



LOS ANGELES

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Despite its vast size, Wyvernwood Garden Apartments has fostered a strong sense of community among its 6,000 residents. Clockwise from top left: Historic view of the complex (Security Pacific Collection/Los Angeles Public Library); current residents (Jesus Hermosillo); a resident sends a message (Evangelina Garza); teenager Juan Bucio's depiction of what Wyvernwood means to him; young residents (Molly Mills).

Wyvernwood Garden Apartments: Community by Design

by Cindy Olnick and Karina Muñiz

"Wyvernwood is a piece of heaven for me," says seventeen-year-old Juan Bucio, describing his drawing of three quaint residential buildings, surrounded by grass and trees, all on a cloud sprouting wings. His ethereal image had taken first place in an art contest among young residents depicting what their home means to them. That was in December 2009, at "Wyvernwood: Our Histories, Our Future," an event that drew over two hundred people to celebrate the rich history of Wyvernwood Garden Apartments—and oppose its potential demolition.

Completed in 1939, Wyvernwood was the first large-scale garden apartment complex built in Los Angeles. The site spans more than seventy acres in the eastside neighborhood of Boyle Heights, just east of Soto Street between Eighth Street and Olympic Boulevard. Architects David J. Witmer and Loyall F. Watson designed 142 two-story buildings and attached row houses, with 1,102 units ranging from one to three bedrooms in size.

The designers arranged the buildings to form intimate green spaces and courtyards, taking advantage of sunlight for passive heating, natural air for cross-ventilation, and existing topography for views of the nearby Sears Tower and distant mountains. Half of the site was carefully planned as community green space. Following urban planning principles of the Garden City movement, the architects created safe play areas by limiting the number of streets going through the complex and placing recreational space in the center of the blocks.

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Last Remaining Seats Turns 25!

Member ticket sales start March 30

Celebrate a quarter century of classic films and live entertainment in the historic theatres of Los Angeles!

The 25th Annual Last Remaining Seats series takes place **May 25 through June 29**. You will receive a large postcard in the mail this year in lieu of a brochure; you can find all the details and order tickets starting **March 30** at laconservancy.org. We were finalizing the schedule at press time; it should be online by the time you receive this newsletter.

In addition to the six Wednesday evening screenings, this special season will include a bonus Fan Favorite film (*Sunset Boulevard*, selected by you, our members!). It will screen twice (matinee and evening shows) at the **Palace Theatre on Sunday, June 26**, a hundred years to the day after it opened! We'll be at the Palace as part of a broader celebration of the centennial of several theatres on Broadway.

Remember to take part in our **2011 membership drive** for your chance to win VIP tickets to a Last Remaining Seats screening. Through **April 30**, each time you recruit a new member or purchase a new gift membership, you have a chance to win. For details, visit laconservancy.org.

As always, Conservancy members enjoy advance purchase of Last Remaining Seats tickets. Tickets go on sale to members at **10 a.m. on March 30** at laconservancy.org. See you on Broadway!

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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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Thanks to the Getty Research Institute for access to the Julius Shulman photography archive.

Changes Coming to Conservancy Website

At press time, we were finishing some enhancements to the Conservancy website at laconservancy.org. We're making it easier for you to find what you're looking for (we hope!) by simplifying the main navigation and making it more intuitive. You'll find clearer categories of information, as well as a new "News" section with the latest Conservancy announcements and press coverage. Our Preservation Resource Directory will be called the Go-To Guide, with a new name and format but the same listings of experts in preservation. Check the website soon for these changes, and please let us know what you think. Feel free to contact Cindy Olnick at colnick@laconservancy.org or (213) 430-4214.

30th Annual Preservation Awards Luncheon

On **Thursday, May 12**, the Conservancy will hold our 30th Annual Preservation Awards Luncheon, celebrating outstanding achievement in the field of historic preservation. The event takes place from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the Millennium Biltmore Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. The luncheon has earned a reputation as one of the most inspiring awards programs in Los Angeles; it is also one of our key fundraising events. Individual tickets are \$125, and table sponsorships range from \$1,250 to \$5,000. For details and tickets, visit laconservancy.org or call the Conservancy's Development Office at (213) 430-4204. We hope to see you on May 12!

