide a collective sense of identity based on how the elements of each type relate to and impact a particular group or culture (Garcia, 2021; Pillai, 2020). The significance of cultural heritage is evident because it defines a community's identity and affirms it across generations. For example, the promotion of community connectedness is enhanced via cultural heritage (Fabbicatti et al., 2020). Furthermore, cultural heritage serves as a unifying force for communities that have experienced disasters that threaten a community's entire existence or erase its shared historical experiences. As Garcia (2021) argues, cultural heritage can be perceived as a community's asset with the potential to provide ongoing support following a disaster. Protecting this asset should also focus on restoring community identity and improving future disaster mitigation efforts.

Both the formation of individual identities and group identity are affected by how individuals express themselves through cultural means, as well as by their sense of belonging to their respective communities. Research from Abd Ghafar et al. (2022) and Hadzimuhamedovic (n.d.) demonstrates how urban branding and the reconstruction of memory can assist in rebuilding a collective identity for historically diverse or marginalized groups suffering from the consequences of trauma or some form of disruption. Cultural expression provides a basis for

identity and thus helps individuals make sense of their experiences of disruption, displacement, and change.

To support long-term recovery from a disaster and to recognize and sustain Altadena, California's complex, multicultural identity, it will be vital to consider how that identity relates to disasters both before and after the event. This approach aligns with the concept of placemaking, which involves actively involving residents in creating public spaces that reflect their community's culture, values, and identity, and in creating an environment that encourages social interaction. By drawing on cultural memory and the emotional connection to place to support the creation of these spaces, placemaking as part of the recovery process transforms places of loss into places of meaning and healing (Ghezelloo et al. 2024). Therefore, the act of creating placemaking is not only about the physical design of urban spaces but also serves as a way for people to achieve physical and emotional recovery through reconnecting with themselves and the world around them (Matsushita et al. 2024).

Disasters disrupt cultural continuity by causing people to lose their homes and impairing their ability to protect or preserve their heritage. Communities may use disasters as transition points for developing new ways to continue existing. March et al. (2017) argue that when systemic weaknesses are exposed by disaster, they present opportunities for transformative recovery. Transformative recovery is viewed as an all-encompassing concept because recovery cannot be called recovery without rebuilding physical structures; it must also include cultural/social recovery. Garcia (2021) and Genova et al. (2020) both agree that recovery methods focus on replacing the physical losses of property, the meaning of properties and of belonging to a community/location, and the personal identity of the impacted person.

Report Organization

The chapters that follow are organized to build sequentially from theoretical foundation through comparative evidence to actionable recommendation:

Chapter	Content
Chapter Two	Literature Review — examines why culture is essential to recovery, defines tangible and intangible heritage, reviews prior recovery frameworks and their gaps, and establishes the placemaking and social capital literature that grounds the case study analysis.
Chapter Three	Methodology — presents the qualitative, comparative case study research design, explains case selection criteria, describes the interview and cultural mapping methods, and articulates how the CURE Framework functions as the analytical structure.
Chapter Four	Study Area: Altadena — establishes the historical background, planning history, community demographics, and pre- and post-disaster cultural identity of Altadena, including a detailed inventory of tangible and intangible losses from the Eaton Fire.
Chapter Five	Case Study Findings — presents comparative analysis of Treme, the Lower Ninth Ward, and Allensworth through all four CURE phases, with cross-case findings, intangible gap mapping, interview integration, and synthesis of three distinct recovery models.
Chapter Six	Recommendations for Altadena — translates case study findings into six actionable recommendations for culturally informed recovery, organized by CURE phase and linked explicitly to the evidence assembled in Chapter Five.
Appendix A	Questions from the interviews

Table 6. The organization of the report

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Why is Culture so Important to Recovery?

Culture is essential to any post-crisis recovery process according to Robert Wrobel, the author of *Culture in Post-Crisis Situations: Opportunities for Peacebuilding and Sustainable Recovery*. Government, development and other stakeholder have incorporated culture mostly into post-conflict recovery and programs in a “under the” radar ways (Wrobel, p. 2). However, it culturally informed approaches to gain traction outside of the domain of economic and social policies, a recent RAND Corporation report, *Building Armies, Building Nations*, focuses on post-war conflict, military and security force assistance in *Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations*, stresses on the importance of “ideas, identities, ideology, and history” in shaping security forces in the context of larger nation-building projects. (Wrobel, p. 2). Culture has been increasingly targeted as a means of erasing people’s ties to their communities, cities and nations. Similar targeted acts of destruction are undertaken to ease cultural diversity and pluralism and deny victims their cultural rights and fundamental freedoms. (UNESCO & The World Bank, p. 11). Most people see cultural heritage as a secondary issue, however in some cases where there was disaster, there are trauma, which lead people in desire to hold on to their cultural landmarks and symbols (Garcia, p.1).

According to Wrobel, “when policymakers and practitioners ignore culture or only think of culture in its derivative forms of monuments, or music, their policies and interventions are unlikely to be effective” (Wrobel, p. 1). If culture is in center of recovery in FCS (*Fragile and Conflict-Affected Situations*), it can enhance individuals’ groups and institution’s ability to deal with social change, work with coordinate effectively among various stakeholders, the outcome they are perceived to be fair and inclusive (Wrobel, p. 3). In the Robert Wrobel report, it

encourages culturally informed reconstruction in conflict situations whether it was a natural disaster or violence or war conflict in post-crisis assessments, therefore helping teams avoid omitting culture in their initial assessments, which can result in lost opportunities, or worse outcomes such as aggravate underlying stresses. They are providing culturally informed analysis that rely upon a range of methodologies, including ethnographic investigation, socioeconomic assessment and participatory engagement (Wrobel, p. 5).

Wrobel mentioned cases around the world for example of culturally informed reconstruction in conflict situation. These cases included the National Program for Culture and Creative Economy and National Solidarity Program (NSP) in Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, which best approximate an approach in which culture is central to post-conflict recovery and long-term state building efforts (Wrobel, p. 8), Case 2 Government-led and Culturally-Informed recovery in Post-Tsunami Aceh, and conflict in Indonesia (Wrobel, p. 11), and Case 3 Urban heritage revitalization in Lebanon.

Case 1: National Program for Culture and Creative Economy and National Solidarity Program (NSP) in the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Afghanistan's National Unity Government unveiled a strategy to support culture & creative industries (the NPCE) as part of its National Peace & Development Framework for 2017 to 2021. The NPCE is designed to promote Afghans' collective cultural heritage by creating programs that build national unity. The NPCE is supported by a Steering Committee comprising Afghans, UNESCO, and other key international donors, and is chaired by the Minister of Finance. (Adapted from Wrobel, p. 9). It focuses on eight key areas, including promoting: right to culture for societal reconciliation, improved higher education for culture and creative

industries, Afghanistan Translation Movement to address the scarcity of translated educational materials, Legal Frameworks Culture and Creative Industries and the Protection of Cultural Heritage, Safeguarding the cultural heritage of Afghanistan by encouraging community ownership and integrating historical sites into daily life, Architecture for public spaces which address the rapid urbanization by promoting better urban planning and enhancing public spaces, as seen in projects like Bamiyan Public Park, Cultural Centers Network, and the Afghanistan Creative Cities Network to boost urban development through international cultural dialogue (Wrobel, p. 10).

Case 2: Government-led and Culturally Informed recovery in post-Tsunami Aceh, and conflict in Indonesia

The Government of Indonesia received international funding and launched a large-scale, \$6 billion Reconstruction Program for Aceh after the disaster and conflict. Emphasis was placed on building trust by ensuring transparency, encouraging community participation, and promoting culturally relevant interventions. This approach was supported by government, who believed that the concept of “unity in diversity” was one of the cornerstones of Indonesian National Identity. Some examples of key initiatives included:

Pressing for Accountability: The Ceuremen Newspaper is a bi-weekly publication that informs local citizens of assistance, rebuilding policies, and their rights, and has helped improve accountability by coordinating the actions of various development actors.

Utilizing Forum Theatre techniques with plays performed in Acehnese by Community Theatre groups via dialogue around rebuilding and peacebuilding: With performances at shelter

and in public spaces throughout Aceh, especially at Banda Aceh's Culture Park, designed to welcome and permit audience members to engage through and with the presenting group. Through workshops for former combatants, Peace Diaries culminate in a photographic and written exhibition of participants' work that encourages discussion and supports their reintegration into their local communities.

The Arch Youth Radio Project helped youth develop programming that supports collaboration and challenges stereotypes through radio programs as well as radio plays and “Peace Concerts” that could help promote peace; all of these activities together highlighted the importance of using culturally sensitive methods when rebuilding and reconciling after a conflict or disaster (Wrobel, p. 12).

Case 3 Urban heritage revitalization in Lebanon

Due to the cycle of violence from the civil war, Lebanon suffered with destruction of failing infrastructure and instability with a local population struggles to make a decent living and pushing into poverty. Since 2003, the World Bank Group, along with Italy and France, has supported Lebanon’s Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project (CHUD), enhancing economic growth and community cohesion in five historic cities: Tripoli, Byblos, Baalbek, Saida, and Tyre. The culturally informed interventions included structural restoration of historic buildings, as well as restoration of archeological sites and monuments (Italian Agency for Development Cooperation 2016), which help rehabilitated some section of the cities and create more jobs and build more inclusive communities. In Tyre, for example, the project revitalized historic harbor, improving and building new docks and facilities, and enhances local markets,

promoting community engagement and economic opportunities, meeting the needs of community and the surrounding historic neighborhoods, specifically fishing trade.

Historic streets have also been restored, adding new square and a large formal marketplace for vegetable clothing, and meat vendors offer renovated venues for community gatherings and exchanges. Reviving the dynamic between the city, the port, and the community created public spaces for residents to live and enjoy. Creating more businesses and opportunities for the locals, which resulted in more confidence in the community's future viability.

Lebanon's Cultural Heritage and Urban Development Project (CHUD) also restored the Roman temple of Bacchus in Baalback, which hosted the 60th International Festival in 2016 benefiting both locals and Syrian refugees employed in conversation efforts (Wrobel, P. 13).

Culture Defined

The fundamental definition of 'culture' is 'a set of intellectual, spiritual, emotional and material characteristics that define a social group/ society; these include; Art and Literature, architectural structures, lifestyle choices, social interaction, morals, religious and belief systems' (UNESCO & The World Bank, 2016) Culture as defined above encompasses all forms of cultural heritage, creativity and the variety of modes of cultural expression (unblocking cycle of culture), some examples of how this works would be through passing on craftsmanship, and storytelling and by creating community through shared experiences and art that can be produced within a community (if one thinks of musical or drama and stage art as cultural forms). Culture can also encompass the Cultural and Creative Industries, which encompass the physical and non-physical infrastructure required to create, distribute, and sell cultural goods such as music, theatre, film, and television, in formal and informal economies (UNESCO / The World Bank, 2016). The 'structure' argument in urban planning literature, as described by Patrick Cobbinah in his article 'Resonating with the 'Culture' Debate in Urban Planning' is that 'culture' can be defined as the norms, values, interpretation, and behaviors that describe groups of people, societies, and the like (Cobbinah, 2020). This includes both formal (regulatory) and informal (unregulated and unauthorized) types of culture. Beyond being a defining characteristic of cities and people's experiences within them, many (e.g., Siew & Allam, 2017; Schwartz, 2006; United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), 2008) have argued that cultural value (both formal and informal) provide a critical parameter for the success of urban development and therefore the success or failure of urban planning (Cobbinah, 2020).

The document "Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery" states that there are two main forms of culture — tangible (physical objects) and intangible (non-physical objects)

particularly in the context of urban development and placemaking. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and The World Bank (p.12), intangible heritage is all of the expression, practice, and knowledge that comes from cultural artifact creation, while tangible heritage is all of the expression of cultural artifact creation as applied to the constructed (built) environment. While not sufficient in itself, intangible heritage can contribute significantly to the recovery and reconstruction processes through its ability to contribute to the rebuilding of social connection and cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue after conflict, and also in supporting the general economy in an evolving global society (UNESCO & The World Bank, p.12; UNESCO, p.2). Through the use of local knowledge and traditions associated with intangible cultural heritage, it can be a source of great resilience among affected communities. Acknowledging that culturally embedded mechanisms of information transmission play a key role in the intergenerational transfer of disaster mitigation strategies, Disaster Special recognizes the provision of social activities as recovery mechanisms.

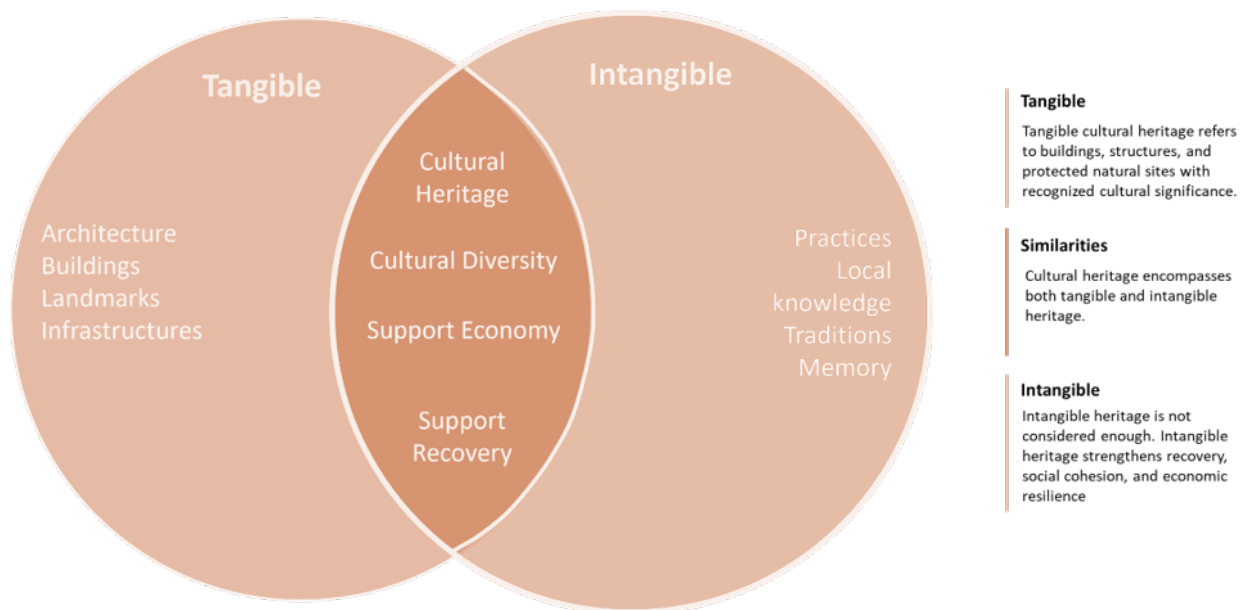


Figure 8. Relationship between tangible and intangible cultural assets and their combined role in supporting cultural heritage, economic activity, and recovery processes.

Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015

The Hyogo Framework for Action has been referenced by UNESCO's Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery, with respect to the potential for future situations regarding disaster prevention and/or mitigation as well as relief. The outstanding item from the Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery that addresses gaps in prior frameworks, such as the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action for a Safer World (1994), which do not acknowledge a connection to any aspect of cultural heritage, to a specific degree, has had a very large bearing on the Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery (CURE) Framework. The Hyogo Framework for Action is considered the first comprehensive and globally unified effort to put forth a detailed work plan for how to reduce the risk of disasters. The establishment of the Hyogo Framework was through agreement among countries at the World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction and the adoption of the Hyogo Declaration. All of the above will have an end result of developing a culturally resilient community and/or nation to disasters (this will accomplish what over 162 countries agreed to in 2005).

The Hyogo Framework for Action is designed to promote Education for Disaster Resilience as well as requiring that Disaster Risk Reduction be included as a priority issue within a sound Institutional Basis; it requires identifying, assessing and monitoring disaster risks as part of an Early Warning System; and building a culture of safety; resiliency. Its strategic goal is to incorporate Disaster Risk Consideration into all government policies, plans and programs (World Conference on Disaster Reduction). The Hyogo Framework does not refer to elements of culture; however, it does refer to "the culture of prevention" and Disaster Risk Reduction (p. 5).

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) 2015-2030

The Sendai Framework replaced the Hyogo Framework as the new standard for disaster risk reduction, and it has been referenced in regards to Reconstruction and Recovery in Cities. It has 4 priorities and 7 Targets for preventing future disasters, which align very closely with the priorities of the Hyogo Framework, as to whether you will be able to prepare for Effective Response to Disasters, and to understand what risks exist, strengthen Governance Systems/Structures to be able to manage those risks/uses of emergency preparedness Equipment and Resources for Disasters or any construction activity in order to "Build Back Better" during the recovery/reconstruction process.

The Sendai Framework seeks to overcome the shortcomings and lessons learned from the previous Hyogo Framework. It establishes a more extensive set of principles on disaster risk management by utilizing a people-focused strategy; improving inclusivity in order to be successful; engaging with stakeholders such as youth, women, low-income individuals, indigenous peoples, and volunteers; connecting to more ways of integrating disaster risk reduction into other management processes. As part of this last goal, the Sendai Framework describes an urgent need to reduce disaster risk and safeguard all communities, including through the protection of their cultural heritage and socioeconomic assets.

Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011)

According to UNESCO, the Core of the Historic Urban Landscape Approach is a New Conceptualization for the Historic Urban Environment. There is also a New Conceptualization for the Definition of the HUL. The Definition of the HUL is "An Urban Area, understood as the Result of a Historical Layering of Cultural, and Natural Values and Attributes, Extending Beyond the Conceptual Notion of the 'Historic Centre' and is therefore Inclusive of

the Wider Context of the Cities and Their Geographical Locations; Concerning with this, we include Aspects such as Social and Cultural Practices, Social and Cultural Values, Economic Processes and the Intangible Dimensions of Heritage as they Relate to Our Diversity and Our Identity" (UNESCO). Furthermore, The HUL also Emphasizes an Inclusive Development, and a Facilitating Participation of Local Communities in Urban Heritage Management by Giving them an Opportunity to have a Voice in the Decision Making Process (UNESCO & The World Bank). Although there is no mention of disaster risk reduction in the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, it acknowledges the importance of preserving the historic urban environment to increase the use of a whole-systems approach when managing an area with multiple levels of historic significance.

Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA)

Post Disaster Assessment is a tool to evaluate damage and loss because of the disaster and to design a practical strategy for rebuilding and promoting sustainable development. The PDNA Guide provides a universal basis for partnership and coordinated delivery of services associated with the assessment phase, post-assessment and recovery planning. The UN CURE program mentions the PDNA as part of its Damage and Need Assessment phase. Recently, the PDNA has demonstrated that there is a significant opportunity to leverage the potential value of intangible heritage through the use of creative industries during the recovery and reconstruction phases of disasters. The use of these types of resources leads to an increase in income and helps provide locals with the necessary materials and craftspeople to rebuild using these resources, while preserving local traditions that will assist in continuing to develop and/or reinstate these types of local knowledge and practices (UNESCO & The World Bank, P. 26).

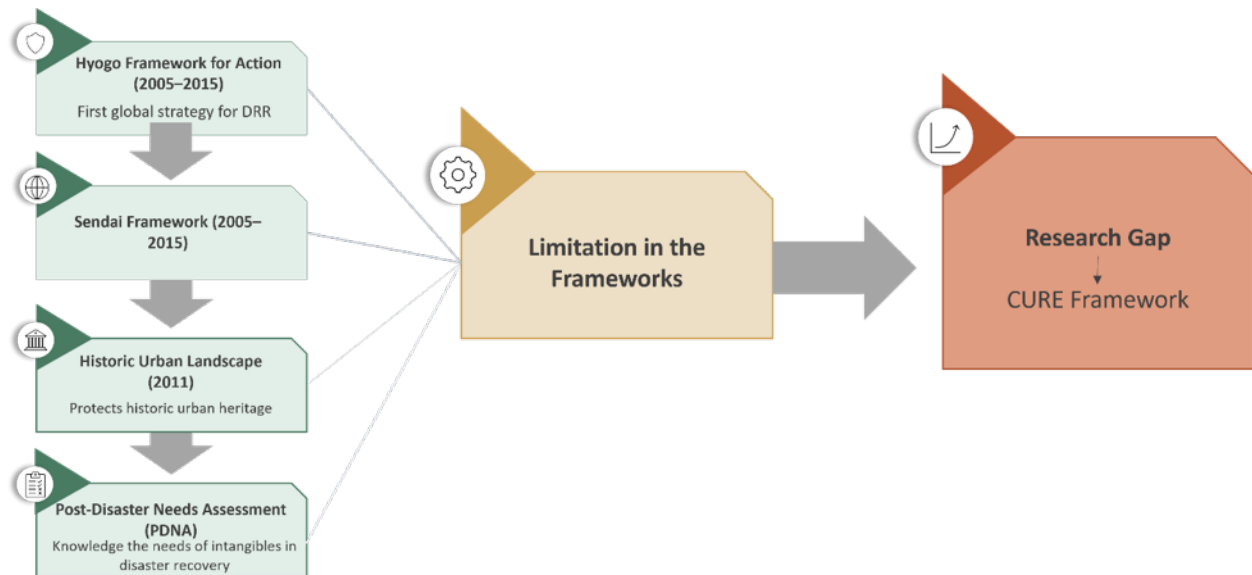


Figure 9. Overview of the disaster recovery frameworks over decades and identified limitations, highlighting the research gap addressed by the CURE Framework.

Cultural Capital and Social Capital Integration

The term "cultural capital" refers to both our sense of community (who we are) and our degree of connectivity (how connected we feel). Cultural Capital was first studied by Pierre Bourdieu in the early 1980s, who used the term to refer to aspects of our daily lives, such as knowledge, language, customs and traditions, celebrations, and events that occur within our communities. Cultural Capital is typically provided through local institutions (e.g., small businesses, cultural institutions, religious institutions, grassroots organizations) that support the day-to-day operations of a community and provide a foundation for continued identity and stability. As Magee et al. explain, Cultural Capital offers a unique opportunity to support the development of both symbolic and educational skills that can subsequently translate into other forms of capital, namely Social and Economic Capital. Ultimately, Cultural Capital represents an important element in a community's ability to recover from loss by maintaining a tradition of establishing a symbolic relationship to the restoration of the physical space (i.e., the town).

Nonetheless, social capital plays a crucial role in recovery after disasters and has historically received extensive study. There is also much greater evidence in the literature that social capital is a much more stable factor over time than cultural capital. Some examples of social capital used to aid disaster recovery include social networks, education level, and professional associations or group memberships. For example, Seidenburg (n.d.) stated that "Social Networks...are among the most significant elements involved in recovering from disasters; as a result of the relationships formed in their community, job, and family/friends, disaster survivors are able to establish temporary shelter, obtain emotional support from others, and access resources (transportation, communication) they need for recovery." Monteil et al (2019) state, "The presence of social capital is one of the most accurate and dependable indicators of a community's ability to recover following a disaster." The authors identified three types of social capital per their definition, and these classifications are as follows: (1) Bonding social capital refers to the degree to which an individual has social connections with people with whom he or she has common characteristics; (2) Bridging social capital refers to the degree to which an individual has social connections with people who are different from him or her; and (3) Linking social capital refers to an individual's degree of connection to others who hold either authority or power. The authors contend that when a disaster occurs, the focus should shift from primarily developing bonding (social capital) to bridging and linking social capital to create conditions favorable for both adapting to the long-term post-disaster situation and effectively rebuilding. The authors contend that social capital can be developed through sustainable recovery methods and through better social infrastructure.

What do we know about how local businesses and their cultures get along with or as a result of being disrupted by outside influences? Research has shown that when local

communities are supported. Dionisio & Pawson (2016) found that in Christchurch, New Zealand, following the earthquake, community projects were established primarily by utilizing preexisting informal social networks among people working in community service delivery and citizen organizations, collectively serving as the foundation for rebuilding community cohesion at the neighborhood level. Also, local community members provided significant opportunities for the wider local community to recover emotionally, support to share their resources, and build a new public life in the surrounding neighborhoods.

As stated by Schmalbach (2021), the large agencies were not only integral to the recovery of culture in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina but also to the exhibition of the resiliency of the artists, musicians, and businesses in the community. The majority of these individuals provided 'third spaces' to enable people to express themselves through cultural expression and to build relationships with each other in the absence of their homes and the presence of emotional trauma. According to Matsushita et al. (2024), there exists an association between the long-term community-based citizen placemaking initiatives established on a voluntary and relational basis (grounded in their relation to one another) and the development of trust and rebuilding of a sense of community through the pre-existing social networks in neighborhoods in the United States and Japan. Specifically, the cultural capital of Altadena comprises several organizations, including Altadena Heritage and the Tekeyan Cultural Association. These groups work in tandem to create stability through educational programs about past events; help connect present-day residents with their historical community members; provide opportunities for community members to actively participate in programs; create cultural programs that represent the community's beliefs; and preserve memories of people who lived in the area before them. Less formal structures, such as neighborly relationships, art collaborations, and faith-based

institutions, often respond to cultural trauma much more quickly than more formal structures, such as government agencies. Therefore, these organizations can play a vital role in a community-based approach to disaster recovery (Bankoff et al., 2015).

