



# LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY NEWS



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The City of Los Angeles, through its Bureau of Engineering, is seeking to demolish Parker Center and replace it with one or two high-rise towers. The Conservancy believes that this historic building can be incorporated into a new construction project, preserving its history and saving millions of taxpayer dollars. Undated photo of Parker Center and Los Angeles City Hall, courtesy of Security Pacific National Bank Collection/Los Angeles Public Library.

## Parker Center: Just the Facts

by Adrian Scott Fine

Sometimes, a preservation issue is about more than the specific place being threatened. In the case of Parker Center, it is certainly about preventing the needless demolition of a very important place. But it is also about making sure the decisions being made are solid ones, based on facts and anchored in a strong process of public participation.

Designed by Welton Becket and Associates, the 1955 former LAPD headquarters has been threatened with demolition for years. The process has veered along the way. As of press time, the Conservancy was working hard to press decision makers to reconsider preservation and reuse of the building.

In the spirit of the classic television series *Dragnet*, which featured Parker Center as a backdrop, we offer this summary of... just the facts.

### Fact: Reuse Is Perfectly Feasible

Parker Center has stood mostly vacant since the LAPD moved to its new headquarters in 2009. Yet the public process for deciding what to do with it did not begin until 2012, when the City's Bureau of Engineering (BOE) began advocating for the building's demolition, releasing an initial study looking at ways to provide office space for nearly 5,500 City staff near City Hall.

Since Parker Center is an office building, it is not a stretch to envision its reuse as part of this project. Yet the environmental review process leaned toward demolishing Parker Center and replacing it with one or two new high-rise towers.

The only reuse alternative that came close to meeting the City's stated project objectives included an addition that was too small and therefore deemed infeasible by the BOE. We asked

Please see PARKER CENTER on page 6

## The L.A. Conservancy and artworxLA: Partners in Supporting Students through Preservation and Art

by Sarah Lann

On November 7, the Conservancy proudly welcomed nearly 100 students to the historic Los Angeles Theatre for a morning of tours, art exhibits, film screenings, and hands-on art projects. This public presentation was the first of three events culminating the Conservancy's partnership with artworxLA, a nonprofit dedicated to combatting the high school dropout rate.

Each year, artworxLA works with three arts or culture-based organizations to engage students most at risk, through long-term arts programs inspiring them to stay in school and exposing them to potential career paths. As an artworxLA partner, the Conservancy's education team spent time training artworxLA teaching artists about the mission of the Conservancy and educating them about the impact of historic buildings within a neighborhood and community.

Over the next six weeks, the teaching artists explored those themes with their students, using neighborhood preservation as the catalyst for creating visual and multimedia art. These pieces, which represented six different schools from across the county, were on display for the public and students to see at the Los Angeles Theatre as part of the final event for the schools.

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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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Major funding for the Los Angeles Conservancy's programs is provided by the LaFetra Foundation and the Kenneth T. and Eileen L. Norris Foundation.

## Welcome Helen Huang, Receptionist

The Conservancy is happy to welcome our newest staff member, **Helen Huang!** Helen holds a bachelor's degree in history from UC Irvine. A native Californian, Helen is a huge history buff with a passion for Los Angeles and California history. "I spend a good portion of my free time reading articles and blogs about local history, including articles on historic L.A. buildings," she says. "I've also always loved walking around downtown L.A. and looking at the historic buildings—now I'm working inside one of those buildings and helping to save them!"



Helen's love for history, art, and culture led her to previous jobs with The Getty Museum, the Norton Simon Museum, and the Altadena Library District. She also previously volunteered with the Los Angeles Public Library, working in the library's extensive photo collection. Please join us in welcoming Helen to the Conservancy!

## Annie Laskey, Lizette Aguilar, and Jessica Ro Leave Conservancy Staff

Several staff members left the Conservancy in late 2016. We appreciate their hard work on behalf of the organization and will miss them greatly.