Thanks to Our Fall 2010 Interns

Last fall, the Conservancy was fortunate to have **Kirsten Bladh** and **Derek Marks** as interns from the University of Cincinnati's Urban Planning program. Kirsten worked on various advocacy issues, researched the work of Welton Becket and Associates, and mapped potential historic resources in a proposed Community Redevelopment Agency expansion area in Wilmington. Derek helped with research for our fall 2010 "Strolling on 7th Street" tour, conducted research for our March 20 tour of the former Hughes Aircraft campus, and wrote an article for the January/February issue of *Conservancy News*. We enjoyed having Kirsten and Derek in the office, and we appreciate their contributions.



Interns Derek Marks and Kirsten Bladh. Photo by Alex Berliner, ABImages.

"Preservation on the Edge" in Santa Monica

Historic preservation will take center stage in Santa Monica from **May 15-18**, as the 36th Annual California Preservation Conference explores provocative topics with the theme, "Preservation on the Edge." Dozens of sessions—from seminars and panel discussions to mobile workshops and study tours—will expand far beyond traditional notions of historic preservation. Specific tracks focus on the future of historic preservation; conserving community character; partnerships, development, and incentives; sustainability, preservation, and rating systems; and innovative preservation practices. The Conservancy is proud to partner in this year's conference, and we hope to see you there. For details, visit californiapreservation.org or call (415) 495-0349.

Preservation Issues in the News

by Flora Chou, Adrian Scott Fine, Karina Muñiz, and Marcello Vavala

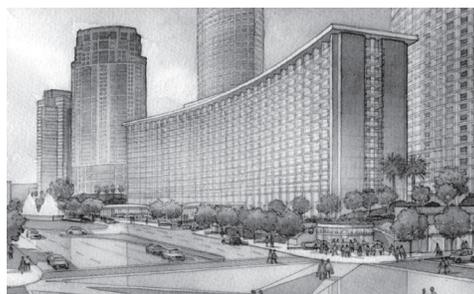
Century Plaza Hotel

At press time, we were anticipating the release of the draft environmental impact report for the project involving the Century Plaza Hotel (Minoru Yamasaki, 1966). The project preserves the iconic building as the centerpiece of new mixed-use development. The building will be reused as both hotel space and condominiums, and it will retain more than ninety percent of its significant historic features. Two new towers (compatible with Century City's skyline) are proposed for the rear of the property, which had been significantly altered over the years.

To meet property owner Next Century Associates' goal of creating a pedestrian-friendly environment, the sunken plaza in front of the hotel will be filled in to more closely connect the structure with Avenue of the Stars. The ballroom, which has been highly altered, will be replaced with a slightly smaller ballroom that will still be the largest on the Westside. The lobby's glass windows will be removed to create a breezeway through the property. The project allows for very small, one-story construction in front of the hotel building, carefully placed to maintain the view of the structure's sweeping arc.

The Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission reviewed the project and determined that it maintains the Century Plaza's eligibility for listing as a Historic-Cultural Monument. Detailed protocols will ensure the appropriate treatment of the hotel building's historic features, as well as the continued involvement of the Conservancy and the National Trust for Historic Preservation.

For updates on the project and the public review process, visit laconservancy.org.



Artist's rendering of the new Century Plaza development. Courtesy Next Century Associates.



The 1959 UCLA Faculty Center, now threatened with demolition. Photo by Conservancy staff.

UCLA Faculty Center

The University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) has proposed a Residential Conference Center project that would demolish the campus' 1959 Faculty Center. Many nearby residents and members of the faculty oppose the project, including more than 200 people who signed a petition asking the Faculty Center Board of Governors to poll its members to gauge support for the demolition. An ad hoc committee called Save the Faculty Center has also formed to oppose the project.