Post-Disaster Placemaking in Literature

In post-disaster recovery, using placemaking as a way to reform a community's identity can benefit a community tremendously by providing the means of reclaiming public spaces and maintaining the collective memory of past experiences; therefore, placemaking supports positive cultural practices, and develops community by creating a greater sense of community in the new environmentally related area. The characteristics of an environment can be defined through their physical aspect and their symbolic aspect; the intersection of these two aspects defines how placemaking reshapes and reconstructs a community after a disaster. By creating significant and accessible space to the public for memorialized usage that represents the culture of a community, placemaking can help reform the cultural value of a community and create a sense of belonging to a community. In Japan, after the tsunami, the creation of memorial parks provided a space for collective mourning of loss, brought back to life the social networks that were lost during the disaster, and created opportunities for an opportunity for healing. Moreover, the establishment of memorial parks has provided a new resilient landscape for the combination of citizen participation in governance and governmental sponsor planning assistance for residents to emotionally recover (Ghezelloo et al., 2024).

The notion of Machizukuri (or "Japanese Participatory Planning," according to Fujimoto-Verdier & Martini, 2024), involves the use of cultural activities and temporary structures to provide support to those experiencing trauma or redefining their relationship with the

environment. A prime example of this can be seen through the Beacons of Hope Initiative's use of arts as a means to support communities re-establishing their voices and forming their identities in order to experience new forms of ritualism through spatial storytelling as they transform devastated places into new places.

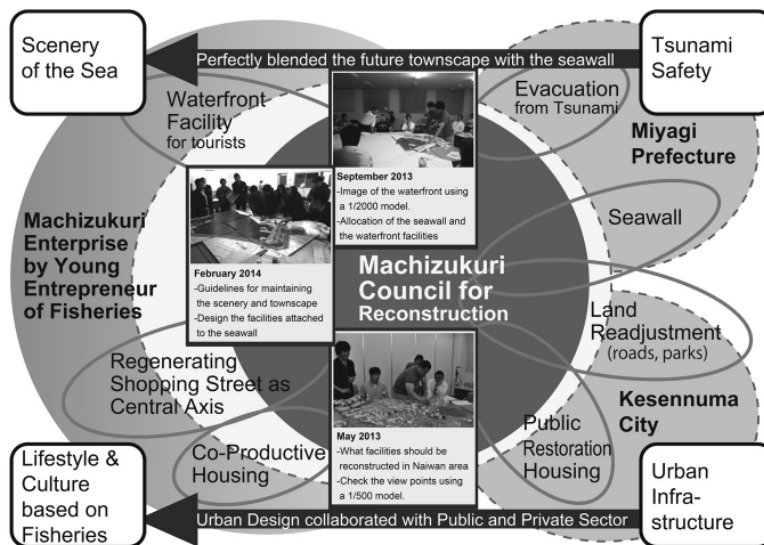


Figure 10. Machizukuri Council for Reconstruction: An Integrated Framework for Post-Tsunami Community Revitalization in Kesenuma City, Miyagi Prefecture. Source: Matsushita, S

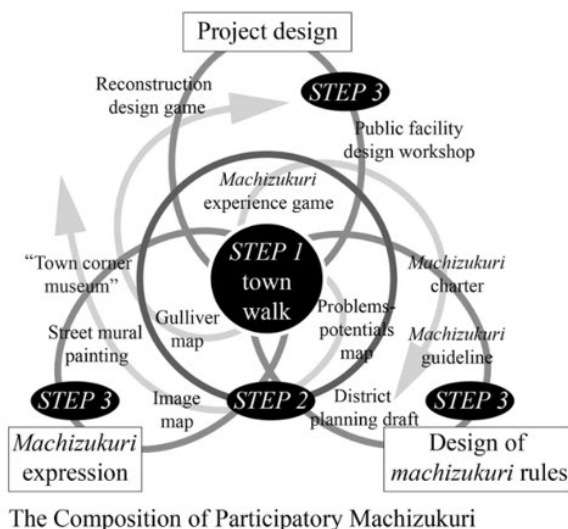


Figure 11. The Composition of Participatory Machizukuri- Overlapping Phases of Community Discovery, Planning, and Design Culminating in Collaborative Urban Governance Tools. Source: Satoh, S

According to Schmalbach's (2021) research, the majority of creative city strategies simply seek to "create" a desired "place" instead of fostering civic creativity and addressing grassroots issues that generate a new "place." Additionally, creative strategies used for economic revitalization may create worse social and spatial inequalities by displacing people from their communities as a result of gentrification. Aestheticizing urban spaces also hides the social and political causes of urban problems, and an ongoing tension exists between using the arts for economic development versus valuing art independently from its economic value.

According to Brand, Nicholson, & Allen (2019), Christchurch, New Zealand, is an example of how to create a sense of place through community engagement that incorporates heritage aspects into urban design. The holistic approach to placemaking taken after the earthquakes demonstrated resilience by retaining local identities. The authors emphasize how “creative engagement and shared ownership” are important components of developing an environment that embraces the values of that community. An overall theme that connects these disparate global examples is that placemaking thrives when it is based on local traditions and led by the local community. By transforming empty lots into gardens, ruins into memorial sites, and trauma into collective experiences, placemaking contributes to a healing, enabling, and culturally remembering process.

Placemaking can create opportunities for your community to recover from the aftermath of the catastrophic events that have occurred and to express your community identity anew. The concept of “Social Design” as outlined by Dimmer (2016) as a direct response to the 3.11 Earthquake and Tsunami, serves as a philosophical framework to develop collaborative relationships among architects, artists, community members, and other partners in order to create

new places that facilitate social interactions, foster collective memories, and contribute to a collective community identity. Communities are often separated from their original location and become disconnected from their history, therefore losing their identity. The principle of social design is illustrated through programs such as Home-for-All where informal community spaces were specifically created for daily engagement, re-establishment of past connections, and an overall feeling of community belonging. This type of design creates a new approach to develop and provide services to help those who have been affected by disaster. In contrast to the traditional, more fixed and hierarchical systems that most governments use for delivering aid and services after a disaster, Dimmer believes that Japan's creation of new public spaces as part of the recovery process after a disaster provided many of these new forms of the role of architecture and urban design through the use of soft power: to help to give a voice to the community, to strengthen and preserve the cultural identity of local people; and to share with affected people the emotional support. Furthermore, this signified a significant change to the way planning in Japan was practiced by acknowledging the importance of incorporating local knowledge, local culture, and local lived experience into the spatial recovery process.

Citizen-Driven Placemaking & Authentic Placemaking

The creation of culture-centered living and the community involvement of the public in transforming existing public spaces is important for post-crisis recovery, as demonstrated by the development of New Orleans' rain gardens and placemaking projects. In the Lower Ninth Ward, citizens were part of the process of citizen-driven placemaking through the principles of (1) ownership by the residents; (2) the transformation of previously unused public spaces into meaningful places; and (3) activation of the community through citizen-led actions that create places that add activation and meaning to the community. Matsushita et al. (2024) describe the

incremental nature of citizen-driven placemaking through the three-stage approach of preparation, creation, and nurturing in the process of citizen-driven placemaking. The experience of residents in the Lower Ninth Ward before, during, and after Hurricane Katrina has shown us how important social capital, a vision for the future, and citizen mobilization can be in creating a solid foundation for the recovery and renewal process of that community. Community-level activity can help restore the meaning of a neighborhood for its residents and create a sense of community through the activation of public spaces where residents can interact with each other.

The evolution of Lafitte Greenway through. Place-making is considered an incremental process, so it is phased; a place goes from preparation to being made, and finally to nurturing over time. The Lower Ninth Ward has applied incremental placemaking methodologies using Matsushita et al.'s illustrations for each of these phases.

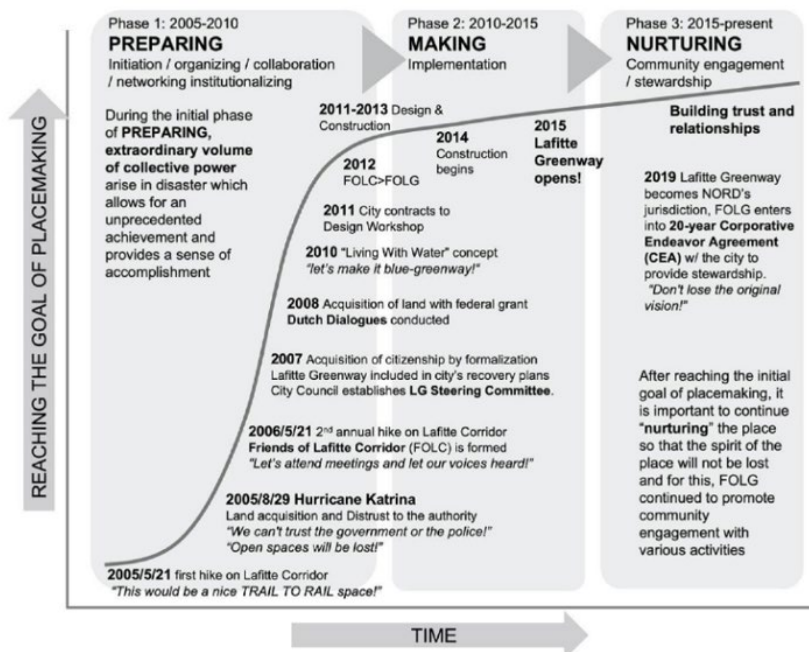


Figure 12. The incremental process of placemaking on Lafitte Greenway, New Orleans showing the three phases, displaying three phases, preparing, making, and nurturing as applied in Lower Ninth Ward. Source: Matsushita et al.

Authentic placemaking that is reflective of the actual location also includes various elements such as the culture, history, and value of the area. Developing a sense of place and creating a feeling of unity among the residents requires a comprehensive, multifaceted method to generate a sense of place that will take into consideration many factors beyond aesthetics, including the local culture, historical context, and obtaining input from the residents to build strong bonds to the area and to create an envious feeling of belonging (El Moussaoui). When elements of authentic placemaking are brought together, the result will be communities being created which will allow for individuals to establish more personal relationships with their environment; therefore, having a positive effect on the well-being of both individuals and communities, such as those found at some of the more successful projects currently being built today, like the New York City High Line or the San Antonio Riverwalk (Krause, 2024). The overall goal of such an approach is to allow society to develop places where people can feel they belong and feel comfortable being part of that community.

The process of creating authentic places is collaborative and also iterative, which relies heavily on engaging with the local community throughout the entire process - not just building something physical (Reny, 2018). A key aspect of this process is that in order for new developments to fit well within the existing urban fabric of a neighborhood, they must enhance and contribute to the neighborhood's existing identity. Developers and planners must seek out and incorporate input from the community, celebrate the unique characteristics of a place, and establish (adaptive) development frameworks that provide for "organic" development as it occurs over time (LLMDesign, 2019). Through continued and thorough engagement, newly created landscapes can be constructed as a part of this iterative process and ultimately become authentic,

lived-in spaces that are created through the ongoing involvement and emotional investment of their users (Piazzoni, 2018).

For placemaking purposes, the meaning of authenticity encompasses more than sensory experience through sight, touch and smell. It also encompasses the way in which people develop emotional and psychological bonds with a particular location (Krause, 2024). Authenticity has strong ties to the uniqueness of a particular location's identity, which arises out of its diverse cultural/historical/spiritual/experiential characteristics (Munjeri 2004). Authenticity creates a "sense of place" within communities while also being individualized by each person. This is what constitutes *genius loci* or the spirit of a location (El Moussaoui 2024). In its most basic sense, authentic placemaking is about the reciprocal relationship between people and place. This means that when your personal identity feels authentic to you, the place will also feel authentic to you. This line of reasoning is articulated in different ways by philosophers Martin Heidegger regarding his true meaning of "dwelling," and Yi-Fu Tuan regarding his definition of "topophilia" (the emotional connection between a person and a place) (Krause 2024).

Culture as a Recovery Assets

How culture aids in rebuilding/restoring a sense of community after disaster occurs is accomplished in a variety of ways, including sustaining identity, sustaining community, and sustaining resiliency in a community that has experienced traumatic events as a result of natural disasters or conflict. When a community experiences trauma from a natural disaster or conflict, the cultural practices, cultural places, and cultural values associated with the community will provide an opportunity to continuously maintain connections with one another following the traumatic event(s). In a study of the recovery process of Sarajevo after wars, Hazimuhamedovic

(n.d.) indicates in her research report on recovery efforts how building infrastructure and restoring the civic cultural identity of a community has or will contribute to rebuilding infrastructures, and how restoring the civic cultural identity of the local community is key in developing resilient communities with a culture-based urban resilience model. She describes how tangible and intangible civic cultural heritage provides an opportunity to connect to history and provide opportunities to recreate the shared story of a community for the future by restoring the shared identity of the community through reconnecting members of the community back to each other.

Sarajevo's approach to coping with the past demonstrates that culture provides a pathway for cities to recover after disasters. Culture also functions as a mechanism to rebuild cities rather than merely suffering from the impact of a disaster. Hazimuhamedovic believes that promoting the inclusion of cultural meaning in the process of spatial recovery supports psychological health and creates social cohesion.

Wu and Hou (2019) illustrate how the ideation of co-design practices is exemplified by Guchengping Village after an earthquake in post-earthquake China. The co-design methods enabled local stakeholders to collectively decide on how to co-create recovery by preserving intangible aspects of their culture such as community traditions, community symbols, and the spatial use of community in a manner consistent with tradition. This demonstrates how working with community members to co-create recovery supports the preservation of community identity and the memories that help shape communities and thus supports cultural resilience. Wu and Hou also demonstrate how inclusive planning supports "the sense of belonging through lived experiences," ensuring recovery is not only physical, but also deeply rooted in culture. Through

their research, Wu and Hou convey a message regarding the success of recovery not only as symbolic, but also as operationalizing cultural values and local knowledge into the design and governance of the recovery process. The perspective above is accurate for Altadena, as they have ample community history and culture to provide guidance for rebuilding after a disaster, in a manner that will be both inclusive and culturally relevant.

Challenges and Successes

Culture is widely viewed as a critical element of city recovery. Implementing culture-centric recovery strategies, however, can be complex and contentious. Across diverse communities, implementing community-driven strategies for recovering from disasters is impeded by structural policy barriers, regulatory gaps, and competing interests in recovery. In the post-disaster recovery phase, there are generally two main obstacles: managing the tensions between hierarchical (top-down) and grassroots (bottom-up) recovery planning and delivery; and managing the risk of losing culture and/or facing gentrification due to the inadequate extent to which cultural factors have been integrated into the recovery process.

The tension between state-run planning and the activities of the community in creating their own culture after a disaster continues unabated. The Christchurch earthquakes and the subsequent redevelopment process showed how technical, efficiency-based decisions made by state-run agencies resulted in economic growth that was unrelated to local voices and connections to place (Brand et al., 2019). Placemaker initiatives that were promoted through the local community were severely restricted because of the overly centralized decision-making by the government. As a result, a large part of the identity of the residents, and thus their possible representation of culturally resilient improvisational forms, was never realized. In Japan, after the tsunami disaster occurred,

the creation of memorial parks involved the collaboration of many different levels of government and citizens; however, during the development phase, there were huge mismatches between the local community's requirements and what the state government was providing (Ghezelloo et al., 2024). Local residents were asking for areas that would reflect their mourning, memory, and experience, yet state representatives typically presented standard design solutions that were driven by bureaucratic regulations. This led to many compromises that were at most only nice to look back & see but have absolutely no depth anymore. All the studies agree that unless there is real co-governance in the process (or genuine community ownership), placemaking will likely be little more than a symbolic act instead of making significant changes for the good of our cities.

People-Centered and Place-Based Approaches

According to the UNESCO Global Report on the Culture of Urban Futures, grounded in key principles that guide the development of cities from a culture-oriented basis: cities that are people centered create opportunities for cultural expression; urban planning based on the unique characteristics of localities and the histories of their communities will create an environment conducive to culture; and integrating culture into policy results in sustainable and resilient community development (UNESCO, 2011).

A community recovering from a crisis can implement a people-centered approach during both the recovery and rebuilding stages. This is a people-centered approach because the community will work together to ensure that they can identify the cultural elements that will need to be built back in the community. In addition, this is about ensuring that the community works together through collaboration (or working together) in order to rebuild the community. At the same time as implementing a people-centered approach, it is possible to implement a place-

based approach when building back the community. Place-based approaches can help in both the planning and design of historic urban areas, as well as the planning and design of new historic urban areas. Urban Heritage contains valuable content about Sustainability, which can be observed through the multiple components of Resilient Planning and Design; Inclusive Public Spaces that connect communities; the close relationship of both the Built and Natural Environments; and the Cultural Diversity of the Urban City users resulting in Identity, Place and Community. Additionally, the use of a Place-based Approach considers Local Context, the Vernacular Style of the Architecture, and the connections of the Built Environment to Nature. (Marks, 2003:UNESCO/The World Bank, p.19).

- People-Centered Policies -Community consultation and meaningful participation
- Place-Based Policies – Recovering infrastructure, housing and facilities.

Risk of Erasure and Gentrification

If redevelopment is not sensitive to the cultural aspects of the affected community or if it attempts to commercialize them, then it is possible for post-disaster recovery efforts to have a negative impact on culture. Schmalbach (2021) describes an example of how the cultural heritage and innovation of the city of New Orleans were leveraged to support economic recovery after Hurricane Katrina. In particular, the cultural assets of New Orleans, such as music (i.e., jazz), public art (i.e., street art), and architecture (i.e., Creole) were all utilized in branding and promoting tourism following the disaster. The efforts to rebrand and market the city have helped bring the city back economically, and to create a favorable perception of the city, at the same

time they have also caused a devaluation of longstanding social networks in addition to gentrification (often called the change-up of poor historic communities) in culturally significant and rich neighborhoods (like Treme) by elevating property values and displacing present residents raising the question of who is benefiting from the recovery. The physical recovery of the city can thus be viewed as being compounded with a physical separation of the city.

Hadžimuhamedović suggests that selective preservation of culture during reconstruction of Sarajevo resulting from war is a misrepresentation of the cultural history related to the aesthetics of building—monumental buildings and buildings with major architectural features. This process will allow for the disruption of historical relationships to culture in order to support re-creation while ignoring marginalized groups.

Barriers to cultural recovery include (1) failing to engage with the community during the recovery process; (2) not viewing one's heritage through a dynamic lens; and (3) failing to develop policies that prevent displacement of communities. As Altadena is such an ethnically diverse community with a wealth of historical and cultural experiences, achieving a balance between contributing to the physical safety of an area and providing opportunities for people to participate economically while still maintaining cultural significance, continuity of the community, and equitable participation in the recovery process is crucial. Cultural integration of an area after a disaster will be dependent not only on what is built back, but also on who oversees the recovery process and how the stories of those who lived there are told.

Gaps within Literature

Despite having an abundance of studies available today examining how culture affects recovery from disaster, many of those areas still lack important research findings that can be

applied to Altadena. There are very few studies that attempt to differentiate between small, or small urban (and) rural areas (eg Altadena) as compared to larger population centers (Santa Monica, Minneapolis). Most studies that are available today (Christchurch (2019), New Orleans (2020), Japan's 3.11 (2011; Ghezello et al., 2024)) are conducted in large urban regions, and/or culturally significant regions or internationally significant area's. The majority of the research completed so far is more focused on social capital than documenting or exploring deeper the cultural capital/aspects, but both are important for understanding how cultural application can play a vital role in the development and maintenance of the identity of individuals/communities throughout their recovery efforts from the incorporation of cultural strategies; however, both have received little attention in this research.

The studies referenced in this article do not adequately represent the reality of unincorporated, culturally rich and diverse communities, such as Altadena. The process of recovery after catastrophic events and disasters in these types of communities is based on the grassroots idea of self-reliance or by the processes of the county of which they are a part. Genova et al. and Matsushita et al. utilized Treme in New Orleans as an example of a culturally based and place-based recovery effort plan after a disaster; they discussed an extensive recovery outcomes for Treme and demonstrated the tension involved in the redevelopment of Treme with new resources, preservation of culturally significant places and neighborhoods, and building a collaborative environment to foster communication between planners and residents concerning competing culturally significant places in the region underneath the Claiborne Avenue Bridge.

Creative Placemaking has been lauded for its ability to foster cultural identity, social cohesion, and community healing in the aftermath of disasters. However, the emphasis placed on the creative and expressive components of placemaking can detract from the need to create

comprehensive and strategic or standard placemaking based on site specific context. Attaining an improved balance between creativity and community driven initiatives, along with evidence based urban design policy approaches may produce a more holistic and sustainable model for recovery in the period following a disaster event. Most research on urban disaster cultural recovery has been conducted with a short term (e.g., post-disaster) duration (Pillai, 2020; Naylor et al., 2020); thus, very little longitudinal research has been conducted pertaining to communities' ability to sustain or adapt their cultural identity over time; therefore, it is very relevant to the changing demographic makeup of Altadena (e.g. 24 Gentrifying and continuing to change). While researchers like Bankoff et. al. Although researchers have pointed out the lack of representation by race and the intentionality behind community results, there remains great uncertainty about the connection between race and SES, as well as race and social equity; also, many other issues concerning race exist. Evolving cultural framework as described in paper by Hadzaimuhamedovic (2015) focuses on how the disaster creates sociocultural environments; it does not take into consideration race, class, and other forms of intersectionality will have an effect on recovery results from the disaster. There is also ambiguity about the metrics used to develop indicators of cultural competence. Although many authors (Garcia, 2021; Fabbriatti et al. 2020) suggest that incorporating cultural components to disaster recovery programs is appropriate, there has not yet been a standardized indicator for measuring the success of cultural competence, continuity, or other forms of place-based accomplishments within a local community. Developing adaptive indicators that are responsive to the place in which they are applied and that are developed with input from Altadena's wide variety of populations could greatly enhance the effectiveness of Altadena's long-term planning processes.

Conclusion

This section's results illustrate (based on many international studies) that cultural considerations form an essential element of post-disaster recovery planning. Examples abound from Afghanistan and Aceh, Lebanon and Sarajevo, Japan, and Lijiang—how cultural heritage, creative economy industries, social capital, and community-made Placemaking provide stabilizing forces during times of disruption/crisis. The Hyogo and Sendai Disaster Risk Reduction Frameworks did support building institutional resiliency in their planning framework, but they did not address how culture has value beyond just being symbolically preserved. Conversely, the need for recognition of the way culture is inherently part of urban environments and the combined value of both tangible and intangible heritage within the rebuilding process is central to the recommendations made by the UNESCO Historic Urban Landscape Recommendation and the CURE Framework.

Literature describes cultural recovery as achieved with interdependent dimensions, including protection of physical landmarks, restoration of intangible practices, rebuilding of social networks, and activation of participatory governance. Cultural and social capital support one another and assist in promoting short-term coping strategies and developing long-term adaptive capacity. However, there continues to be considerable tension between top down redevelopment and bottom-up cultural expression; for example, the experiences of communities in post-Katrina New Orleans indicate that prioritizing economic revitalization without involving the community meaningfully creates risk for dislocation, commodification and cultural erasure. In contrast, culturally based and community driven placemaking approaches have led to better outcomes related to identity preservation and social connectedness.

Currently, there are no available resources to small or unincorporated communities (like Altadena) for cultural integration into the recovery process. Most of the research that currently exists has been done regarding larger cities and the designated “heritage” global cities. Therefore, there is an inadequate amount of research related to assisting "wildfire affected communities” (WWC) who are culturally diverse and county governed in recovering from wildfire events. Most studies reference the relationship between social capital and the influence of using cultural strategies to assist with recovery but regard the use of cultural strategies in recovery as an effort of strengthening the existing planning framework. Consequently, there is a requirement to enact cultural strategies throughout the entire reconstruction process (i.e., damage assessment, policy, and funding) instead of solely when using them for symbolic preservation post-reconstruction.

This research established three principal conclusions and recommendations about the subject area from what has previously been discovered: (1) to incorporate the culture of the community during the recovery planning process at the outset and also continuously throughout the process; (2) to create cultural-based placemaking and involve people participatively during this process to improve the chances for community recovery after a disaster; (3) to use recovery as a means for reducing and mitigating inequity and displacement from communities to promote the idea of continuing the community’s identity. These three findings are the foundational grounds to implement the CURE Framework in Altadena, along with examining comparative case studies to demonstrate the use of culture as a resource for recovery purposes and provide cultural protection mechanisms.

Chapter Three-Methodology

Research Design

The previous literature review shows that both tangible and intangible culture are essential for fair and durable post-disaster recovery. However, there remains limited use of culturally based recovery strategies in smaller unincorporated communities, such as Altadena, despite growing scholarly consensus. This study aims to address this gap and identify ways to incorporate culture into neighborhoods' post-disaster recovery planning.

Using a qualitative comparative case study approach, the researcher will investigate how culture can be systematically incorporated into the recovery process following a disaster. This type of research design is especially suited for examining the complexities of cultural identity, the role of social networks, and community practices, all of which are context-sensitive, complex, and embedded in historical, political, and spatial contexts. Because these dynamics cannot be adequately measured with quantitative data, they must be understood through interpretative, context-dependent analysis, grounded in lived experience and place-based meaning.

Using this comparative case study method, you can conduct both detailed analyses and comparative analyses across different cases. When adopting this methodology, the researcher examines cases across different governance structures and disaster contexts to identify patterns, differences, and strategies that could be transferred from one place to another. This methodology matches the research questions directly by allowing for (1) analysis of cultural identity before and after a disaster; (2) evaluation of culture-focused recovery strategies; and (3) recommendations developed based on the local context of Altadena.