The Conservancy's long-time program manager, **Annie Laskey**, left the Conservancy at the end of 2016. Annie will be missed by all of the staff and volunteers who worked closely with her in the nearly seventeen years she spent here. Annie was responsible for running the Walking Tour Program and helped plan educational events throughout the year, including the special tours. We are currently searching for someone to fill this open position.

In her two years as Salesforce administrator, **Lizette Aguilar** helped us make the most of our database technology, now a critical element in achieving our mission. Among many examples, she was instrumental in our transition last spring to a new membership system. We're now assessing staffing options for this role.

After one and a-half years as our membership assistant, **Jessica Ro** left one Conservancy for another: she accepted a position in the development department at the Nature Conservancy. Jessica served an important role in handling the day-to-day functions of our membership program. Luckily, we didn't have to look far to fill this key position: **Marcella Akop**, who worked as our administrative assistant for three years, has taken on this role.

Our heartfelt thanks go out to Annie, Lizette, and Jessica for all of their contributions, and we wish them well in their future endeavors.

## Landmark THIS! Workshop February 4

Learn how to nominate a historic place for local landmark designation in unincorporated communities of Los Angeles County, during this workshop presented by the Conservancy in partnership with Altadena Heritage and the County of Los Angeles.

This hands-on, interactive session will introduce you to the County's new historic preservation program and walk you through writing an effective nomination, finding the necessary information, and navigating the political process.

The workshop will take place on **Saturday, February 4** from 9:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in the Altadena Community Center, with check-in beginning at 9:00 a.m. Admission is only \$10, including materials and refreshments. **Space is limited** – reserve your spot online at [laconservancy.org/landmark-this](http://laconservancy.org/landmark-this).

## Preservation Issues

by Laura Dominguez, Adrian Scott Fine, and Marcello Vavala

For more information about these and other preservation issues, please visit [laconservancy.org/important-issues](http://laconservancy.org/important-issues).

### Conservancy Sues City of L.A. Over Lytton Savings

On December 1, 2016, the Conservancy filed a lawsuit to force the City of Los Angeles' compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in considering demolition of the historic Lytton Savings building (now Chase Bank) in Hollywood.

The City blatantly disregarded environmental law in its review of the 8150 Sunset Boulevard Project, a mixed-use development proposed for the southwest corner of Sunset and Crescent Heights Boulevards.

The environmental impact report (EIR) acknowledged Lytton Savings as a qualified historical resource. The EIR identified two feasible preservation alternatives allowing Lytton Savings to be incorporated into the project. Under CEQA, a project must avoid significant impacts—such as the demolition of a historical resource—if the fundamental project objectives can be met without demolition.

Nonetheless, the Los Angeles City Council approved the project that, as designed by architect Frank Gehry, calls for the needless demolition of Lytton Savings. While the City claimed that the EIR's preservation alternatives were not feasible, its findings were contradicted in the EIR and were not supported by any substantial evidence.

Completed in 1960, the Lytton Savings building exemplifies a transformative shift



The City blatantly disregarded environmental law in its review of the 8150 Sunset Boulevard Project, which calls for the demolition of the historic Lytton Savings building. Photo by Hunter Kerhart.

in bank design after World War II. As the EIR explains, the bank design “was strategically conceived as a modern multi-media showcase for Modern art, architecture, and interior design . . . related directly to its Sunset Boulevard context” with a “distinctive folded plate concrete roof.”

The Conservancy has been advocating for the preservation of the former Lytton Savings building for several years. Early in the process, the Conservancy met with the developer, Townscape Partners, who responded positively to the idea of integrating Lytton Savings as part of the new development. This promising collaboration came to a halt after a new design for the site by Gehry was unveiled in 2015. This new design was ultimately approved.

When the City failed to address preservation alternatives as part of the EIR process, the group Friends of Lytton Savings successfully nominated the building for Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) designation to provide some measure of protection. It was designated in December 2016, but not before the City Council approved the project to replace it.

While Lytton Savings is significant in and of itself, the litigation is about more than the building. By sidestepping two viable preservation alternatives, the City abused its discretion and violated the law. If they aren't held accountable, their actions set a dangerous precedent for future land-use decisions that will affect Angelenos for years to come.