The Faculty Center was designed by the architectural firm of Austin, Field and Fry. The firm was responsible for many civic buildings throughout Los Angeles, including serving as part of the team who designed the 1958 Los Angeles County Courthouse.

The design of the Faculty Center is unusual for its ranch-style residential architecture, particularly in a university and public institution setting. The post-and-beam construction, large floor-to-ceiling windows, and indoor-outdoor spaces create a casual, welcoming environment conducive to faculty lunches and convening.

In February, the Conservancy responded to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the project, emphasizing the need to evaluate the Faculty Center as a historic resource. The building is potentially eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources as a representative work of a notable architectural firm, as well as a unique example of California ranch-style architecture. In our comments on the NOP, we urged UCLA

to fully evaluate and examine preservation alternatives, including consideration of alternative sites for the proposed Residential Conference Center.

Southwest Marine Shipyard

On February 1, the Los Angeles City Council ended a two-year effort to realize a plan by Gambol Industries to reopen the 1917 Southwest Marine Shipyard at Terminal Island as a shipbuilding and repair facility. The Conservancy has worked for four years to save the last vestige of San Pedro's once-mighty World War II shipbuilding industry. We supported Gambol in their efforts to revitalize this rare collection of historic structures, thirteen of which are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Responding to a motion from a January 27 hearing by the City Council's Trade, Commerce, and Tourism Committee, members of the City Council voted to allow a decision by the Board of Harbor Commissioners to stand. The decision ends exclusive negotiations with Gambol and no longer designates the site for shipbuilding. It also allows two slips at the site to be filled and capped with 160,000 cubic yards of contaminated soil.

We strongly believe that there were viable approaches to storing the contaminated soil while allowing Gambol's shipyard to move forward. Without the slips, the future use of the site as a shipyard is in serious question. The current plan leaves the historic buildings on the site more vulnerable than ever, sitting idle without a designated use.

In response to concerns by the Conservancy and others, the City Council directed the Port to report back to the Trade, Commerce, and Tourism Committee in March to address the preservation and reuse of the historic buildings.

Friars Club Building

Despite last-minute efforts by the Conservancy, the 1961 Friars Club building in Beverly Hills was demolished in January.

Please see ISSUES on page 6



Photo by Joseph Stevenson.

My Favorite Landmark

by Greg Figueroa, Conservancy member and walking tour docent

SANTA ANITA PARK (1934)

285 W. Huntington Drive, Arcadia

“My favorite landmark is Santa Anita Park, and not just because I am a horse racing fan. It opened in the heart of the Art Deco period in 1934, and its basic features are the same, from its elegant walking ring to its turquoise green color to the long friezes of jockeys riding horses that decorate its exterior. Its view of the races has the magnificent backdrop of the San Gabriel Mountains. It has a rich history in the movies as well as in racing. It was featured in the Marx Brothers’ *A Day at the Races* (1937), Bob Hope’s *The Lemon Drop Kid* (1951), *Seabiscuit* (2003), and many other films. Many famous horses have raced here, including Seabiscuit, Citation, Swaps, and John Henry. I have been to over twenty race tracks across the country, and Santa Anita is easily the most beautiful.”

What’s your favorite landmark?

Tell us why your favorite L.A. County landmark means so much to you, and we might feature you in a future issue! E-mail news@laconservancy.org with “My Favorite Landmark” as the subject.

Reminder: Hughes Aircraft Tour March 20

Don’t miss the chance to see the former Hughes Aircraft Company’s Culver City Campus on **Sunday, March 20!** It was here that Howard Hughes and his team designed and built planes, helicopters, and most famously, the H-4 Hercules Flying Boat—more commonly known as the “Spruce Goose,” the largest plane ever to fly.

