



Adrian Scott Fine and Linda Dishman. Photo by Gary Leonard.

Passing the Torch of Preservation: Linda Dishman and Adrian Scott Fine

By Carley Michelle Hildebrand

When Linda Dishman announced her departure earlier this year, folks within the preservation community all had the same burning question: who could replace someone seemingly irreplaceable? The Conservancy’s board of directors undertook the major task of finding a replacement for our fearless president and CEO by conducting a months-long, nationwide search. And, as is often the case, the answer was right in front of them: her colleague of the past thirteen years, Senior Director of Advocacy Adrian Scott Fine, will replace her on January 1st, 2024.

Recently, Dishman and Fine took a moment from their busy schedules to sit down and talk about their past work together, the challenges and triumphs of leading a nonprofit, and aspirations for the future of preservation in Los Angeles as the Conservancy transitions into its next chapter.

LAC: You’ve worked together for a long time. Do the two of you remember your first impressions of each other?

Linda Dishman: I knew of Adrian and his work at the National Trust for Historic Preservation, especially his work around schools and teardowns. I remember being very impressed with how he approached issues and found ways to solve problems.

Adrian Scott Fine: I’d known of Linda and the Conservancy through my work at the Trust, through conferences, and the Partners Network. Actually, I was a member of the Conservancy long before I came here to Los Angeles because I was interested in the work it was doing at the time with Modernism. So, I was

Dear Members,

After thirty-one years of leadership, this is my last message to you as president and CEO of the Los Angeles Conservancy. *Where did the time go?*

We’ve accomplished so much together! The Conservancy is strong because of the passion and dedication of our members, staff, board, and volunteers. I am confident in its future under the leadership of our senior director of advocacy, Adrian Scott Fine, who will take over the helm as president and CEO.

It’s easy to think of historic preservation as being about just saving buildings. But at its core, historic preservation is about protecting places that bring people together and hold the stories of the people who have made us who we are as Angelenos.

Thank you for strengthening the L.A. Conservancy’s voice. You’ve called into council meetings, written to your representatives, signed petitions, organized rallies, and provided financial help. You’ve stood by us through thick and thin.

It’s been the honor of my lifetime to share this work with all of you. As I always say, people never really leave the Conservancy family—myself included—and I’m sure I’ll see many of you around the historic places in L.A. we all love so much.

My sincere hope is that you will continue to support the Conservancy. It’s more vital than ever as we begin this exciting new chapter in our history. Thank you for your friendship for all of these years!

With love and gratitude,

Linda Dishman

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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.

Upcoming Events

For more information and to register for our events, visit: laconservancy.org/tours-events.

**December 12 & 19
5:30 p.m.**

HOLIDAYS AT UNION STATION

Visit iconic Union Station during the most festive time of the year! Learn the history of this extraordinary Spanish Colonial Revival and Art Deco monument as you enjoy the sounds and sights of the season, including Union Station's spectacular holiday tree. \$15 Members / \$20 General Public

**December 20
6:00 p.m.**

A "VIRTUAL" VINTAGE L.A. CHRISTMAS

What Los Angeles lacks in snow it makes up for with elaborate Christmas displays. Join us for "Vintage L.A. Christmas," a live virtual of L.A. Christmases past. On this tour you'll revisit Altadena's famed "Christmas Tree Lane," look back at elaborate displays from some of L.A.'s most iconic department stores, and more. \$8 Members / \$12 General Public

Photo credit: USC



In Memoriam: Bob Harris, FAIA (1935 - 2023)

We are sad to hear of the passing of respected architect and educator Bob Harris. Harris, a former president of the Los Angeles Conservancy's board, was the USC School of Architecture dean from 1981 to 1992 and enjoyed an extraordinary academic career spanning five decades. In addition to his much-admired work at USC, Harris was passionate about historic preservation and was an active civic leader, helping preserve L.A.'s built environment.

In addition to his leadership role at the Conservancy, he co-chaired the Downtown Strategic Plan Advisory Committee, founded the Urban Design Advisory Coalition, and helped develop historic preservation programs at USC and the University of Oregon. His loss will be felt not only by a generation of USC alums but by all who had the pleasure of working with him at the civic level.

Photo: Los Angeles Times



In Memoriam: Wayne Ratkovich (1941 - 2023)

The Conservancy is saddened by the loss of Wayne Ratkovich, the legendary real estate developer and preservation champion who helped save and restore such architectural icons as the Wiltern Theatre, the Oviatt Building, and the Fine Arts Building.

