



With so many modern resources out there, how do we decide which ones are most significant? Pictured above is a suburban housing tract in Los Angeles, illustrating the “bunny rabbit dilemma” described below. Photo by “Dick” Whittington Studio/University of Southern California, on behalf of the USC Special Collections.

Top 13 Challenges in Saving Modernism and the Recent Past

by Adrian Scott Fine

The Conservancy is no stranger to preserving places from the recent past. Our Modern Committee began trailblazing in the 1980s, and modern resources now represent nearly half of the issues addressed by advocacy staff. It stands to reason, as so much of Los Angeles’ built environment developed after World War II.

How do we decide, prioritize, and build popular support for saving these places before it is too late? We can start by understanding how saving a place from the modern era (broadly considered the 1940s-1960s) or recent past (now considered the 1970s and even the ’80s!) is different from other eras.

In no particular order, the following “Top 13” list briefly illustrates the inherent and unique challenges preservationists face around the nation and the globe.

1. The Bunny Rabbit Dilemma

There are a lot of modernist and recent past places out there. How much do we save, and how do we decide what is worthy? Scale is a big issue. Large developments and entire communities emerged during this period, particularly in the San Fernando Valley. With limited resources and manpower, how do we evaluate significance from an economy of scale perspective?

Please see *SAVING MODERNISM* on page 6

Development Proposed Around Capitol Records

by Marcello Vavala

The Millennium Hollywood Project proposed around Hollywood’s iconic Capitol Records Tower advanced last fall with the release of the draft environmental impact report (EIR) in October. The tower’s owners, developers Millennium Partners and Argent Ventures, have planned a mixed-use complex with residential units and hotel, office, restaurant, and retail space.

Rising on both sides of the 1700 block of North Vine Street, the new construction could potentially consist of two highrise towers, lower-scale buildings, public walkways, and open space. It would be built around the landmarked Capitol Records Tower using public open space and setbacks as a buffer. Tenant EMI Music would continue to use the building as office space and recording studios.

While the new construction would occupy the parcels surrounding the Capitol Records Tower and those across Vine Street, the landmark itself would not be altered or have a change in use. The project aims to preserve the prominent viewsheds of the landmark from both the Hollywood Freeway and the intersection of Hollywood and Vine. The project also acknowledges the functioning high-fidelity recording studios underneath the tower and proposes no new construction on their collective footprint.

The Conservancy submitted comments on the draft EIR in December, with a focus on ensuring compatible, complementary new

Please see *CAPITOL RECORDS* on page 4

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The Los Angeles Conservancy is a nonprofit membership organization that works through education and advocacy to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles County.

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Preservation Award Applications Due January 31

Do you know of a preservation project that deserves special recognition? If so, we encourage you to apply for the Conservancy's 32nd Annual Preservation Awards, which honor outstanding local achievement in the field of historic preservation.

Award recipients are selected by an independent jury of experts in architecture, historic preservation, and community development. Recipients vary widely, from restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse projects to advocacy and education efforts by individuals and groups. We encourage submissions from throughout the county that illustrate the value and power of historic preservation. Eligible projects must be located in Los Angeles County and must have been completed by December 31, 2012.

The Conservancy must receive all 2013 applications by **Thursday, January 31, 2013**. You can download an application at laconservancy.org/awards or request one by contacting the office at (213) 623-2489 or info@laconservancy.org. We'll announce the recipients in March and present the awards at a luncheon on May 16. Thanks, and good luck!



Linde + Robinson Laboratory at Caltech, a 2012 Preservation Award recipient. Photo by David Wakely.

Los Angeles Mayoral and City Council Candidate Interviews Online in February

This spring, residents of the City of Los Angeles will elect a new Mayor and several new City Council members. While the Conservancy cannot endorse political candidates, we do provide information to help voters make an informed decision. We plan to interview several City Council candidates and the two run-off candidates in the Mayoral race. We'll ask questions about some of Los Angeles' most pressing preservation issues, and then post the transcripts on our website at laconservancy.org. Check the site in February to see the responses.

To be notified when they're available, be sure you're subscribed to Conservancy E-News ("Sign Up for E-News" on our website). As a reminder, the primary election takes place on **March 5** and the general election on **May 21**. Only residents within the City of Los Angeles can participate in the election, but the information may be relevant to those in neighboring cities as well.