Research Questions

This study is guided by one primary question and three supporting sub-questions, each addressed by a specific method:

Primary Question: What community strategies should be used to enhance cultural identity in Altadena's neighborhood disaster recovery?

Sub-Question 1: What was Altadena's cultural identity before and after the natural disaster? (Addressed through the Study Area chapter and cultural asset mapping)

Sub-Question 2: What strategies have communities used to enhance cultural identity and placemaking following post-disaster recovery? (Addressed through the literature review)

Sub-Question 3: What can Altadena learn from other communities that have effectively incorporated culture into their disaster recovery? (Addressed through comparative case studies)

Analytical Framework: CURE Framework

This evaluation of each case study is based on the CURE Framework (Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery), developed collaboratively by UNESCO and the World Bank. The framework divides the post-crisis recovery process into four main phases: Damage & Needs Assessment, Policy & Strategy, Financing, and Implementation. The CURE Framework emphasizes that both tangible and intangible cultural assets should be prioritized across all four phases of recovery.

The CURE Framework was used as a coded, comparative tool for this study. The researchers examined Treme, the Lower Ninth Ward, and Allensworth using the CURE Framework and then compiled their findings into a dual tangible/intangible structure for a comprehensive cross-case analysis. This facilitated the identification of patterns, gaps, and lessons in recovery processes across diverse environments. The framework was also used to generate culturally based recommendations for Altadena by determining which phases were best addressed in each case and which phases lacked adequate service delivery.

Case Study Selection

Three selected case studies were selected —Treme (Claiborne Avenue corridor), Sankofa Wetland Park in the Lower Ninth Ward, and Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park in Allensworth, California— based on four criteria: (1) they each represent a marginalized ethnic group with an identifiable culture; (2) they all experienced major disruption due to an event such as Hurricane Katrina; (3) they each have identified strategies for rebuilding based on their cultural background that is found within the professional planning literature; and (4) they all function at a similar neighborhood/small-community scale as Altadena.

The impacts from Hurricane Katrina in 2005 form the basis of the recovery efforts in Treme and the Lower Ninth Ward. However, the recovery of Allensworth has been shaped largely by the long-term environmental and developmental marginalization that followed, including impacts from the 1966 discovery of Arsenic contamination and the 2022 -23 flooding of Deer Creek. Comparisons among the communities will focus on three distinct approaches for environmental recovery through natural place-making (Sankofa), redevelopment (Treme), and preservation of heritage (Allensworth), and an assessment of the relative strengths of each approach, including the governance structure(s), financing mechanisms, and community engagement, relative to achieving cultural recovery.

Data Collection and Interviews

This study draws on two categories of data: secondary sources and primary data collected through interviews and cultural asset mapping.

Secondary Data: Secondary sources encompass a range of peer-reviewed academic and culturally relevant literature on placemaking and disaster recovery. Documents from the World Bank and UNESCO associated with the CURE Framework, along with a range of federal, state,

and local planning documents—such as demographic information from the U.S. Census Bureau—were also reviewed using case-study documentation, including historical accounts of events and archival material. The possibility of these reviews/all of this data contributing to the literature review and the case studies, where appropriate.

Interviews: Primary data were obtained via semi-structured interviews with individuals who have direct knowledge about Altadena regarding its cultural identity and how it is recovering from the effects of the recent disasters, and Allensworth's efforts regarding their cultural heritage programs. The use of semi-structured interviews provides consistency in responses across all interviewees while also allowing for additional questions and open-ended discussions.

Interviews were conducted with four different individuals: a historian/author/civic activist, president of an organization, attorney and an architect. They shared their perspectives about the pre-fire cultural landscape of Altadena, key physical landmarks that anchored the Altadena community, and community concerns about recovery and whether residents would be displaced. An attorney and chair of Altadena Heritage contributed insight into questions related to spatial inequity; cultural loss at the corridor level along Lake Avenue and Fair Oaks Avenue; and tension between the need to physically reconstruct housing and the desire to preserve culture. The President of the Allensworth Progressive Association was interviewed about community-based recovery solutions, the role of Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park in community culture, and lessons learned from the Allensworth experience with environmental disaster and cultural preservation. An Architectural interviewee had been confirmed for this study - a member of NOMA and the Altadena Rebuild Coalition.

Thematic coding was used to analyze the interviews. The responses were examined for recurring themes regarding culture, both tangible and intangible losses, displacement, recovery priorities, and community agency. These themes were incorporated into the comparative findings and, in addition, into the analysis for the Altadena study area.

Cultural Asset Mapping uses a combination of analysis and visualization to create a record of Altadena's cultural resources prior to and after the Eaton Fire. The map identifies both tangible assets (e.g., landmarks, businesses, parks, and places of worship) and intangible assets (e.g., community traditions and social relationships) that were impacted (damaged, destroyed, or disrupted) by the fire. The process used GIS-based data and qualitative information gathered through interviews and archival research to create a spatially based representation of both cultural loss and potential recovery in the Lake Ave corridor and surrounding areas.

Analytical Approach

The analytical method is applied using the CURE Framework as the foundation for comparative cross-case analysis; each case will be evaluated through the four "phases of the recovery," with an emphasis on cultural assets used in each case to promote community involvement and equity strategies. Interviews will also be analyzed in conjunction with the cross-case analyses in order to provide context for the findings and grounding in lived experience (i.e., thematic insights identified through interviews will be compared to the patterns, etc., identified within the case studies in order to determine the extent to which they will apply to Altadena).

The researcher used thematic coding and pattern matching, along with multiple methods of cross-case synthesis, to develop the study's findings. This method allowed the research to rather than just provide a descriptive based account, generate useful and applicable insight into recovery mechanisms that are culturally based.

Limitations

The sample size for this research was fairly small because it was conducted by a single researcher, although the participants were selected based upon their expertise, thus the analysis of culture in Altadena would have benefited from a more diverse representation of participants to include more of the voices from the Black, Latino, and Asian community, and more voices from those who rent in Altadena.

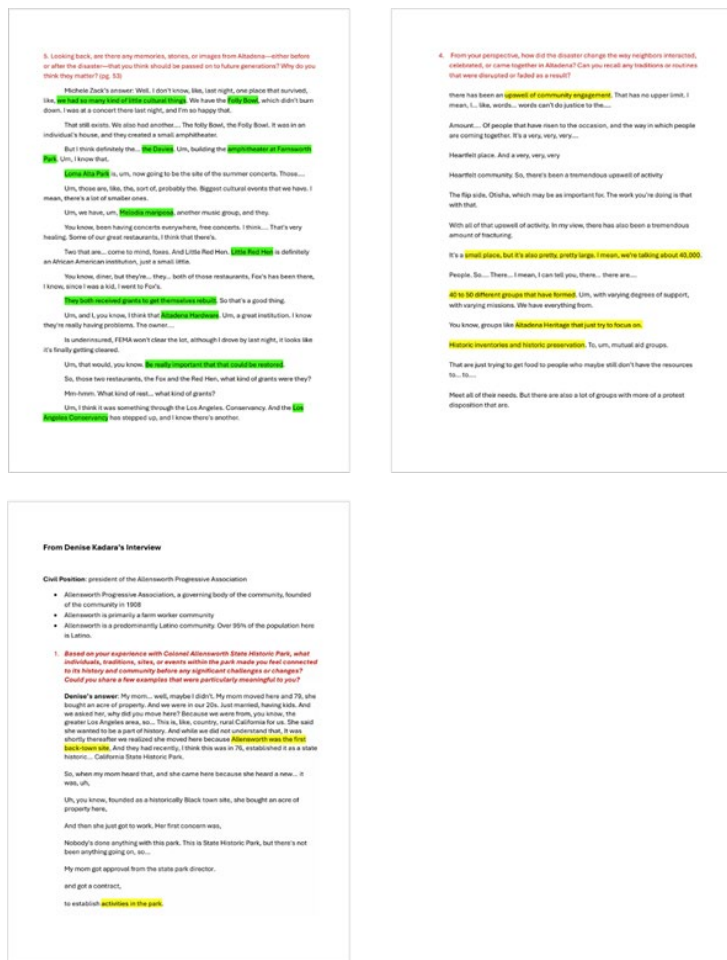


Figure 13. Notes taken from the transcript interviews for Methodology

Chapter Four – Altadena: Study Area, Cultural Identity and Post- Disaster Impact

Introduction to Altadena

The study primarily examines Altadena, CA. The January 2025 Eaton Fire will significantly impact what has already been lost in Altadena from previous disasters. Therefore, in order to comprehend the extent of Altadena's cultural loss, it is beneficial to operate under the premise that a significant amount of Altadena's resources, culture, community and infrastructure were considered 'built' and in play in some manifestation prior to being damaged or destroyed by that incident. This discussion will assist in establishing an overview of Altadena's geography and cultural context, a chronological overview of how, at the local, regional and state levels, regulation and policy regarding land use and heritage protection were developed for Altadena's neighborhoods and corridors prior to that incident, how cultural identity had developed in Altadena's neighborhoods and corridors and finally, the size and scope of all the cultural losses (tangible and/or intangible) that will comprise the recovery component of this research due to the fire incident. In total, this body of information will answer the first sub-question of this study; What was Altadena's cultural identity before and after the natural disaster?

Located 13 miles northeast of downtown Los Angeles and immediately north of Pasadena, Altadena is an unincorporated area in the County of Los Angeles. The name Altadena is derived from the Spanish word *alta* meaning "upper" and *dena*, the second part of the name, is a variant of the names Pasadena. Altadena is located at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains and is bordered by three sides of open space, which include: the Arroyo Seco on the west, the Angeles National Forest on the north, and Eaton Canyon on the east. The city limits of Pasadena

are along the southern boundary of Altadena. The unique geographical characteristics of Altadena and its surroundings (i.e., high peaks and rugged topography) combined with ecological richness and limited urbanization provide a strong sense of rural character while creating what may be expected to have the potential for increased risk from wildfires.

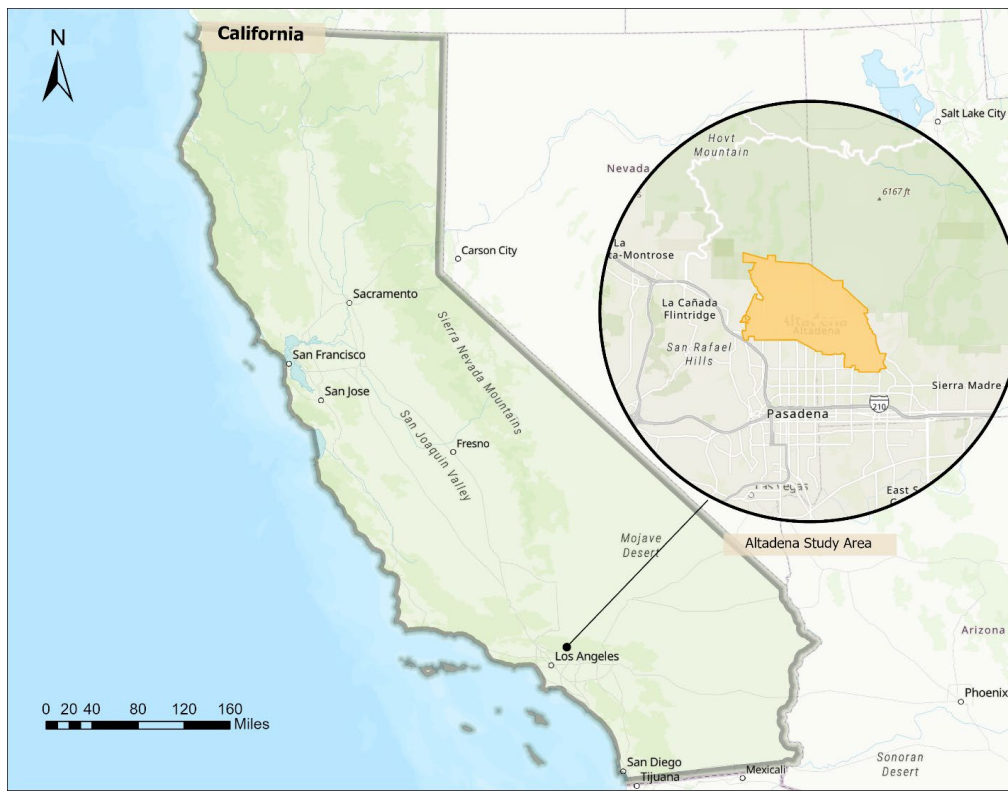


Figure 14. Regional map showing Altadena's location within Los Angeles County at the base of the San Gabriel Mountains, north of Pasadena.

Historical Background

Indigenous Settlement

Before European colonization, the area we know today as Pasadena and Altadena was inhabited by a group of Indigenous people who call themselves Hahamog'na (a branch of the Tongva), the first residents of the Los Angeles Basin. The Hahamog'na were historically located along the banks of the Arroyo Seco and in the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. They are also one of the longest continuously occupied locations in Southern California. The cultural landscape that is now considered to be the Altadena area has been developed by the Indigenous people of this land as a result of their seasonal use of the land, their understanding of the surrounding ecosystem and their long-held cultural connections to the San Gabriel Mountains. The cultural landscape of the Altadena area can only be understood in terms of its past history in order for it to continue to develop in a positive manner.

Early Settlement and Founding (1880–1920)

Altadena's current settlement started in 1880 when Frederick Woodbury and his brother John acquired 937 acres in the foothills. This area was then referred to as the Woodbury Ranch, and John developed the Woodbury Subdivision and the Pasadena Improvement Company, establishing streets today that can still be found in Altadena. The city of Altadena has been categorized as an unincorporated area by the county of Los Angeles since 1887. As a result, it is governed by the county rather than through elected city officials.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Altadena developed into a unique residential community for rich people, artists, writers, and professionals who enjoyed its closeness to nature and moderate climate while being far from the dense population of Los Angeles. The Mount Lowe

Railway reached Echo Mountain in 1893 and was completed in 1896, connected Pasadena and Altadena to the San Gabriel Mountains using trolleys and a funicular system to create a national attraction and firmly establish Lake Avenue as the main commercial and civic artery of the community. As opposed to having a downtown area, the linear north-south development of Altadena relative to the use of the railway to develop the community remains in the land use patterns today.

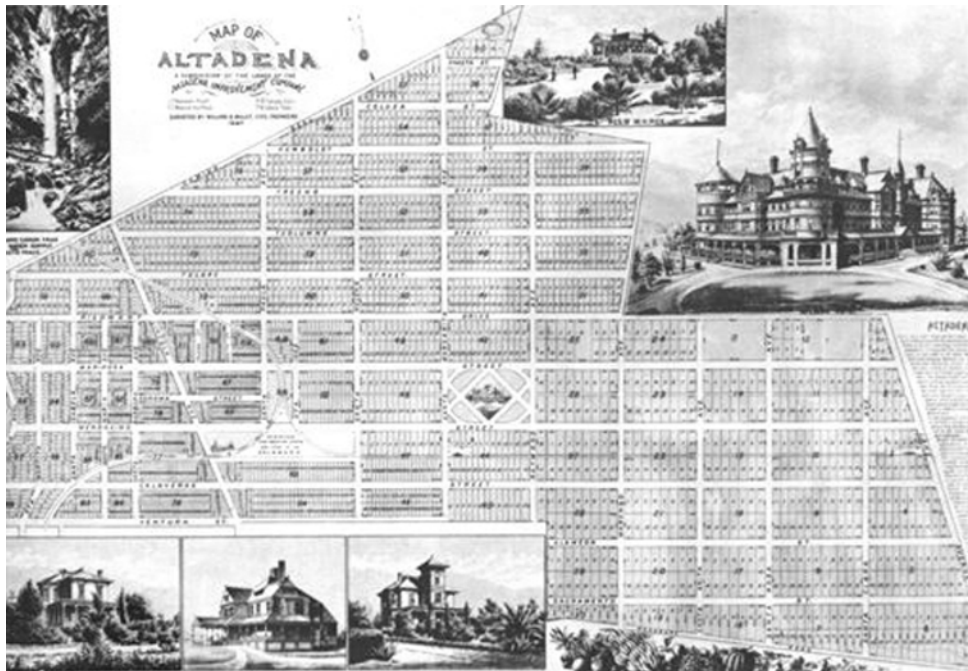


Figure 15. A plot subdivision plan by Jon Woodbury and the Pasadena Improvement in 1887. Source: Altadena Town Council



Figure 16. A streetcar located in Altadena. Source: Altadena Heritage

Demographic Transformation and Civil Rights Era (1940s–1980s)

The past of racial injustice has played an integral role in shaping the culture and characteristics of Altadena today. In the 40s and 50s, the use of racially restrictive covenants prevented many nonwhite residents from buying homes in numerous neighborhoods within Altadena. In the early 1960s, Altadena was about 95% white; however, many areas still had racially restrictive covenants that were made legally unenforceable by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1948, yet continued to affect both real estate decisions and lending practices for another generation.

Various circumstances contributed to the rapid demographic transformation of Altadena during the 60s and 70s, including: civil rights protests occurring across the U.S., especially in Southern California; urban renewal dislocations that happened in nearby Pasadena; improvements in freeway construction that impacted communities of color throughout the Los Angeles area; and political pressure exerted on local elected officials as a result of these circumstances. Many white residents left Altadena, creating a void in the community that was

filled by expanding populations of Black and Latino families, resulting in a significant change in the character of the community. The proportion of Black residents grew from less than 4% in 1960 to 27% in 1970 and reached 43% in 1980 before declining to 31% in 2000 as other ethnic groups' populations continued to increase within the community. In the late '90s and early '00s, Altadena had evolved into one of Southern California's most integrated communities; its demographic changes reflected both that community's diverse, independent culture, as well as development resulting from the civil rights movement.

These documents relate to events that took place. The Cultural Identity of this region is shown here to be comprised of People that were black home owners when other regions would not permit this. Altadena was home to the working class, artists and individuals who stood up for everyone's rights regardless of racial background to live together and have connections to one another over time through multiple generations. Altadena suffered greatly from the Eaton Fire because its cultural history has created the landscape of Altadena from many generations and therefore must be perceived through the foundation of this history when understanding its current recovery.

Planning History and Governance Context

Altadena has never been incorporated into a city and therefore has no established system for municipal governance (i.e., city council, independent planning department, local zoning authority) similar to any other California City; as such, the Department of Regional Planning for Los Angeles County holds the entire authority over land use due to the extreme number of unincorporated communities within the county; as such, the Department of Regional Planning is not structured to give affirmative consideration for culturally specific needs of Altadena's

residents, and the Altadena Town Council (the only elected body for Altadena with limited function) serves as an advisory board with no binding authority on the decisions of the county's departments. A significant governance gap exists between the needs of a community and how well a municipality can supply those needs, impacting Altadena's recovery prospects. This lack of an elected municipal government led to the formulation of development and recovery plans based on general guidelines for the Socially Determined Recovery Program established by a county-wide authority rather than the cultural needs of Altadena.

The 1986 Altadena Community Plan

The Altadena Community Plan established in 1986 serves as the primary guide to land use for Altadena and provides a comprehensive framework that identifies community-wide goals, policies and programmatic approaches to support the preservation of the existing residential character of Altadena, as well as the decentralization of land use along commercial corridors such as Lake Ave., enhancing the commercial viability of these corridors and diversifying land utilization within the community. Additionally, this plan includes recommendations for fire safety as well as for the reduction of hazards related to fire, but it does not address issues related to cultural relevance or historical preservation and other planner priorities that were prevalent over 30 years ago. Since 1986, the plan has not been updated or modified, which means that the people of Altadena have existed for about 40 years without an updated plan that reflects the current demographic make-up of the community. In addition, the plan does not include any references to cultural identity, use of intangible heritage, or methods of culture based on the community.

Recent Planning Developments (2023–2025)

Altadena's proposed redesign before the Eaton fire incident was still evolving at the time of that incident, even though some portions were not yet complete to be enacted and voted on by the public as legally binding. At the time of the fire, LA County was in the final stages of a long-term policy and planning document referred to as the West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan for nine of its unincorporated communities (Altadena is one). The goals of the area plan establish a cohesive relationship within these communities because of the implementation of proposed land use policies that allow for the establishment of functional facilities for social interaction, safe pedestrian pathways for the community to walk throughout Altadena and the improvement of public spaces. Among the new additions to the Area Plan include a Historic Preservation Element, and new Environmental Resiliency language / policies. These additions are seen as a significant improvement over the original 1986 Area Plan. Yet, the Area Plan, identifies cultural and community identities primarily through observable patterns of land use and not through intangible Heritage or community based cultural systems. Thus, this research identified this absence of Heritage or community based cultural systems in the Area Plan as a shortcoming and an area in need of specific interventions for recovery.

In July 2025, the Historic Highlands Historic District was declared as the county's first historic district. It will also be designated in the County's zoning code and create formal architectural and cultural heritage protections for the first time in the district. Although this designation reflects progress for the Historic Highlands, it accounts for only a small portion of Altadena's culturally significant features and does not provide any protection to what Altadena has to offer in the way of intangible heritage, including its community organizations and many of the cultural practices that contribute to its community identity.

Starting in early 2026, Altadena has not yet developed or implemented an independent recovery plan for the Eaton Fire and there is no government agency with an adopted or developed recovery plan. However, there are some resources available from county-level rebuilding and permitting agencies and community organizations that have developed recovery strategies for their respective communities, including the Altadena Builds Back Foundation and infrastructure financing. The lack of a complete recovery plan for Altadena creates a significant gap in the planning process, which is the primary focus of this research - the development of a culturally informed recovery plan to identify and protect the physical and non-physical heritage resources of Altadena during the recovery period.

Key Gap: Altadena has no updated community plan, no standalone recovery plan, and no formal intangible heritage protection framework. Recovery is currently proceeding without a cultural roadmap.

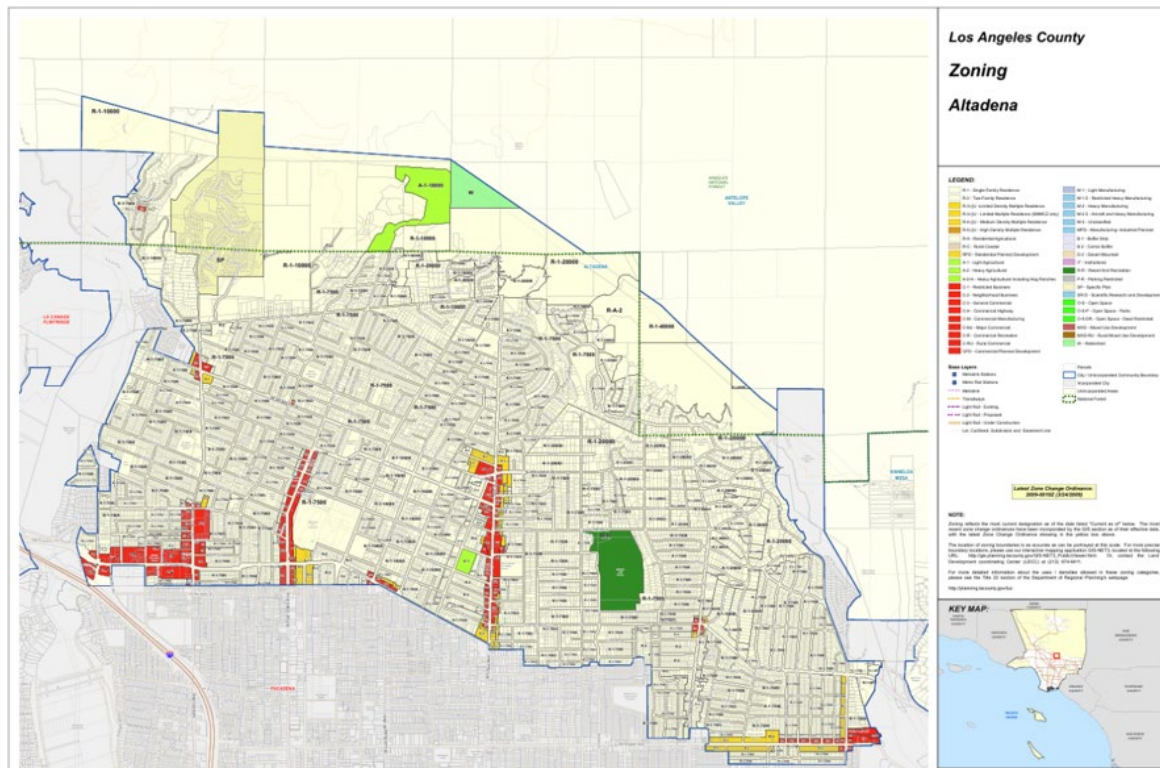


Figure 17. Zoning map (parcel detail, official 2022), Altadena zoning designations, showing R-1 residential, C-2/C-3 commercial corridors along Lake Avenue, and A-1 agricultural zones in the foothills. Source: Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (2022).

