2014 Report Card Reveals Backslide in Preservation Countywide

by Adrian Scott Fine and Cindy Olnick

In March, the Conservancy released our 2014 Preservation Report Card, assessing the state of preservation policy in local governments throughout Los Angeles County. While some communities have made great progress since the last Report Card was issued in 2008—particularly Beverly Hills, Burbank, and Calabasas (see “Notable Improvements,” page 4)—the overall outlook is less than rosy: More than half of the county’s communities have no protections whatsoever for their historic places.

With a new scoring system, innovative digital platform (see “Digital Report Card,” page 5), and expanding base of resources, this year’s Report Card focuses more than ever on clarity and support in helping communities improve their preservation efforts.

Why a Report Card?

The most effective preservation protections often lie in the hands of local government. Los Angeles County has eighty-nine of them: eighty-eight cities, plus the County government, which covers the unincorporated areas of the county. Each government operates independently and has its own protections—or lack thereof—for historic places.

The Conservancy created the Preservation Report Card in 2003 to understand how preservation works in each of the county’s different jurisdictions, help governments create or improve preservation programs, and recognize those with strong protections in place.

Based on in-depth research and interviews with representatives of each local government, Conservancy staff members assess each jurisdiction on its preservation policies and

Post Office Update

by Marcello Vavala

For over two years, the Conservancy has focused on the sale and disposal of historic post office facilities, primarily in Venice and Santa Monica. Our goal has been to ensure meaningful protection and preservation for these civic buildings following their sale and transfer of ownership into private hands. California has been an area of focus in this issue nationwide, as the United States Postal Service (USPS) has been particularly aggressive in closing or relocating facilities here.

In March, Conservancy staff traveled to Oakland to participate in a convening of a historic preservation working group formed by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP). Members took testimony to hear how well the Federal Section 106 historic preservation review process has been working to date and to discuss specific challenges in California regarding historic post offices.

Our comments at the convening focused on two primary challenges in our efforts with the Venice and Santa Monica post offices: the USPS’s inconsistency in conducting the Section 106 process and its failure to adequately address long-term protection for historic post offices before they are sold. The ACHP was expected to issue a report with recommendations to Congress in April.

While the Conservancy’s efforts have focused on historic post offices in Venice and Santa Monica, we anticipate others being targeted for closure, including a 1934 branch in Glendale. To learn more about this issue, please visit laconservancy.org/issues/post-offices.
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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Annual Meeting

The Conservancy’s 2014 annual meeting will take place on Thursday, May 29, at 7 p.m. in the Pacific Club Room at PacMutual, 523 West Sixth Street, downtown Los Angeles. This meeting will feature an introduction of our newly elected board members and a special program focused on the recent revitalization of PacMutual. The annual meeting is free and open to the public; see insert for details.

All Aboard! Union Station 75th Anniversary Gala

The Conservancy is thrilled to hold our 2014 annual benefit on Saturday, May 17 at the iconic 1939 Union Station in celebration of its 75th anniversary.

Designed by John and Donald Parkinson, Union Station was the last grand railroad station built in the United States. Its unique combination of Art Deco and Spanish Colonial Revival styles make it one of the most recognizable buildings in Los Angeles.

Metro purchased Union Station in 2011 and is now completing a master plan to transform the site to accommodate current and future transportation needs while maintaining the original building’s historic character.

Reservations for the benefit begin at $500, including dinner in the main ticket concourse and live entertainment in the former Fred Harvey restaurant. Donors at higher levels will also enjoy a cocktail reception in two private luxury railcars on the station’s tracks. Join us for a memorable night at this beloved Los Angeles landmark. For details and reservations, visit laconservancy.org/benefit.

Curating the City Microsite Honored by Docomomo US

Our Curating the City: Modern Architecture in L.A. microsite (laconservancy.org/modern) recently received a Modernism in America award from Docomomo US, which works for the documentation and conservation of buildings, sites, and neighborhoods of the modern movement.