L.A. 1960s Architecture iPhone App Expanded

We have relaunched our L.A. 1960s Architecture iPhone app to include ten more sites! The app now features all sixty sites selected in our 2009 People's Choice poll. The guide is now available as a stand-alone app (\$1.99) as well as an in-app purchase (\$2.99) through Know What (\$2.99). You can download our app on iTunes. If you already have the previous version of the app, it will update automatically.

For information about other self-guided tours we offer, see page 5. Enjoy!



Preservation Issues in the News

by Flora Chou, Adrian Scott Fine, and Marcello Vavala

Casa de Cadillac

If you've driven down Ventura Boulevard in Sherman Oaks recently, you may have noticed the renovations taking place at Casa de Cadillac. Located at 14401 Ventura Boulevard, this 1949 showroom is one of the most significant postwar auto showrooms remaining in Los Angeles County.

Designed by Randall Duell and Phillip A. Conklin, the building features extensive glazing for maximum visibility of the showroom floor and large-scale neon signage to attract traveling motorists. It was featured in two past tours by the Conservancy and its Modern Committee: *How Modern Was My Valley* (2000) and *ModCom: 20-20-20* (2004).

Conservancy staff contacted the building owner to learn more about the renovations, which include replacing the non-historic showroom glazing (installed after the 1994 Northridge earthquake) with a system we believe to be more compatible with the building's original design.

As a building type, auto showrooms have become increasingly vulnerable as dealerships have either closed or undertaken corporate rebranding that compromises the buildings' original design. Recent losses include Lou Ehlers Cadillac (1955, demolished 2008) and Crenshaw Ford (1946, demolished 2009), both in Los Angeles, and Crestview Cadillac (1962) in West Covina, which is undergoing major alterations.

City of Los Angeles Community Plans

The City of Los Angeles is in the midst of updating twelve of its thirty-five Community Plans that direct land use in those plan areas. Community Plans outline specific goals and policies to guide growth for the next twenty years. Among the many aspects Community Plans can influence, their goals, policies, and zoning changes have the potential to protect—or negatively affect—historic resources in each area.

Most of the City's Community Plans were last updated fifteen to twenty years



Casa de Cadillac. Photo from Conservancy archives.

ago. Recent budget cuts have forced the City to focus on completing twelve plan updates already under way. The Hollywood Community Plan Update was approved by the City Council in July 2012. Since then, several additional draft environmental impact reports (EIRs) for Community Plan updates have been released. These include the San Pedro, West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert, Granada Hills-Knollwood, and Sylmar Community Plan Areas.

The release of a draft EIR provides an opportunity for public comments on the draft plan as well as its potential environmental impacts. While each plan is unique, the Conservancy seeks to ensure that the plans' zoning changes and incentive programs avoid increasing development pressures on historic resources, and that adequate policies and procedures are in place to protect existing and potential historic resources that will be identified through SurveyLA. We also urge the inclusion of tools and incentives, such as demolition review, overlay zones, and transfer of development rights programs, to support historic preservation.

For more information and to find out how you can comment on the Community Plan update in your area, visit laconservancy.org/issues.

Jordan High School

In October, the Board of Education for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) approved a revised development project that maintains the eligibility of a historic district on the campus of Jordan High School. LAUSD had previously proposed demolishing two of five contributing structures

in a National Register-eligible historic district on the campus located in Watts.

The buildings date from the school's beginnings in the 1920s. Following the 1933 Long Beach earthquake, prominent local architect Sumner P. Hunt renovated the buildings in 1935 with a unifying PWA Moderne style.

The Conservancy submitted comments on the proposed project's draft environmental impact report in March 2012. We advocated for preservation alternatives and suggested refinements to meet the project's goals while maintaining the campus's eligibility as a historic district. We subsequently met with LAUSD as well as with the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, one of two charter schools operating at the campus.

Based on our comments on the importance of maintaining the historic district's eligibility as well as the collection of three buildings along the street front, the project was revised. The street-facing Domestic Sciences Building will be retained and minimally renovated, along with the Administration Building, Auditorium, and Loggia. New classroom buildings, open space, and fire and safety features will be incorporated on the rest of the site.

We appreciate LAUSD's efforts to meet with the Conservancy and address our concerns. As the district begins to plan a renovation program for its existing schools, we will build on the experience of Jordan and work with LAUSD staff to ensure that historic schools throughout Los Angeles are thoughtfully updated while continuing to serve students well into the future.



Jordan High School. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.

