



LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY NEWS



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While this modest building is unspectacular architecturally, it is culturally significant for the key role it played in the history of puppetry. Photo by Jessica Hodgdon/L.A. Conservancy.

Why Cultural Significance Matters

by Adrian Scott Fine and Cindy Olnick

A modest industrial building on the outskirts of downtown Los Angeles recently raised some important issues about preserving the city's cultural heritage.

The Bob Baker Marionette Theater at 1345 West First Street has been in the news recently for two reasons. Its founder, the legendary puppeteer Bob Baker, passed away in late November. Earlier in the fall, the new owner of the theatre property had issued a proposal to redevelop the site as housing, incorporating portions of the theatre building into the design. The notion of reusing the nondescript building in the new development led some in the media and the public eye to question the value of the building and whether it—or rather, its historic use—should be preserved.

In 2009, the theatre was designated as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM). Likely the longest-running puppet theatre in the nation and the only one of its kind in Los Angeles, the theatre was officially recognized for its association with Baker and its key role in the history of the art form. Baker was a beloved figure in Los Angeles, and countless Angelenos have fond memories of his shows.

The Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Ordinance defines a Historic-Cultural Monument as having “particular historic or cultural significance to the City of Los Angeles.” The ordinance applies to buildings, structures, and even trees and landscapes. It does not, however, apply to the use of a property. Many historic landmarks survive only because they find vital new uses, as they should. It's important to understand that when the Bob Baker Marionette Theater was designated as an HCM, it was the building itself that was landmarked, not its use.

What is key to the redevelopment of the theatre building, as with any other designated landmark, is how to design the new development so as not to overwhelm or marginalize the historic building, even one that is modest architecturally yet rich in cultural significance.

Please see CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE on page 6

Preservation Award Applications Due January 30

Each year, the Conservancy honors outstanding achievement in historic preservation in Los Angeles County with our Preservation Awards. If you know of a preservation project that deserves special recognition, we encourage you to apply for our 2015 awards.



Ace Hotel Downtown Los Angeles, formerly the United Artists Theatre and office tower, a 2014 Preservation Award recipient. Photo by Spencer Lowell.

An independent jury of experts in architecture, historic preservation, and community development will select the award recipients. We encourage submissions from across Los Angeles County that illustrate the value and power of preservation.

Please see AWARDS on page 6

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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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Welcome Katie Sanborn, Office Manager

We are excited to welcome Katie Sanborn as the Conservancy's new office manager. Katie will keep our day-to-day operations running smoothly in many areas, including finance, human resources, operations, information technology, and risk management. A native Angeleno, Katie holds a bachelor's degree in dance from UC Santa Barbara. She worked most recently as data operations manager at tech startup Spokeo. She also worked previously at Girls, Inc., and is excited to return to the nonprofit sector.



Welcome Tiffany Narváez, Public Relations and Marketing Coordinator

Please join us in welcoming Tiffany Narváez as the Conservancy's new public relations and marketing coordinator. Tiffany will help raise the Conservancy's visibility by fielding press inquiries, promoting events, publicizing important advocacy issues, and enhancing awareness of other initiatives. A Southern California native, Tiffany is passionate about local history and culture. She holds a bachelor's degree in art history from UC Riverside and came to us from Rogers & Cowan, one of the nation's top entertainment PR firms.



Welcome Lizette S. Aguilar, Salesforce Administrator

We're also excited to welcome Lizette Aguilar in the new and critical role of Salesforce administrator. After implementing the new constituent relationship management system in 2013, we realized the vast potential and importance of using Salesforce to its full advantage in advancing our mission. Lizette will manage our ongoing transition to, and transformation by, Salesforce, from training staff to customizing the system to best suit our diverse needs. Lizette has twenty years of information technology systems and project management experience in retail, corporate, and nonprofit organizations. Most recently, she both worked and volunteered at Dolores Mission in Boyle Heights, where she implemented Salesforce.



Willow Pappageorge Leaves Conservancy Staff

After eight years as a key member of the Conservancy team, Willow Pappageorge left the staff in October to move to Portland, Oregon. Willow rose from administrative assistant to director of administration during her tenure, playing an essential and leading role in the Conservancy's operations.

Among many achievements, Willow was instrumental in transforming our technology more than once—from paper-based to online transactions, sending our first mass email communications, and most recently, launching Salesforce to integrate a vast range of information about our diverse constituents.