The jury noted “the very considerable amount of thoughtful work and financial resources that went into the development of the exceptional visual quality, organization and public access of the website” and commended its “innovative use of technology, preservation talent, historical knowledge, and web design to attractively bring together a vast amount of information available to the general public.” We are thrilled and honored by this recognition, which will raise awareness of the microsite and hopefully increase its use across the U.S.

Funded by a grant from the Getty Foundation, the microsite was part of the 2013 Getty initiative, Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A.
Preservation Issues

by Adrian Scott Fine, Manuel Huerta, and Marcello Vavala

For more information about these and other preservation issues, please visit laconservancy.org/important-issues.

Faculty Center at UCLA

While the Faculty Center on the UCLA campus is no longer in imminent danger of demolition, the Conservancy has nominated it for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources in order to secure its consideration as a historic resource in the future.

In January, the nomination received the support of the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission, which voted 5-0 in support and recommended designation to the City Council as part of the City’s internal process for commenting on California Register nominations.

The State Office of Historic Preservation will review the nomination and prepare a recommendation to the State Historical Resources Commission. At an upcoming quarterly hearing, the Commission will make the final decision on whether to list the building in the California Register.

Completed in 1959, the UCLA Faculty Center represents a distinctive interpretation of the Ranch style applied to an institutional building. Its post-and-beam construction, large floor-to-ceiling windows, and indoor-outdoor spaces create a casual, welcoming environment conducive to faculty lunches and convening. The firm of Austin, Field and Fry served as executive architect for the Faculty Center, while Welton Becket and Associates, the master planner for the UCLA campus at the time, served as supervising architect. Renowned landscape architect Ralph Cornell designed the landscape.

In August 2010, UCLA proposed demolishing the Faculty Center to make way for a hotel and conference center, prompting outcry from nearby residents, university faculty, and the preservation community. The university later chose to relocate the conference center project to a new site. Both then and now, UCLA representatives oppose recognizing the Faculty Center as a historic resource.

Fred C. Nelles Youth Correctional Facility Campus

The recently proposed Lincoln Specific Plan seeks to demolish fifty of the fifty-two buildings on the Fred C. Nelles Youth Correctional Facility Campus in Whittier. They would be replaced by a mixed-use development with 750 residential units and over 200,000 square feet of commercial space.

The seventy-six-acre campus, partly bordered by Whittier Boulevard and Sorenson Avenue, is a historic public institution that operated continuously from 1891 to 2002. The entire site is listed in the California Register of Historical Resources and determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. At least eight buildings on the campus have been previously identified and appear to be eligible for individual listing in the National Register. The proposed project may also affect additional historic buildings, as it does not appear that any post-World War II campus buildings have been properly surveyed, evaluated, and identified as potentially significant.

In February, the Conservancy submitted comments, in partnership with the Whittier Conservancy, on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the project. The Conservancy’s comments strongly urge the City to mandate consideration of preservation alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) that could incorporate more of the existing buildings on campus while accommodating new construction for housing and commercial uses.

We are urging the City and project developer to look to successful adaptive reuse projects at similar campuses as inspiration for creative conversion. Numerous examples exist in California and nationally that were financially feasible while resulting in meaningful preservation. We have encouraged the City to incorporate tax incentives as a way to reduce rehabilitation costs.
REPORT CARD

WHAT THE REPORT CARD ISN’T

It’s important to understand what the Preservation Report Card grades do, and do not, reflect. They reflect a local government’s policies and programs to foster preservation, such as ordinances, surveys, and incentives. They do NOT reflect a jurisdiction’s stewardship of publicly held resources or its actions regarding specific preservation issues.

Many communities in Los Angeles County have invested significant time and resources to preserve specific places, and we applaud their efforts. However, the key to long-term preservation lies in strong policies and other tools, including ordinances and incentives, and we prioritized these factors in our grading.

Our new Extra Credit option allows us to recognize a community’s efforts to preserve a specific place, but these 25 points will likely not change a community’s grade (versus the 150 points awarded for a preservation ordinance).

