



LOS ANGELES  
CONSERVANCY

CURATING THE CITY

Modern  
Architecture  
in LA

## Preserving Sprawl The Suburbs Become Historic

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July 27, 2013

AbilityFirst's Paul Weston Work Center  
John Lautner, 1979  
6530 N. Winnetka Ave., Woodland Hills

### Program

- 10:00 a.m. Breakfast Reception
- 10:30 a.m. Welcome  
**Linda Dishman, Executive Director**
- 10:35 a.m. About the Site  
**Helena Arahuate, Architect,  
Lautner Associates**
- 10:40 a.m. Preserving Sprawl Panel Presentation
- Remarks and Panel Introduction  
**Alan Hess, Moderator**
- Overview of Postwar Suburban Development  
**Dr. Robert Bruegmann**
- Developing Lakewood  
**D. J. Waldie**
- Developing the San Fernando Valley  
**Kevin Roderick**
- 11:45 a.m. Closing Remarks and Q&A
- 12:00 p.m. Book Signing
- 12:30 p.m. Program Ends

The Crippled Children's Society Rehabilitation Center (now AbilityFirst's Paul Weston Work Center) in Woodland Hills was designed by John Lautner, architect, FAIA and built by Paul Speer, general contractor, in 1979. Helena Arahuate was the project architect working for John Lautner, and Ben Noble, Paul Speer's associate, was in charge of the construction.

John Lautner designed the building to suit the requirements of Mary Jane Moore, the director of the Woodland Hills Center. Mrs. Moore wanted to see everything in the Center from her office, without having to use cameras and a monitoring TV system.

The building had to include a speech and hearing department, a workshop, a multipurpose room, a recreation room, an indoor swimming pool, locker rooms, storage, mechanical room, garage, and parking areas. A summer swimming lake was proposed but never built. The Center had to be designed for growth, so it could be built in phases.

Mr. Lautner created a one-of-a-kind design. The director's office was at the center of a circular, pie-shaped plan. The office was raised three feet higher than the main floor, and it had no interior partitions, so it would provide total visibility to all the wings radiating from this center.

Each of the wings contained one of the departments listed above.

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Special thanks to our host, Richard Briseño, and everyone at the Paul Weston Work Center.

## About the Panelists

**Dr. Robert Bruegmann** is a historian and critic of the built environment. He received his Ph.D. in art history from the University of Pennsylvania in 1976 and since 1979 has been at the University of Illinois at Chicago, where he is currently Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Art History, Architecture and Urban Planning. Among his books are the award-winning *The Architects and the City: Holabird & Roche of Chicago 1880-1918*, published in 1998; the controversial *Sprawl: A Compact History*, 2005; and *The Architecture of Harry Weese*, 2010. His main areas of research are in the history of architecture, urban planning, landscape and historic preservation.

**Kevin Roderick** is a native Angeleno who has lived on both sides of the Santa Monica Mountains, along the coast and beside the L.A. River. He is the author of two books on Los Angeles— *Wilshire Boulevard: Grand Concourse of Los Angeles* and *The San Fernando Valley: America's Suburb*. Kevin is the founder and editor of the Los Angeles news website LAObserved.com, a weekly commentator on NPR station KCRW, a former reporter and senior editor at the *Los Angeles Times*, and a contributing writer at *Los Angeles* magazine.

**D. J. Waldie** was named one of the city's most influential interpreters by *Los Angeles* magazine in 2006 and his writing called "a gorgeous distillation of architectural and social history" by the *New York Times* in 2007. In 2006, Waldie was named by *Los Angeles* magazine as one of the "100 influentials" of Los Angeles. In 2008, novelist and memoirist Patricia Hampl declared Waldie's *Holy Land* "a classic of American autobiography." He is a contributing writer at *Los Angeles* magazine and a contributing editor for the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Los Angeles Review of Books*. He is a founding member of the Los Angeles Study Group of the Huntington-USC Institute on California and the West.

**Alan Hess** has written nineteen books on Modern architecture and urbanism in the mid-twentieth century. They include *The Architecture of John Lautner*, *Google Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture*, *Julius Shulman: Palm Springs, Viva Las Vegas*, *The Ranch House*, and *Oscar Niemeyer: Houses*. Hess has been active in the preservation of post-World War II architecture, including the oldest remaining McDonald's restaurant (1953, Downey), Edward Durell Stone's Stuart Pharmaceutical factory (1958, Pasadena), and Wurdeman and Becket's Bullocks Pasadena (1947). He has a M.Arch degree from the Graduate School of Architecture and Urban Planning, UCLA. He is currently researching the architecture of Irvine, California, one of the United States' largest master-planned communities of the 1960s and 1970s.

## About the Los Angeles Conservancy

The Los Angeles Conservancy is a nonprofit organization that works through education and advocacy to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles County. Founded in 1978 as part of the community-based effort to save the Los Angeles Central Library from demolition, the Conservancy is now the largest local historic preservation group in the U.S., with more than 6,000 members and hundreds of volunteers. For more information, visit [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org).

## AbilityFirst's Paul Weston Work Center



Photo courtesy Helena Arahuete

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Each wing had glass on three sides, facing landscaped areas that separated the wings and provided views, shading, and natural light. These garden-like penetrations continued in the form of pie-shaped skylights to the center of the building.

The structure converged to a central column in the director's office and continued in the form of steel tie-downs, forming an open landscaped trellis outside the office, completing the circular plan. The trellis was designed to be densely planted, to provide shading to the director's office.

John Lautner created in this Center, as well as in all his work, an ideal, practical, and inspiring environment. This was the main purpose in his Real Architecture.

—Helena Arahuete

## About Curating the City: Modern Architecture in L.A.

Curating the City: Modern Architecture in L.A. treats Greater Los Angeles as a living museum, using public programming and an interactive website to interpret the story of L.A. Modernism in different ways. For details, please visit [laconservancy.org/modern](http://laconservancy.org/modern).

Curating the City is part of Pacific Standard Time Presents: Modern Architecture in L.A. This collaboration, initiated by the Getty, brings together seventeen local cultural institutions from April through July 2013 for a wide-ranging look at the postwar built environment of the city as a whole, from its famous residential architecture to its vast freeway network, revealing the city's development and ongoing impact in new ways. For details, please visit [pacificstandardtimepresents.org](http://pacificstandardtimepresents.org).



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