When the Conservancy was still in its infancy, Ratkovich was the proud owner of the Oviatt Building and saved the Art Deco jewel from becoming a parking lot. It was a transformative experience for Ratkovich, who said, "I realized that my little company could make a positive difference in the city." He continued to work closely with preservation groups on crucial preservation battles—such as the fight to save the Wiltern Theatre—and visionary adaptive reuse projects like the Hercules Campus. "The greatest thing Wayne did is shine a bright light on historic buildings in downtown L.A. and beyond," says the L.A. Conservancy's outgoing president and CEO Linda Dishman. "He was a towering figure and will be greatly missed."

Don't Be a Grinch: Book a Group Walking Tour This Holiday Season



© Getty Images/Denise Taylor

Entertaining guests for the holidays can be challenging. If you're looking for a way to give your friends and family a dash of holiday cheer that's fun, festive, *and affordable*, consider booking a Conservancy group tour!

These privately led tours are a great way to introduce out-of-towners (or even locals) to the architectural wonders of our city, from the Victorian beauty of Angelino Heights to Broadway's Art Deco splendor. You can typically choose your own start time, meeting location, length, and ending location. This flexibility lets you easily fit a group tour in with other downtown plans, something you'll definitely want to make during the most festive time of the year!

Even the biggest humbug in your group will smile at downtown's yuletide offerings, so book your group tour today!

'Tis the Season for Giving!

As 2023 comes to a close, the Conservancy thanks everyone who supported our work this year: your time and gracious gifts make it all possible. If you're thinking about year-end giving this holiday season, consider donating to the Conservancy's Preservation Advocacy Fund (PAF)! This fund directly contributes to our advocacy work on behalf of historic places in L.A. County.

Supporting PAF has helped us achieve so much in 2023, allowing us to be involved in supporting more than 15 Historic-Cultural Monument designations, offering assistance to individuals and communities, and continuing to invest in local advocates with our Community Leadership Boot Camp program. *With your help, we can continue to preserve and celebrate L.A.'s rich architectural and cultural history in 2024!*

In addition to the PAF Fund, you can add the Conservancy to your end-of-year giving list in several other ways! **Making a gift in someone's honor** is a beautiful way to pay tribute to a loved one who loved L.A. just as much as you do. You can also purchase a **gift certificate for our walking tours** or even gift a **Conservancy membership** to the history or architecture lover in your life. For full details on ways to give, visit laconservancy.org/support.

And while you're in the area. . .

Deck the stalls at Grand Central Market:

Our Historic Downtown tour ends at historic Grand Central Market, where you'll find festive holiday foods and maybe a chance to snap a selfie with St. Nick himself.

Yuletide at Union Station:

Union Station is a sight to behold during the holiday season: don't miss a chance to see its beautifully decorated South Patio: *yule love it*.

Lace Up at Pershing Square:

Each year, Pershing Square transforms into a winter wonderland complete with a 100-foot Christmas tree and outdoor ice rink. After your tour, take a spin on the ice and sip some cocoa!

Merry Mid-Century Magic:

A short walk from our Historic Downtown tour is the renowned Music Center. Take in a holiday show at this Mid-Century arts center and stay for Grand Park's annual "Winter Glow" lights!

Tamales at La Plaza:

Our Union Station tour is at the foot of Olvera Street and La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, where you'll find holiday festivities—and food—galore. (*Don't miss the tamales at Cielito Lindo!*)

To inquire about Conservancy group tour rates and availability, please visit our website:

laconservancy.org/group tours.

Walking Tour Rate Increases in 2024

Please be advised that starting **January 1, 2024**, the L.A. Conservancy's weekend walking tour prices will become **\$18** for members and **\$25** for the general public.

All tickets purchased prior to December 31, 2023, even tickets for dates in 2024, will still retain the current price. *So book your walking tours now!*

Coming Soon: Tour the Historic Fox Studio Lot!

We hope you join us next April for a special one-day tours of the legendary Fox Studio lot in Century City! The studio that was home to classic movies such as *Star Wars* and *The Sound of Music* is inviting Conservancy members to experience its storied studio lot.

Don't miss this exciting opportunity to learn about the historic movie factory and walk in the footsteps of Hollywood icons like Shirley Temple and Marilyn Monroe.