We miss Willow very much, but we wish her all the best and look forward to following her adventures in Portland.

City Makes New Strides in Protecting Older and Historic Neighborhoods

by Laura Dominguez, Adrian Scott Fine, Manuel Huerta, and Marcello Vavala

Preservationists and neighborhood activists have reason to celebrate the start of the new year, as there is some relief from over-development in sight. In November, the Los Angeles City Council unanimously passed two measures designed to curtail the city's burgeoning teardown trend and bolster neighborhood conservation efforts, following public testimony from residents, neighborhood groups, and the Conservancy.

Stabilizing Development in Older Neighborhoods

Beginning in early 2015, fourteen older and historic neighborhoods will experience much-needed relief from demolition activity and out-of-scale new construction for up to two years, the result of a new Interim Control Ordinance (ICO). The ICO will limit single-family home demolitions in five neighborhoods awaiting Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) designation: Carthay Square, El Sereno-Berkshire Craftsman District, Holmby-Westwood, Oxford Square, and Sunset Square.

In nine proposed Residential Floor Area (RFA) Districts, including in part La Brea Hancock, Larchmont Village, Miracle Mile, North Beverly Grove, and Old Granada Hills, demolition may still occur yet the ICO will control the size of new replacement houses. RFA Districts are a relatively new zoning tool in single-family home neighborhoods that regulate the scale of new development.



Mansionization in Carthay Square. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.

In addition to these targeted restrictions, the ICO establishes a process for amending the City's 2008 Baseline Mansionization Ordinance (BMO) over a period of eighteen

months. The revised ordinance will close a number of controversial loopholes, including so-called "bonuses" that enable builders to exceed original space allotments by twenty to thirty percent.

In May 2014, Councilmember Paul Koretz introduced the motion directing the Department of City Planning to make recommendations for stabilizing construction activity in older and historic neighborhoods. The City has witnessed a surge in requests for HPOZs and RFA Districts, the result of escalating development pressure in residential neighborhoods and the compounding loss of community character and overall livability.

Public Notification of Demolition

Prior to the Thanksgiving holiday, the Council also approved Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell's August 2013 motion to modify the City's demolition process with legislation designed to empower community members to prevent surprise demolitions of unprotected historic buildings.

Before demolition permits can be issued for buildings older than forty-five years, the new Demolition Notification Ordinance requires property owners to inform abutting neighbors and their Councilmember's office of any planned demolition activity, and to post a public notice on the property. The ordinance creates a thirty-day window for stakeholders to potentially negotiate preservation alternatives if a significant historic property is affected. This might include nominating it for Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) status. The ordinance also introduces a sixty-dollar fee to cover administrative costs.

The ordinance comes on the heels of several high-profile demolitions. In June 2014, the Mole-Richardson Studio Depot, a 1930 Art Deco building in Hollywood at La Brea and Willoughby, was torn down without any prior notification.

Because the building was not landmarked and a replacement project was not yet known, the property owner was able to obtain the proper permits without public notice or review by the Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources.

Additionally, two designated structures were illegally demolished within seven months of the Mole-Richardson. In April, the owner of the San Marino Villas (HCM #870) demolished the Mediterranean Revival apartment building without any permits. In November 2013, the owner of an early 1920s Spanish Colonial Revival house in the Whitley Heights HPOZ tore down the property in its entirety, despite having been issued a permit only for interior remodel work.

The Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety has thoroughly reviewed the cases to date and is imposing the maximum penalty under the City's scorched earth policy, which would prohibit any development on the sites for five years.

Neighborhood Character Counts

These complementary ordinances reflect growing public mobilization in response to recurring teardowns and other threats to neighborhood livability. Over the past year, the Conservancy has worked closely with residents and activists to shape these vital policies, reframing the complex topic of neighborhood conservation as an essential conversation about community identity and sustainability.

Co-presented by the Conservancy and the Department of City Planning, the L.A. Historic Neighborhoods Conference in October 2014 brought further momentum to these citywide efforts, convening more than two hundred residents for a lively exchange of ideas. The erosion of historic neighborhood fabric—or, as one attendee put it, "reckless development ruining the character and culture of the neighborhood and driving out long-term residents"—was a central and broadly experienced theme.

While a long-term, citywide solution to the teardown trend is still needed, the City Council's latest actions represent significant progress. Now we need to speed up the process to bring new tools online to help more neighborhoods. Thank you to everyone who spoke out on behalf of these ordinances and, especially, to Councilmembers Koretz and O'Farrell for their strong leadership.