Volunteer Profile: SCOTT BENSON

by Bruce Scottow

"You just never know what's going to happen. I guess that's the joy of it—the charm of it."

- Scott Benson

The thousands of people who attend our Last Remaining Seats series see a seamless spectacle of classic movies in historic movie



palaces. Those who work behind the scenes see the challenges of the undertaking. From late-night committee meetings to backstage rope-splinters and temperamental light fixtures, few Conservancy volunteers know those challenges better than Scott Benson.

Scott headed west from his native Massachusetts in 2003, taking an internship at the Sony (formerly MGM) lot in Culver City. He then worked in Hollywood as a film talent agent for "below-the-line" positions (costume designers, film editors, etc.). An event at the Orpheum Theatre introduced him to downtown's historic theatres.

Once Scott discovered the city's historic core, he jumped right in—from visiting regularly, to encouraging his employer to move from Hollywood to the Eastern Columbia Building, to becoming a downtown resident in 2011.

Scott jumped right into the Conservancy, too. He attended his first Historic Theatres Committee (HTC) meeting in 2008 and volunteered at Last Remaining Seats (LRS) the next year. Within two years, he was vice chair of both the HTC and the LRS Subcommittee. In September 2012, Scott was elected chair of the LRS Subcommittee—quite a journey in just a few years!

Thank You, 2012 Walking Tour Docents!

With eight different docent-led architectural tours of the downtown area, the Conservancy's signature Walking Tour Program reaches more than 8,000 people each year. The following people made that possible in 2012 by volunteering their time, expertise, and enthusiasm as walking tour docents. Thank you!

- | | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| Alice Allen * | Randy Henderson * | Stewart Rupp ** |
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| Erica Hayward | Vince Robbins | |
| Mike Henderson | Jerome Robinson | |

* gave more than 15 tours in 2012

** gave more than 30 tours in 2012

CAPITOL RECORDS continued from page 1

infill construction that does not overwhelm Capitol Records and other nearby historic resources. We are encouraged that the developer has considered the landmark and its preservation as part of the project from the beginning—a development approach that we are working to make the norm in Greater Los Angeles.

Completed in 1956, Capitol Records was designed by Welton Becket and Associates, with Louis Naidorf serving as project designer. It was hailed as the world's first circular office building, and its recording studios have hosted legendary recording sessions by such artists as Frank Sinatra, Nat "King" Cole, The Beatles, and The Beach Boys.

In 2006, the Conservancy's Modern Committee successfully nominated the Capitol Records Tower for listing as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM). This designation provides review by the City of any substantive changes to the building.



Proposed Millennium Hollywood Project adjacent to Capitol Records Tower. Courtesy Millennium Hollywood.

Self-Guided Walking Tours: Perfect Anytime!

The Conservancy offers a large and well-attended program of docent-led walking tours. Did you know that we also have a variety of self-guided tours on our website? Check out laconservancy.org/tours to choose from a range of topics and formats, from downloadable map-guides and podcasts to an iPhone app. Before even leaving your living room, you can begin learning about historic Los Angeles!

We offer two downloadable audio podcast tours. One is a half-hour overview of the **Pershing Square** area in downtown Los Angeles, which includes buildings spanning the twentieth century. This podcast is also available in Spanish. The second podcast, produced by Downtown LA Walks in conjunction with the Conservancy, highlights the broader **historic downtown** and features about a dozen buildings as well as interviews with Conservancy executive director Linda Dishman, preservation architect Brenda Levin, and film critic/historian Leonard Maltin.

Prefer a hard copy? We have several printable guides with maps and descriptions of historic places including **Historic Downtown**, **Strolling on Seventh Street: Downtown's Historic Thoroughfare**, and **Pico-Union** (also available in Spanish).

For movie fans, we have two printable tours based on **downtown movie locations**. One explores sites used in the classic silent film *Safety Last!* (1923), adapted from the book *Silent Visions: Discovering Early Hollywood and New York through the Films of Harold Lloyd* by author John Bengtson. The other tour, based on one given for the Conservancy by film historian Harry Medved, features selected locations from the 2009 hit *(500) Days of Summer*.

Looking for more? Check out our interactive Google map created in conjunction with the 2010 Ring LA festival featuring sites significant to **German life in Los Angeles** during the first half of the twentieth century. The map includes residences, commercial buildings, parks, and theatres across L.A. County.