### Hannah Carter Japanese Garden and Shepherd Residence

In August 2016, the Coalition to Save the Hannah Carter Japanese Garden and the Conservancy nominated the 1961 Hannah Carter Japanese Garden in Bel Air for designation as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM). The nomination was the latest step in a larger campaign to preserve the historic landscape.

The Hannah Carter Japanese Garden was donated to UCLA in 1964 to be cared for and maintained in perpetuity. In November 2011,



The Hannah Carter Japanese Garden in 2013. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A.

UCLA announced plans to sell the garden, citing rising maintenance costs, deferred maintenance, and the lack of attendance due to limited parking.

For the past several years, the Conservancy has been part of the Coalition to Save the Hannah Carter Japanese Garden, working closely with The Garden Conservancy, the California Garden and Landscape History Society, the Cultural Landscape Foundation, and the Carter family, as well as other concerned organizations. Since the sale was announced, we have urged UCLA to ensure the preservation of and continued public access to the garden, as intended and envisioned by the Carter family.

After the plans for sale were announced, members of the family of Hannah Carter filed suit against UCLA for breaking its promise to maintain the historic garden in perpetuity. In September 2015, UCLA reached a settlement with the family. The settlement allows the university to sell the historic garden on the condition that the new owner agree to preserve it for at least thirty years.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported in June 2016 that UCLA had sold the Hannah Carter Japanese Garden to developer Mark Gabay.

The Carter family formerly resided in the adjacent Neoclassical-style Shepherd Residence (1938), which was also sold at private auction in 2016. The neighborhood group Bel Air Residents for Preservation nominated the home for landmark designation in August 2016. If successful, the landmark designations for the garden and adjacent home will offer continued protection for the sites beyond the next thirty years.

# You Made It Happen in 2016

As a member of the Conservancy, you played a key role in some great progress in preservation last year. Below we list just a few highlights of what you made possible. The Conservancy has always been a member-based organization, and members remain vital to our success. Thank you, and best wishes for a happy and healthy 2017!

## 2016 By-the-Numbers

- Took direct action to help preserve **123** threatened historic places
- Actively worked with **7** communities on new or updated preservation ordinances
- Mobilized nearly **2,500** people to take action on behalf of threatened places
- Celebrated our 30th season of Last Remaining Seats, bringing more than **13,000** people into Broadway's historic theatres for film screenings plus new features including theatre Q&As, backstage tours, and trivia nights at Clifton's
- **Doubled** the number of middle-school students we served in our Adventures in Architecture program, a summer partnership with Heart of Los Angeles (HOLA) that engages kids with historic places in their own backyard
- Welcomed **1,400** people on special, day-long tours of View Park and Chinatown, exploring two of L.A.'s unique cultural and architectural enclaves (see sidebar)
- Launched **new member services** including monthly payments, automatic renewals, and email renewal notices—all designed to make it easier for you to support the historic places you love
- Had **6,409** active member households, making the Conservancy the largest local preservation organization in the U.S.
- Benefited from **\$760,176** in membership funds, representing nearly a third of our organizational budget and making our work possible
- Appeared in the media more than **300** times, including **39** new outlets, reaching new audiences
- Launched the **#LAsStoryhood** social media campaign to gather and share stories of what makes our diverse communities special and worth preserving
- Expanded our online community by **25 percent** with over **26,000** likes on Facebook, over **12,000** followers on Twitter, and nearly **10,000** followers on Instagram



2016 marked our 30th season of Last Remaining Seats. Photo by Jessica Hodgdon/L.A. Conservancy.

## Top Preservation Issues

These three advocacy issues reached critical points in 2016, and all three will likely be resolved in 2017.

- **Baseline Mansionization and Hillside Ordinances** – closing loopholes in local laws to stem the rampant trend of teardowns and mansionization
- **Parker Center** – fighting for a fair, transparent process regarding the proposed demolition of the former LAPD headquarters (see cover story)
- **Lytton Savings** – holding the City of L.A. accountable for violating environmental law in approving the needless demolition of this (now-designated) Modernist landmark

## 2016 Highlight: All in the Family



Photo by Margot Gerber.