Thank You for Your Support in 2014!

Last year was a successful one for the Conservancy, and we want to thank each and every one of our members for your support. Here are some highlights of what you helped us achieve. The statistics are from calendar year 2014 as of press time. Just as every membership makes a difference, every action taken on behalf of a specific issue—from writing a letter or attending a hearing to spreading the word to your friends—makes a difference. Thank you!

Impact

- Benefitted from the hard work of **340** volunteers
- Took direct action to help preserve **64** threatened historic places
- Analyzed and commented on **20** environmental impact reports
- Provided technical assistance to **250** callers
- Interviewed candidates for Los Angeles County Supervisorial District 1 and posted transcripts online
- Provided support to **6** neighborhoods seeking historic district designation
- Released the 2014 Preservation Report Card, assessing the state of preservation policy in **89** jurisdictions in Los Angeles County, and worked with **8** communities to improve their scores
- Raised over **\$42,000** for our Preservation Advocacy Fund, which goes beyond membership dues to support our preservation efforts

Top Preservation “Wins”

- Funding for Neighborhood Conservation/HPOZ staffing included in City of L.A.’s budget
- Interim Control Ordinance (ICO) will provide relief from teardowns and mansionization in 14 neighborhoods (see page 3)
- Demolition Notification Ordinance will prevent surprise demolitions of unprotected historic buildings (see page 3)
- Paul R. Williams-designed Hunt Residence spared from demolition
- Angel Food Donuts sign in Long Beach saved and repurposed as part of new Dunkin’ Donuts

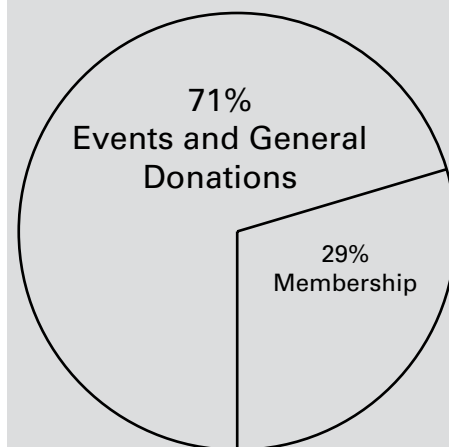
Engagement

- As of press time, had **6,208** active member households, representing more than **\$566,000** in general support for our advocacy and education programs
- Convened **213** people for the L.A. Historic Neighborhoods Conference, co-sponsored by the City of Los Angeles Office of Historic Resources, to help people learn how to protect the character of their communities
- Welcomed **12,456** moviegoers to the 28th season of Last Remaining Seats
- Took a record **11,000** guests on our downtown walking tours, including **906** school and college students
- Led **12** young preservationists (ages 11-13) on our Adventures in Architecture summer program for inner-city youth in partnership with the Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA)
- Introduced **30** future city builders (ages 15-17) to preservation and the great work of preservation architects in partnership with ACE Mentor Program
- Hosted over **50** attendees at two Regeneración workshops focused on the preservation of sites related to Latino/a heritage
- Shared some of L.A.’s amazing Modern buildings with **350** aficionados through four events hosted by our Modern Committee
- Hosted **2,074** people at additional public tours and programs, spanning from Sherman Oaks to Venice
- Partnered on events with Bringing Back Broadway, Los Angeles Heritage Alliance, CicLAVia, and Casa Libre

Visibility

- Had more than **413,000** website visits by over **300,000** individuals
- Appeared in the media **180** times
- Spoke at **29** conferences, classes, and community meetings
- Neared **19,000** “likes” on Facebook
- Reached over **9,000** followers on Twitter
- Passed the **2,000** follower mark on Instagram and introduced the #LAsStoryhood hashtag, with more than **600** photos tagged to date

Your Membership Has a Direct Impact



Revenue from membership represents nearly one-third of the Conservancy’s annual income. The majority of this revenue directly supports our dual mission of advocacy and education. By maintaining your Conservancy membership, you play an important role in helping to preserve, revitalize, and promote Greater Los Angeles’ architectural and cultural heritage.

Thank You, 2014 Walking Tour Docents!