And as noted on page 2, we also recently relaunched our **L.A. 1960s Architecture** iPhone app!

We hope you have fun exploring these options on our website—and exploring the sites in person!



Explore downtown Los Angeles on one of our self-guided tours! Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.

Volunteer Committee Officers, 2012-2013

Congratulations and thank you to our new and returning officers!

Historic Theatres Committee (HTC)

Chair: Michael Zoldessy
Vice Chair: Mariah Montgomery
Recorder: Marty Russell

Last Remaining Seats Subcommittee (LRSCOM) of the HTC

Chair: Scott Benson
Vice Chair: Ken Gehrig
Recorder: Ann Hobbs

Modern Committee (ModCom)

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Barry Gittelson
Residential Council Chair: Steven Kyle
Membership Outreach Chair:
Cheryll Dudley Roberts
Education Outreach Chair: Chris Green



Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.

My Favorite Landmark

by Mitch Bassion, director of development

DOROTHY CHANDLER PAVILION (1964) 135 N. Grand Avenue, Los Angeles

Because it was my second home for more than four years, I have to select the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion as my favorite Los Angeles landmark—but not necessarily for the most obvious reason.

Certainly it is a beautiful Welton Becket-designed building that represents the city's unique cultural history: home to the Academy Awards (until 1999), the Los Angeles Philharmonic (until 2003), LA Opera (my employer from 2007-2011), and a host of other world-class artists and arts organizations. It is even glamorous enough to stand in for a hotel in Rome, as it did in an episode of *Mad Men*.

What makes it special for me is that the building serves as a sort of memory and experience factory for Angelenos and tourists alike. Whether it was a ravishing performance of an opera, symphony, or ballet—or whether it was a solid nap during a performance—anyone who has had the pleasure of walking up the spacious plaza and into the glamorous lobby will always have a story to tell about their personal experience at the “DCP.”

For the first time ever, the Conservancy will hold one of our Last Remaining Seats screenings at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion! Check our website in late January for the 2013 LRS schedule.

SAVING MODERNISM *continued from page 1***2. Time for a Facelift and Tummy Tuck**

Modernist and recent past places are now showing signs of aging, sometimes prompting the need for costly rehabilitation and energy retrofits. This can lead to misguided and botched attempts at facelifts, with a growing perception by some that buildings and landscapes from this era are beyond repair and must be completely overhauled.

3. Bye Bye, Good Stewards

Many longtime owners and occupants of modernist buildings—from homeowners to corporations—have been faithful stewards for years. As they move on (or pass on), they leave these places at risk and vulnerable without a good succession plan in place. It can be quite difficult to find the right person to hand these places off to and ensure their future preservation.

4. Icksnay on Locationnay

Many modernist and recent past structures are in highly desirable locations, sitting on land that is worth far more than the building itself. The 1965 Columbia Savings Building at Wilshire and La Brea, for instance, was demolished in 2010 for a massive mixed-use development. Many developers regularly seek “undervalued” properties that they can buy, demolish, and rebuild on the site at a profit.

5. No Beauty Pageant

Modernist or recent past properties are sometimes criticized as being sterile, soulless, or outright ugly. Take Brutalism, for instance, an architectural style that favors poured concrete, bold geometric shapes, and stark landscapes. Its name alone hardly evokes warm and fuzzy feelings. The realization that certain places do not meet traditional standards of beauty requires digging further in order to fully understand their significance.

6. A Lot of Baggage and Stigma

Buildings that rose on the rubble of older landmarks—such as the skyscrapers of Bunker Hill—sparked the modern U.S. historic preservation movement in the 1960s.

Some consider it counter-intuitive, or at the very least ironic, to now want to preserve these places. Do we now turn our backs on a whole class of buildings because of their negative associations?

7. Green Collision Crash Course

The thought that we might want to preserve some “sprawly” suburbs and energy-inefficient places clashes with notions of sustainability. While a number of modernist architects designed with energy efficiency in mind, most tapped into what was then a vast supply of cheap energy. Many arguments for demolition are based on perceived energy deficiencies in modern buildings. We need to counter these misperceptions and build a stronger track record in sensitively retrofitting and upgrading these resources.

8. The Favorite Child Syndrome

There is a bias toward preserving modernist icons, considering only great architecture—the Case Study Houses, for example—as worthy of preservation. While critical, the icons tell only part of the story of modern architecture in Los Angeles. We need to consider vernacular, industrial, and culturally significant places as well, to avoid a piecemeal approach to preservation.