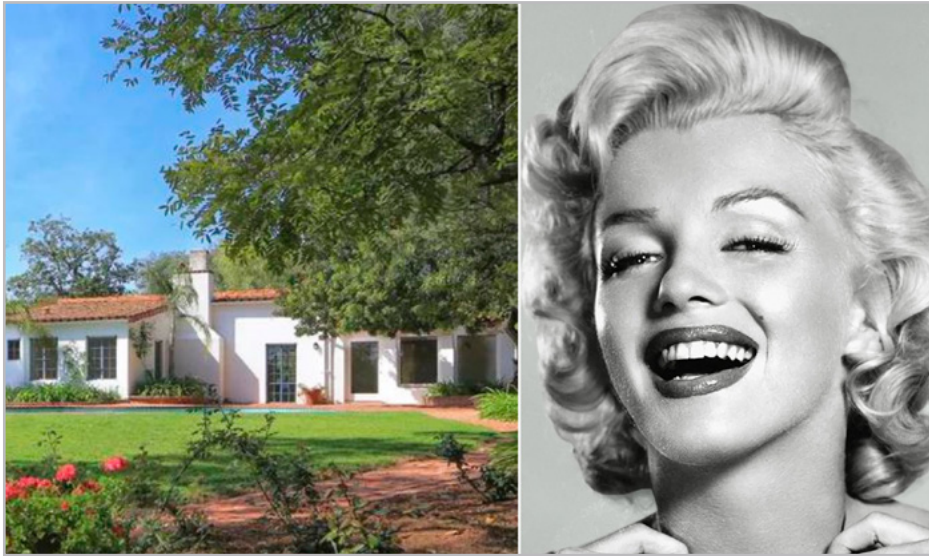
Tour date and times to be released in early 2024, so stay tuned!

Good Luck, Sana Ahmed!

In October, we said goodbye to our Student and Family Program Manager, Sana Ahmed. Over the past six and a half years Sana has been instrumental in growing and enhancing our student programs, overseeing robust virtual and in-person field trip programs, creating neighborhood-focused workshops, and curating on-demand resources for educators.

Sana also helped reactivate the Conservancy's committee focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion in 2020.

She will be missed!



Marilyn Monroe's Brentwood home courtesy Mercer Vine; Monroe portrait © Getty Images.

Marilyn Monroe's Brentwood Home is Saved from Demolition — *For Now.*

Marilyn Monroe, Hollywood's legendary "blonde bombshell," left the world much too soon and the Brentwood house where she lived—and died in 1962—recently came under serious threat of demolition. Although the story that follows is a testament to the power of community advocacy, the house's fate remains a very active preservation issue requiring a creative win-win solution.

Over the course of her short life, Monroe reportedly lived in a staggering 43 residences but never personally owned any of them. While she had a relatively short tenure at Helena Drive in Brentwood, the 1929 Hacienda-style residence holds the distinction of being the only residence that Monroe purchased on her own. It was a modest residence for such a major celebrity, but the property offered her much-needed quiet, peace, and tranquility.

Proud of her new role as a homeowner, she made a trip to Mexico to hand-select art, furniture, and tile to complement the existing architecture. Just weeks before her untimely death at the age of 36, she invited *LIFE Magazine* inside for an intimate look and said, "Anybody who likes my house, I am sure I will get along with."

The house was bought and sold a handful of times over the decades and has long been a destination for Monroe fans. While it was identified in 2013 by the City's SurveyLA program as being potentially historic, the house had no legal protection against demolition.

The previous owners had filed plans to build a new house on the site of the Spanish-style property, and the current owners (who also own the neighboring property) filed a request to demolish the house without a clear intention for a replacement project.

In late August 2023, the Conservancy was alerted to an impending demolition permit for the house.

The threat prompted a strong response and nearly every form of media outlet quickly covered the issue, from *The New York Times* to *Dwell* to *Reuters* to *People* magazine.

As an important first step in the process to protect the house, the Conservancy advocated for interim Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) protection through community outreach to Councilmember Traci Park. Park's office agreed to intervene. On Sep-

tember 8th, Park hosted a press conference announcing her intention to save this house and introduced a motion to initiate an HCM nomination.

Speaking with emotion and urgency, Park confirmed that her team was hard at work to stop the needless loss of a historic resource—and a sad erasure of Monroe's legacy—not just to Los Angeles but the world. "The global concern that has flooded my office reaffirms its significance," said Park. "The overwhelming sentiment here is clear: this home must be preserved."

The Conservancy is working to ensure the HCM is a strong nomination and conveys Monroe's connection to this house, as a place that illustrates an important part of her life and how she lived in Los Angeles. We greatly thank Councilmember Park for initiating this HCM designation and we've been working closely with her staff throughout the process to date. We also hope to have some dialogue with the property owner and their representatives soon.