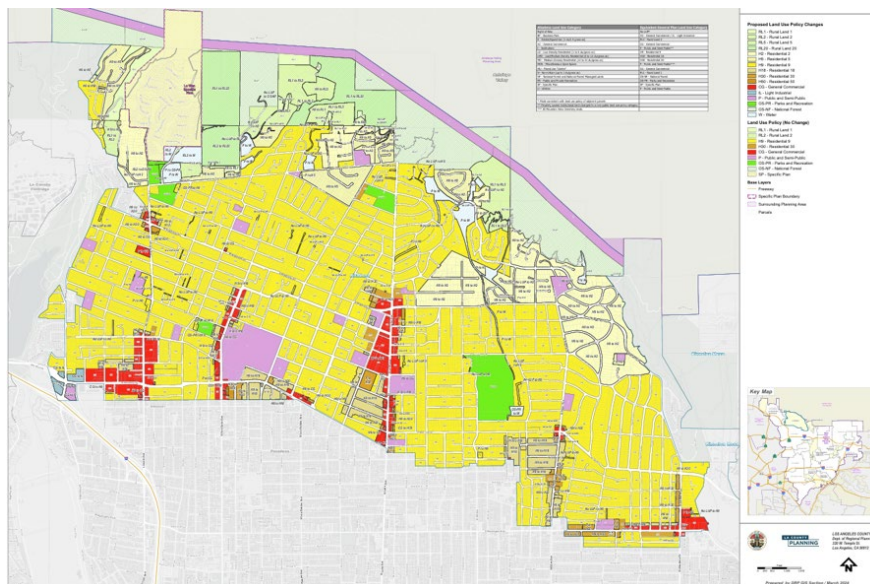


Figure 18. WSGV Area Plan land use map (2024), Altadena general plan land use policy designations under the 2024 West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan, the most recent official planning framework governing the community's recovery context. Neither this map nor the 2022 zoning map includes a cultural district overlay or heritage designation for Lake Avenue or anywhere else. Source: Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning (2024).

The Altadena Zoning Map for 2022 and the West San Gabriel Valley Area Plan for 2024 both classify Lake Avenue as a commercial corridor in the respective plans, but neither plan contains any cultural district or heritage preservation designation for Lake Avenue. These plans also did not consider many of the key community institutions that represent the identities of Altadena's Black, Latino, and multiracial communities and their immediate (or intangible) heritage. There were many other key resources available to protect these community assets before they lost their cultural designations as a result of the Eaton Fire in Altadena. Phase Two of the CURE Framework is designed to close this gap by providing recommendations for incorporating cultural assets into land use planning in order to ensure equitable recovery and support through policy recommendations.

Land Use and the Lake Avenue Corridor

In Altadena, the main purpose of land use is for places to live, and the majority of this region consists of just one kind of housing which are known as (R-1) or single-family homes. Each of these classifications is identified by their design or style, which for example could include craftsman bungalows, mid-century modern homes, and houses built in the English Revival, Spanish Colonial, or California bungalow style, all of which have a part in establishing Altadena's historic character. There are very few multi-family homes in Altadena, (for instance; duplexes and small apartment buildings), and most of the remaining multi-family housing roads are only allowed within a specific area, specifically along the Fair Oaks Avenue / Lake Avenue area, where they were built some time ago to provide a means of transportation to areas located on Altadena's northern peak or tip. Altadena's northern peak is comprised mostly of large

undeveloped parcels that consist primarily of open space and designated conservation areas that will be subject to additional regulations regarding future development.

The primary north-south corridors of Altadena – Lake Avenue, Fair Oaks Avenue, and typically Lincoln Avenue– have more than half of the total number of commercial establishments relocated to this area. The businesses found in these three corridors provide services to the community as well as serving as sources of income and tax revenue for Altadena. Unlike Pasadena's dense downtown area of commercial development, Altadena has no centrally organized commercial district; instead, businesses can be found along linear corridors located within adjacent residential communities. Civic and cultural activities, including schools, fire stations, places of worship, libraries, and community centers (all of which are classified as public uses), are primarily located in residential communities and not separated from the residential community by distance. This shows that residents of Altadena engage in civic and cultural activities as much as they do in the residential setting where they live and work.

Lake Avenue as Cultural Spine

The purpose of this research is to study the Lake Avenue corridor. This area is both the major business and cultural center of the village of Altadena and is also the heart of the economy and the culture of the village. The Corridor connects the city of Pasadena with the San Gabriel Foothills and has historically provided an essential transit corridor to allow access to the Village's eastern foothill residences via a transit system (streetcars) from Pasadena's central business district. Historically, the Corridor has been a linear commercial strip providing all the retail goods and services for local residents, most of whom are in single-family homes; however, as the Village of Altadena has developed over time, the Corridor continues to be the primary social and

cultural center of the community due to the presence of numerous churches, schools, parks, dining establishments, drug stores, hardware stores, and many other community-based facilities that fulfil the full range of social and cultural needs of the residents of the neighborhood.

Lake Avenue and the surrounding area comprise Altadena's largest concentration of cultural community facilities and are thus the most affected by the loss of cultural life as a result of the catastrophic fire. The interviewee indicated that all the main elements of community life (Parks; Libraries; Churches; Day-to-Day Social Activities) are located within one block of Lake Ave; consequently, the devastation of Lake Ave as part of the fire has resulted in the loss of not only commercial businesses, but also the disintegration of the social framework of cultural life in the Altadena community.

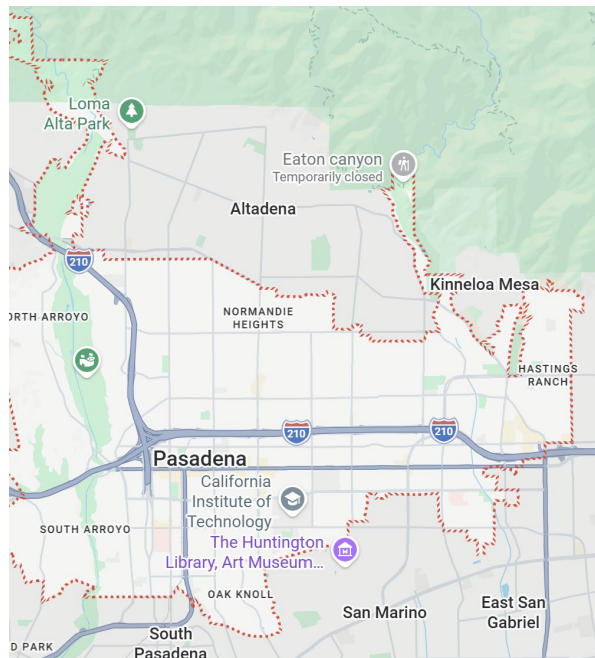


Figure 19. Image of Altadena and Pasadena connection. Source: Google Map

Community Demographics

There are about 41,900 residents living in Altadena as of 2023. The average age of these residents is 46 years. The average income for households in the area is \$128,720 which is considerably above that of Los Angeles County (\$78,672) and California (\$91,551). Approximately 76.6% of the homes located in Altadena are owner-occupied versus those of Los Angeles County and California giving Altadena unique historical significance of generations of families who have owned properties in Altadena providing cultural and historical stability to, as what it is today. Only 7.9% of Altadena's residents live at or below the federal poverty threshold.

The demographic makeup of Altadena has changed significantly since the Civil Rights Era and makes it one of the most integrated cities in Southern California. Approximately 41.7% of Altadenans identify as White (Non-Hispanic); 27.2% identify as Hispanic/Latino; 17.6% identify as Black/African American (Non-Hispanic); and approximately 6% identify as Asian American.

Indicator	Altadena	LA County	California
Total Population	~41,900	~10.0 million	~39.0 million
Median Age	46	37	37
Median Household Income	\$128,720	\$78,672	\$91,551
Homeownership Rate	76.6%	~46%	~55%
Poverty Rate	7.9%	~15%	~12%
White (non-Hispanic)	41.7%	~26%	~35%
Hispanic or Latino	27.2%	~48%	~40%
Black or African American	17.6%	~9%	~6%
Asian	~6%	~15%	~15%

Table 7. Demographic comparison of Altadena with Los Angeles County and California, including population, median age, household income, homeownership rate, poverty rate, and racial composition. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2020).

POPULATION BY ETHNICITY

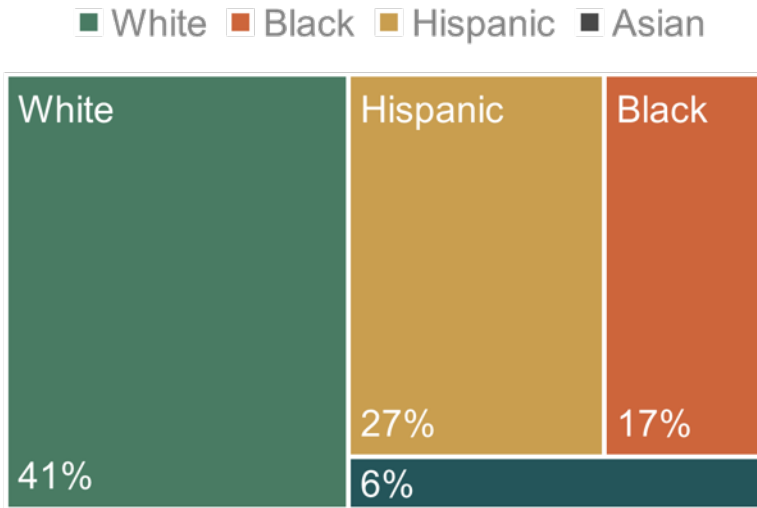


Figure 20. Racial and ethnic composition Tree map of Altadena, 2023, compared to Los Angeles County and California. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2023).

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

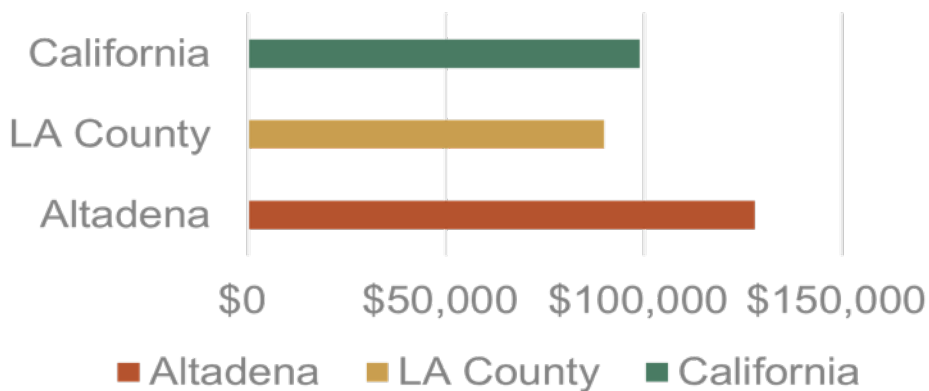


Figure 21. Median household income comparison: Altadena, Los Angeles County, and California, 2023. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates (2023).

Altadena's demographic profile is an important factor to consider when examining the recovery from the fire for two reasons. One, the high rates of homeownership in Altadena create much of the community's cultural continuity through the residential properties that existed prior

to the fire; thus, loss of homes in the fire not only represents a loss of secure places to live, but also threatens the multigenerational patterns of real estate ownership that have historically provided Black and Latino families with significant wealth in Altadena. Two, Altadena is a community that, despite its relative wealth compared to the rest of Los Angeles County and California, has many economically diverse households; however, lower-income renters and historically marginalized groups, especially Black residents, were disproportionately affected by the fire, as they laid along the primary path of the fire immediately west of Lake Avenue.

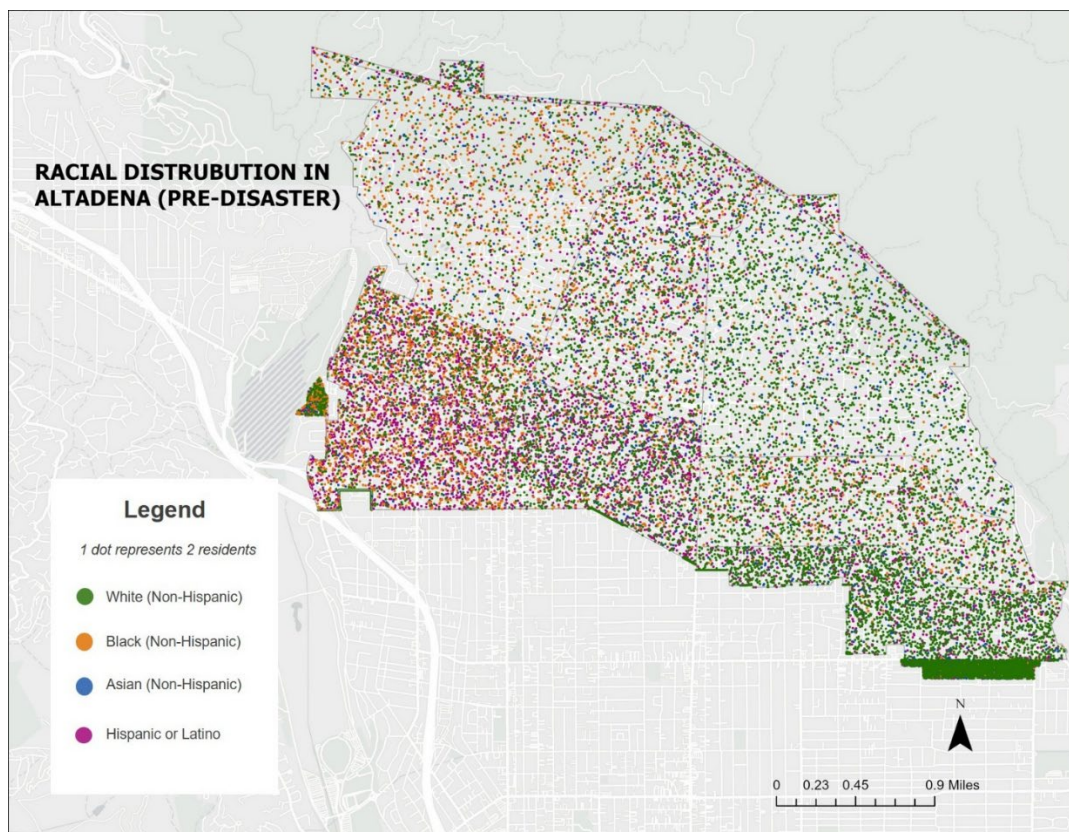


Figure 22. Racial dot density map of Altadena showing the spatial distribution of racial and ethnic groups prior to the January 2025 Eaton Fire, illustrating the community's multiracial integration. Mostly Black and Hispanic residents residing on the West side. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey (2020).

Pre-Disaster Cultural Identity

Prior to the Eaton Fire, the configuration of Altadena's cultural identity was far from straightforward and consisted of many complex layers rooted in generations of originating from racial minorities, having locally established cultural practices, institutions and landmarks; organizing the community; and making social or socio-political connections with others within the geography defined by Altadena. Identifying this cultural identity (both intellectually and practically) will help determine what aspects of this culture (i.e., the defining elements) need to be protected during recovery.

African American Heritage and Cultural Leadership

The cultural identity of the African American community in Altadena is one of its key features. Altadena was established in the late 1960s and early 1970s as one of the largest areas of Black middle-class homeownership in Southern California, where families who had been shut out of nearby communities due to restrictive covenants and predatory lending practices built their cultural and generational wealth. This transformation is not simply a shift in the demographics of the population, but rather the establishment and formalization of a new cultural tradition. Altadena became home to many African American musicians, writers, artists, and intellectuals whose contributions to the arts established the creative character of the community. Some notable individuals associated with Altadena include the science fiction author Octavia Butler, baseball player Jackie Robinson, and actor Sidney Poitier. These individuals represent the heritage of a place and the contribution of its cultural identity.

Rhythms of the Village, a culturally centered community space on Lake Avenue that is an African-centered heritage & music & gathering space, represents the ongoing heritage of Black Culture in that area of Altadena. Some of the organizations, like Know Your Rights Camp, are linked to Black citizens' tradition of civic participation and activism. In addition to religious institutions such as the Lifeline Fellowship Christian Center and the Wallace Snap Church and the Presbyterian Westminster Churches that also provide social services & function as community centers/sources of civic engagement for the Black population have played significant roles in developing & structuring daily life for Black Altadena from generation to generation.

Latino Cultural Heritage

Residents of Latino descent have played an important role in the identity of Altadena, beginning with the establishment of vineyards and ranches by Spanish settlers during the 18th century in the San Gabriel Valley (Palma, 2017). Today, the Latino community makes up about 27 percent of Altadena's population, and they have brought a rich history of traditions, family values, small business ownership and civic involvement to the area. Their contributions to education, social justice and economic development along Fair Oaks Ave. and Lake Ave. have contributed to the social fabric of Altadena for generations. Cultural events like the Altadena Latino Festival have also acted as important representations of Latino culture through food, music and literature.

Multiracial Integration as Cultural Identity

Altadena can't be defined in terms of any one ethnic group. Its greatest cultural quality- according to both residents and scholars alike- and the most striking to a visitor who visits Altadena for the first time, will be the experience of genuine multi-racial integration in everyday life. The process by which that occurred was not without conflict or spontaneity and rather was produced by an array of historical forces described earlier in this document. Ultimately, this area achieved community pride that identified Altadena as a place- and as such, an essential component of the community self-definition by the end of the 20th century. During her interview, interviewee one spoke extensively about the variety of ways in which Altadena's multi-racial community operated as social mix- or what is commonly referred to as a social mix- at various locations such as Farnsworth Park, along Lake Avenue, at local schools, and in the more informal settings of everyday life prior to the fire.

interviewee 1 (historian, author, land use committee member, Altadena Heritage member, 2025): “ *What makes Altadena special — what people refer to a lot — is its diversity. And it's not just racial diversity. There's a lot of overlapping categories: artists, musicians, scientists, renters, very rich people. What I treasure about Altadena is just the variety of experiences there. It's a truly mixed community — it's not monolithic, not just rich people, or poor people, or white people, or Black people.*”

Tangible Cultural Heritage: Landmarks, Institutions, and Architecture

Altadena's tangible cultural heritage includes a diverse assortment of significant material objects, including historical landmarks, community resources and services, commercial businesses, and architectural styles which together form the physical basis for Altadena's entire cultural identity. The following were identified prior to the Eaton Fire as being some of Altadena's greatest tangible cultural assets:

Historic Landmarks and Estates. An Altadena institution, Zorthian Ranch, an inspiring Armenian American farm community gathering place for artists, writers, and other creatives; as such it epitomized the community's eclectic and bohemian personality. The Zane Grey Estate, which belonged to a famous writer of Westerns, has long been an important architectural and cultural landmark. Millionaire's Row was a testament to Altadena's founding families' wealth, and its historical significance was also reflected in its grand homes' distinctive architecture. The Andrew McNally House was one of the historical properties along Lake Avenue and was previously owned by one of Rand McNally's founding partners. Lastly, The Bunny Museum was a unique Altadena organization that was also an unusual point of interest for visitors — thus serving as further evidence of Altadena's independent and unique cultural identity.

Religious and Social Groups. Farnsworth Park, right on the edge of Lake Ave., was where the people of Altadena gathered for public events. They had an outdoor amphitheater that hosted

music, plays and festivals of all kinds over the years, and it was also the main place for Altadena's community to enjoy one another. Other institutions included the Altadena Library, Theosophical Library, which has an archive of all of the literature produced by Theosophists, and St. Elizabeth Church. All these institutions provided public service to their communities and were heavily used by people from all walks of life. The Lifeline Fellowship Christian Center, Wallace Snap Church, and Westminster - both Presbyterian - were some of the churches for the Black community in the area of Lake Avenue and surrounding areas.

Educational institutions and schools are very much a part of our society; however, Eliot Arts Magnet School provided cultural education to families & students of Altadena; therefore, the loss of this culturally significant school resulted in both educational as well as cultural disruption for the community (by creating a lack of continuity for those who use this school). The Altadena Library is another example of how educational institutions and libraries helped define what type of place/atmosphere was valued in the Altadena community; thus, providing educational opportunities and enhancing the overall intellectual quality through their existence within Altadena.

Commercial and Social Institutions. The businesses and establishments located along the Lake Avenue commercial corridor, such as Webster's Pharmacy and Altadena Hardware, served not just as places to purchase goods but also as anchors for the community, providing opportunities for residents to develop relationships over many years. Fox's Restaurant is an example of a landmark that has served multiple generations as a social and dining venue within the community. Businesses along the corridor, including Café de Leche, Rhythms of the Village, and others, helped define the commercial and social landscape of Altadena and reinforced the

multiracial character and collective identity of the community through opportunities for daily interaction. Jane's Village is representative of a small collection of businesses located on Lake Avenue that represented a community gathering location where creative and social activities would take place regularly amongst residents.

The homes in Altadena offer an impressive array of traditional architectural designs — English, Spanish, California Bungalow, American Craftsman, and Mid-Century Modern homes — that reflect over 100 years of growth and development within our community. These buildings are monuments to both history and the people who lived in, built and passed them down to future generations, as well as what cultural activities took place inside or around the building itself.

Intangible Cultural Heritage: Traditions, Practices, and Social Networks

Altadena has an equally and perhaps even more delicate aspect of its intangibles — such as community festival and gatherings, representing a rhythmic way of life that organized residents' calendars and promoted racial integration due to the shared experience of participating in the activities associated with these events. Examples of festivals include Folly Bowl; the Latino Festival; outdoor event activities at Farnsworth Park's outdoor amphitheater; and informal neighborhoods celebrations on Lake Avenue. The identity is transmitted, renewed, and expressed through participation in the festival-like activities amongst all generations.

Civic Engagement and Grassroots Activism in Altadena. Altadena has a rich history of grassroots civic participation defined by the saying "live free or die," which represents a strong sense of autonomy, self-determination, and opposition to outside control that has influenced how

the community has responded to development, racial discrimination, and most recently, to disasters. Groups like Altadena Heritage, the Altadena Historical Society, and the Know Your Rights Camp embody Altadena's grassroots tradition by keeping archives, advocating for conservation, educating and unifying its residents under common principles.

The Altadena community has experienced the loss of homes from families who have lived in those homes for many years. In Altadena, homeownership rates are high, especially for residents of Black and Latino descent; thus, the community is rich with memories and history that have been created over many generations. The multigenerational aspect of this community illustrates that people create an abundance of knowledge and histories related to them. Developing an appreciation for the intangible assets represented in memories, family history, and local culture can provide insight into how tangible assets such as a house or a building may be replaced, but the emotional attachment associated with those buildings cannot be replicated by paying for them through an insurance claim or a building permit. These families have lost their homes and substantial amounts of their family narrative created in the past 50-60 years as a result of gentrification and other types of displacement.

Interviewee 2 (attorney, Altadena Heritage Chair, 2025): “ *It's important when we talk about the civic corridors to not limit ourselves to Lake. Fair Oaks matters a tremendous amount, and Lincoln does too. Altadena has a rich, rich history — scientists from JPL and Caltech, artists and bohemians, outdoor culture. There is a real concern about gentrification, about people with outside money coming in. The place is absolutely going to change — 100% yes, that concern is there.*”

The Eaton Fire: Scale and Spatial Character

Around 7 PM on January 7, 2025, a fire broke out in the vicinity of Altadena Drive and Midwick Drive in Altadena. Due to Santa Ana winds gusting to approximately 100 mph, the fire quickly spread east and north through residential neighborhoods from Lake Avenue to the mountain slopes surrounding Eaton Canyon. When the fire was finally contained, it had burned over 14,000 acres, destroyed approximately 9,400 structures in Altadena, including 4,356 single-family homes, 77 multi-family homes, 123 commercial buildings and other 1,023 structures including businesses, schools, churches, and cultural organizations, with 19 fatalities, all but one reside in the west of Lake Avenue in Altadena's Black neighborhood. The become the second most dangerous fire disaster in California history (CAL FIRE). More than 700 firefighters responded to the fire, however, most media coverage of the incident focused on the destruction previously occurred in Malibu and Pacific Palisades, both of which had greater visibility nationally; thus, most media coverage from the early hours after the fire, failed to fully capture its impact on the Altadena community.

As shown by the Eaton Fire's patterns of destruction, the area around the city of Pasadena (specifically the western side) was disproportionately impacted by the fire in relation to their higher density of racial minorities and lower median household income in comparison to the more affluent foothill communities in Pasadena. Further, the destruction from the Eaton Fire pointed out the equity challenges as it relates to both the impact of the fire on minority populations and their ability to recover from the fire's effects. As noted in the work of Professor Frasure of UCLA, the Eaton Fire makes clear how decades of redlining/segregation have produced more fire-risky properties for Blacks than others due to many factors including being located within the primary path of the fire, limited access to resources for rebuilding and underinsurance (Bonner, 2025).

The U.S Department of Justice has joined victim groups in filing over 40 lawsuits against Southern California Edison, which provides electricity to the region, alleging that sparks came from high voltage transmission lines adjacent to Eaton Canyon that might have started the fire (Eisner, McMillan). As recovery continues, the issue of who started this fire, and how they will be held accountable, remains a pending question that involves legal and political processes.

Equity Note: The fire's most severe destruction fell disproportionately on neighborhoods west of Lake Avenue with higher concentrations of Black and Latino residents, raising critical equity dimensions that must be addressed in culturally informed recovery planning.