9. One of These Things Does Not Belong

Given the nationwide (and global) reach of modernist and recent past design, we often lack a full context for evaluating the significance of specific places. For instance, we may not know how an innovative bank branch in Los Angeles stacks up to others statewide, let alone nationally. In making a compelling case for preservation, it helps to know whether a resource is unique or one of many.

10. The Frankenstein Catch-22

One of the great benefits of working with modern and recent past resources is that many of the people who designed them are still living and practicing. However, the work of living architects is generally not considered eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, posing a steep challenge for those who routinely use National Register eligibility as a preservation tool.



Bunker Hill's transformation in the 1960s illustrates the “baggage” issue (#6 below). Photo from Herald-Examiner Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

11. Thank You for Your Years of Service; Now, Goodbye

There is a perception that many modernist and recent past places are obsolete and were not intended to last for generations, in terms of materials and in meeting the current needs of people. American homes have increased in size more than 100 percent since the 1950s, fueling teardowns and insensitive additions. Fortunately, this trend has started to turn in recent years.

12. “You Lack Integrity” Quandary

Preservation generally favors historic integrity—particularly, the retention of original materials. Yet many modernist structures contain mass-produced products and experimental materials that may not be easily replicated and, in some cases, are now failing. Some replacement materials are no longer in production, and better-performing options often exist for others. If we use new products that resemble the originals, is that preservation?

13. Constantly Getting “Carded” Problem

Generally known as the “fifty-year rule,” a building cannot be considered for the National Register until reaching the age of fifty (unless it is deemed “exceptionally important”). Some think this rule is outdated—many cities, including Los Angeles, have no minimum age for local designation. Others think this threshold offers the proper perspective for evaluating significance. As the debate continues, we are losing important resources well before they reach their fiftieth birthday.

Excerpted and modified from *Forum News*, July 2010, National Trust for Historic Preservation.

SEPTEMBER 21 / NOVEMBER 16 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Los Angeles Conservancy would like to acknowledge the generous contributions of our new Supporting members, and the new and renewing members of our Sustaining, Benefactor, and Cornerstone groups.

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WALKING TOURS**

Walking tours begin at 10 a.m. except where noted. Tours are \$5 for Conservancy members and children twelve and under; \$10 for the general public. Walk-ins are accepted on most tours. Pre-payment is required on Angelino Heights, Biltmore Hotel, and Broadway.

For details and reservations, visit laconservancy.org. Questions? Call the Conservancy office at (213) 623-2489.

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Every Saturday

Historic Downtown

Every Saturday

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First Saturday

Downtown Renaissance: Spring & Main

Second and Fourth Saturdays

Modern Skyline

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Union Station

Third Saturday

Youth, family, and group tours by arrangement; call (213) 623-2489 for information.



Los Angeles Conservancy

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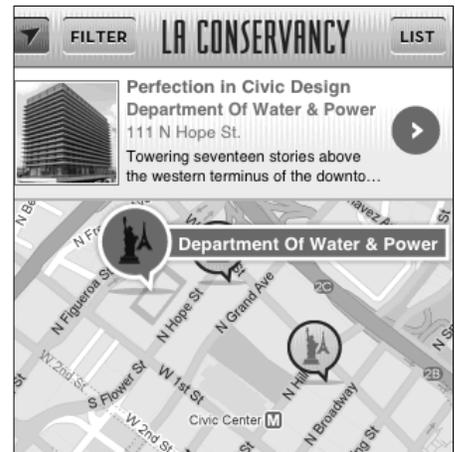


Catalina Casino, courtesy Spectra Company

**2013 PRESERVATION AWARDS
APPLICATION DEADLINE**
Thursday, January 31



**CITY OF L.A. CANDIDATE
INTERVIEWS**
Online in February



**L.A. 1960s ARCHITECTURE
iPHONE APP**
Available for Purchase

If you know of a preservation project that deserves special recognition, consider applying for a 2013 Conservancy Preservation Award. For details, see page 2 and visit laconservancy.org/awards.

Check our website in February for interview transcripts with candidates running for Mayor and City Council. We'll ask questions about pressing preservation issues to help you make an informed decision.

Does this issue's cover story get you in the mood for some modern architecture? Check out our updated iPhone app with sixty sites from the 1960s! Have a groovy time exploring! See page 2 for details.