Even communities with high grades do not always act in the best interest of specific resources. West Hollywood received a grade of A+ because it has all the policies and programs in our evaluation. However, the City is currently seeking to demolish the significant WPA-era Great Hall/Long Hall in Plummer Park. The Conservancy and community groups are working to prevent this demolition.

Cities with grades of A+, A, or A-
Beverly Hills Monrovia
Burbank Pasadena
Calabasas Pomona
Claremont Redondo Beach
Culver City Santa Monica
Glendale South Pasadena
Huntington Park West Hollywood
Long Beach Whittier
Los Angeles

HONOR ROLL

Notable Improvements

Congratulations to the following cities, which have made significant strides in their preservation programs since the release of our last Preservation Report Card in 2008.

Beverly Hills

In 2008, Beverly Hills had a very weak historic preservation ordinance that offered honorary landmark status and no true protections (and had never even been used to landmark any structures). The City had updated a 2006 survey of its commercial area, but the existing citywide survey from 1986 was over twenty years old and sorely out of date.

Sometimes, the threats to a specific historic building—and the efforts to save it—galvanize support that leads to something much bigger. Beverly Hills is a good example; in the wake of some high-profile demolitions, the City catapulted ahead with a strong and active historic preservation program. The City adopted an innovative and strong historic preservation ordinance in 2012 and has implemented the Mills Act program, a powerful preservation incentive. The City has also hired a dedicated historic preservation planner and created a Cultural Heritage Commission. Now celebrating its centenary, Beverly Hills is conducting a comprehensive update to its citywide survey and has already designated more than a dozen local landmarks.

Burbank

In 2008, Burbank had yet to designate any local landmarks, despite having had a historic preservation ordinance since 1994. The ordinance did not allow for the designation of historic districts, and it contained landmark designation criteria that were not based on state or national models. Since 2009, Burbank has transformed its approach to historic preservation by making significant improvements to its program. The City completed a citywide survey and historic context statement in 2009, adopted the popular Mills Act program in 2010, and has begun to designate local landmarks.

The City updated its historic resource management ordinance in 2011, with notable amendments including the ability to designate local historic districts. The City has further demonstrated its commitment to historic preservation through public education and outreach via the web. Like a growing number of communities, Burbank has a dedicated web page for its historic preservation program that includes links to its historic context report and preservation plan. To engage the next generation, Burbank has also developed a kid’s section on its website.

Calabasas

In 2008, Calabasas had recently adopted its historic preservation ordinance, implemented the Mills Act, and was conducting its first citywide survey of historic resources. The City has continued to make great strides in developing its preservation program. Calabasas became a Certified Local Government in 2009, indicating its strong commitment to a professionalized preservation program.

The City has also been actively designating local landmarks, which include structures from the recent past of the 1970s and ’80s, and is adding cultural landscapes to the City’s historic context statement.
Digital Report Card: A New, Dynamic Resource for Communities

This year, the Preservation Report Card has gone digital at laconservancy.org/report-card. Our new Digital Report Card transforms the use of Report Card information by providing instant access to a wealth of resources and encouraging residents to get involved in local preservation. For the first time, preservation-related information about all eighty-nine local governments in Los Angeles County resides in one place, easily accessible for use in a variety of ways.

Made possible by a grant from the Donaldson Charitable Trust, this innovative resource spans two new areas of our website: a dedicated section (microsite) on the Report Card itself (under Resources), and new pages for each of L.A. County’s eighty-nine communities (under Explore L.A.). For the purposes of the Report Card and the website, “communities” refer to the county’s eighty-eight cities, plus the County government.

The microsite and community pages are closely integrated for use specific to the Report Card. Yet over time, the community pages will grow into robust resources of their own with content, photos, and other features to help convey the unique character of each community.

In the past, the Conservancy issued static Report Cards every five years, providing “snapshots” of preservation programs at a certain point in time. With the Digital Report Card, we can update scores, grades, and other content in real time, as communities make progress. A growing library of online resources on the microsite includes a model ordinance, glossary of preservation terms, and information about preservation incentives.

The heart of the Report Card microsite is an interactive chart with the scores and grades for all eighty-nine communities in Los Angeles County. You can sort results by category, select specific categories to narrow your focus, and select specific communities to compare.