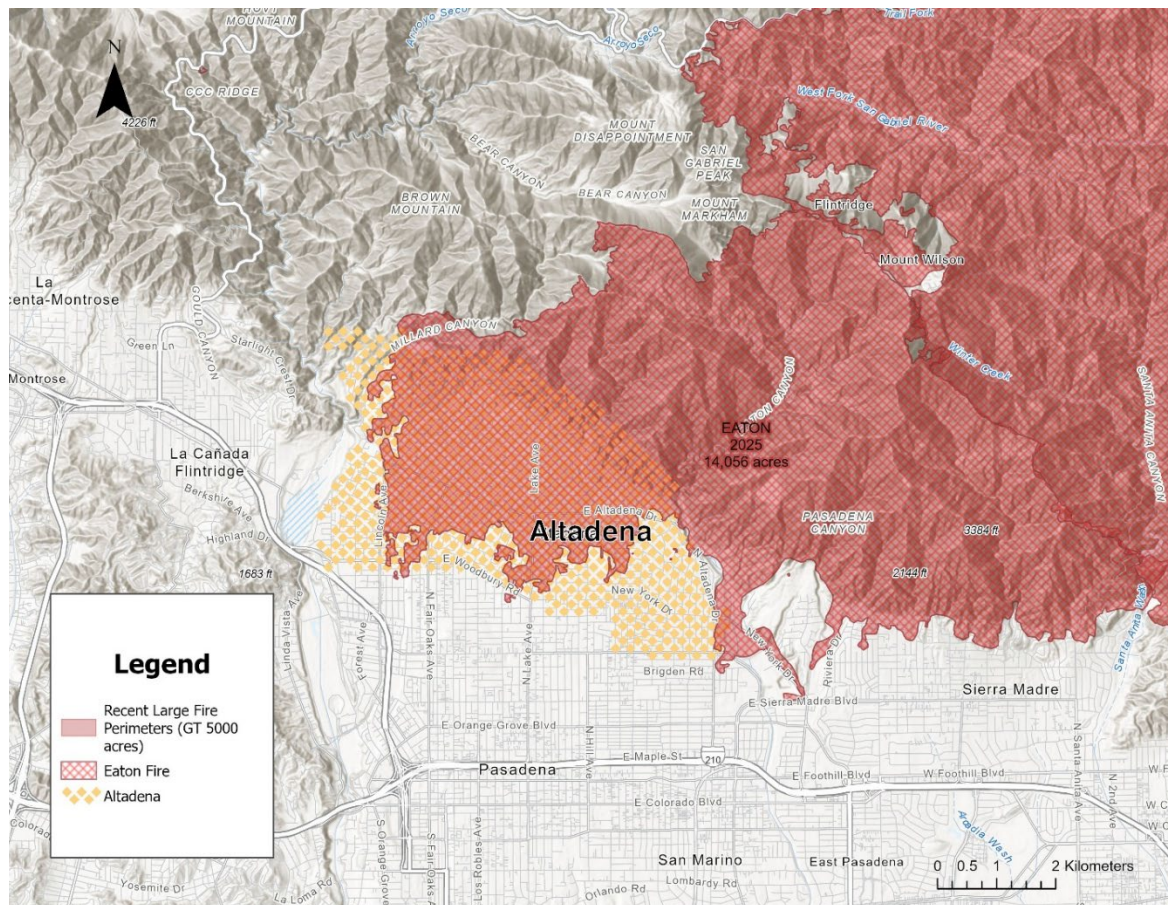


Figure 23. Eaton Fire burn perimeter, January 2025, showing the spatial concentration of destruction west of Lake Avenue in neighborhoods with higher proportions of Black and Latino residents. Source: CAL FIRE / Los Angeles County Fire Department (2025).

Post-Disaster Cultural Impacts

Tangible Losses Along Lake Avenue and the Broader Community

The loss of Altadena's tangible cultural heritage as a result of the Eaton Fire has been great; in many instances, this damage will be permanent. The following significant losses have been reported in response to interviews with Interviewee 1, Interviewee 2 and additional sources – including the LA Conservancy, Pasadena Now and other community organizations:

Cultural Institutions. Zorthian Ranch was lost and along with it a one-of-a-kind gathering place for bohemian artists and intellectuals; there will be no other location for this group to meet. The Bunny Museum was destroyed, as well as the Zane Grey Estate. The Theosophical Library Center had the largest collection in the world of Theosophical materials and was an international scholarly loss and a local loss too; all the contents were lost. The Andrew McNally House was also damaged. A historic dinner that had been in the social consciousness of many generations was destroyed, Fox's Restaurant.

Religious Organizations. The Wallace Snap Church and Westminster Presbyterian (both churches) were lost. Lifeline Fellowship Christian Center was a center of civic and spiritual life for the Black community at greater loss than either church alone. There are many smaller faith-based communities that have lost their buildings with the destruction resulting in a break of the weekly rhythms of coming together as a community for the purposes of building community and giving support to one another.

Eliot Arts Magnet School was utterly destroyed which interrupted the education of hundreds of children and separated a culturally important education community from its home.

Dozens of businesses were also destroyed along Lake Avenue or suffered extreme damage. Examples include Webster's Drug Store, Altadena Hardware, Side Pie Pizza, Patron Mexican Restaurant, Mia Thai, Mary Pose, Café de Leche and Jane's Village. The African American cultural hub of the corridor, Rhythms of the Village, was also destroyed. These losses eliminated not only commercial activity but removed everyday gathering places for the different cultures that intersected throughout the length of the corridor. These businesses are where they build relationships with each other through social engagement.

Community Parks and public spaces are impacted by severe damage to Farnsworth Park, which included the outdoor amphitheater that had been home to community events for decades; two other locations, Loma Alta Park and the Davies Building, were affected as well. The losses deprived the community of its main outdoor event locations when the ability to gather and heal as a community were most needed.

More than 35 historic buildings were lost in all of Altadena by researchers from LA Conservancy & Pasadena Now (LA Conservation & Pasadena Now). This includes some of the area's most scenic unique architectural and historical buildings, (that) will take years to replace and cost millions of US dollars to recover, if ever.

Category	Specific Loss	Status	Cultural Significance
Cultural Landmark	Zorthian Ranch	Destroyed	Gathering space for bohemian artists & intellectuals
Cultural Landmark	Bunny Museum	Destroyed	Iconic community identity landmark
Archive / Library	Theosophical Library Center	Destroyed	World's largest Theosophical archive
Cultural Landmark	Zane Grey Estate	Damaged	Historic literary and architectural landmark
Religious / Civic	Wallace Snap Church	Destroyed	Black community spiritual and civic anchor
Religious / Civic	Presbyterian Westminster	Destroyed	Historic religious and community institution
Education	Eliot Arts Magnet School	Destroyed	Cultural and arts education anchor
Community Cultural Hub	Rhythms of the Village	Destroyed	African American heritage and music hub
Restaurant / Gathering	Fox's Restaurant	Destroyed	Historic diner, multigenerational social space
Public Space	Farnsworth Park / Amphitheater	Damaged	Primary outdoor community gathering venue
Commercial / Social	Webster's Pharmacy, Altadena Hardware, Jane's Village, others	Destroyed	Neighborhood social anchors along Lake Ave

Table 8. Tangible and intangible cultural asset inventory for Altadena prior to the January 2025 Eaton Fire, organized by asset category, location, and significance.



Figure 24. Pre-disaster cultural asset inventory along the Lake Avenue corridor, Altadena, documenting landmarks, civic institutions, and community gathering spaces prior to the January 2025 Eaton Fire. Source: Author's original GIS mapping based on community documentation and interview data (2025).



Lifeline Fellowship Christian Center



Theosophical Library Center



Fox's Restaurant



Café de Leche



Bunny Museum



**Andrew McNally House
(not on Lake Avenue)**

Figure 25. Cultural or buildings with sign incant at Lake Avenue before the Eaton Fire. Source: San Francisco Chronicle

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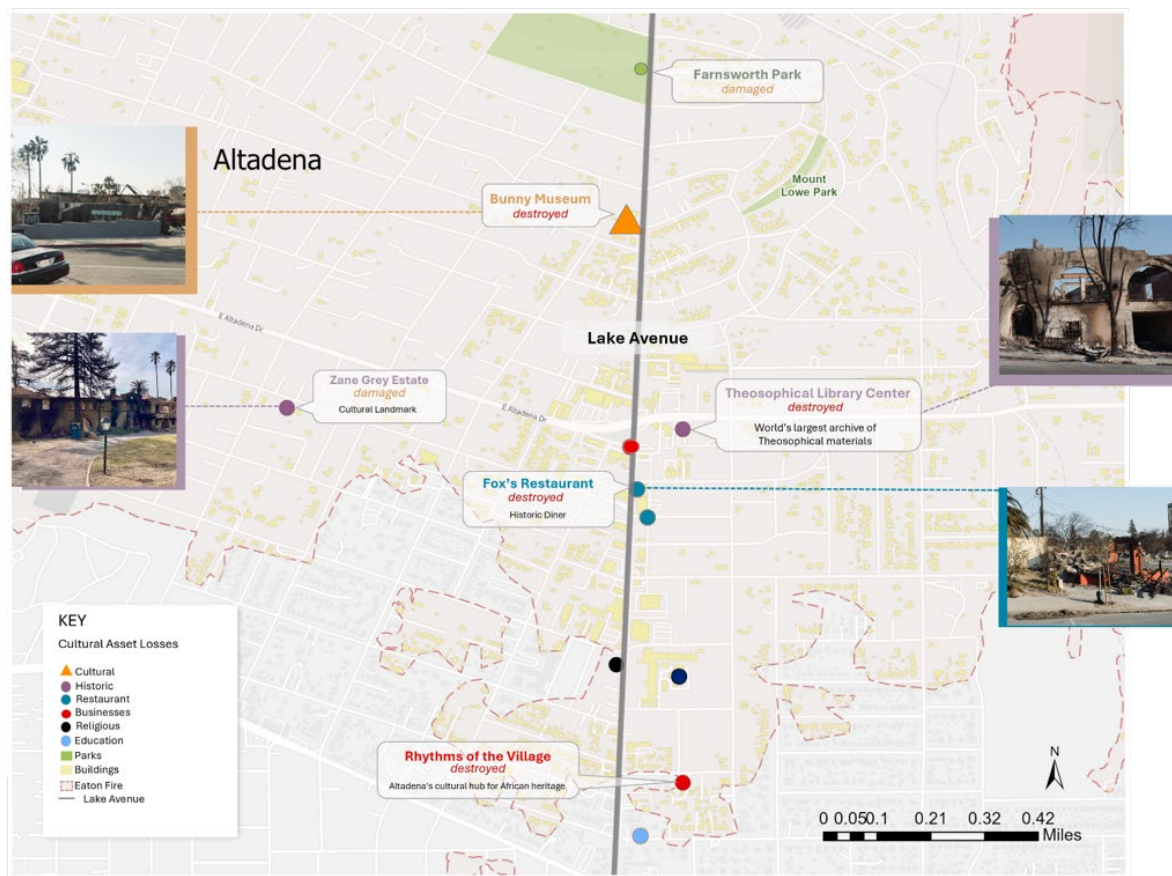


Figure 26. Post-disaster cultural asset loss map along the Lake Avenue corridor, Altadena, showing destroyed, damaged, and intact cultural assets following the January 2025 Eaton Fire. Source: Author's original GIS mapping based on LA Conservancy, Pasadena Now, and community interview data (2025).

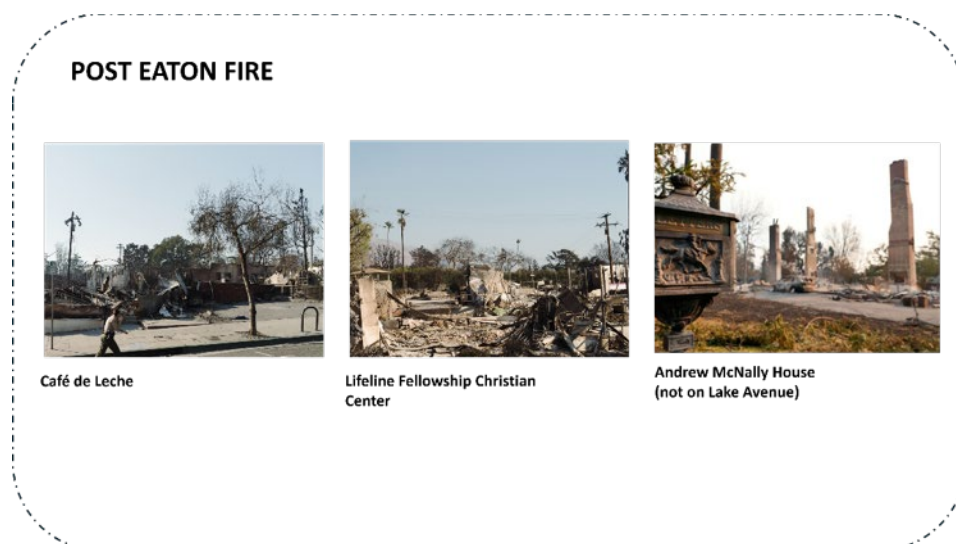


Figure 27. The damaged buildings at Lake Avenue post- Eaton Fire. Source: San Francisco Chronicle



Figure 28. Buildings near Lake Avenue display the extent of damage. Source: Los Angeles Times

Intangible Cultural Losses

The intangible losses from the Eaton Fire are, in some respects, more difficult to document and more difficult to recover. Three categories of intangible loss are particularly significant:

Cultural Identity & Sense of Place. For Long-time residents of Altadena & families that lived in Altadena for generations, the destruction of familiar, historic locations & neighborhoods as a result of the fire represented a deep disruption to their sense of place, which is an essential part of establishing one's own identity as well as that of the community as a whole. Michele Zack stated that the loss of places such as Lake Avenue and Farnsworth Park is not only a physical loss. It has interrupted both the social life of the community and the daily rhythms through which people interact with each other, and the informal social relationships built over years of sharing events and experiences.

The cultural continuity of past generations through the process of passing on their traditions was enabled by religious institutions (e.g., churches) and educational institutions (e.g., schools), civic organizations (e.g., youth groups) and businesses (e.g., restaurants), and was therefore, nearly all destroyed in the fire. This generally means that more people living today will never experience what it was like to grow up with the culture associated with the destroyed institutions than would otherwise have. Additionally, it likely will take many years to develop new institutions that will provide the same kind and amount of social support as those destroyed by the fire. Of course, much of our cultural heritage, including oral histories and records of community organizations, and their institutional memory, were stored in the Theosophical Library Center. Thus, these histories will never again be recorded in the previously established ways.

Social Cohesion and Community Networks: The fire affected all of the social networks (church groups, neighborhood groups, business contacts, festival groups, and informal getting together groups) that made up the social fabric of daily living to the residents. Many of the people who lived in the areas that were affected by the fire were put into housing that was located in many different parts of the region and therefore disrupted the geographic proximity that helped to

maintain their social connections. The demographic disruptions caused by the displacement of community members were a threat to the very basis of Altadena's cultural identity (which is based on interconnectedness and daily, intercultural interactions) and, therefore, to the social cohesion that defines Altadena as unique.

Interviewee 1 (historian, author, land use committee member, Altadena Heritage member, 2025): *"Everything is disrupted. The destruction was not even — the wind shift meant central and west Altadena suffered far more. A lot of people haven't moved back, and those who have find it eerie. There's been a surge of crime in empty houses. There's a lot of lack of trust toward public institutions. The recovery has to include a cultural dimension or we risk rebuilding buildings without rebuilding Altadena."*

The Recovery Landscape and Cultural Risk

In early 2026, the recovery of Altadena continues to be primarily focused on rebuilds and permits through County fees, federal assistance through FEMA and numerous non-profit and community-based rebuilding initiatives. The Altadena Rebuilds Foundation and other organizations have mobilized community resources and spirit in ways that mirror the grassroots culture of the community. However, several of the structural aspects of the current recovery landscape present risks for cultural continuity, which the recovery plan should be designed specifically to address.

Gentrification and Displacement Risk

Due to the fact that increased real estate prices are combined with the destruction of wildfires in Los Angeles and no protection from being displaced in the current recovery plan, there is a very real chance that those who were displaced will not be able to return to Altadena after the fire. Once insurance payments are made, the land will be cleared, and that capital pool will attract speculative developers. If there is no zoning in place, no community land trusts or

anti-displacement policies are part of the recovery plan, then the existing residents and businesses who created the culture of Altadena will not have an opportunity to come back. The same risk lies predominantly with those who rent or are lower-income homeowners, as well as those who are people of color, as these groups have the least resources available for recovery. From his interviews, Interviewee 2 pointed out that gentrification and lack of representation were two of the most significant issues concerning the residents they spoke to, and the continual theme throughout all three stakeholder discussions was the conflict between the pace of recovery for residential housing and preserving the cultural fabric of the community.

Absence of a Cultural Recovery Framework

Right now, the biggest problem with how we're recovering from the fire is there is no dedicated cultural recovery strategy. This means that there is no blueprint or plan available that would allow for the identification of Altadena's (CA) cultural assets, the ordering of reconstruction priorities, the establishment of anti-displacement protections, the allocation of funding streams to intangible programs, and the creation of governance mechanisms that would give communities the authority to make recovery decisions. Without having a defined cultural recovery strategy, recovery processes will only focus on how to rebuild things, rather than the long-term effect that rebuilding will have on the community. This has resulted in a focus on speed, cost, and the physical structure of buildings; rather than on the long-term viability of their community's culture, identity, and equity. Studies in Chapter Five have shown that by including culture at every stage of the recovery process, communities have built more resilient and equitable outcomes than those who do not.

Recovery Priority: Altadena needs a culturally informed recovery plan that addresses both tangible reconstruction and intangible heritage protection — one developed with genuine community participation and formally adopted as a governing framework for recovery decisions.

Chapter Conclusion

Before the Eaton Fire, Altadena's cultural identity had a rich and complex history shaped by many factors, including previous Indigenous occupation, development of early neighborhoods, changes due to demographic shifts associated with the Civil Rights Movement, community organizing and activism, and institutions of culture, landmarks and traditions collectively defining Altadena as a multi-ethnic place. The cultural identity of Altadena was essential to its value as a socio-geographic entity and was the very essence of Altadena as a place that could never be replaced in the larger Southern California landscape.

The Eaton Fire hit this community hard, hitting its heart and soul by destroying/damaging 35 or more historic properties, displacing thousands of residents, and completely disrupting the social networks/institutional relationships that supported daily cultural life. Additionally, the Eaton Fire revealed other existing inequalities and exacerbated them; namely, the greatest risk for permanent displacement from their homes was amongst Black and Latino residents whose neighborhoods were in the direct path of the fire, and whose ability to recover is limited due to the historical wealth gap.

As we can see, Altadena's recovery is both a technical and a cultural challenge as well as an equitable and a logistical challenge. Rebuilding our new physical infrastructures, without the investment of rebuilding our cultural infrastructures, will produce physical neighborhoods that do not function in an integrated way with the underlying cultural community of Altadena. The case studies presented in this next chapter will provide examples of successful efforts to address this challenge, and with the conscious inclusion of cultural recovery planning into the Altadena rebuilding process, Altadena can be rebuilt in a way that respects the way it was and develops into all that it can be.

Chapter Five - Case Study Findings: Culture in Post-Disaster Recovery

Introduction to Case Study Findings

Chapter five presents comparative findings from three case studies – the Claiborne Avenue corridor in Treme (New Orleans), Sankofa Wetland Park in the Lower Ninth Ward (New Orleans), and Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park in Allensworth, California -analyzed through the four phrases of the Culture in City Reconstruction and Recovery (CURE) Framework. The analytical lens applied throughout is the distinction between tangible and intangible cultural heritage, which together constitute the full scope of cultural loss and recovery. Each case was selected because it involves a historically marginalized community of color that has confronted the intersection of disaster, cultural disruption, and recovery planning at a neighborhood or small community scale comparable to Altadena.

This chapter draws exclusively on secondary sources – scholarly literature, planning documents, and published case study analysis- to enable a systemic comparative analysis of three cases across all four CURE phases. This is methodologically deliberate: the literature-based comparative case study approach allows for consistent cross-case analysis structures around the CURE Framework’s four phases, while integration with interview findings from Altadena is addressed in Section 5.6.3 and Chapter Six, where case study lessons are synthesized with community perspectives to produce the final recommendations.

The chapter is organized around the four CURE phases: Damage and Needs Assessment, Policy and Strategy, Financing, and Implementation. Within each phase, findings are presented first by case and then synthesized into cross-case findings that directly address the research question: What community strategies should be used to enhance cultural identity in Altadena's neighborhood disaster recovery? Each phase concludes with a clearly labeled cross-case finding and an explicit link to Altadena.

Case Selection Criteria

The three cases were chosen based upon four criteria developed and consistently applied (in Chapter 3). These were: (i) a population size comparable to Altadena's (approximately 40,000); (ii) an identifiable cultural heritage that has been affected by disaster/structural marginalization; (iii) a disaster or systemic disruption affecting a historically racially/ethnically marginalized community of color; and (iv) adequate documentation to facilitate analysis of all four CURE phases. The table below outlines how each case met all four of these criteria.



Figure 29. Comparative location maps of (left) Treme, (center) Lower Ninth Ward, and (right) Allensworth. Sources: U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line shapefiles; Louisiana and California state boundary data

Criterion	Treme	Lower Ninth Ward	Allensworth	Altadena (Study Area)
Population (≤40,000)	~4,155	~6,893	~600	~41,900
Identifiable cultural heritage	Jazz, Mardi Gras traditions	Black working-class community, second line parades	Black self-determination, 1908	Multi-racial, historic landmarks and architecture
Experience of disaster or disruption	Hurricane Katrina	Hurricane Katrina (catastrophic flooding)	Arsenic contamination and 2023 Deer Creek flooding	Eaton Fire, Jan. 2025
Community of color / marginalized history	African American	African American	African American / Latino	Black, Latino, Asian, multiracial
Recovery model represented	Cultural corridor redevelopment	Citizen-driven ecological placemaking	State-led historic preservation	(Study Area)

Table 9. Case study selection criteria and comparison table show how Treme, the Lower Ninth Ward, and Allensworth meet the four selection criteria relative to Altadena as the study area

CURE Phase One: Damage and Needs Assessment

The first phase of the CURE Framework, Damage and Needs Assessment, is an essential process for guiding culturally based recovery efforts. Communities must measure their losses related to both tangible and intangible cultural resources, assess the economic impact of disruptions to cultural industries, and undertake processes of mapping cultural resources and engaging a wide range of stakeholders, including women, youth, renters and informal members of the community who often are not involved in formal damage assessments (UNESCO/The World Bank, 2018). The most significant shortcoming demonstrated across the three case studies during this phase was the systematic omission of intangible heritage from formal damage assessments. As Garcia (2021) states, too often cultural heritage is only considered in its physical form, whereas the practices that live and breathe life into those structures — ritualistic practices,

oral histories and social networks — are thought to be too difficult to measure, thus rendering them unrecoverable (Fabbicatti et al., 2020; Genova et al., 2020).

5.2.1 Tangible Cultural Losses

Treme and the Claiborne Corridor

The damage profile of Treme caused by Hurricane Katrina was shaped by decades of layered injustice infrastructure preceded storm. With the construction of the I-10 Claiborne Expressway starting in 1966, roughly 500 homes and 120 Black-owned businesses were destroyed or displaced between the construction of the expressway and the existing Claiborne Avenue. The new expressway replaced the lush tree-lined boulevard, which served as the commercial and ceremonial heart of Black New Orleans, with a concrete overpass that created physical separation from the remainder of the city, concentrated air and noise pollution in the community, and sped up the disinvestment of the community from the economy (Brand, A. L., 2022; Campanella, 2009; Gotham, 2007; Reclaiming Old West Broad Street, 2014). Because of this history, when Hurricane Katrina hit in August of 2005, the cultural historic assets of Treme were already weakened compared to what they were prior to the expressway — leading to a long-standing vulnerability that past damage assessments for post-disaster repair use as their baseline to calculate and establish pre-disaster conditions.

While Tremé experienced low to moderate flooding compared to the catastrophic inundation of the Lower Ninth Ward, Hurricane Katrina nonetheless caused building damage, prolonged closures of cultural institutions, and mass displacement of residents who did not return — a combination that fractured the neighborhood's cultural infrastructure. The Circle Food Store, which had been a much-loved grocery store owned by an African American family and

was located at the intersection of North Claiborne Avenue and St. Bernard Avenue for many years, was closed for nine years and did not resume operation until 2014; because of the flooding caused by Hurricane Katrina the store was covered with 5 feet of water. Due to the loss of the Circle Food Store, thousands of Claiborne corridor residents have lost a location where they would meet every day for socializing throughout the last several generations. Another victim of the hurricane that caused minor damage to the neighborhood and to the businesses is Little People's Place, a family-owned bar and social gathering space on Barracks Street in Treme for indirect impact and religious places such as St. Augustine's Church, a historic African American Catholic Church and symbol of Creole people, founded in 1841 was threaten to close after Katrina. A long-time resident in Treme stated that "there were barrooms in every corner of the Treme neighborhood, however after the hurricane, the reduction of local barrooms was visible due to displacement" (Weil, 1998-2017). Many historic shotgun homes near Claiborne Ave constitute the - built landscape and cultural heritage of Treme's residential neighborhoods- were either lost, abandoned, or demolished displacing family residences where generations of families held ceremonial and cultural traditions by making Mardi Gras Indian costumes and through artistic expression during their rehearsal for brass bands in their home.