The site is now known as the Hercules Campus, and it has rarely been open to the public. While the “Spruce Goose” is now housed in Oregon, eleven of the original campus buildings remain. An exciting \$50 million preservation development project by The Ratkovich Company will adapt the structures for creative use, including design, technology, and movie production. The site is currently under construction, offering a rare glimpse of preservation in action.

The docent-led tour will include several sites on the campus, including the 750-foot long building where the Hercules was assembled. Tickets are \$20 for Conservancy members (\$25 for the general public; \$10 for kids twelve and under) and are available at laconservancy.org.



Mass production of OH-6 Cayuse helicopter at Hughes Aircraft in Culver City, circa 1967. Photo courtesy Herald-Examiner Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

A Sunny Day in Historic Boyle Heights

On January 15, more than 150 people attended a free community event celebrating the rich history of Boyle Heights. The Conservancy was proud to partner in this event with the Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember José Huizar, the City’s Office of Historic Resources, the Boyle Heights Historical Society, and the City’s Community Redevelopment Agency.

Linda Dishman, the Conservancy’s executive director, emceed the event. After remarks by Councilmember Huizar and other participating organizations, staff from the Office of Historic Resources discussed the results of its SurveyLA pilot survey of the neighborhood. Guests were encouraged to join the survey themselves by identifying places in Boyle Heights that are particularly important to them.



Guests learn about the 1932 International Institute of Los Angeles in Boyle Heights. Photo by Omar Gonzalez.

After the presentation, the Conservancy and the Boyle Heights Historical Society offered guided tours at five historic sites on Boyle Avenue between 4th and 6th Streets. The tour sites included the Max Factor House (Charles E. Shattuck, 1909), the International Institute of Los Angeles (Webber & Spaulding, 1932), the Elmer O. Simons House (Austin & Brown, 1906), the East L.A. Community Corporation Offices (architect unknown, 1906), and the stunning chapel at Hollenbeck Palms (Morgan and Walls, 1896 with later additions). As a special treat, guests also had the opportunity to tour the nearby Breed Street Shul (original building from 1915; 1923 brick building designed by Abram M. Edelman and A. C. Zimmerman). Special thanks to all our members who attended this great event.

Volunteers Make Everything Happen!



The Conservancy's annual volunteer appreciation party took place on January 30 at the Homeway House, a 1932 residence in View Park designed by C. E. Noerenberg. More than ninety volunteers toured the unique house, in which each room has a different design or theme. The Conservancy thanks all our volunteers for their hard work, as well as our gracious hostess, Martha Bringas, a remarkable steward who has lived in the home for fifty years. Photo by Mrs. Underhill.

Julie Raskoff (1927-2010)

Longtime Conservancy volunteer Julie Raskoff passed away on December 25, 2010 at the age of 83. Vibrant, witty, generous, stylish, and vastly knowledgeable, Julie led Conservancy tours for nearly twenty-five years.

Born in 1927 in Brownsville, Texas, Julie graduated from the University of Arizona in 1948 and attended graduate school at California State University, Northridge. She wed H. Miles Raskoff in 1946; they remained married until his death in 2001. In 1957, they moved to the home in Woodland Hills where Julie lived for the rest of her life.

Julie immediately got involved in a range of civic activities, from volunteering at Camarillo State Hospital, to leading tours at many local museums and art galleries, to fostering reading among children. She even created her own reading motivation program, Super Reader, which was used at several elementary schools throughout Los Angeles. Julie received numerous awards for her volunteer service and civic activism.

Julie joined the Conservancy and became a walking tour docent in 1986. Years later, as a veteran, she would mentor new docents, helping others and building lasting friendships. After winding down her regular tour duties, Julie continued to lead private group tours, often tailoring them to topics such as art and Jewish history. She remained an ardent supporter of the Conservancy and strongly encouraged others to support us as well.

Julie lived life to the fullest and traveled the world, from Europe, to Cuba, to Antarctica. She was no-nonsense and good-natured, and she had a great sense of humor. Invariably, when asked how she was doing, Julie would reply, "Adorable!"