Each community’s name in the Digital Report Card chart links to a dedicated web page for that community. The community page contains the jurisdiction’s Report Card scores, links and downloadable documents related to the community’s preservation program, links to the community’s official website and local advocacy groups if relevant, and information on how residents can get involved in preserving their local heritage. Instant access to information about nearby communities offers context about preservation in a specific area of the county.

Visit laconservancy.org to view the full Digital Report Card and community pages.

Tell Us About Your Community

What makes your community special? Let us know, and we’ll use your input to help convey the unique character of your community on our website.

As part of our efforts to create the Digital Report Card, we built new web pages for each of L.A. County’s eighty-nine communities (eighty-eight cities plus the County government).

You can find these pages under the “Explore L.A.” menu at the top of any web page, by clicking on the community’s name on the Report Card chart, or by clicking on the community’s name on the page for any location on our map of historic places.

The community pages already contain valuable information related specifically to the Preservation Report Card, from individual scores to community-specific documents, websites, contacts, and other resources.

Our ultimate goal for these pages is that they grow over time to more fully convey the distinctive flavor and resources of each community.

That’s where you come in. We encourage you to use the online “Tell Us About Your Community” form on any community page to share your stories, submit photos, and suggest historic places for us to add to our map. We will add this information to the pages over time.

We hope you’ll visit your community page on laconservancy.org soon, and we look forward to your input. Thank you!
REPORT CARD FINDINGS continued from page 1

programs such as ordinances, surveys, and incentives. These assessments translate into a Report Card grade for each community. The Preservation Report Card recognizes communities with strong programs in place and provides practical tips for jurisdictions that want to improve. The Conservancy also provides personal technical assistance to any community in Los Angeles County seeking to create or enhance a preservation program.

The Preservation Report Card provides a succinct, easy-to-understand overview of the approaches needed for effective local preservation in Los Angeles County. It also provides instant access to successful, real-world examples of those approaches taken by specific communities.

Innovations for 2014

Since 2003, the Conservancy has released a Preservation Report Card every five years. The 2014 edition marks a sea change in the program’s outreach, with a far more proactive approach to helping communities succeed in their preservation efforts.

A new point-based scoring system clarifies how grades were determined and clearly identifies success factors and areas of improvement. A new Extra Credit option recognizes specific preservation efforts that fall outside the parameters of the Report Card scoring.

A new section offers practical tips for improvement, encouraging communities to contact the Conservancy for assistance. An innovative new Digital Report Card at laconservancy.org/report-card is transforming our public outreach and the use of Report Card information (see “Digital Report Card,” page 5).

Key Findings

Countywide, progress in preservation programs has slowed in the past five years for reasons that include staffing and program cutbacks during the recession of the late 2000s. Key findings include:

One size doesn’t fit all.

Communities pursue preservation in different ways. While good preservation programs require certain basic elements, such as a preservation ordinance and surveys of historic places, some communities take a “hybrid” approach, blending some if not all of these elements in different ways. For instance, La Cañada Flintridge does not have a preservation ordinance, so it can’t protect historic resources through local landmark designation. Yet it does offer a strong incentive to property owners through the Mills Act tax relief program, which provides local design review and limited protection for participating properties.

An ordinance alone isn’t enough.

Even an iron-clad ordinance is less effective than a cohesive approach to preservation using a range of tools. In California, one of the strongest tools for preservation is the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Communities need to understand their responsibilities in using CEQA to protect threatened resources, yet many don’t. For instance, in 2013 two buildings (a 1930 Mediterranean Revival building in Glendale and the 1959 St. Martha’s Episcopal Church in West Covina) were approved for demolition during the environmental review process for replacement projects, despite clear evidence of their significance.

Some postwar communities think they have no historic resources.

The Conservancy spoke with a number of local representatives who simply maintain that their community has no historic resources because it is relatively young. Yet one of the most-improved communities, Calabasas, recognizes significant places from as recent as the 1970s and ’80s. Each jurisdiction should view its built heritage through the lens of its own development, not in comparison to older communities.