Perhaps more significantly than the physical losses that were visible to the outside world were the social and cultural losses — such as the Circle Food Store's being closed for early nine years and therefore unable to provide a place for members of the community to gather; the disruption of Mardi Gras Indian practice networks; and the interruption of rehearsal space that used to be in the same place as people's homes — were nowhere to be found in the usual disaster assessment procedures used by FEMA and the city. Thus, the gap between the physical damage

of built structures and the cultural loss associated with the use of those structures is the principal shortfall that the CURE Framework was created to correct.



Figure 30. Historic photograph of the Claiborne Avenue oak canopy prior to the construction of the I-10 Claiborne Expressway (1966), displaying the cultural landscape that was destroyed by infrastructure injustice before Hurricane Katrina. Source: New Orleans City Archives



Figure 31. Circle Food Store after its post-Katrina recovery, located under the I-10 Claiborne Expressway at the corner of St. Bernard Avenue and North Claiborne Avenue — New Orleans' first African American-owned full-service grocery store, founded in 1938. Source: Max Becherer / NOLA.com / The Times-Picayune | The New Orleans Advocate:



Figure 32. Flooded street in Treme, New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina (2005). Source: UPI / Getty Images

Lower Ninth Ward

By a tremendous scale of physical destruction upon New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward versus Treme (ton versus ton); on August 29, 2005 when the levees along the Industrial Canal broke apart and flooded areas 10-to-15 feet below sea-level; thousands of houses — primarily single family, owner occupied shotgun houses and Creole Cottages — that made up the cultural identity of this neighborhood community were either completely destroyed (wiped away) or damaged so severely that they were no longer habitable. According to Matsushita, (2024) et al. in their analysis of placemaking/identity making by the citizens of the Lower Ninth Ward in New Orleans post-Katrina, housing was not only shelter to the citizens of this neighborhood; rather, it also formed the physical spatial infrastructure of an entire cultural ecosystem that defined the places where people engaged with each other every day through front porches, corner stores, church steps; the basis for transferring cultural knowledge from one generation to the next.

The floodwaters that overtook St. Claude Avenue and submerged Philadelphia Ministries Church caused the loss of a spiritual/ civic point of reference in the community, where residents had come together in a safe environment to receive mutual aid for decades, as well as political mobilization efforts for the community. In addition to churches, Holy Cross School closed for an extended period, reducing access to a locally based educational and civic organization. Businesses throughout the neighborhood also shuttered permanently. Residents also lost an extensive amount of family heirlooms and archival materials that contained personal or community memories, such as photographs, musical instruments, and even tangible items given to them by deceased relatives. Fats Domino's home, which represents a historical landmark of national importance, suffered damage due to the flooding and must now be repaired. In addition to these losses, the number of people who lived in the neighborhood prior to the storm, 14,000) dropped drastically after March (it was estimated in April 2008). Because so many of these residents moved to Houston and Atlanta and did not return, the networks of kinship that traditionally supported local cultural production across generations were destroyed. As March et al. According to (2017), disasters of this magnitude act as critical junctures that expose systemic vulnerabilities and provide opportunities for transformation; the direction and character of that transformation will depend on who has control over the recovery process.



Figure 33. Shotgun houses in Lower Ninth Ward, New Orleans — a vernacular housing type historically associated with African American neighborhoods in New Orleans, with roots tracing to West African and Haitian architectural traditions. Source: Mark Kammerbauer / Topos Magazine



Figure 34. Fat Domino's House under flooded water (2005). Source: UPI



Figure 35. Flooded residential street in the Lower Ninth Ward following Hurricane Katrina (2005), showing the catastrophic scale of physical and cultural destruction that displaced thousands of residents. Source: Smiley N. Pool / Houston Chronicle via Getty Images

Allensworth

The type of damage documented in Allensworth is different in that it accumulated over more than 100 years and was caused by many different events, whereas Allensworth suffered from acute disasters. The initial infrastructure established at Allensworth (the farming economy linked to the Santa Fe Railroad, civic buildings (school, church, library, hotel)) was systematically undermined by the discriminatory practice of rerouting railroads to the nearby white community of Alpaugh beginning in the 1910s, resulting in an inability for Allensworth to sustain its economic viability. The discovery of arsenic contamination in the groundwater at unsafe levels in 1966 made the water supply unsafe and added to the decline of the community's population. The availability of arsenic poisoned water left many Black residents no choice but to abandon schools, businesses, and other civic institutions that had provided stability for their

communities in California's San Joaquin Valley. By the mid-twentieth century, the town's physical structure had been reduced to almost nothing — a deteriorating condition that no standard method of assessing damage could adequately account for.

As of late, flooding produced by atmospheric river storms during the 2022–2023 season have impacted Tulare County, including flooding access roads and agricultural land, along with straining infrastructure to create access to Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park. In general, the historic structures reconstructed at the park were not impacted by flooding; however, flooding would create limited program access and tourist visitation for cultural tourism – which decreased economic and symbolic visibility of the town's founding narrative when visibility is needed to sustain identity within the community and have continued investment.

5.2.2 Intangible Cultural Losses

Treme

Treme presented loss from Hurricane Katrina both in tangible property damage and in intangible losses. While the physical losses caused by the storm were sufficiently documented and could be repaired, the documentation of intangible loss and its repair present far more challenges. Sakakeeny (2013) has shown in his ethnography of New Orleans' music culture that the second-lines, jazz funerals, and masking traditions of Mardi Gras Indians, as well as the practices of Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, are so much more than entertainment or tourism; these practices create the living ceremonial infrastructure of how the residents of Treme reproduce their identity, create channels to share their knowledge across generations, and achieve a sense of collective belonging in public spaces. Being able to continue to practice these traditions requires local, tangible resources (costumes, instruments, rehearsal spaces) as well as

the necessary social networks and proximity to members of the community. Hurricane Katrina disrupted all these conditions.

As neighborhoods lost residents all around the region, there were no longer any Second-Line parades to be found on the streets of New Orleans. The Mardi Gras Indian traditions (which involve preparing for months with other people, making costumes at home and in shared spaces, all with the help of networks of friends within the neighborhood), suffered greatly due to this displacement of practitioners being spread throughout multiple cities. Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, which for generations had provided for the mutual aid, civic life, and public ritual of a given neighborhood, were unable to retain members because their members were now living in several different locations. After the storm passed and the park/buildings of Louis Armstrong Park and the ceremonial site of Congo Square were temporarily closed, they also ceased to be used as location to hold festivals or gathering, thereby severing the connection of people to the festivals or gatherings that would otherwise help re-establish communal memory and civic identity. Sakakeeny contends that the disturbances weren't just one-off events. They were ruptures in the social network that make up the fabric of cultural production — the kind of ruptures that typical building damage surveys cannot adequately capture at all.

Lower Ninth Ward

The intangible cultural loss suffered by the Lower Ninth Ward was much greater than that suffered by Treme; it was permanent in many ways as opposed to temporary. Kinship relationships over multiple generations formed the basis for patterns of social organization in the neighborhood; these forms of organization were historically stable due to the homeownership rates being disproportionately high compared to other comparable low-income neighborhoods

throughout the country (Matsushita et al., 2024). The displacement of many residents as a result of flooding and their relocation to cities like Houston and Atlanta, where they have not returned to form again has greatly reduced the number of people living in close proximity who would normally be able to carry out regular cultural practices together and the relationships between individuals are not maintained over distance from a community perspective. The community cohesion found in urban neighborhoods is not an inherent property existing as a continuous condition; rather, it requires an active process of community members being physically present, knowing each other, sharing spatial resources with others, and relating to each other via the repetitive acts of social interaction. (Genova et al., 2020). Due to a decrease in population, the Lower Ninth Ward's cultural density was reduced to a point where the original forms of second-line parades, Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs, jazz funerals and other neighborhood events could no longer be sustained.

The population fragmentation caused by the disaster was also a cultural fragmentation — something that informal recovery efforts by returning and remaining residents have only partially addressed in the 20 years since the storm. Porch culture, socializing/block level, and the informal economies of food vending and small-scale live music, which gave daily life to the streets, were built not on the support of formal institutions but rather on the presence of neighbors in common space. When that presence was lost due to displacement, all of those intangible activities became lost as well; thus, while the physical landscape continued to be rebuilt, the social landscape could not be rebuilt in an incremental way



Figure 36. A second line parade through a New Orleans neighborhood, a living cultural tradition rooted in Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs that reclaims public space and affirms community identity — particularly in historically Black neighborhoods like Tremé and the Lower Ninth Ward. Source: Getty Images / The Times-Picayune | The New Orleans Advocate

Allensworth

The loss of intangible culture in the community of Allensworth, Calif., represents a complete loss of self-determining factors in the culture itself, a slow, progressive loss of governance structures and agricultural independence (the first four of the three layers of cultural loss). By the mid-20th century, the town lost not just its buildings but lost the story of Allensworth as a successful model for Black self-sufficient communities; that story now only

exists in the minds of a few of the surviving residents and their children.



Figure 37. Historic photograph in Ebony magazine (1967) of the decline and renewal of Allensworth. Source: The Allensworth Community Plan

The flooding that occurred between 2022 and 2023 caused further disruption to the intangible cultural programs that Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park had been trying to rebuild over the years through its annual Juneteenth commemorations, interpretive reenactments and educational tours. The purpose of these events is to serve as the primary vehicles for transference of knowledge across generations and the reinforcement of community identity for the Allensworth community, which cannot rely on residency density or common space to continue passing on their culture to future generations. Typical of small towns with few full-time residents and struggling financially, there are not many opportunities for the Allensworth community to engage in community gatherings on a day-to-day basis or to sustain the kind of cultural continuity that occurs through regular participation in ritualized community gatherings. In other words, both the flooding that caused a postponement or reduction in size of the events described above interrupted the cycles of ritual repetition that support the continuity of the community's historical memory. According to the research by Ghezelloo et al. (2024) on how

post-disaster memorial parks function within the context of Japan, communities that rely exclusively on formalized ritual gatherings to maintain their cultural memory are especially sensitive to the effects of unexpected disruptions to their rhythm of communal rituals, because it takes a long time to heal any breaks in rhythm once created.

5.2.3 Cross-Case Finding and Link to Altadena

Finding: Across all three cases, formal damage assessments conducted in the immediate aftermath of disaster focused primarily on physical and economic losses. Intangible cultural heritage — rituals, kinship networks, oral traditions, social practices, and community governance structures — was not systematically documented in initial recovery inventories. This omission was not accidental but structural: standard damage assessment methodologies, including the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) framework that the CURE Framework was designed to supplement, are built around categories of physical and economic loss that do not accommodate intangible heritage. The result was recovery frameworks that rebuilt physical infrastructure while allowing the deeper social and symbolic dimensions of community identity to erode unremarked. This gap is the primary assessment failure that culturally informed recovery planning must address.

Altadena Link: For Altadena, this finding directly supports the need for a comprehensive cultural asset mapping initiative — encompassing both tangible landmarks and intangible heritage systems — as the first and most urgent step in recovery planning. The Eaton Fire's destruction of the Bunny Museum, Rhythms of the Village, the Zane Grey Estate, Farnsworth Park's amphitheater, the Theosophical Library Center, and more than thirty-five historic properties along the Lake Avenue corridor represents a tangible loss that is beginning to be documented. But the fire has also disrupted the informal gathering networks, faith community ties, multigenerational neighborhood relationships, and community rituals that constitute Altadena's intangible heritage. Without systematic documentation of these intangible losses — modeled on the cultural asset mapping process the CURE Framework prescribes — recovery planning will replicate the same structural gap observed in all three case studies.

CURE Phase Two: Policy and Strategy

During Phase 1 (Policy & Strategy) of the CURE Framework, assessments conducted on damage and need forms the basis for the preparation of implementation plans, regulation and governance processes associated with recovery. Requirements included within the CURE Framework regarding the preparation of recovery plans during this phase require that recovery planning be inclusive, transparent and participatory, thereby facilitating public, private and

community stakeholders' involvement in developing recovery strategies, including recognition of cultural diversity; culture's contribution as a source of dignity; and institutionalizing community participation are preconditions for a stable, resilient recovery (UNESCO/The World Bank, 2018, p 42). This phase establishes the decision-making authority regarding who participates in shaping recovery and whose culture should be protected. In addition to institutionalizing the decision-making authority described above, this phase represents the most evident opportunity to negotiate the tensions between place-based policies and people-centered (intangible) strategies. All of the aforementioned jurisdictions demonstrate a similar trend in that the policies pertaining to physical locations (areas where businesses and services will be built) seem to have been developed and implemented more effectively than any policies regarding the people who would live and work in these areas.

5.3.1 Tangible Policy Responses

Treme

The Louisiana Cultural Products District designation, established by state law in 2007, aims to provide tax incentives for culture-based businesses in the Claiborne corridor to promote economic development. The cultural products districts do not include provisions against displacement or provide funding for cultural programs. In addition, both the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP, 2007) and the NOLA Master Plan processes provided opportunities for resident input through community charrettes, where residents supported the removal of the expressway and the revitalization of the corridor. Furthermore, through the City of New Orleans Master Plan Draft, the city has highlighted cultural corridors as part of a long-term planning framework, affirming that culture is a vital economic and social resource in historically

prominent neighborhoods and recommending removal of the Claiborne Expressway. In the end, there was no language in the 2010-adopted plan to protect the corridor from infrastructure-related problems. Community members had argued for infrastructure remediation to address the structural problems causing the corridor's decline (UNOP 2007; CNU 2024) before these problems were addressed. Treme's recovery post-Katrina failed to provide the structural remediation necessary to support cultural recovery, despite some mention of culture in the planning documents. The space between the 2009 draft plan and the 2010 final adopted plan demonstrates this failure.

The Creation of the Claiborne Corridor Cultural Innovation District (CID) will include a substantial number of community-focused physical improvements in the form of a 19-block redevelopment of the area directly under the elevated I-10 expressway. The proposed improvements will incorporate arts markets, artisan vendors, classroom space, exhibit space, community project space, and youth activities that create a viable recreation basis for an overall mixed-use cultural economy. Additionally, the idea of converting this previously derelict structure into a viable site for a community to have a creative economy will serve as a counterpoint to the historical use of this structure as a racial infrastructure that has created a negative effect on the individual and community's quality of life. Lastly, the Unified New Orleans Master Plan (UNMP) of 2007, funded jointly by the Rockefeller Foundation and the Louisiana Recovery Authority, identified Treme as part of Planning District 6 and developed recovery priority areas, including to protect and preserve the structure of the historic housing stock, to maintain and protect historic cultural landmarks, to promote and stimulate local business revitalization and infrastructure repair, to reduce blighted properties, and to encourage and enhance the overall character of the neighborhood (City of New Orleans, 2007).



Figure 38. The I-10 Claiborne Highway, under the Claiborne Avenue expressway. Source Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) Highways to Boulevards Campaign, New Orleans

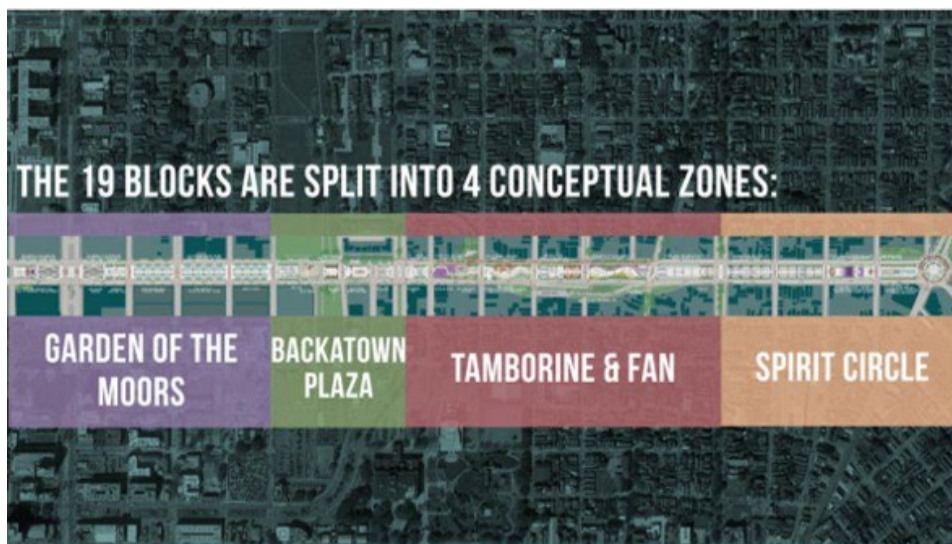


Figure 39. Conceptual zone map for the Claiborne Corridor Cultural Innovation District (CID), dividing the 19-block area beneath the I-10 Claiborne Expressway into four zones: Garden of the Moors, Backatown Plaza, Tamborine & Fan, and Spirit Circle — a community-driven plan to reclaim the corridor from Canal Street to St. Bernard Avenue. Source: Colloqate Design / Ujamaa Economic Development Corporation

In 2012, a \$2 million grant was awarded by HUD and USDOT with the intention of engaging stakeholders throughout the entire process of creating the Livable Claiborne Communities Study. The study concluded in October of 2013 and provided three alternative scenarios to the future of the corridor (Congress for the New Urbanism, 2024). In 2021, through

the Reconnecting Communities initiative introduced by the Biden Administration, there is now discussion at the federal level regarding either removing or redesigning the Claiborne Expressway. This suggests a long-term shift in terms of federal policy towards restorative infrastructure planning (US DOT, 2022). If implemented, this would represent one of the largest place-based interventions in Treme's cultural recovery since the original construction of the expressway.

Lower Ninth Ward

The strategies used to stabilize the Lower Ninth Ward (9th Ward) were based on a combination of what would restore ecology, and that which would offer individuals and families the opportunity and ability to remain in or return to the Lower Ninth Ward once they had been rebuilt. The (Unified) Recovery Plan (UNOP) and LA Coastal Master Plan were guides used to make decisions regarding land use in the Lower Ninth Ward. The majority of residential areas of the lower ninth ward are amongst the most vulnerable to flooding. The plans utilized in both cases encourage residents of the Lower Ninth Ward to think of new and creative ways to develop the land. Such was the case with Sankofa Wetland Park. Matsuhita et.al. (2024) have identified the creation of Sankofa Wetland Park as one of the most successful cultural restoration projects in any of the three cases. The wetland restoration method, as a way to reduce future disaster risks, was upheld by FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Grant Program and; realized in part, due to the governance structure of the Sankofa Community Development Corporation (SCDC), which incorporated the environmental justice and identity of the surrounding community. The SCDC was founded in 2008 by local resident and activist Freddie King III.

Sankofa Community Development Corporation (CDC) had multiple opportunities for public participation through community meetings at several locations, including: Christopher Homes-Villa at St. Maurice Senior Housing; Caffin Avenue International Seventh-Day Adventist Church; and, New Orleans Recreation Department Sanchez Center; as well as sharing plans with various neighborhood associations and community groups, including A Community Voice, The Lower Ninth Ward Neighborhood Association, and Holycross Neighborhood Association (Sankofa CDC n.d.), with guidance from the National Parks Service's Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance program related to master planning process utilizing community input around art, amenities and the priorities of design in writing master plan; with Park Director, Tricia LeBlanc commenting, "We don't do nothing without tons of community input in order to truly serve our community by bringing them to all discussions." (National Parks Service n.d.)

The relationship between the two types of policy that guide the CURE Framework (Cultural Strategies) and ecological planning (focused mainly on environmental sustainability) is evident through the way that together they impact neighborhood redevelopment and regeneration within Historic Urban Centers as well as future planning/design of areas where development will occur (i.e., new buildings). By focusing on the Lower Ninth Ward's vacant and flood-prone land, the Sankofa Model reframed it from a burdensome problem to merely an ecological/cultural asset; in other words, an expression of the natural environment, which could be developed/established through stewardship by local community members, instead of through development ("external" to the community) as guided previously.



Figure 40. Aerial view of the Sankofa Wetland Park & Nature Trail, a restored 40-acre wetland in the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans, Louisiana. Source: Sankofa Community Development Corporation / Sankofa Wetland Park & Nature Trail

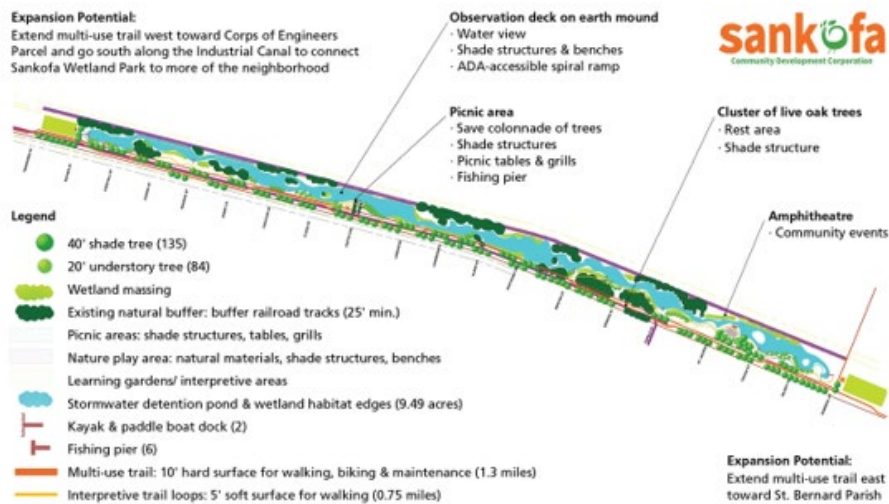


Figure 41. Master plan and site map for the Sankofa Wetland Park & Nature Trail expansion, showing proposed amenities including trails, picnic areas, an amphitheater, observation deck, fishing pier, and stormwater detention ponds. Source: Sankofa Community Development Corporation / National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program

Allensworth

As stated in the Allensworth Community Plan, this comprehensive CURE Phase II strategic document is an in-depth altogether policy response to three of cases. Models of integrated people-centered and place-based planning can be seen here, where place-based strategies follow climate responsive rural design standards (e.g. regenerative agriculture hubs), plan for water security and groundwater management, establish energy sovereignty through agrivoltaic solar microgrids, and develop anti-displacement zoning regulations and eco- and agri-tourism infrastructure. In terms of human-centered strategies, the plan includes Youth Environmental Leadership Programs, education expansion K-14 learning, workforce development initiatives, and an Allensworth Progressive Association (APA) developed community governance structure. The comprehensive strategies (physical/social; public/people-centered) represent a significant advancement over the strict physical preservation model of the original General Plan dated 1976.

Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park was designated through the enactment of AB 562 as a way to protect and preserve artifacts associated with this park as part of California's legislative direction. The designations in California serve as a model of culturally authentic recognition from a state level, which does not exist in Altadena due to lack of either a Community Plan or a

Heritage District as was done post-Eaton Fire. This lack of formal policy protection is essential to understanding Altadena's recovery circumstances.



Figure 42. Members of the Advisory Committee of Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park at a meeting in Allensworth, May 1976. (Front row, L-R): Hattie Crawford, Dr. Edward E. France, Cecil Berkeley, Gaynelle Green, Al Green, Vassie Wright, Frances R. Miller, Elena Albert, Royal E. Towns, Kay Green; (Second row): Jefferson Pierro, Bettye Williams, Eugene P. Lasartemay; (Third row): Marcella Ford, Lois Carson, George Pope, Gemelia Herring, Ms. Willie. Source: African American Museum & Library at Oakland Photograph Collection, MS 189, Oakland Public Library/The Allensworth Community Plan



Figure 43. restored historic building at Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, Tulare County, California — the only town in California founded, financed, and governed by African Americans, established in 1908. Source: Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park Photographic Collection, California State Parks Photographic Archives

5.3.2 Intangible Policy Responses

Treme

In Treme, the grassroots organizations were primarily responsible for forming the intangible policy environment in Treme due to a lack of significant institutional support from formal institutions for the Intangible Policy Environment. The Claiborne Avenue History Project (CAHP) began in 2013 with an approach that is culture-based and people-centered to heritage preservation; they accomplished this by collecting oral histories from the community, video interviews, archival maps, and photographs of individuals in the community. This helped develop a true-to-life historical narrative about the Claiborne Avenue Corridor. CAHP also partnered with the New Orleans Jazz Museum to host events and exhibits. They were also working on developing an interactive website, mobile app, and documentary film to provide the community with the tools necessary to preserve and transmit its culture. All of this illustrates that while the formal recovery plans did not build durable infrastructures to support cultural

transmission, the alternate form of community organization (i.e., grassroots) was able to provide strong and effective alternatives.

The Claiborne Avenue Alliance, founded in 2017- more than a decade after Hurricane Katrina, through a process of community organizing and urban planning, led by Amy Stelly, encompassed a local coalition to promote the concept of reparative spatial politics via petition activities advocating for the removal of the expressway as an act of racial justice and environmental justice; and to (1) center embodied knowledge of local black women in the discourse of a community-recovery process (social capital); (2) to frame the transformation of the expressway corridor as a reparative political action rather than a planning project (policy framework). Furthermore, Schmalbach (2021) cautions that the economic revitalization of New Orleans can potentially occur through leveraging the city's cultural creativity and heritage to benefit communities which are celebrating those same cultures; the Claiborne Avenue Alliance has taken the explicit position through its organizing efforts to post-Katrina communities that recovery planning must involve the voices of the community and include anti-displacement commitments, as opposed to merely branding for tourism.