"Adorable Julie" was widely beloved within and beyond the Conservancy. We are very grateful to Julie's sons Mark, Douglas, and Ken, who asked that contributions be made in her memory to the Conservancy's Preservation Advocacy Fund.



Julie at a 2006 Last Remaining Seats screening at the Palace Theatre on Broadway. Photo by Larry Underhill.

Robert Leary (1959-2011)



Robert at the Ennis House in 2008.
Photo © Mark Hertzberg.

Robert Leary, a passionate preservationist and Conservancy member, passed away on January 23 after a long illness. He was 52.

A native of New Jersey, Robert received a bachelor's degree from Niagara University in New York. He worked as an actor on the East Coast before moving to Los Angeles in 1991. He continued to act and model, as well as direct plays and invest in several Broadway shows.

Robert joined the Conservancy in 1992 and was active in his neighborhood of West Adams. He was instrumental in preventing demolition of the 1902 South Seas House, a unique landmark that suffered decades of neglect before being transformed into a community center.

He had a deep appreciation for art and architecture in general and was fascinated by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Robert joined Friends of Hollyhock House in 1992 and served as its president from 1994-96. He also served as Chairman of the Ennis House Foundation during the home's stabilization and partial restoration in the mid-2000s. Robert's work on behalf of Hollyhock House and the Ennis House was honored by many, including the Frank Lloyd Wright Building Conservancy and the Los Angeles City Council.

Robert was beloved for his warmth, charm, humor, and dedication. He had a way of making instant friends, and he always had a smile, encouragement, or a witty remark to offer. We are very grateful to have known Robert and will always appreciate his significant contributions to historic preservation in Los Angeles.

ISSUES continued from page 3

Sidney Eisenshtat, a prominent Los Angeles-based architect, designed the building along with other notable commissions in the area. The structure was built for the private entertainers' club established by Milton Berle in 1947 as an annex of the famous New York Friars Club. The building was included in a 2006 survey of commercial structures in Beverly Hills, noted for its architectural and cultural significance.

Unable to prevent the demolition, the City of Beverly Hills is one of many in Los Angeles County with no protections for its historic resources. The City's review power over the Friars Club property extended only to a new project that would replace the building, not to the demolition of the building itself. Although interest in preservation in Beverly Hills has increased, the city continues to lose significant resources, including the 1951 Shusett residence designed by master architect John Lautner (see Nov./Dec. 2010 issue).

The loss of the Friars Club building underscores the need for greater recognition of our 1960s architectural heritage, as well as the need for stronger preservation laws at the local level. In preparing our 2008 Countywide Preservation Report Card (available at laconservancy.org), the Conservancy found that a third of local jurisdictions in Los Angeles County have no preservation protections for historic resources. We will continue to advocate for such protections, and we stand ready to assist Beverly Hills and other cities in this effort.



The Friars Club building circa 2006.
Photo courtesy of ICF International.

WYVERNWOOD continued from page 1

Despite some alterations in recent years, Wyvernwood remains largely intact. It is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources and was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Urban Oasis in Jeopardy

Wyvernwood has been threatened with demolition since 2008, when its owner, Miami-based Fifteen Group Land and Development, announced plans for a \$2 billion development on the site. The project would quadruple the site's density with 4,400 housing units and 300,000 square feet of retail and commercial space, drastically reducing open space to nine acres.

Residents have strongly opposed the complex's demolition, particularly long-term tenants who attest to the close-knit community and family ties spanning generations.

Residents are working with the Conservancy, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, resident groups, and community organizations. They've held rallies, attended hearings, and used tools such as oral histories to raise awareness of how much Wyvernwood means to them.



2001 Wyvernwood soccer tournament, known as Mundialito de la Esperanza. Photo by Roberto Mojica, Comité de la Esperanza.

The Girl Next Door (or, Downstairs)

Wyvernwood was designed to foster a sense of community, and it has succeeded beyond any expectation. "Wyvernwood is the hidden gem of Los Angeles," says Leonardo Lopez, a resident for nearly thirty years and president of resident group Comité de la Esperanza (Committee of Hope). "It's like a small town within a vast city."