The nomination is scheduled to be heard in late January (following a request for an extension by the owner). We will continue working with Councilmember Park's office to ensure the Cultural Heritage Commission and City Council take this important house under consideration for HCM protections.

HCM designation would allow owners to update and even expand the house if desired, but ensures its essential character, and Monroe's association, is maintained. We hope to meet with the property owners and their representatives soon.



Monroe at her Brentwood home, 1962. ©Alan Grant/LIFE

Preservation Snapshots



Proposed Mirabel Project; Rendering by Walter N. Marks

Mirabel Transit Project

Built in 1936 as the Sontag Drug Building, and designed by architects Alvan Edward Norstrom and Milton Lawrence Anderson, this outstanding example of Streamline Moderne architecture in the heart of Los Angeles' Miracle Mile is currently threatened.

The Mirabel Transit Priority Project was introduced in 2020. This project consists of the construction of a new, 42-story tower and 3-story parking podium (including 3 subterranean levels). There are up to 348 dwelling units—including 29 units set aside for very low-income households—and 12,821 square feet of ground-floor commercial uses.

As planned, the project would demolish approximately 38,545 square feet of existing commercial uses and buildings along Wilshire, including the existing commercial building at 5401 Wilshire Boulevard: the former Sontag Drugstore, which is a contributor to the Miracle Mile Historic District.

The Conservancy recently submitted comments on the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Mirabel Transit Priority Project.

L.A.'s Miracle Mile was formally determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1983 and is, therefore, listed in the California Register of Historical Resources. However, it is a highly vulnerable, small historic district that has seen various losses since its determination of eligibility and listing in 1983.

The Miracle Mile Historic District is a rare and unique place in Los Angeles. As a historic resource, it is small in scope and, therefore, extremely fragile when contemplating any potential loss of either a contributor or individually significant historic resource. In this case, the contemplated project impacts affect a designated historic district, an already-identified contributor, and what we believe to be an individually significant historic resource.

Given losses that have already occurred within the district, the Conservancy is concerned about additional, cumulative impacts that may jeopardize the continued eligibility of this historic district.

Only the east and south facades of the Sontag Drugstore Building are intended to be retained and subsequently reincorporated with the new project as part of a new "one-story building," with the rest of the building demolished to facilitate proposed subterranean parking.

The Conservancy strongly believes the Sontag Drug Building to be eligible as an individually significant historic resource. Therefore, it should be evaluated as such for the purposes of CEQA and this project's review and impact analysis rather than as only a contributor to the Miracle Mile Historic District.

The Conservancy supports adding housing and density, and that is possible here without causing harm to the historic Miracle Mile Historic District and the Sontag Drug Building.

We are urging the Project team to pursue more meaningful preservation-based alternatives that maintain eligibility of the historic district and the individually eligible Sontag Drug Building.

Each of these components contributes to the significance and helps to convey the district's overall significance.

We're hopeful to continue our conversations with the project team and press for alternatives.



Photo © Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

La Brea Tar Pits / Page Museum

As many of you know, a redesign and new master plan for the historic La Brea Tar Pits and the George C. Page Museum is in the works.

Completed in 1977, the George C. Page Museum houses the paleontological discoveries from the La Brea Tar Pits. It was one of a growing number of museums and collections that entered Los Angeles' cultural landscape in the 1970s, along with the Getty Villa, FIDM, and MOCA.

The project to update the Page Museum includes a reimagined site design, expansion, and upgrades to the overall La Brea Tar Pits site. The project also consists of a new companion museum building.

There are significant adverse impacts anticipated to the Page Museum, which causes concern, including limited demolition and partial removal of existing berms, removal of the open-air space frame roof structure, enclosure of the atrium, and the addition of new window glazing.

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) was released earlier this year, and the Conservancy submitted comments expressing these concerns.

The Conservancy hopes this project will celebrate the site's iconic 1970s-designed Page Museum. We will keep you updated on the project.

LEADERSHIP continued from page 1

following the Conservancy and wanted to be a part of it well before I arrived in town.

LAC: Linda, what will you miss most about the Conservancy?

LD: I'm going to miss the people. Our staff is great, as is our board, and everyone we work with. I really have enjoyed getting to know people, and I've made a lot of friends over the years, which has also been a real added plus.

LAC: Adrian, what excites you most about your new position?