As planning for our spring 2016 tour of L.A.'s Chinatown got under way, **Celeste Hong**, an active Conservancy volunteer, offered to help. We wouldn't realize until later how special her assistance would be.

The tour included a stop at the Y. C. Hong office building, a location noteworthy not just for its immaculate, frozen-in-time offices from the 1940s, but for the man who worked there: Y. C. Hong.

Hong devoted his career in immigration law to fighting on behalf of civil rights for the Chinese American population. As the first Chinese American to pass the California Bar and to testify before the U.S. Senate and Supreme Court, he was a pioneering figure.

When Celeste revealed that she was his granddaughter, we knew we'd found the right person to tell his story. The family photographs and memories she shared with all who visited Hong's office during the tour brought to life the building he worked in, as well as the community he served there.

## Conservancy Partners with Geotourist to Produce Chinatown Audio Tour

Our April 2016 tour Exploring Chinatown: Past and Present was a great success, and it sold out very quickly. If you didn't attend the tour, or if you'd like to go back to have another look around, we're happy to announce an audio version of the tour you can take at any time!

Created in partnership with Geotourist, this audio guide allows you to explore Chinatown's rich history and culture right on your smartphone. The Geotourist app is available for free for both Apple and Android phones. It uses GPS functionality to bring you audio based on your geographic location, so you can learn about the world around you while you walk.

Chinatown is one of L.A.'s oldest neighborhoods, with many layers of history and diverse communities. The city's first barrio later became Little Italy, as evidenced by existing structures such as St. Peter's Italian Catholic Church. The Pacific Alliance Medical Center, dating to 1869 as the French Hospital, and the 1910 St. Anthony's Croatian Catholic Church speak to other prevalent populations. The audio tour takes you to these sites and more.

We will continue to partner with Geotourist to produce more audio versions of past and future tours. Are there any past Conservancy tours you'd like to see (or rather, hear) as an audio-guided tour? Check out our downloadable tour PDFs at [laconservancy.org/events-tours/self-guided-tours](http://laconservancy.org/events-tours/self-guided-tours) and let us know which one(s) you'd like in audio. Please email your suggestions to [news@laconservancy.org](mailto:news@laconservancy.org).



Photo by Annie Laskey/L.A. Conservancy.

## Thank You, 2016 Walking Tour Docents!

In 2016, eighty-one volunteer docents gave a total of 970 tours to over 9,500 people! Docents who gave tours in 2016 are listed below. Thank you, walking tour docents, for your hard work and dedication!

Alice Allen	Michael Goldstein	Carol Mitchell	Chris Spry
Janis Ashley	Larry Goodfried	Lilly Morcos	Pamela Taylor*
Liliana Barrios	Jody Gunn	Libby Motika	David Thompson
Kenon Breazeale*	Kellie Hardick	Ellen Nichols	Nicole J. Thompson
Bob Brennan	Erica Hayward	David Nufer	Jill Thomsen
Roberta Brown	Mike Henderson	Andrew Odom	Beth Topping
Gail Burton	Randall Henderson	Steven Ort	Ed Troser
Kathleen Campbell	Gloria Hernandez	Lisa Otis-Kisor	Priscilla Ulene
Sanjay Choudhuri	Julianna Herrera	David Peake	Christine Upton
Stephen Cirello	Karen Himes	Kay Pegram	Donald Weggeman**
Cathy Cleveland	Ann Hobbs	John Pesetski	Jan Westman
Bud Coffey	Robin Holding	Barbara Petersmeyer	Mary Alice Wollam
Carolyn Coughlin	Gordon Johnson**	Vivian Pine	
Jay Cywan	Cathy Jurca	Erika Pinto	* Gave over 25 tours
Terry Dadd	Pearl Jusem	Paul Polacek	
Mandi Dillin	Leah Kabaker	Monica Rejniak	** Gave over 35 tours
Julie Downey	Deke Keasbey	Kip Rudd	
Annabel Enriquez	Leslie Lambert*	Greg Salyer	
Gregory Figueroa	Eric Lynxwiler	Judith Siegel	
Danny Fisk	Steven McCall	Herb Silverman	
David Fitzgerald	David McMenamin	Shannon Simonds	
Katie Frank	Lindsay McMenamin**	Kimberly Skavaril	
John Ghini	Stephen Melli	Steve Slakey	