Alice Allen	Julianna Herrera ¹	Monica Rejniak ¹
Janis Ashley	Ann Hobbs	Dennis Ritchey*
Reem Baroody	Robin Holding ¹	Vince Robbins
Liliana Barrios ¹	Gordon Johnson	Jerome Robinson*
Kenon Breazeale*	Cathy Jurca	Kip Rudd ¹
Bob Brennan	Leah Kabaker*	Nico Saez
Margaret Briggs	Holly Kane	Judith Siegel
Chris Brown	Deke Keasbey	Herb Silverman
Roberta Brown	Anne Kelly	Shannon Simonds
Gail Burton	Leslie Lambert **	Kim Skavaril
Kathleen Campbell	Nancy Lienthal	Steve Slakey
Cathy Cleveland	Jeremy Loudenback	Pam Taylor*
Bud Coffey	Mary Ann Lovato	David Thompson ¹
Carolyn Coughlin-Grimm	Eric Lynxwiler	Nicole Thompson
Jay Cywan	Sterling Mackinnon ¹	Jill Thomsen
Julie Downey	Lindsay McMenamin ¹	Beth Topping ¹
Marcia Enger	Steve Melli	Ed Troser
Greg Figueroa*	Carolyn Mitchell*	Priscilla Ulene
Danny Fisk ¹	Lilly Morcos ¹	Chris Upton
David Fitzgerald	Libby Motika ¹	Tony Valdez
Katie Frank	Deanne Neiman	Donald Weggeman**
John Ghini*	Andrew Odom	Jan Westman
Mike Goldstein	Steve Ort	Mary Alice Wollam
Larry Goodfried	Matthew Parrent ¹	Erik Yesayan
Jenny Goodwin	David Peake	
Erica Gutierrez	Kay Pegram*	¹ Part of the 2014 docent
Kellie Hardick	John Pesetski	training class
Erica Hayward	Barbara Petersmeyer ¹	* Gave more than 20
Mike Henderson	Vivian Pine	tours in 2014
Randy Henderson	Erika Pinto ¹	** Gave more than 30
Ricardo Hernandez	Paul Polacek	tours in 2014
Oscar Hernández	Janet Raffalow ¹	

Congratulations to Our 2014 Docent Class



The 2014 docent class trained on six different Conservancy tours: Angelino Heights, Art Deco, Broadway, Downtown Renaissance, Historic Downtown, and Union Station. Encompassing extensive classroom work, independent study, and training out in the field, the training takes approximately four months to complete. The next class will take place in spring 2016 (no class is scheduled for 2015). For information on applying, visit laconservancy.org/walking-tour-docents. Photo by Annie Laskey/L.A. Conservancy.

VOLUNTEER PROFILE: MICHELLE GERDES

by Bruce Scottow

"As a Conservancy volunteer, I've gotten through the doors of places I'd never see otherwise!"

-Michelle Gerdes

Michelle's comment resonates with so many of our volunteers, who often cite the significant benefits of helping out



with events at sites rarely open to the public. Michelle was quick to add that getting through those doors for free is a definite plus!

As a third-generation Angeleno (her grandfather was a conductor on the Red Cars), Michelle has long been familiar with the region's history, culture, and architecture. She began volunteering for the Conservancy in 2003 and was soon serving on the Last Remaining Seats committee, as well as helping at the film series' screenings.

Theatre preservation and history are of special interest to Michelle. As a volunteer, she created the theatre "history boards" displayed at Last Remaining Seats screenings. She chips in for other Conservancy events as well, recalling with particular fondness (?) her exterior docent role at the Hughes Aircraft Company campus tour a few years back. Tour attendees might remember—as Michelle certainly does—that the city was drenched with over five inches of rain that day!

Michelle also volunteers at the Los Angeles Historic Theatre Foundation (LAHTF), where she has worn nearly every hat imaginable.

Besides minding the manners of her two rescue cats, Michelle finds time to craft jewelry and art lamps from vintage items.

AWARDS

continued from page 1

Projects honored in the past have varied widely, from sensitive restoration, rehabilitation, and adaptive reuse projects, to groundbreaking advocacy and education efforts undertaken by individuals or groups. Eligible projects must be located in Los Angeles County and must have been completed by December 31, 2014.

Applications must be received no later than **Friday, January 30, 2015**. You can download the application from laconservancy.org/awards or request one by contacting our office at (213) 623-2489 or info@laconservancy.org. We will announce the recipients in the spring.

We will present the awards at our 34th Annual Preservation Awards Luncheon on **Thursday, May 7**. With around 600 guests, the luncheon is a great chance to network while learning the compelling and inspiring stories of the award recipients. Watch for more information in upcoming issues of this newsletter and in our monthly *E-News* email newsletter. We hope to see you there!