Lower Ninth Ward

The Park Planning Process for the Sankofa Wetland was a great example of how youth engagement and environmental justice were included in all aspects of the design process, which is what most participatory planning processes do not do well; therefore, this is providing a new model for community co-governance. The Sankofa CDC conducted community meetings in neighborhoods at a senior housing center, places of worship, community centers, and many other locations, with approximately 50 to 60 residents attending each meeting. The majority of the participants were seniors aged 55+ years who lived in the neighborhood prior to Hurricane

Katrina, therefore having lived there for many years and having a strong connection to the area (Matsushita et al., 2012). The environmental stewardship of the wetlands provided a means for intergenerational knowledge to be transferred from older members of the community to younger members through a stewardship program; this also enabled younger people to develop a strong understanding of the wetlands' ecological and cultural history, as well as ensuring that the programming was reflective of the needs of the community; rather than determined by external factors outside the community's control.

This method is a direct match for the citizen-driven placemaking definitions Normoyle and Christian describe. This is the process by which residents take possession of unused or transitional public spaces and convert these areas to meet community needs using engagement from activism rather than development by others. The Sankofa model clearly shows that citizen-driven placemaking is more than a design method; it is also an approach to governance that integrates community authority into the physical and programmatic fabric of recovery projects from inception, providing resiliency against future takeover by outside redevelopment interests.



Figure 44. Students participate in a water quality education activity at Sankofa Wetland Park's STEM outdoor classroom, part of the park's environmental stewardship program for schoolchildren in the Lower Ninth Ward. Source: Sankofa Community Development Corporation, courtesy of the U.S. National Park Service

Allensworth

Allensworth's intangible policy responses illustrate how the organization transitioned from advocating for community issues to an established and recognized governance intermediary; responsible for influencing state and county land use planning processes while still holding true to grassroots accountability. The 2023 Community Plan explicitly states the intention of preserving oral histories, celebrating Juneteenth, organizing Sunday Night Lights, conducting Fall Festivals, providing educational programs at historical parks and facilities located in Allensworth, and offering workforce development programs. These examples represent intangible cultural values that have been formally institutionalized within a planning document and community mapping system; therefore, a successful demonstration of the APA's ability to translate community priorities into policy language to be utilized by both government agencies and philanthropic organizations. The APA's achievement of obtaining over \$13 million in grants since 2021 for planning capacity, restoring the environment and developing resilient projects has shown that when organizations working in their communities are given formal authority from their local governments; they can access funding at a much larger level than just through advocating with the community. The CURE principle #5 reflects that making community engagement an integral part of a plan rather than an occasional consultation to support the community will enable these organizations and local governments to work together and secure valuable resources.

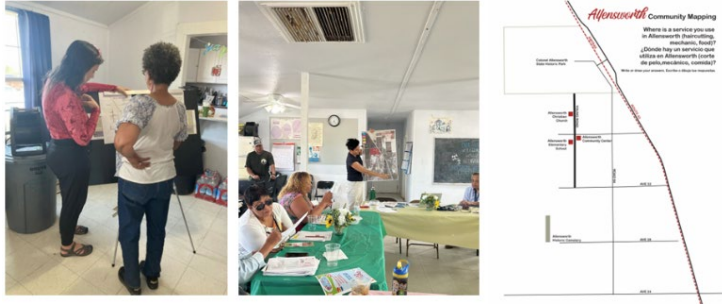


Figure 45. Community mapping with the Allensworth Progressive Association staff. Source: Allensworth Community Plan

5.3.3 Cross-Case Finding and Link to Altadena

Finding: The most effective recovery strategies across the three cases were those that linked physical place-based policies — zoning designations, heritage park legislation, ecological land use frameworks, corridor cultural districts — with people-centered intangible strategies including community visioning, oral history initiatives, youth programming, and anti-displacement protections. Where only one dimension was addressed, recovery outcomes were incomplete and often inequitable. Treme's cultural branding and tourism-driven corridor revitalization rebuilt commercial visibility while gentrification pressures continued to displace long-term residents — a cautionary pattern that Schmalbach (2021) identifies as the central risk of cultural recovery strategies that prioritize aesthetic revitalization over structural equity. Allensworth's state-led preservation protected tangible structures while the living community continued to face water insecurity, food deserts, and economic precarity. The Lower Ninth Ward's Sankofa model, which integrated ecological design with community stewardship, youth programming, and grassroots governance from the outset, most fully achieved the integrated approach that the CURE Framework prescribes.

Altadena Link: For Altadena, this finding supports the urgent designation of Lake Avenue as a Cultural Corridor — a formal planning action that would embed both physical protections (zoning overlays, cultural preservation districts, anti-displacement provisions) and cultural programming requirements into the recovery framework. The designation should be modeled not on Treme's cultural district, which provided incentives but insufficient anti-displacement protections, but on a hybrid of the Sankofa model's community governance structure and Allensworth's formal policy integration — ensuring that Lake Avenue's recovery serves the residents and communities whose culture it embodies rather than the speculative development interests that wildfire recovery typically

CURE Phase Two: Financing

The Financing phase of the CURE Framework works to resolve an issue that has long plagued forms of assistance for recovering from cultural impacts following disasters. Currently there is a disconnect between how funds are distributed for rebuilding of the physical structures

where cultures thrive and funds that are used to support cultural programming, establish community organizations and preserve the intangible aspects of a cultural identity. The Financing Phase seeks to develop funding mechanisms that create a balanced financing model by bridging the gap between immediate post-disaster relief efforts and both medium- and long-term development efforts. It looks at all aspects of Cultural Recovery in their own right (community organizations, festivals, etc) as legitimate targets for recovery funding versus discretionary or "nice to have" components of a physical rebuilding process (UNESCO & The World Bank, 2018). Financial structures across all three cases were best served by hybrid financing structures that brought many sources together.

5.4.1 Tangible Financing

Treme

An extensive variety of federal, state, philanthropic, and local resources provided post-Katrina recovery financing in Treme. As a result, a combination of HUD Community Development Block Grants, FEMA rebuilding funds, philanthropic foundation funding, state funding for cultural district incentives, and funding from federal transportation programs supported the physical reconstruction of homes, businesses, and community infrastructure as well as improvements to infrastructure corridors. In addition, the Rockefeller Foundation's investment of \$3.5 million in the Unified New Orleans Plan (UNOP) process provided a framework for planning and articulating Treme's recovery priorities. Economic development based on cultural factors - such as designating a cultural district, investing in venues for local music, and having public programming under the elevated highway - were all means of

stabilizing small businesses and continuing tourism revenue associated with heritage (City of New Orleans, 2007).

Tourism-related reinvestment has also helped increase property values and continued to put pressure on long-time residents through gentrification. This creates a contradiction for cultural financing strategies that are trying to build up an economic development asset like culture, but do not provide for anti-displacing within them. Schmalbach (2021) describes in great detail that when you leverage New Orleans' culture like jazz and street art or Creole food to have a post-Katrina recovery, you create a recovery where, although there is a celebration of the culture; it will be displacing those communities that developed that culture. By providing money to support cultural assets and not supporting cultural communities, you will, in effect, create a museum-type recovery where the forms of cultural expression will be preserved while the people who gave those forms their meaning will be removed from the city.

Lower Ninth Ward

The finance system used for Sankofa Wetland Park was intentionally designed using a combination of a "hybrid-like" structure that is made up of non-profit partnerships, philanthropic grants, funding for environmentally based restoration projects, and volunteer work from the community at large. The physical infrastructure of the park is made possible, in part, by the FEMA-related grant money available through the Hazard Mitigation Grant Program. Additionally, non-profit organizations and foundations provided support for various aspects of the park such as programming geared towards youth and education of community members as well as developing the "caretaker role" of park stakeholders. By purposefully incorporating community volunteers into the restorative process, the park not only provided cost savings to the

project but also established a sense of ownership by residents who participated in the building of the park through volunteerism, thus giving them a vested interest in its long-term sustainability. According to Matsushita et al. (2024), citizen led placemaking can also be described as a form of cultural healing through participatory construction processes where members of a community engage in both physically constructing the environment together as well as envisioning how their constructed environment will look/function as a whole. This participatory approach builds community relationships and agency while creating an environmentally conscious built environment.

Sankofa CDC's finance plan was designed very well which shows they have a lot of experience and knowledge about how to get funding for wetland restoration projects. They made sure to explain that restoring wetlands to restore their cultural heritage, restoring them culturally, and restoring them will also improve community well-being. By using this integrated method to frame these projects, Sankofa was able to obtain funding from multiple sources at the same time. This created more diversified and thus sustainable financing than if they were to pursue funding from one source only.

Allensworth

The financing for Allensworth has been sourced from various forms of public (state) acquisition of historic lands during the 1970's in addition to capital investments made through California State Parks along with both philanthropic support and governmental grants; including the \$13.08 million that the APA was able to obtain since 2021 for planning capacity, environmental remediation and resilience projects. The 2023 Community Plan outlines the potential for additional revenue streams derived from land readjustment and cooperative farming

operations along with agrivoltaic energy systems that can generate local revenues while working toward energy sovereignty which serves as a financing innovation to meet CURE Framework's demand for locally generated revenue sources that can help diminish the reliance on outside funding cycles (UNESCO/The World Bank, 2018). Leveraging public funds to support long term sustainability of rural communities supports CURE Principle 6's objective for developing financial models that will provide stabilization resources needed to support rural communities immediately, while also providing resources to aid in their long-term development.

5.4.2 Intangible Financing

Treme

Investments in Treme's cultural and intangible aspects, such as music venues, oral history projects, cultural festivals, and community arts programs, were primarily supported by philanthropy and state cultural districts; however, this funding was substantially less than that of capital investment in Treme's physical structure. Although Treme received a Cultural District designation, this designation did not protect many small music venues/places of gathering from eventual closure due to a lack of support over time. The oral history and documentary project component of the Claiborne Avenue History Project was only modestly supported relative to the immense cultural value these types of projects provide. The structure of intangible heritage programming funding is the "cultural gap" identified by the CURE Framework as one of the significant and widespread failures of post-disaster financial aid; when cultural funding is primarily focused on physical assets (buildings/murals/markets) there is little to no institutionalized funding for social practices/traditions that accompany those physical assets.

The conclusion drawn from Treme is not that naming a cultural district does not work, but rather that naming a district alone will not guarantee success. Cultural assets will be preserved only in form if there aren't dedicated funding streams to support intangible programs like festivals, oral histories and rehearsal spaces; in addition, therefore, to community organizations and mentors pass culture forward across generations.

Lower Ninth Ward

Community organizations located in New Orleans' Lower Ninth Ward received grants from both philanthropists and government agencies for supporting youth education, conducting oral history projects and implementing environmental stewardship programs, resulting in a hybrid financing model that resembles the CURE Framework's vision of balanced cultural financing. As an important part of this process, Sankofa CDC's grant-seeking strategy integrated funding sources for ecological restoration with funding sources for cultural programming, viewing these two categories of funding as being inextricably linked to a single investment supporting recovery efforts. The integration of these two categories of funding into a unified model allowed the organization to successfully pursue and access funding sources for both environment and culture simultaneously, viewing environmental sustainability and cultural continuity not as competing priorities, but rather as mutually reinforcing goals. This allowed for a financing model in which the park's ecological infrastructure and its community programming funding would come from the same sources, eliminating the frequent issue of completing building infrastructure with separately funded cultural programs.

Allensworth

Historically, the weakest aspect of the recovery model for Allensworth has been the financing of cultural programming, as evidenced by the gap between state funds available for preservation and the community's need for support of their culture. California State Parks allocate funds as part of their annual budget to hold educational tours and events like Juneteenth; however, these funds are only allocated toward maintaining state historic parks rather than being utilized to support the living culture of a community. Although APA has partially covered the gap in state-performed heritage preservation by securing grants, the continued reliance upon state preservation budgets clearly demonstrates the inherent flaw in using state-led heritage preservation as a financing mechanism, which preserves the material remains of a culture but does not provide the ongoing resources needed by the community that creates and continues to give meaning to those artifacts.

5.4.3 Cross-Case Finding and Link to Altadena

Finding: Intangible cultural programming — festivals, oral history projects, youth stewardship programs, community organizations, and the social practices that sustain living cultural identity — is consistently the least funded dimension of post-disaster recovery across all three cases. This underfunding is not incidental but structural: available funding mechanisms (FEMA, state preservation budgets, federal infrastructure programs) are designed around categories of physical loss and reconstruction that do not accommodate intangible heritage. Hybrid financing models that combine public disaster funds, philanthropic grants, state preservation budgets, environmental restoration funds, and community labor produce the most resilient outcomes. Single-source financing — state-only in Allensworth, federal infrastructure-only in Treme's early recovery phase — leaves cultural programs vulnerable to budget cycles and political shifts that may not reflect community priorities.

Altadena Link: For Altadena, this finding supports the development of a deliberately hybrid financing strategy that treats intangible programming as a co-equal investment target alongside physical reconstruction. Recovery financing for Altadena must draw from FEMA disaster recovery funds, philanthropic partnerships, arts and culture grants, environmental resilience funds, cultural district incentive programs, and small business support mechanisms — designed and administered in ways that explicitly target intangible programming, community organizations, and cultural events that give Lake Avenue and Altadena's neighborhoods their living character. The Sankofa model's integration of ecological restoration and cultural programming into a single funding strategy offers a particularly relevant model for Altadena's park rebuilding efforts.

CURE Phase Two: CURE Phase Four: Implementation

In the fourth phase of the CURE Framework — Implementation — strategies to achieve the CURE goals (i.e., improved quality of life and sustainable development) physically manifest. This is also the stage where direct negotiations take place between the capacity of an institution and the authority of the community concerning who will ultimately be the decision-maker for implementing recovery. The CURE Framework emphasizes that effective implementation relies on existing governance structures that maintain ongoing engagement with the community at each step throughout the recovery process — as opposed to just being an input into a consultative process, but as an actual redistribution of decision-making authority. Further, the implementation phase also emphasizes the need to develop governance structures that balance both the need for preservation of historic character with the need for adaptation of living, dynamic communities, and do not follow the model — as clearly evidenced by Allensworth's earlier preservation framework — of having state institutions serve as guardians of the past without investing in the today.

In the three cases examined, the actual phase of recovery is where the greatest divergence occurs among the different models of post-disaster recovery. The model of governance used at this phase — state-managed, municipal, not-for-profit, or community-controlled — has a direct impact upon both the level of equity of the recovery outcomes experienced and on how much intangible cultural heritage was preserved in addition to the physical reconstruction of the disaster. As indicated by Brand et al. (2019) in their analysis of Christchurch/New Zealand's earthquake recovery, post-disaster redevelopment processes that emphasize technical efficiency and financial performance tend to neglect both local residents' relationships to their place and, as

a result, the intangible connection of those residents to their communities; this happens not on purpose, but as a result of the structure of these redevelopment processes favoring material outcomes that can easily be measured, at the expense of social and symbolic measures of community.

5.5.1 Tangible Implementation

Treme

Tactical Urbanism used in Treme combined with corridor infrastructure funding and incremental business restoration over the course of several years resulted in tangible outcomes that can be viewed publicly, which did not solve the biggest structural issue in the corridor (the elevated expressway). The most public and visible method of execution was through mural installations to honor lost businesses; use of the spaces below the Claiborne Expressway allowed for the creation of community markets, cultural events, and places for public expressions of performance. The activations of this space were facilitated through the establishment of the Claiborne Corridor Cultural Innovation District (CID) and the Ujamaa Economic Development Corporation, changing a space that had historically caused damage through infrastructure into a site for collective memory and cultural expression; this type of tactical placemaking is an example of applying CURE Principles #3 (promoting cultural expression as healing infrastructure) and #5 (including community in recovery strategy).

Yet, over time, the inadequacy of application methods that rely on an unequal physical environment instead of altering it has been made clear. The interstate still exists – it continues to increase pollution, to reduce pedestrian access, and to split the neighborhoods that it cuts through. Most of the small businesses that used to be in the corridor before Katrina have not been

able to reopen. The Reconnecting Communities federal initiative, which started in 2021, has provided the first real opportunity for the removal of the interstate, but as of this research, there is still no actual full physical recovery of the corridor – i.e., the type of restoration of infrastructure needed to create real place-based justice – that has taken place.

Lower Ninth Ward

Constructed over many years, Sankofa Wetland Park demonstrates the vision of CURE Framework for iterative and community-controlled processes by using an incremental construction model. The community enacted the placemaking process at Sankofa through a three-phased approach: preparation, creation, and care, where the community created a vision for the space, built the physical elements, and provided stewardship through programming support and care of the space. Each phase built on and enhanced community relationships from the previous phase. The park's physical features (wetland restoration areas, walking paths, outdoor classrooms, community amphitheater, and observation structures) were developed with direct involvement from local youth participants and community volunteers, creating a multi-dimensional example of building both social and physical centers that met communities' needs at the same time.

The vision at Sankofa CDC is long term: to create 40 small islands that will restore the Bayou Bienvenue wetland triangle (435 acres) links neighborhood recovery with regional climate resiliency. This scale of ambition is supported by embedding it into the implementation strategy from day one, positioning this park not only as a local amenity but as an investment in ecological and cultural infrastructure that has value to the larger region. Memorial parks and ecological restoration sites designed to promote stewardship and intergenerational use create

living landscapes of resiliency — places where they provide social labor to maintain the place's identity for multiple generations (Ghezelloo et al., 2024).

Allensworth

Most of the physical implementation of Allensworth has been implemented primarily by California State Parks. California State Parks has reconstructed the schoolhouse, library, church, hotel and homes in the Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park to how they appeared between 1908 and 1918 and serve as interpretive exhibits that tell the story of Black agricultural settlements, self-determination, and community governance. The reconstructed buildings further reflect CURE Principle 2, which calls for the restoration of cultural landmarks and places of significance to the community as the basis of recovering their community identity, and preserving that spatial memory through the preservation of the street grid, lot layout and the configuration of the open space within the park's historic landscape and connecting the visitor to the narrative of the birth of Allensworth.

The divergence between the preserved historic landscape inside the boundaries of the park and the vulnerable living community outside the park (characterized by contaminated water, food insecurity and economic marginalization) represents a key limitation of implementation strategies that prioritize symbolic preservation over integrated community resiliency. In each of the three case studies, the Allensworth Community Plan (2023) identifies and seeks to close this divergence by utilizing a strategy that promotes living community investment in conjunction with historic preservation. This divergence illustrates most clearly the dysfunction of state-led implementation when it prioritizes the past instead of the present

Existing Community Anchors



Figure 46. Mapping of the current cultural anchors in Allensworth. Source: The Allensworth Community Plan

5.5.2 Intangible Implementation

Treme

Grassroots cultural organizations led the way in Treme through intangible implementation. Treme is a community that is both highly organized and lacks the governmental infrastructure to support intangible heritage in its long-term recovery planning. The Claiborne Avenue History Project provides long-term cultural transmission by building both digital and physical archives of community memory, oral histories, and documented history. Such cultural capital must be embedded within both the physical landscape and institutional framework of recovery to protect a community's identity over time, as Hadzimuhamedovic (2005) has noted. The Claiborne Avenue Alliance constantly created pressure for the removal of the expressway and for environmental justice thereby maintaining community visibility through their intangible claim of spatial dignity within public planning discourse even when the physical implementation was proceeding on other fronts.

As Treme's population began to return to the neighborhood, the revival of second-line parades, jazz funerals, and the traditions of Mardi Gras Indian masking reflected the community's efforts to reclaim its culture – emphasizing that Treme's identity would not be defined solely by its image to tourists but by the continued presence of real live residents committed to cultural heritage. The revival of these forms of culture was not organized or funded through agencies engaged in recovery; rather, they were created out of the will of the community to recreate their culture after having suffered from systematic institutional neglect. While this pattern of resilient community self-organization in the absence of adequate institutional support is commendable, it also illustrates the failure of the planning and financing structures that should

have provided the financial resources for sustaining these types of activities rather than relying solely on community willpower.

Lower Ninth Ward

The main feature of Sankofa that distinguishes it from both the state-managed preservation of Allensworth and the activist-led recovery of Treme is its intangible implementation process. In conjunction with local schools, youth environmental leadership programs were created from the initial park planning phase using a model of intergenerational knowledge transfer. As such, the ecological restoration of the park was a cultural education project. Community visioning meetings established an ongoing governance structure through the park's planning and into its construction phase, allowing for programming to evolve over time as community needs change rather than being fixed at an original design phase. The collection of oral histories linked the ecological restoration of the Lower Ninth Ward to the community's cultural memory from prior to Hurricane Katrina, thereby positioning the park as an extension of the community's historical relationship with the land and its self-determination rather than a break from that relationship.

The types of implementation activities mentioned above represent CURE Principle 5 — ongoing partnership with your local community to enhance the cultural landscape, not only through consultation, but also by establishing true co-governance of that landscape. One of the insights shared by Matsushita et al. (2024) has to do with the importance of nurturing places to succeed in long-term placemaking. Nurturing places is the ongoing social work (labor) that is done to maintain and program an existing place that has been recovered, while placemaking is about the physical act of building a place. If there is no nurturing involved, then the physical

recovery of a site will become stagnant (recovered physically or built), but without the social practices of the community that has made that recovery into a living community.

Allensworth

Through Juneteenth celebrations and other historical reenactments and comparative interpretative programming at our state historic park, we have intentionally focused on annually recommitting ourselves to preserving cultural memory through ritual and storytelling; and through the continuing transfer of knowledge between the younger and older generations. All of these activities are driven by a desire to help heal individuals and communities from the trauma of post-crisis events and to restore a sense of cultural identity to all who are affected. In addition to our efforts to implement CURE 3 by supporting cultural expressions as means to address the trauma of post-crisis events, the APA has increasingly assumed the role of an intangible implementation entity beyond its function of administering the Historic Park by becoming an organizing body to record and facilitate mutual aid in the wake of the floods in 2023; working to advocate for water sovereignty and environmental justice; and coordinating with NGOs and local, state and federal government agencies on behalf of the needs of the living community.

The way in which California State Parks will continue to protect natural resources at the same time as developing local communities has been created through a collaborative approach between two government agencies with different, but complementary responsibilities. Each agency's responsibilities have been recognized by both parties, but they have frequently not been funded to support the balance between the two sides of the hybrid governance model.

5.5.3 Cross-Case Finding and Link to Altadena

Finding: The most equitable and culturally resilient implementation outcomes occurred when governance structures genuinely balanced institutional capacity with community authority. Where state or federal agencies dominated implementation without meaningful community co-governance — as in Allensworth's early preservation phase and, as the CURE Framework itself documents, in Beirut's Business Central District model — recovery produced physically restored environments that were socially disconnected from the living communities they were meant to serve. Sankofa's grassroots governance model, which centered community agency and ecological stewardship while accessing institutional funding through the CDC structure, most fully operationalized the people-centered and place-based integration that the CURE Framework prescribes.

Altadena Link: For Altadena, this finding supports the establishment of a Cultural Recovery Task Force composed of residents, cultural leaders, youth representatives, faith-based institution leaders, small business owners, and county officials — modeled on the hybrid governance structures evident in both the Sankofa CDC and the Allensworth Progressive Association. This body must be given genuine decision-making authority within the recovery process, not merely a consultative role, if it is to produce the community-accountable outcomes that the evidence consistently associates with culturally resilient recovery.

Interviewee 3 (President of Allensworth Progressive Association, 2025): *" We decided to develop our own community plan — to come up with our own vision and control our own destiny. The way you take back your community is block by block, home by home. Don't let people dictate. Everybody has to rise up and take a piece of their community back. When the community has a real seat at the table, that is when recovery actually reflects what people need."*

Interviewee 4 (architect, 2026): *" There should be a collective entity taking in all of the different individual aspects of the work that all these different organizations are doing and funneling them together into a greater master overview. Knowledge is everything — it puts homeowners in a better position to understand their value and their role in the recovery process. A Black Cultural District designation would bring opportunity and dollars to support economic development and ensure that culture does not get completely pushed out."*

Synthesis: Cross-Case Comparison and Recovery Models

All three case studies demonstrate similar patterns across all four CURE phases, and highlight three different recovery models, each with their own distinct combination of governance structures, cultural strategies, and equity outcomes. The purpose of this synthesis section is to display the three recovery models in a comparative context, map out across CURE phases where systemic gaps exist in intangible cultural recovery, integrate findings from primary

interviews, and to connect the cumulative findings to the research question and recommendations in chapter 6. In summary, the evidence compiled from these three case studies is not simply an accumulation of best practices; rather, it provides a consistent structural case regarding the conditions through which culturally informed recovery will succeed or fail.

5.6.1 Three Recovery Models

There are three different models of post-disaster cultural rehabbing by using a comparative approach. All three models provide a different pattern of governance, funding and cultural-related strategies, resulting in unique levels of cultural resilience and equality.

