

Bidwell Mansion Fire Recovery Planning

Summary

Following the fire in December 2024, exterior debris was removed, a security fence was installed and hazmat testing was completed. Once safe access was possible, a team of specialists, including historians, architects, and engineers evaluated the post-fire conditions and completed its draft final report in December 2025. The findings of the report are summarized below.

Structural findings: All wood framing is a total loss. The brick structure is intact and may still have the possibility of being reused either as standing walls or reuse of the historic material. Work would be extensive including phased shoring, hand clearing of the building interior, significant repair/repointing work, and seismic stabilization with a fiber-reinforced polymer coating of 100% of the brick (based on structural brick analysis and building code requirements). Further study will be needed to confirm these options.

Architectural findings: The architectural features and elements are a total loss, other than select potential salvage items identified in the report.

Cultural findings: Pre-fire, the Bidwell Mansion SHP is a listed property on the National Register of Historic Places and as a California Historical Landmark. Due to the fire damage DPR must reevaluate and update the Bidwell Mansion property's historic status and consult with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and local Native American Tribes prior to determining future treatments to the site or building.

The report touched on several possible alternative treatments for consideration, including:

- Preserve the remaining brick structure and maintain as a stabilized visible ruin or incorporated on a reconstructed building. This potential treatment would require temporary exterior shoring while the interior of the structure is cleared of debris, followed by permanent visible interior bracing. The visual impact to the site would be significant. Further study would be needed to assess the feasibility of this option.
- Remove the remaining brick structure and construct a memorial or other new reconstructed building/structure. This is the most open-ended treatment with many options for potential programmed use.

Given the variety of possible treatment options, as well as the need for detailed feasibility studies and analysis, the conditions assessment report recommended a subsequent feasibility study be conducted to further evaluate potential treatment options including architectural and engineering challenges, costs and timelines. DPR is currently assessing public input on which specific alternatives to study that will shape the future use, program and treatment of the mansion site.

Next Steps

Assess public input and utilize results to inform the preferred alternative(s) and subsequent feasibility study(ies).