Project team from Rancho Los Alamitos, 2014 Preservation Award recipient, with Conservancy Executive Director Linda Dishman. Photo by Larry Underhill.

CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE *continued from page 1*

Telling the Full Story

While architectural icons are vital to our history and will always be integral to the Conservancy's work, they don't tell the full story. Architecturally unspectacular buildings also deserve recognition for the important roles they've played in defining our communities. They require us to dig deeper and look beyond just the façade of a building to fully understand what stories can be told. These stories come alive and are much more meaningful when the physical building in which they occurred still exists.

In addition to the Bob Baker Marionette Theater, buildings designated for their cultural significance include Bukowski Court, a 1920s bungalow court at 5124 West De-Longpre Avenue in Hollywood. Its modest Spanish Colonial Revival design is ubiquitous throughout Los Angeles. Yet this landmark served as home to a budding poet and novelist named Charles Bukowski from 1963 to 1972, as he transitioned from his job at the post office to the writing career that brought him international renown.

Once threatened with demolition, Bukowski Court was designated as an HCM in 2008. It has since been renovated by its owners and is a popular destination for literary and cultural tourists.

Designated the same year as Bukowski Court, the former Black Cat bar at 3909 West Sunset Boulevard became an HCM for the key role it played in Los Angeles' gay rights movement. On New Year's Eve 1966, Los Angeles police officers raided the Silver Lake bar, beating and arresting patrons for lewd conduct. Hundreds of protesters held a peaceful demonstration in front of the Black Cat the following February—more than two years before the famed Stonewall Riots in New York City.



2013 photo of the Black Cat. Photo from Conservancy archives.

The City of Los Angeles has designated other cultural landmarks, including the former Venice West Café at 321 South Ocean Front Walk (designated in 2010), which epitomized the postwar Bohemian counterculture in Los Angeles. In East L.A., the Maravilla Handball Court and El Centro Grocery, built by—and integral to—the surrounding multicultural community, was listed in the California Register of Historical Resources in 2012.



Maravilla Handball Court. Photo from Conservancy archives.

Recognizing cultural significance does not mean preserving every old building in Los Angeles. All landmarks must meet a threshold of significance based on nationally accepted standards and criteria. Yet, rightly, these criteria include not only architectural merit or pedigree, but the people and events that, together, convey our rich cultural heritage.

Jurisdictions near and far have made great strides in recognizing and protecting places of cultural significance. The City of Los Angeles and other cities in the county have started down the important path of embracing the full breadth of our heritage. While we have only scratched the surface, this is a journey that the Conservancy fully supports.

Plan to join the Conservancy and the Department of City Planning Office of Historic Resources in the spring for a **Landmark This! workshop** where we will focus on designating sites of cultural significance.

SEPTEMBER 24 / DECEMBER 4 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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MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Your membership provides the Conservancy with crucial operating funds, as well as strength in numbers to maintain a powerful voice for preservation. Thank you!

YOUR MEMBERSHIP DOLLARS AT WORK

Did you know that a third of the Conservancy's revenue comes from membership? That makes you a critical partner in our mission of using advocacy and education to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles County.

As one of our more than 6,000 member households, you help give the Conservancy a significant voice for preservation in our community, enabling us to advocate for our historic neighborhoods and individual places that are too valuable to lose. Because of you, we can:

- Meet with elected officials and other decision makers to voice concerns and find solutions
- Work with community members out in the field
- Advocate for stronger tools to protect places and incentivize preservation
- Provide technical assistance and training to residents, city staff, and others working to protect the historic places that make L.A. unique

As we begin the new year, we want to thank you for your ongoing commitment to and support of the Los Angeles Conservancy!

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. 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
- Union Station
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.

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



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

UPCOMING EVENTS



Photo by Tom Bonner.



Photo by Annie Laskey/L.A. Conservancy



**PRESERVATION AWARD
APPLICATIONS DUE**
Friday, January 30

Each year, the Conservancy honors outstanding preservation projects in Los Angeles County. Applications for the 2015 awards are due January 30. Details on page 1.

**WALKING TOURS CELEBRATE
35TH ANNIVERSARY**

2015 marks the 35th anniversary of the Conservancy's walking tour program. Help us celebrate by attending one of our tours listed above, and look for special events throughout the year.

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