"The layout lends itself to people getting to know each other, for kids to play safely outside, away from the danger of cars," says former resident Jesus Hermosillo. "It's been very easy for a genuine sense of community to develop among the neighbors, a sense of community I haven't seen in any other neighborhood in L.A. or in other cities."

Stories abound of how Wyvernwood cultivates community—stories like that of Miguel Angel Meneses, who lived upstairs from Sandra Nava, a student. On his way home from work, Miguel would have to pass by Sandra's apartment, where he would see her studying. They eventually fell in love, moved to their own apartment in Wyvernwood, and raised a family there. "I enjoy living here because of all the green space," says Sandra. "My kids can have a healthy lifestyle here, and I feel a sense of unity."

Now seventeen, their son Miguel, Jr. attributes his interest in anthropology to having learned about different cultures from fellow residents. He plans to study anthropology at UCLA and move back to Wyvernwood after college. "Everyone knows everyone here," he says. "I feel safe here; people look out for each other. The people here are the most important thing to me."

New Generations, New Layers of History

The long tradition of community at Wyvernwood has in turn helped to shape its unique sense of place. At their best—and particularly in as dense and fast-changing a place as Los Angeles—historic places gain new layers of history as they are inherited by new generations.

The original population of Wyvernwood consisted primarily of white middle-class families. While a racial covenant did not officially exist in the complex, people of color were prohibited from living there. Since the 1960s, Wyvernwood has evolved into a majority Latino working-class community that has added new layers of history and meaning, shaping

Please see *WYVERNWOOD* on page 7

DECEMBER 1 / JANUARY 28 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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Los Angeles Conservancy
Attn: Membership
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(213) 623-2489 ■ fax: (213) 623-3909

WYVERNWOOD continued from page 6

the built environment through its own cultural heritage and traditions. Just one example is el Día de la Virgen, a Catholic celebration of an apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe in which residents transform their front-door archways into altars for the Virgin Mary. This festival is one of many ways Comité de la Esperanza has worked for decades to enhance the community.

The Conservancy continues to work with residents, community groups, and elected officials to protect this unique place—and its residents' quality of life—from destruction. For more information, including the video *We Are Wyvernwood*, visit laconservancy.org.

CONSERVANCY 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 or call (213) 623-2489.

WEEKLY TOURS

Art Deco

Every Saturday

Biltmore Hotel

Every Sunday, 2 p.m.

Broadway: Historic Theatre & Commercial District

Every Saturday

Historic Downtown

Every Saturday

BI-WEEKLY AND MONTHLY TOURS

Angelino Heights

First Saturday

Downtown Renaissance: Spring & Main

Second and Fourth Saturdays

Downtown's Modern Skyline

First and Third Saturdays

Union Station

Third Saturday

Youth, family, and group tours by arrangement; call the number above for information.



Los Angeles Conservancy

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UPCOMING EVENTS



Herald-Examiner Collection/L.A. Public Library

**HUGHES AIRCRAFT COMPANY:
THE CULVER CITY CAMPUS**
Sunday, March 20

Rarely open to the public, this industrial complex played a key role in aviation history and is now being transformed for new uses. Don't miss this one-time-only tour! See page 4 for details.



Tom Zimmerman Photography

**MEMBER TICKET SALES FOR
LAST REMAINING SEATS**
Wednesday, March 30, 10 a.m.

Tickets for the 25th Annual Last Remaining Seats film series will go on sale exclusively to Conservancy members on Wednesday, March 30 at 10 a.m. See page 1 for details.



Tom Davies

MEMBER DRIVE DEADLINE
Saturday, April 30

Recruit a new member or purchase a new gift membership, and you'll be entered into a drawing for two VIP seats at a Last Remaining Seats screening! Visit laconservancy.org for details.