## ARTWORXLA

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Conservancy docents gave students a tour of the space from top to bottom, which included a stop in the mezzanine to watch a bit of *City Lights*, the Charlie Chaplin film screened for the theatre's opening in 1931. Students also participated in a scavenger hunt, took a quiz about the theatre's history, and learned more about the Conservancy's work and how to get involved through social media and other channels.

Throughout the remainder of the school year, artworxLA will continue to work with two more sets of schools on preservation-centric art, and two more public presentations will occur at the Los Angeles Theatre showcasing their classes' work. These presentations, on **March 2** and **May 17**, are free and open to the public. We welcome you to join us in supporting and celebrating these young people's dedication and creativity.

For more information about these upcoming events, please visit [artworxla.org/news-and-events/](http://artworxla.org/news-and-events/).

**PARKER CENTER** continued from page 1

the City, “Why not plan a taller addition that provides more square footage, and why was only one real preservation alternative provided?” We asked these questions repeatedly for the next three years, with no response.

Reusing Parker Center is entirely feasible, yet it has not yet been adequately considered.

**Fact: Reuse Can Save Millions**

In 2015, City Councilmember José Huizar instructed the BOE to study another preservation alternative that would provide more space than the first one. The bureau quietly developed a new alternative, without involving the preservation community or engaging architects experienced in preservation. The BOE took its proposal to the City’s Municipal Facilities Committee in August 2016.

This new alternative stated that reusing Parker Center would cost \$107 million more than demolishing and replacing it. Despite our repeated requests, the City provided no substantive analysis to support this claim.

We know from experience that reuse often costs much less than all-new construction. In early January 2017, we convened a panel of preservation experts—including highly experienced developers, architects, a cost estimator, and a seismic engineer—to examine the costs of preserving Parker Center. After careful analysis, we strongly believe that reusing the building could SAVE the City nearly \$50 million in comparison to all-new construction. This is a conservative

estimate; the true savings could be far more. For details, visit the Parker Center issue page on our website at [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org).

**Fact: Reuse Can Enhance the Civic Center and Connect Little Tokyo**

When Huizar made his motion in 2015 to study a new preservation alternative, he also directed the City to undertake a plan for the Civic Center. It certainly makes sense to create a cohesive vision for the Civic Center before deciding the fate of Parker Center.

Most master plans are large-scale, visionary, and based on extensive public input. By contrast, this has been a quiet and quick process involving a limited group of stakeholders. The community advisory committee (CAC) contains representatives of nearby business improvement districts, including Little Tokyo and the Historic Core. The City declined requests by the Conservancy and the Cultural Heritage Commission to participate on the CAC.

Despite the plan having a stated objective to “balance past and present” as part of a legacy goal for the Civic Center, the master plan process assumed from the start that Parker Center would be gone.

This approach puts the cart before the horse, presuming that the City Council will vote for Parker Center’s destruction before they even consider the master plan.

Reluctance by members of the Little Tokyo community to preserve Parker Center is understandable, given the neighborhood’s negative association with the building. Parker Center came into being through the destruction of two of the most vibrant blocks in the community. Its origin as part of L.A.’s early efforts at urban renewal is an important part of Parker Center’s complex and difficult history—a history that must be told, faced, and understood if we are to learn from it.

The Little Tokyo Historical Society had previously urged the City to support a preservation alternative, in part to tell the story of what happened to their community. Yet in recent months, the Historical Society has changed its position and now supports Parker Center’s demolition.