The Cultural Corridor Redevelopment (Treme / Claiborne Avenue). The designation of a revitalization of a culturally distinct commercial and civic corridor is a promising model for cultural recovery. Because of the considerable institutional strength of the culturally-distinct commercial and civic corridor — including formal policy recognitions, the existence of sustained grassroots activism to advocate for community priorities in the development of comprehensive public planning processes, and a strong symbolic cultural identity such that the corridor can be understood by both local residents and external funding sources (Jeong, 2022) — however, the case of Tremé serves as a warning about how major cultural plans can utilize resources for the creation of material accomplishments, but not secure the protection of the communities that were intended to benefit from those cultural initiatives. The Claiborne Corridor Cultural Innovation District is home to organizations like Ujamaa Economic Development Corp, which provide both physical and programmatic infrastructure within the corridor. This includes community markets, green infrastructure, vendor stalls and workforce development. These community-driven initiatives are great examples of collective efforts to rebuild culture, but many of the projects

started after 2017 — more than ten years after Hurricane Katrina hit — suggesting that there weren't any active anti-displacement protections during that initial recovery period, leaving the corridor vulnerable to displacement for almost 20 years prior to the establishment of community-driven infrastructure improvements in the corridor.

The Treme model also shows that corridor-based approaches to revitalizing culture can lead to decline and loss of culture for local communities if there are no anti-displacement protections built into zoning, financial and governance systems. As shown in Schmalbach (2021), using cultural identity as a tool for economic development in post-Katrina New Orleans is an example of a recovery that maintained forms of culture (music, architecture, festivals) while also allowing the displacement of the communities who created those forms. The lesson for Altadena is to start cultural corridors with anti-displacement protections in place for the residents and businesses who provide the culture for the corridor. The shift in Treme's racial makeup following the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina is an illustration of the demographic changes resulting from the lack of federal and state anti-displacement programs during the post-storm recovery. For example, the percentage of Black residents in Treme went from 92% before Hurricane Katrina to 57% by 2018; that's a 35-percentage point decrease in just over 13 years (A Closer Walk NOLA, 2022).

Citizen Driven Ecological Placemaking (Lower Ninth Ward/Sankofa Wetlands) provides a process for building community governed and culturally and ecologically developed landscapes on formerly vacant/damaged areas after they have been hit by a hurricane. This transformative approach to recovering landscapes is accomplished by utilizing the active participation of the community to create a cultural/ecological landscape and utilizing decentralized governance of these landscapes as opposed to a top-down approach to planning the landscape or a state managed

approach to preserving the landscape. There are many advantages to this model; the requirements for holistic human place based/people centered strategy development all require a single governance structure that provides for effective co-governance; total community ownership, leading to long-term investments of the space and its programming; development and leadership of youth for the purpose of maintaining the model and allowing for continuity; and development of ecological resilience and subsequently the protection of cultural recovery within the impacted community and adapting to the regional environment. In addition, the Sankofa model reflects the dual processes employed in actualizing CURE Framework; focusing both on tangible and intangible cultural recovery, with the intent of demonstrating that these two aspects are equally important as recovery investments/investments into sustainable recovery.

The limitations of the Sankofa Model are largely scalar in that as a single community-driven project it occupies a relatively small area and relies upon sufficient capacity to maintain a professional organizational structure and resource base (i.e., diverse sources of long-term funding). To successfully replicate this type of model on a smaller scale (multiple sites at once, for example, as needed by Altadena's recovery context) will require institutional infrastructure that cannot be provided solely by community organizations. The lesson to be learned by Altadena is to utilize the governance principles of the Sankofa model, including genuine community co-governance, integration of ecological and cultural recovery, and youth-centered stewardship, while at the same time developing an institutional framework that synthesizes these principles in such a way that they function at the level needed for Altadena's recovery.

State-led Historic Preservation (Allensworth/Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park). In this model of preservation, public authority and long-term investment are advantages that provide

formal recognition by the state government through reconstruction and preservation of physical, historical sites. These strengths are (i) the permanence provided by the state's protection, (ii) the legitimacy of the historical story recognized by the state, and (iii) the state's ability to draw educational programming and tourism numbers into this heritage site. Allensworth's founding history has been able to withstand a series of community population declines and the devastation that existence within an environmental disaster has to offer due to the above-mentioned three strengths of the state-led historic preservation model. Those three strengths enabled the existence of Allensworth as a historical community in the public consciousness long after population decline and environmental disaster destroyed its very existence in reality. The state's formal recognition of Black cultural heritage in California through the designation of Allensworth as a state historical park and programming for public interpretation related to this park is an act of recognition by an institution that is unique in its historical significance in the California community and the nation as a whole.

One key shortcoming of the Allensworth model, as this case highlights, is that while there is a protected historic environment, the current socio-economic and environmental vulnerabilities are not addressed, as discussed in the 2023 Allensworth Community Plan. The agreement between the Allensworth model and the considerations put forth by the 2023 Allensworth Community Plan shows that state-preserved environments represent history, but do not take into account the socio-economic and environmental injustices the people who live there have historically experienced. Thus, preservation must be combined with the following items for a true cultural recovery to occur, and not just the museumification of the people's history: anti-displacement protections, environmental infrastructure investment, economic diversification, and community governance authority to force decisions that align with the future of their community.

As such, the overall lesson from Altadena is to remember that while it is advisable to pursue formal historic-historic designation, it must fit within the greater recovery framework that addresses the living conditions of the people whose history is being protected.

CURE Phase	Treme	Lower Ninth Ward	Allensworth	Structural Gap
Phase 1: Damage & Needs Assessment	Physical inventory conducted; intangible loss (ritual, social networks) not formally mapped	Catastrophic physical loss documented; cultural density loss not quantified	Cumulative structural harm assessed; intangible narrative loss undervalued	Intangible heritage absent from formal damage assessments across all cases; PDNA methodology structurally unable to capture it
Phase 2: Policy & Strategy	Cultural district policy strong; anti-displacement protections weak	Ecological strategy is well integrated; intangible programming embedded in Sankofa design	Tangible preservation formalized through state park legislation; intangible living community needs systematically underprioritized	Physical place-based policy consistently outpaces people-centered intangible policy; two are rarely treated as co-equal priorities
Phase 3: Financing	Tourism-driven funding for physical assets; cultural programming underfunded	Hybrid model best practice; community labor leveraged for both physical and intangible	State preservation budget; minimally dedicated cultural programming funding	Intangible programming least funded dimension across all cases
Phase 4: Implementation	Partial; equity tensions persist; community-led cultural revival strong but fragile	Strongest model; community governance, ecological stewardship and youth programming	State Institutional management of tangible heritage; living community social needs incomplete	Community governance under-institutionalized except in Sankofa model

Table 10. Cross-case comparison of CURE Framework phases across Treme, the Lower Ninth Ward, and Allensworth, showing recovery strategies and structural gaps at each phase

5.6.2 Intangible Gaps Across All Four CURE Phases

The analysis of multiple cases shows a very clear pattern: every stage in all three recovery types does not address intangible cultural assets as well as tangible assets within the CURE Framework. This is a structural pattern rather than just a pattern of accident, as there are many reasons for this: assessment methods cannot assess cities in terms of loss in intangibles; funding from financing mechanisms does not support programming in intangibles; policy frameworks protect only the physicality of cultural heritage and not its life; and governance systems have prioritized institutional efficiency instead of the ability for communities to be recognized as cultural authorities. The table below shows how failure to support intangible assets occurs at each phase and case.

For the purpose of this document, I am using the term "intangible heritage" based on some national and international conventions and literature. "Intangible Cultural Heritage" refers to the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills associated with a social group. Examples of intangible heritage include music; traditional craft; festivals; oral histories; traditional healing; and agriculture. An intangible cultural heritage is often not visible; however, it exists very much within every social context. Rebuilding physical infrastructure without preserving the cultural identity of the community will create a continuation to the previous structural gap that Altadena has experienced in the past.

5.6.3 Interview Findings Integration

The interviews of Interviewee 1 (an author, historian, and member of Altadena Heritage), Interviewee 2 (an attorney and Chair of Altadena Heritage), Interviewee 3 (President of the Allensworth Progressive Association), and Interviewee 4 (an architect, NOMA SoCal) provided data that substantiates and amplifies the discoveries from the cross-case analysis in four distinct capacities and recommendations. The data from interviews can be utilized to link to primary data and secondary data from the case studies to create an evidence base that establishes analytic claims made in this chapter.

The interviewees confirmed that the cultural identity of Altadena is based on the place and its corridor—similar to Treme’s report about the corridor’s role in maintaining community life and the fracturing of network relationships among residents as a result of disruption. The first interviewee reported the importance of Lake Avenue and Farnsworth Park as unique social infrastructures that supported daily interactions across racial and economic distinctions. Similar to that found by Sakakeeny (2013) along Claiborne Avenue in Treme, the corridors are not just places for commerce but also serve a ceremonial and social function with their cultural impact being greater than the economic impact. The identification of Fair Oaks and Lincoln Ave as additional key corridors and the perception of Altadena’s culture as a multi-layered culture (including JPL, the arts community, outdoor identity, and historic neighborhoods) support the idea that the recovery of Altadena must provide protection to a more complex and widely distributed cultural geography than the single corridor models can support.

The four interviewed individuals all agreed what's most threatening Altadena's cultural identity in the time following its recovery is displacement, which is the same main warning from Treme. The first interviewee pointed out that all recovery effort is mainly focused on housing,

with little or no regard for investments into the cultural infrastructure, meaning the community could lose its identity along with its physical structure and wanted more community and walkable places. The second interviewee identified both gentrification and lack of representation among the displaced residents as continuing threats to identity; therefore, both of these factors speak to the way Treme created an environment whereby residents would continue being displaced due to gentrification-type redevelopment efforts during recovery in Altadena. If Altadena does not provide any form of anti-displacement protection in their recovery framework from day one — rather than waiting until after speculative development pressure has already begun — the end result will be that they will have rebuilt the Lake Avenue corridor, but only for new residents instead of all residents that lived there before, thus losing the cultural identity originally associated with Lake Avenue.

Interviewee 3 describes how, through the Allensworth Progressive Association, grassroots governance played a key role in resisting unwanted developments and supporting culturally relevant programming. She notes that there are gaps in institutional support for the residents of Allensworth, forcing the community to organize themselves because existing structures were unable to adequately address their needs, just as was observed in all three case studies where the most effective cultural recovery strategies came from community organizations instead of governments or large organizations with top-down planning. According to Interviewee 4, there is no detailed action plan for Altadena's recovery; therefore, collaboration between the county government and community leaders is needed to deliver integrated services. Preservation of Altadena Black Heritage should be prioritized; that can be accomplished through a Black Cultural District, digital documentation of historic sites, and mapping to avoid the displacement of existing residents. Homeowner education and case management for housing, including ADUs,

will also be required to provide ongoing financial support to residents for their long-term housing stability.

Fourth, interviews offer an additional and confirmed finding that also supports a finding supported by case study literature. Altadena recovery currently does not have a cultural framework for recovery. The lack of a structured cultural recovery plan, housing-focused nature of the County's recovery resources, and reliance on community-driven initiatives without institutional support and sustainable funding all re-create the structural gaps identified within Altadena's recovery context in all three case studies documented in the case studies. The overlap between the findings of the primary interview data and case study documentation further supports recommendations presented in Chapter Six.

5.6.4 Connection to Research Question and Chapter Six

In this chapter, the findings related to the three sub-questions guiding this research are presented as follows: the answers to the first sub-question—what was Altadena's cultural identity before and after the disaster? —will be provided in Chapter 4 of this research paper; the answers to the second sub-question— what strategies have communities used to enhance cultural identity and placemaking following post-disaster recovery? —will be found in the areas of policy, financing, and implementation related to each of the three cases studied (cultural corridor designation/community-driven and charette visioning in Treme; citizen-engaged ecological placemaking/hybrid governance in the Lower Ninth Ward; state-led heritage preservation acting in conjunction with grassroots advocacy in Allensworth); and the answers to the third sub-question— what can Altadena learn from other communities that have effectively incorporated

culture into their disaster recovery?—will be illustrated by discussing the cross-case findings as well as Altadena connections identified in the conclusion of each CURE phase section above.

The main research question (what community strategies should be used to enhance cultural identity in Altadena's neighborhood disaster recovery?) is answered through a synthesis of information across all four phases: the communities that systematically included 'culture' in their damage assessments, policies created for recovery, funding for recovery, and implementing recovery created the best/most resilient/equitable recoveries because they had an equal focus on 'place-based' versus 'people-based' approaches. In addition, this has been translated into six practical recommendations in Chapter 6.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has shown: (1) that Cultural Recovery after a disaster is a complex multi-layered negotiation process at various levels; for example, between physical reconstruction and intangible preservation; institutional capacity and community authority; economic revitalization and anti-displacement protection; the desire to rebuild what was lost and create a more resilient or sustainable built environment. The case studies presented have provided multiple perspectives on these dimensions of the negotiation as well as a more complete comparative picture of a culturally based recovery at both the neighborhood and community level.

The Treme area is a prime example of power and the danger of the redevelopment of cultural corridors. With the advocacy of the community, policies that support cultural districts, and the planning known as tactical urbanism, we can maintain cultural expression through significant disruption. Unfortunately, without structural equity protections in place during the redevelopment process, cultural expressions will be commercially valued while displacing the

people who created them and therefore will lead to a museum-like version of the surrounding neighborhoods that have taken away the residents who created them. The impact of this process can be seen in the Lower Ninth Ward's use of citizen-driven ecological placemaking, in conjunction with true shared governance and intergenerational stewardship, has proved that by transforming areas devastated by a disaster into areas of cultural resiliency there will create the need for additional institutional support, as the organizational requirements for sustaining such a model are beyond the capacity of the community organizations alone. State-sponsored historic preservation efforts have shown that it is possible for the state to support both the protection of physical (tangible) heritage and the perpetuation of historical memory through state intervention in the development of historic places; that in order for this to be a true cultural recovery, they need to invest in the sustainable resilience of the living community through environmental justice, economic diversification, and empowerment of the local community to govern themselves; otherwise, state-supported historic preservation will only serve to memorialize the history of a community, while destroying its present.

The clear and urgent lesson learned through these cases in Altadena is that culture must be treated as the primary principle for Rebuilding and Recovery since it provides the foundation for why we rebuild physically, provides a sense of community identity across disruptions and builds resiliency over time. If culture is treated as peripheral in recovery planning the result will be neighborhoods that have been physically rebuilt but are culturally void. Chapter Six provides a series of recommendations that translate the evidence compiled in this chapter into a series of actionable strategies that are both consistent with the findings of the comparative case studies and applicable to the context of recovery in Altadena.

Chapter Six – Recommendations for Altadena

Next Actions

The actions listed do not represent the official timeline or responsible parties; they are intended as realistic, real-time estimates.

The beginning action for Altadena to move towards recovery is to create an extensive map of cultural assets. The map would document both tangible and intangible heritage across the community. The mapping should be much more than an inventory of damaged buildings; it should also include small businesses on Lake Avenue, places of worship, neighborhood groups, artists groups, multigenerational homes, festivals that occur and informal gathering places that define social networks. Cultural-based asset mapping should utilize GIS mapping with historical documentation from community storytelling workshops. This method will result in an accurate and complete record of community members' experiences on how they recover from the disaster rather than relying entirely on data from physical damages checked against established standards. The living records captured through cultural asset mapping can be used as part of institutionalized recovery planning processes within Los Angeles County, so that Altadena does not erase its various history layers or (Black/Latino/Asian/multiracial) heritage and can create a baseline from which to recover based on the actual culture(s)/community(ies). This should be taken immediately, within the first six to twelve months of the recovery process, through a partnership among the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning, residents, and other stakeholders.

The second action is that parks and public space reconstruction should be seen as efforts to restore the cultural landscape rather than simply replacing facilities. Parks like Farnsworth Park and Loma Alta Park should be reconstructed by employing wildfire-resistant landscape design principles with a focus on ecological restoration, incorporating cultural programming into the park's continued long-term management plan. By looking at lessons learned from Sankofa Wetland Park (specifically related to integrating youth environmental stewardship and education/community education), Altadena's park reconstruction can provide outdoor classrooms, oral history installations, and community-led art initiatives that provide a path to restore both environmental and cultural resiliency. Therefore, public space will no longer just serve as a place for recreation, but instead will create opportunities for healing, preserving memories, and providing continuity between generations. This action is led by the Los Angeles County Department of Parks and Recreation, within a one- to three-year design and partnership with community stewardship groups identified during the previous action mapping process.

The third action is that Altadena should develop and implement anti-displacement and equitable land use safeguards at the outset of the reconstruction phase to stop speculative redevelopment and cultural displacement. Environments are extremely sensitive following a disaster; high land costs, excessive insurance costs, and outside investment can completely disrupt communities' traditional social systems. Zoning overlay policies, cultural preservation districts (e.g., Black Cultural District designation) and community land trust type mechanisms are useful tools to help stabilize areas inhabited by black middle-class homeowners and founded upon sublegal grassroots efforts. The incorporation of these regulatory tools into the updated community plan will help preserve community cohesiveness and create a stable backdrop as the reconstructions begin. Additionally, to protect the cultural capital of Altadena over time, it will

be necessary to maintain affordability and continuity with regards to ownership. These protections need to be in place immediately, within the first year, by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors and community planning bodies working with community land trust organizations. The experience in Treme is a revealing example, in which prioritizing cultural branding and corridor revitalization without anti-displacement provisions pushed long-term residents out regardless of the area's cultural revival.

The fourth action is to develop a plan that creates a hybrid financing approach which balances public disaster funds with long term community investments. While FEMA and state funding have the potential to meet short-term infrastructure needs, the longer-term needs of cultural recovery will require multiple funding sources including philanthropic partnerships, arts-based grants, environmental resilience funds, and support for local economic development initiatives to help small businesses. Incentive programs like façade improvement grants for Businesses located on Lake Avenue and block grants for property owners interested in restoring or rehabilitating historic homes can create momentum for reinvestment in neighborhoods while also retaining their historic character. The financing mechanisms should support the CURE Framework's goal of integrating culture into all aspects of recovery, rather than treating it as an afterthought. Creating these mechanisms is a one-to-three-year process led by county economic development officials.

The fifth action is establishing an Altadena Cultural Recovery Task Force consisting of local stakeholders, planners, cultural representatives, youth representatives, and county officials would greatly benefit Altadena by creating a coordinating body that helps to keep recovery programs and strategies focused on people and places. The coordination body could provide an

example of a hybrid stewardship system, similar to Kobe's earthquake restoration headquarters, to help oversee the implementation of equitable systems (e.g., measuring equity impact) and maintain an open line of communication with the residents of the community. By embedding community involvement into an institutional structure, recovery decisions will better reflect the priorities of the entire community as opposed to being based on purely technical factors. The Task Force should be arranged immediately, within the first six months of the recovery process, by Los Angeles County in partnership with community members.

And the sixth action is to create a long-term monitoring system, and adaptive evaluation mechanisms should be included in the Recovery Plan. Cultural resiliency measures—like the number of local businesses restarting operations, the number of community festivals held, and the participation of youth in stewardship programs—should be monitored in conjunction with physical rebuilding measures. Recovery needs to be seen as an ongoing, iterative process over longer periods of time (years, rather than just months). Creating an institutionalized approach to adaptive management will allow Altadena to prepare for possible new threats and retain its cultural continuity. The Cultural Recovery Task Force created in the fifth action, monitoring on a long-term basis over five years or more.

The next phase of recovery shifts from just rebuilding buildings to being an intentional approach for restoring culture, identity, community, and multi-generational resiliency. Altadena can not only recover from the disaster by using the CURE Framework (for assessing, developing, funding and doing) but by culturally strengthening themselves as a result of the disaster.

Findings and Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate what community strategies can enhance the cultural identity of a neighborhood in Altadena recovering from a disaster. To do this, we examined three case studies using the CURE Framework and found that an effective recovery needs to consider culture as the primary driver of physical reconstruction rather than simply an additional element after the fact.

The Eaton Fire in January 2025 was not an event occurring in a vacuum. Communities of Altadena had long-standing histories of racial equality, activism from within the community and cultural production along with having a strong identity associated with their location prior to the fire. African Americans, Latinos and Asian Americans as well as many multi-generational members have created their lives through not only the structures they live and work in but also through relationships, cultural practices such as arts or music, as well as through common focus areas. Many of these types of community-based areas were damaged, destroyed or otherwise impacted as a result of the fire. While the physical destruction of property was extensive, the greatest loss or potential loss for the future of Altadena are the people, practices and places that provide value/worth to the structures; not simply because the structure exists but because of how they defined themselves and connected one another.

In Treme, the Claiborne Corridor demonstrates how recovery can go wrong if cultural protection is not a priority; a neighborhood that has cultural vibrancy can also be both displaced and commodified at the same time. The heritage of a neighborhood like the Claiborne Corridor can go from a community resource to a tourism attraction while the people that have lived there for a significant amount of time can no longer afford to live there. Conversely, in the Lower

Ninth Ward, the Sankofa Wetland Park shows how community-driven recovery, ecological restoration in harmony with cultural memory, and investment in young people as protectors of both the land and the heritage can create centers of true renewal in a post-disaster area. The Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park is an example of the consequences of preserving cultural heritage without the commitment of active living communities. These parks are reminders of how memorializing our past is not equal to continuing to sustain the present.

The model for moving forward from the January 2025 Eaton fire in Altadena, California will take place through both Economic Development and Culture (local artists, arts organizations, and alternative cultural initiatives/activities) thus demonstrating that neither one of these is sufficient in isolation as it relates to Recovery Support. Community Members must not only develop their own visions for Recovery Support; however, but they must also own the CURE Framework and hold local governments accountable for fulfilling their obligations as outlines of the CURE Framework. By delivering upon these foundational aspects of how Altadena can recover, it is proposed that ultimately the success/effectiveness of the CURE Framework and the local vision will depend upon both planners and community members driving its application.

The researcher found several important limitations in this study. A small number of participants were interviewed, which greatly limited the potential for utilizing the primary data from the interviews in this study. Each of the case studies are well-documented; however, they each have certain characteristics that rendered them not ideal to compare against Altadena -- for example, each of the case studies was based on a specific context (i.e., flooding versus wildfires), large urban centers versus non-incorporated communities. Future research should longitudinally

follow-up in Altadena for five-to-ten years to see whether intangible cultural heritage remains in the community as cultural assets either are displaced or are restored; and when conducting community interviews, including a more diverse audience (including Latino/as and Asians), should ultimately include all of Altadena's cultural properties that exist within the community.

Although there are limitations to this study, the contributions are clear in three areas: one, the CURE Framework has been applied to an unincorporated area in California (it was previously applied only for international cities) demonstrating that it can be used in more than just urban situations; two, it provides a detailed account of Altadena's culture both prior to and subsequent to a disaster so that future comparisons may be made against these baseline data; and three, the recommendations provided in this study are based on evidence gathered through the comparative analysis of urban and rural communities (including social networks) rather than through the development of simple abstract principles.

The Eaton Fire has provided a painful yet real opportunity for the people of Altadena to reimagine their community. While it is not a question of whether or not it will be rebuilt, it is a question of whether the residents who helped create Altadena will still be there once it has been rebuilt. This research indicates that the outcome of the rebuilding process is not a sure thing and will only occur if there are purposeful actions taken by all members of the community, which reflect and support the diverse cultures of the community, through all phases of recovery, to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to actively participate in the rebuilding process. The future of Altadena will be determined by what gets rebuilt, who takes part in the rebuilding process, and whose stories are preserved, and whose belonging is protected. Culture is not something that communities recover after a disaster, but rather something they recover with.

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Appendix A - Interview Questions from the Methodology

Questions for interviewee 1 (historian, author, land use committee and Altadena Heritage member) and interviewee 2 (attorney, and Altadena Heritage Chair):

1. Based on your personal experience living/working in Altadena, what people, traditions, places, or events made you feel connected to the community before the disaster? Could you share a few examples that were especially meaningful to you?
2. Thinking about your time in Altadena, especially around Lake Avenue, were there any landmarks, institutions, or gathering places that you or your family regularly visited? What did those places represent to you or your community?
3. After the fires, were there any cultural spaces, community centers, or places you personally valued that were lost or damaged? How did their loss affect you or the people you know?
4. From your perspective, how did the disaster change the way neighbors interacted, celebrated, or came together in Altadena? Can you recall any traditions or routines that were disrupted or faded as a result?
5. Looking back, are there any memories, stories, or images from Altadena—either before or after the disaster—that you think should be passed on to future generations? Why do you think they matter?

Questions for interviewee 3 (President of Allensworth Progressive Association):

1. Based on your experience with Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, what individuals, traditions, sites, or events within the park made you feel connected to its history and community before any significant challenges or changes? Could you share a few examples that were particularly meaningful to you?

2. Thinking about your time at Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park, especially around the core historic area, were there any landmarks, buildings, or gathering places that you or your family regularly visited? What did those places represent to you, to the park, or to the broader Allensworth community?
3. After any significant changes or challenges the park faced, were there any cultural spaces, historic buildings, or places you personally valued within the park that were lost or damaged? How did their loss affect you or the people you know who were connected to the park?
4. Is there a cultural overlay for the Master Plan for Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park after the Deer Creek flooding?
5. What does the community wish to achieve with the restoration of Colonel Allensworth State Historic Park?

Questions for interviewee 4 (architect, NOMA SoCol):

1. Is there currently a recovery or community plan in development for Altadena following the Eaton Fire?
2. What efforts are underway to restore Altadena's historic and cultural heritage, particularly Black heritage?
3. How is the Altadena Rebuild Coalition addressing gentrification and displacement?
4. In what ways do rebuilding efforts and partnerships with community-based designers support Black homeowners in preserving and reestablishing third spaces in Altadena considering both tangible and intangible cultural dimensions?