The recession took a heavy toll.

Historic preservation programs were far from immune to the recession of the late 2000s. Local budget reductions led governments to eliminate positions and commissions, as well as indefinitely postpone specific preservation efforts such as creating historic districts. Despite the recent upturn in the economy, many of these negative impacts remain today, significantly hindering communities’ preservation efforts.

We have a long way to go.

Fifty-one communities (57%) received “F” grades this year (they have no protections at all), indicating a clear need for more outreach and assistance to local governments throughout L.A. County. The Conservancy is eager to help communities in their efforts and will be reaching out with more resources, tools, and technical assistance.
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With fewer newsletters going through the post office, the Conservancy has cut postage and printing costs by more than fifteen percent in the past year. Imagine the cost savings if even more members received the electronic version!

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Richard Wells

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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.

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
- Modern Skyline
  - First and Third Saturdays, 2 p.m.
- Union Station
  - Third Saturday

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

For the latest information about issues and events, visit laconservancy.org.

ANNUAL BENEFIT
Union Station
Saturday, May 17

All aboard! The Conservancy is thrilled to hold our 2014 annual benefit at the iconic Union Station in celebration of its 75th anniversary. Details on page 2.

ANNUAL MEETING
PacMutual
Thursday, May 29

Meet with Conservancy board, staff, and fellow members and learn about the rehabilitation of PacMutual. See insert for details.

LAST REMAINING SEATS
Downtown’s Historic Venues
June 11 - 28

Tickets are on sale now for our 28th annual Last Remaining Seats! This year’s films include Back to the Future, Citizen Kane, Footlight Parade, and more. Visit laconservancy.org for details and tickets.
Los Angeles Conservancy Annual Meeting
Thursday, May 29, 2014, 7 p.m.
PacMutual, Pacific Club Room

Please join Conservancy board, staff, and fellow members for our annual meeting on Thursday, May 29, at 7 p.m. at PacMutual in downtown Los Angeles. We will introduce the newly elected members of the Board of Directors and hold a special program covering the recent restoration work on the PacMutual building.

Representatives from Rising Realty Partners will discuss PacMutual’s current rehabilitation project, including the connection between preservation and sustainability. PacMutual recently received LEED Platinum certification, the highest level of green certification by the U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC). This historic building is the oldest in Southern California to earn a LEED Platinum rating.

Now known as PacMutual, the former Pacific Mutual Building is actually three interconnected structures built over a twenty-year period. The first was a six-story building on the corner of Sixth and Olive Streets, built in 1908. It is the oldest remaining structure adjacent to Pershing Square, as well as one of the earliest designs by the prominent firm of Parkinson and Bergstrom. The original building was added to and remodeled over the years, including a major renovation in 1936 that altered the exterior design, which was executed in a plain monumental Moderne style popular at the time.

In 1921, a twelve-story Beaux Arts building was added to the complex, featuring a grand lobby with a barrel-vaulted ceiling and sweeping staircases in Italian Tavernelle marble. The third structure is a two-story parking garage from 1926, with offices and meeting rooms on the top floor. Then, as now, its function was disguised in a charming Beaux Arts exterior with a cordova tile roof.

PacMutual currently houses a range of tenants, from attorneys and architects, to the fashion firm Nasty Gal, to the Los Angeles Conservancy.

This event is free and open to the public. RSVP via your returned ballot or at info@laconservancy.org by 12 p.m. on Wednesday, May 28, 2014.

Los Angeles Conservancy Nominees to the Board of Directors

Please fill out the form on reverse and return it by 12 p.m. Wednesday, May 28, 2014.

Each year, the membership of the Conservancy elects several members of the Board of Directors. Directors are elected for three-year terms and (other than officers) are limited to serving no more than two consecutive terms. Two continuing and three new nominees are being presented to the membership for consideration before the annual meeting.

