



## Draft Vision and Guiding Principles

April 9, 2026

### I. INTRODUCTION

The vision statement expresses aspirations about the Cultural Center as a place, organization, and symbol that reflects the past, present, and future of the SELA community and region. The vision statement and guiding principles will provide a framework of foundational elements, priorities, and values upon which the Cultural Center is built – physically in design and construction, organizationally through operations and programming, and socially in interaction with and service to the surrounding SELA community and region.

### II. VISION STATEMENT

The SELA Cultural Center is a multi-disciplinary arts and culture campus where Southeast Los Angeles' identity, stories, and creativity thrives. The SELA Cultural Center is dedicated to uplifting arts and culture access to the surrounding region, building opportunities for local artists, and activating vibrant third spaces where all ages, abilities, and backgrounds belong. We believe arts and culture is healing and fundamental, and demonstrates SELA's innovation and resilience. We are committed to centering the needs and hopes of the surrounding community and to being led by the people who call SELA home.

### III. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following guiding principles expand on the emerging vision statement's aspirational framework and establish values to inform the Recommended Operations Plan elements. Furthermore, all guiding principles are interconnected, such that no one principle is more or less significant than another.

**A. Honor and celebrate the region's richness and diversity** – Acknowledge and integrate the history, creative practices, and cultural heritage of the SELA region, communities, and tribes, as well as the LA River water, landscape, and ecosystem as a means of honoring SELA's holistic identity and celebrating community pride. Art and culture are critical aspects of individual and shared identity, and contribute to personal and collective healing, belonging, joy, and resilience. The Cultural Center's built and felt environments should be reflective of and uplift this through design, engagement, education, and exploration.

A.1 Steward the land and surrounding environment with care and deference to Indigenous knowledge, expertise, and practices.

- A.2 Amplify the relationship with and proximity to the LA River in an organic and accessible way, bridging connections to the surrounding natural environment through design and programming.
- A.3 Carry forth the region's collective memory and traditions through storytelling, cultural preservation, installations, programming, and events.
- A.4 Ensure holistic arts and culture programming is culturally- and linguistically-aligned, and supports physical and mental health, personal growth, community building, and mutual aid.

***B. Design and activate memorable and vibrant spaces*** – Bring people together in thoughtfully-designed spaces that meet diverse needs, host third spaces, and offer unique experiences. Arts and culture can flourish in built environments that are constructed to be accommodating, inspiring, and collaborative. The Cultural Center as a whole and in its components should be in service of the people who use it and represent the quintessential SELA style.

- B.1 Interweave SELA's cultural and Indigenous traditions, practices, and philosophies into the design, landscaping, and layout. This is including but not limited to the naming of buildings, spaces, paseos, and/or plazas, the selection of vegetation and other natural elements, the construction of architectural elements, and the incorporation of artwork to visually represent SELA's identities.
- B.2 Partner with and compensate local artists to contribute to the creation of the Cultural Center's visual environment. This is including but not limited to temporary and/or permanent murals, sculptures, photos, interior design, multimedia installations, and more.
- B.3 Integrate indoor and outdoor, unprogrammed spaces that can be used for SELA residents, families, and community-based organizations to rest, gather, play, work, and create.
- B.4 Include adaptable, well-equipped, flexible, and modular spaces that support a variety of artistic mediums and needs, programmatic styles, and events ranging from family celebrations to large-scale performances.
- B.5 Elevate health and wellbeing through physical components such as green spaces, shade and other cooling amenities, adequate seating, accessible walkways, access to public transit, and others.

***C. Foster and cultivate inclusion and belonging*** – Deepen a sense of inclusivity and belonging through connection, togetherness, and shared creation. Art and culture are an essential and transformative part of daily life, meant for everyone. The Cultural Center should be deliberate in welcoming, including, and representing all ages, abilities, backgrounds, cultural identities, and artistic interests.

- C.1 Prioritize a warm, welcoming, and hospitable environment where everyone can feel included, safe, and at-home. These values should be woven through all programming at the Cultural Center, and include elements in the physical space

such as linguistically-aligned wayfinding signage, ADA-accessibility, gender-inclusive restrooms, and more.

- C.2 Affirm that all forms of arts and culture programming have a place at the Cultural Center, rather than being elitist or exclusive of certain types of craft and creative expression.
- C.3 Provide community building and mutual aid opportunities to support local residents, families, youth, and seniors with individual, shared, or changing needs.
- C.4 Utilize community-led safety design and practices over traditional forms of policing or hostile architecture to ensure security.

**D. Empower and uplift local artists and cultural leaders** – Provide local artists, creators, and cultural leaders with opportunities to incubate new ideas, learn and develop creative skills, and connect with industry partners. There is already a robust and thriving arts and culture infrastructure across SELA, home to emerging and established artists at all levels of experience. The Cultural Center can leverage collaborative opportunities and supplementary resources that invest in rather than displace the existing arts and culture community.

- D.1 Outreach to and engage with the local arts and culture community to understand current and future needs of SELA-based artists.
- D.2 Offer an array of programming that increases exposure to the arts, supports the professional development of local artists, and fosters creative, intergenerational, and organic community building within the arts and culture community.
- D.3 Encourage the development of local artists and youth who are exploring, in pursuit of, and/or have established creative careers, by providing skill-building, monetary, and administrative support across disciplines and professional pipelines. As relevant, connect with other local, regional, national, and international organizations that can help inform best practices and/or support the professional development of local artists.
- D.4 Partner with and compensate local, formal and informal SELA artists and creative businesses, organizations, and spaces to co-develop arts and culture programming at the Cultural Center.

**E. Center and support the existing community and cultural infrastructure** – Invest in SELA residents, families, artists, and community members through all aspects of programming and operations to keep community at the core. Though the Cultural Center will invite new opportunities as a regional arts and culture hub, it must also ensure that all benefits and decision-making prioritize, commit, and respond to community needs and values now and into the future. SELA residents, businesses, organizations, and artists should enjoy and benefit from the Cultural Center while remaining rooted in place for generations to come.

- E.1 Outreach to and engage with SELA residents, families, youth, and seniors to understand what types of programming community members are excited about

and where programmatic gaps exist, integrating feedback in all stages of planning. Provide frequent, multiple, and meaningful opportunities for community members to provide feedback.

- E.2 Increase access by providing resources that address financial, geographic, linguistic, transportation, and other relevant barriers to participation.
- E.3 Prioritize job opportunities to SELA residents at all levels of employment at the Cultural Center, from executive leadership and teaching positions, human resources and security, to maintenance and performers.
- E.4 Incorporate revenue-generating uses, such as advertising, ticketing, rentals, vending, and others to support the Cultural Center's financial sustainability. Use this revenue to offset free and affordable programming for community members, and focus on uses aligned with the Cultural Center's values as well as SELA's identity and style.
- E.5 Institute anti-gentrification and anti-displacement policies and be explicit about equitable, community-led initiatives that prioritize community-centered investments and benefit existing businesses, families, and organizations across generations.
- E.6 Include local artists, businesses, nonprofits, and organizations as key operational decision-makers who can identify and uplift SELA's needs as they are now and as they will change into the future. Leverage the Cultural Center as a resource to support community needs.