



Guiding Principles: Preliminary Draft

January 22, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Based on SELA Cultural Center Advisory Panel (Panel) Meetings and input from the SELA community, the following is a preliminary draft of emerging *Guiding Principles* that will guide the development of a Vision and Recommended Operations Plan for the Center.

The Vision will express aspirations about the Center as a place, an organization, an incubator of ideas and co-creation, and a symbol that reflects the past, present, and future of the SELA community. The Vision will be a framework of foundational elements/priorities/principles upon which the Center is built—physically (in design and construction), organizationally (in operations and programming), and socially/culturally (in its interaction with and service to the SELA community).

EARLY VISION ELEMENTS

As expressed in Panel meetings and community outreach events/activities, the Elements can be organized around several key values.

NOTE: Additional words and phrases: Rooted in Place, Community at the Core, Art is Essential and Transformative, Cultural Heritage

Honor and Celebrate

- Art
 - As a critical aspect of individual, cultural, and community identity
 - Use language that shows how art and culture is part of individual and shared identity, specifically to those living and working in SELA (e.g. “resilient”, “healing”)
 - Through education, engagement, and exploration
 - Highlight a holistic approach to art and culture, including how it can support and cultivate physical health, mental wellbeing, youth

development, resource sharing, financial literacy, collaboration with local business and organizations, etc.

- Community and youth leadership
- History & culture
 - Indigenous
 - Naming spaces, paseos, and plazas
 - Landscape design
 - Acknowledge importance/ significance of the LA River
 - Immigrant
- Indigenous practices/philosophies regarding the natural world
 - Relationship to fire (outdoor cooking fires)
 - Landscape design
 - Design that highlights being near the LA River in a natural and organic way, rather than planned or forced.

Create and Collaborate

- Opportunities
 - Act as incubator/lab for local established and upcoming SELA artists
- Partnerships
 - Learn from other cultural centers/projects
 - LA County Public Works
- Relationships/Connections
 - LA County Cultural Policy
 - Incorporate informal and formal spaces that already exist in the SELA arts community (e.g., garages, sidewalks, Art Space HP, South Gate Museum and Art Gallery, Stay Studio)
- Access
 - Affordability of programs/classes
 - Flexible spaces
 - Multiple seating styles
 - Technology needs (microcinemas, green screen rooms)
 - Be clear about how the Cultural Center will be welcoming and hospitable to all ages, abilities, interests, and backgrounds
 - Indicate how access to and through the Cultural Center will be accommodated and inclusive, including transportation and financial accessibility
- Safety & security
 - Avoid traditional forms of security that could be perceived as policing and unwelcoming/uninviting

- Be clear about how the Cultural Center will be welcoming and hospitable to all ages, abilities, interests, identities, and backgrounds

Foster and Cultivate

- Revenue
 - Artist studios
 - Art sales
 - Flexible spaces/seating to accommodate audiences of various sizes
 - Indicate how the vision and values will weave into the Recommended Operations Plan, including how finances and governance are and will be considered
- Excitement
 - For arts and culture education (master classes)
 - Indicate how the Cultural Center will be a space that generates excitement and keeps the community involved and engaged
 - Safe spaces for organic community building, gathering, play, and rest
- Pride
 - SELA identity and style
- Stability
 - Mitigate/avoid gentrification
 - Be clear about anti-displacement and anti-gentrification intentions and initiatives
- Feeling of safety, and in doing so, change perceptions about the LA River being a dangerous area/place

Support and Serve

- Community Centered
 - Mitigate/avoid gentrification
 - Be clear about anti-displacement and anti-gentrification intentions and initiatives
 - Use language that centers and prioritizes the SELA community, without being exclusive to other visiting communities
 - Be clear about what the Cultural Center will provide to the community, and what it will stand for (i.e. What is the Cultural Center's platform? What does it commit to? How will it center the community in all aspects?)
- Youth
 - Encourage their leadership and support their development

- Opportunities to explore creative professions
- Economic, cultural and environmental resilience/sustainability
 - Affordability of programs/classes
 - Revenue for Center & artists
 - Native vegetation
 - Highlight the Cultural Center's relationship to the LA River and surrounding geography, including the Indigenous plants, landscapes, and ancestral lands
 - Confirm that revenue generated from phased uses can support lower-cost and/or free programming for residents and local artists as phases are implemented.
 -
- Local artists
 - Revenue
 - Recognition
 - Gallery space to display work
 - Incorporate informal spaces that already exist in the SELA arts community (e.g., garages)
 - Be clear about how the Cultural Center will support emerging and established artists across all ages, indicating how it will be both an incubator for new opportunities and provide monetary and/or administrative support