ASF: Well, preservation *is* people. So I'm excited about finding new ways to engage and bring more people into our work, from our Community Leadership Boot Camp to new programming that offers a platform for others to better tell their stories about places and cultures. I'm looking forward to strengthening what we already do well, ensuring preservation is relevant, meaningful, impactful, and positioned to meet the moment.

LAC: Linda, what advice would you give to Adrian as he takes on his new role?

LD: Keep being *proactive* a high priority for the Conservancy. Some of our most impactful work has come from being proactive. I know it's hard to carve out time when you're rushing to save a historic building from being torn down, but it makes a big difference down the line.

LAC: Adrian, what will you take away from Linda's leadership?

ASF: The one thing that stands out for me is Linda's persistence and patience. She showed everyone that you don't just cave in. When you know what is right, and you can see beyond the rhetoric or false choices being presented, then you persist and persevere and make your case. Hopefully, you'll convince the decision-makers to do the right thing and work to find a win-win.

LAC: Linda, what should Adrian be most excited about?

LD: Well, I know that Adrian loves to learn, so this will be very exciting for him because he is about to learn a lot about the rest of the organization. He already knows so much about the Conservancy, especially with his demonstrated track record leading the advocacy department, and I have real confidence in his ability to master the other areas of the Conservancy. But I think he'll enjoy this role because he does love to jump into a problem and solve it.

LAC: What do you both want to see from the Conservancy in five years?

LD: Well, echoing what Adrian said about increasing our outreach, there's been a lot of conversation [among preservationists] about 'how do we reach the people that don't know they're preservationists yet.' So I hope we'll see more people beginning to think they're preservationists, whether through our social media outreach, which is really paying off, or through some other platforms. I hope to see us keep expanding our circle so that we're building a movement and a preservation ethic.

ASF: For me, this is a three-point answer. First, we need to amplify our education and advocacy efforts to demonstrate that preservation is fundamentally about people and communities, not simply buildings. We also need to bring in more resources, both financial and technical, to help intervene and support local community preservation efforts so that we can work toward more proactive vs. reactive outreach. And, finally, I want to see the Conservancy continue to grow in size and stature, ensuring L.A. grows in a way that embraces and balances the need for both the old and new.

*Although the Conservancy will start a new chapter with Adrian's tenure in January, Linda will always be with us in spirit! We hope she enjoys every moment of her retirement—she certainly earned it—and bid her a fond farewell. With sincerest gratitude from all of the Conservancy's staff, board, members, and volunteers: **THANK YOU!***

Linda's Legacy: A Benefit for Linda Dishman

On Sunday, November 5th, more than 200 guests joined the L.A. Conservancy for "Linda's Legacy: Celebrating Linda Dishman's 31 Years of Leadership!" This fundraising event included a cocktail reception and benefit dinner honoring the impact that our outgoing president and CEO has made here in Los Angeles during her epic 31-year tenure.

Linda chose the location of Vibiana in downtown L.A. for this occasion because it was the site of the Conservancy's fiercest preservation battle. Taking on a powerful mayor and archdiocese, Linda led the charge to save one of L.A.'s oldest buildings that, today, is a stunning event space.

Thank you to everyone who attended this unforgettable evening and helped honor our fearless leader. For event photos plus a short film about the battle for Vibiana visit: laconservancy.org.



Photos by Gary Leonard.

AUGUST 16 / OCTOBER 5 MEMBERSHIP REPORT

The Conservancy acknowledges the generous contributions of our new and upgrading Supporting members, and the new and renewing members of our Sustaining, Benefactor, and Cornerstone groups.

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Granite Cornerstone

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Start the New Year as a Pillar Society Member!

Just as pillars hold up buildings, members of the Los Angeles Conservancy's Pillar Society substantially support our efforts to protect L.A.'s historic places. By including the Conservancy in your estate plans, you will make a significant and lasting contribution to our cultural heritage.

As we conclude 2023, the Conservancy wishes to thank our Pillar Society members for their generosity. To learn more about and/or join the Pillar Society, please visit: laconservancy.org/pillar-society.

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weekly walking tours

DETAILS AND RESERVATIONS AT
laconservancy.org/tours

ANGELINO HEIGHTS

First Saturdays
9:45 a.m.

ART DECO

Saturdays
10:15 a.m.

BILTMORE HOTEL

Sundays
1:00 p.m.

HISTORIC BROADWAY

Saturdays
10:00 a.m.

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN

Saturdays
9:45 a.m.

MODERN SKYLINE

Second Saturdays
10:30 a.m.

PAST MEETS PRESENT

Fourth Saturday
10:30 a.m.

UNION STATION

Saturdays
11:00 a.m.