

Historic Desert Community Fights for Control of Its Future by Opposing the County's Generic Zoning

The Community of Pioneertown, California, is battling against San Bernardino County's generic zoning proposal, arguing it fails to reflect their unique needs.

PIONEERTOWN, CALIFORNIA, USA, June 1, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- A historic desert community in Pioneertown, California, is battling against San Bernardino County's generic zoning proposal, arguing it fails to reflect their unique needs and threatens their historic district.

Since 2016, Pioneertown residents and property owners have tirelessly worked with County staff to amend County land use regulations. The primary goals of their [community-led proposal](#) are to protect historic buildings, preserve the unique dirt roads, ensure manageable tourism, and promote small-scale development.

However, the County has yet to act on the proposal. It plans instead to apply generic County zoning on Mane Street as early as July, disregarding the outcomes of County-led workshops and the residential properties that line the street.

"Zoning regulations should mirror the unique conditions of Pioneertown, not neglect them," said Ben Loescher, an Architect and Pioneertown resident leading the initiative. "If the County fails to adopt our proposed overlay, we risk losing our historic structures, managing unmitigated tourism impacts, and an increase in incompatible businesses without removing the unnecessary barriers that are currently standing in the way of small businesses and adaptive reuse of our historic buildings."

With a series of regulatory modifications, the proposed overlay seeks to maintain Pioneertown's



Left: North side of Pioneertown's Mane Street as it was in 1949. Right: South side of Mane Street as it looks now.

unique identity while ensuring future growth aligns with the community's needs and infrastructure.

The community's best-case scenario involves adopting the overlay, ensuring the preservation of Pioneertown's historic architecture, and facilitating manageable tourism. "With the right zoning regulations, Pioneertown can continue to grow without sacrificing its [historical significance](#) and unique charm," added Curt Sautter, Pioneertown historian, landowner, and curator of the Pioneertown Film Museum.

The community hopes to gather [1,000 signatures on their petition](#) to demonstrate the widespread support for their cause. The upcoming July 6th Planning Commission meeting, where the County's CEO plans to apply a generic "Rural Desert Commercial" zoning to Mane Street, represents a critical juncture for the future of Pioneertown.

The community's initiative has already seen significant support from a coalition of local residents, property owners, and businesses. While the proposal is opposed by one of Mane Street's newer property owners who intends to convert a portion of the historic area into a live music venue and music festival site, the majority of Pioneertown's residents stand firmly behind the proposed changes.

The fight for Pioneertown's future stems from the county's chronic under-resourcing, the dominance of county politics by heavily populated areas adjacent to Los Angeles, and a lack of representation in county planning from the communities most impacted by recent tourism-related development.

The residents of Pioneertown urge all stakeholders to support their efforts to retain the historic charm and unique culture of their beloved community.

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About Pioneertown:

Established in the 1940s, Pioneertown is a historic community in the Morongo Basin region of Southern California's San Bernardino County. Known for its unique Western movie set facade, the town draws in tourists from around the world with its distinctive charm and rich history.

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