Nominees are recommended to the Board of Directors by the Conservancy’s Nominating Committee. This year’s committee consists of Clare De Briere (chair), Andy Meyers, Thomas Miller, Tom Neary, and Chris Rising. This year, two incumbent directors are on the ballot: Eric Moore and Andrew Meieran. The nominating committee and the board thank them for agreeing to be nominated again. The board is losing six members this year due to term limits: Clare De Briere, Barbara Flammang, Bob Foster, Michael LaFetra, Dexter Henderson, and Stephanie Kingsnorth. To fill out the slate, the committee and board are pleased to present three well-qualified nominees: Mike Deasy, Bill Roschen, and Ted Tanner. A brief biography of each nominee appears on the back of this page.

The Conservancy’s Board of Directors hereby forwards the nominations to the membership with the recommendation that the nominees be elected. A member may write in the name of an additional candidate or candidates (there is a blank line on the ballot for that purpose). We would appreciate each member marking and returning his or her ballot as soon as possible. Ballots must be received at the Conservancy office by 12 p.m. on Wednesday, May 28, 2014 to be considered valid.
Los Angeles Conservancy Nominees to the Board of Directors

MIKE DEASY  Chief Executive Officer, co-managing director, and managing broker at Deasy/Penner & Partners (DPP). Mr. Deasy is a Yale-educated urban planner-turned-realtor. His respect for art and architecture led him to found DPP, which specializes in historic and architectural homes. Previously the President and Managing Broker of Mossler Deasy & Doe, Mr. Deasy has represented buyers and sellers of architecturally significant residential properties in Southern California for over thirty years. He currently resides in the Entenza House (1936), designed by Harwell Hamilton Harris.

ANDREW MEIERAN  Entrepreneur. Mr. Meieran’s interest in preservation dates back to his college years, when he purchased and restored a Craftsman bungalow in the Berkeley area. He pursued a career in real estate and in 2007 opened The Edison in downtown L.A.’s historic Higgins Building. Mr. Meieran is currently restoring and rehabilitating the legendary Clifton’s Brookdale Cafeteria on Broadway, set to reopen later this year.

ERIC B. MOORE  Managing Director and Partner at Cassidy Turley Commercial Real Estate Services. Mr. Moore has over twenty four years of brokerage experience representing corporate clients, public agencies, nonprofits, and community-based organizations in leases, acquisitions, and dispositions, consummating over 15 million square feet of transactions. He is a past board member of the Dunbar Economic Development Corporation, and a member of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Downtown Los Angeles YMCA, American Industrial Real Estate Association, and Los Angeles Commercial Realty Association.

BILL E. ROSCHEN, FAIA  Principal, Roschen Van Cleve Architects. In 1987, Mr. Roschen opened a storefront office in Hollywood with his partner, Christi Van Cleve, where they established a “place-based” urban architectural practice working on affordable housing, historic preservation, and mixed-use transit-oriented development projects. He previously served as President of the Los Angeles City Planning Commission.

TED TANNER, AIA  Executive Vice President, Real Estate Development, AEG Worldwide. Mr. Tanner has over thirty-five years of experience in downtown Los Angeles real estate development. One of his major projects was acquiring, entitling, and master planning the forty acres surrounding the STAPLES Center. A registered architect in California and Pennsylvania, Mr. Tanner also serves on the Board of Trustees of the Southern California Institute of Architecture (SCI-Arc) and the California Hospital Medical Center Foundation.

OFFICIAL BALLOT

☐ Yes, I will attend the L.A. Conservancy annual meeting. ☐ No, I will not attend.  

Please vote for five of the five candidates listed below:

☐ Mike Deasy  ☐ Andrew Meieran  ☐ Eric B. Moore
☐ Bill E. Roschen  ☐ Ted Tanner

Below, you may write in the name(s) of one or more Conservancy members in lieu of any of the above names submitted by the Nominating Committee and recommended by the Board of Directors.

This ballot should be completed and mailed, e-mailed, or faxed to the Los Angeles Conservancy (fax 213-623-3909, e-mail info@laconservancy.org, mail to 523 W. 6th St., Ste. 826, LA, CA 90014). Ballots must be received by 12 p.m. Wednesday, May 28, 2014 to be considered valid.