Members of the community have also expressed a desire to strengthen the connectivity between the Civic Center and the

Parker Center site. Some have been led to believe that Parker Center literally stands in the way of this connectivity. In fact, keeping Parker Center and removing an administrative wing would significantly open up the site and link it to the Civic Center, providing a similar amount of space and amenities offered through new construction.

**Fact: We Can Do Better**

A particularly harsh fact is that Parker Center is far from safe from demolition. It may very well be demolished despite our best efforts and the facts. Yet recent events have given it a brief reprieve, and we are working tirelessly to find a solution with the City before it’s too late.

Thanks in part to calls and emails from the Conservancy’s Action Alert readers, on January 10 the City’s Entertainment and Facilities Committee agreed to wait on a final recommendation until the Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) nomination for the building is considered. The City Council has until February 15 at the latest to vote on the nomination.

We firmly believe that by working together with the City and experts in development and preservation, we can find a solution for Parker Center that not only saves millions but also works better for everyone than what is currently proposed.

Yet we can’t do it without real leadership. If you haven’t already, please reach out to your City Councilmember, especially Councilmember José Huizar, to let them know that Parker Center matters to you and you believe in a better solution.

You can contact José Huizar at [councilmember.huizar@lacity.org](mailto:councilmember.huizar@lacity.org), [jose.huizar@lacity.org](mailto:jose.huizar@lacity.org), and (213) 473-7014.

For more information, read our in-depth blog post dated January 7, 2017 at [laconservancy.tumblr.com](http://laconservancy.tumblr.com).



Parker Center in 2014. Photo by Hunter Kerhart.

# OCTOBER 1 / DECEMBER 9 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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John Stassen  
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Elisabeth Vacca-Brown and  
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JD Walsh  
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## SPONSOR SUPPORT

## THANK YOU, VIEW PARK TOUR PARTNERS!

On November 6, we welcomed over 600 guests on a special tour of historic homes in View Park, a beautiful neighborhood with a rich architectural and cultural history.

Thanks to everyone who attended the tour, the owners who opened their homes, and the sponsors who helped make this event a success!

### Tour Partners

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Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, Los Angeles County, Second District

### Tour Sponsors

Architectural Resources Group  
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### Community Partners

View Park Conservancy  
ViewPark.org



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

## CONSERVANCY WALKING TOURS

Tours cost \$10 for Conservancy members and youth 17 or younger; \$15 for the general public.

Most tours require reservations. We accept walk-ins on some tours, subject to availability.

For details and reservations, visit [laconservancy.org/tours](http://laconservancy.org/tours). Questions? Contact us at [info@laconservancy.org](mailto:info@laconservancy.org) or (213) 623-2489.

### WALKING TOURS

#### Angelino Heights

First Saturday of each month

#### Art Deco

Every Saturday

#### Broadway Historic Theatre & Commercial District

Every Saturday

#### Historic Downtown

Every Saturday

#### Millennium Biltmore Hotel

Every Sunday

#### Union Station

Every Saturday

Youth, family, and group tours available by special arrangement. For details, visit [laconservancy.org/tours](http://laconservancy.org/tours) or contact us at [info@laconservancy.org](mailto:info@laconservancy.org) or (213) 623-2489.



### Los Angeles Conservancy

523 West Sixth Street, Suite 826

Los Angeles, California 90014

[laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org)

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For the latest updates and hundreds of historic places to explore, visit [laconservancy.org](http://laconservancy.org).

## UPCOMING EVENTS



Photo by Flora Chou/L.A. Conservancy.

### LANDMARK THIS! WORKSHOP

Altadena Community Center  
Saturday, February 4

Join us for a special session to learn how you can nominate buildings in unincorporated L.A. County for landmark designation! Details on page 2.



### ARTWORXLA PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS

March 2 & May 17

Attend the next two free public presentations of preservation-centric art created by high-school students. Learn more on page 1.



Photo by Annie Laskey/L.A. Conservancy.

### CHINATOWN AUDIOGUIDE NOW AVAILABLE ON GEOTOURIST APP

Did you miss our spring 2016 Chinatown tour? Explore the rich history of the neighborhood using our audioguide, available on the Geotourist app! Learn more on page 5.