



LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY NEWS



Mar/Apr 2022 · Volume 44 Number 2



Top-left, The Crenshaw Women's Center; Bottom-left, The Alcoholicism Center for Women (ACW); Right, The Woman's Building. Photos courtesy Historic-Cultural Monument Application; ASID UCLA; The Clio Foundation

Preserving Women's Heritage in Los Angeles

By Carley Michelle Hildebrand and Lindsay Mulcahy

In 2020, the L.A. Conservancy launched its "'70s Turn 50" initiative: an educational campaign exploring and recognizing 1970s architectural and cultural heritage sites in Los Angeles. On the social and cultural front, the '70s were a crucible for movements here in Los Angeles, perhaps none as major as the Women's, LGBTQ, and Chicano Civil Rights Movements.

On International Women's Day, March 8th, 2022, the Conservancy is taking a closer look at the women's movement in Los Angeles. Our free virtual conversation **"People + Places: '70s Women's Spaces and Places"** will take place at 12 noon on Zoom and will shine a light on the courageous women who fought for their rights and the spaces where they could thrive.

By 1970, second wave feminism had firmly taken root across the country. Buoyed by the FDA's first approved oral contraceptive in 1960 and followed by a rise of women in the workplace, women's liberation was quickly becoming one of the largest social movements in American history. The effects of women's organizing and advocacy were felt at home, at school, and in the workplace, giving women firmer ground on which to assert control over their bodies, finances, and public spaces.

Rising in synchrony with women's liberation, the gay liberation movement took hold of Los Angeles in the 1970s. Energized by the homophile and civil rights movements of the 1960s, LGBTQ activists moved from the streets and private homes to concretize their community-building efforts in public spaces. As they established and grew their own institutions, they created physical spaces and places necessary to foster community, self-expression, as well as physical well-being. Today, the places that were central to this watershed moment in LGBTQ history are increasingly at risk of demolition. The Conservancy has worked to raise awareness about some of these historic spaces and we're honored to celebrate their stories.

See **WOMEN'S HERITAGE** on page 6

Let's Stay Connected!

Due to the uncertain nature of the pandemic, email communication has become the most effective way to share important Conservancy news and event updates.

Please take a few moments to update your email address on your profile on the Conservancy's website to ensure we can reach you in between newsletters.

You can log in at laconservancy.org/user or email us at info@laconservancy.org and we are happy to update your profile for you. You can also reach out to us for upcoming event information at **(213) 623-2489** or info@laconservancy.org.

And don't forget to follow us on social media! You'll find the most up-to-date news on preservation issues, plus announcements for new virtual and in-person programming.

Find us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter at: [@laconservancy](https://www.instagram.com/laconservancy).

Thank you again for your membership and support!

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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 upcoming events, visit laconservancy.org/events.

March 20 (In Person)

MEET US AT THE GREEK: TOURS OF THE GREEK THEATRE

On March 20th, get your backstage pass to one of the country's most famous entertainment venues: the historic Greek Theatre! Since completion in 1930, this beautiful Griffith Park amphitheatre, with its iconic Greek style stage, has been home to countless concerts and events. Now managed by the City of L.A., the Greek has undergone extensive historic restoration, uncovering architectural details not visible for decades. Los Angeles Conservancy docents will take you on a tour behind the scenes of this renowned theatre where you'll explore its history and learn about its deep connection to the creation of Griffith Park. (Some steps and stairs will be included.) Event hours: 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.; \$22 Members/\$30 General Public. laconservancy.org/greek.

March 9, 24 (Virtual)

DON'T CALL ME UGLY: A FRESH LOOK AT MODERNISM

Everyone's a critic—especially as it relates to architecture. One person's "glass box" is another person's edifice of stunning beauty. And while tastes change over time, buildings from the '70s remain particularly challenging to many eyes. But are '70s buildings "ugly," or just misunderstood? You can be the judge on this fun, interactive virtual tour! Join us as we critique some of the tough-to-love buildings of downtown Los Angeles. This tour was offered as part of our '70s Turn 50 initiative exploring the 1970s' lasting imprint on L.A. County's built environment. Tours start at 6 p.m.; \$8 Members/\$12 General Public. laconservancy.org/modernism.

Ongoing (Virtual)

NEW VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP! BUILDING COMMUNITY: PIONEERING BLACK ARCHITECTS IN LOS ANGELES

This new virtual field trip launched in February as part of Black History Month. Through the stories of architects like Norma Merrick Sklarek and Paul Revere Williams (to name a few), and the buildings they designed, students will learn how Black architects shaped Los Angeles and influenced communities through advocacy and architecture. Along the tour route, students will be asked to consider the role that architects play in creating cities and spaces that reflect the people who use them. Following the tour, teachers will receive additional resources to continue this conversation in their classrooms. All virtual field trips align with Common Core standards in Social Science and History and are facilitated live by Conservancy educators. *Recommended for grades 6-12. \$50 per field trip.* laconservancy.org/student-field-trips.

Happy Anniversary, Linda Dishman! Celebrating 30 Years of Leadership.



Happy thirtieth anniversary to Linda Dishman, the Conservancy's president and CEO! Focused and fearless, Linda has been a force of leadership for the Conservancy and the historic preservation movement throughout California.

Linda joined the Conservancy as executive director in March 1992. Since then, the organization has grown to 5,000 members—the largest membership of a local historic preservation organization in the country—and our budget is now \$3 million.

From all of us at the Conservancy, a heartfelt congratulations and thank you! We asked Linda to reflect on her time at the Conservancy. (This interview has been lightly edited for clarity and brevity.)

What do you love about working at the Conservancy?

It's the people! I have a poster on my wall that says, "People make history, people preserve it." That really encapsulates why our work is so meaningful. We save historic buildings because they mean something to people.

How has preservation changed in the last thirty years?

There is greater public awareness and appreciation for historic buildings and what they do for communities. We can point to many examples that showcase the value of historic preservation on a project. Take the Tower Theatre, for example. It was vacant for over thirty years. Then, Apple came in with a strong vision to adaptively reuse the space in a way that celebrated its historic character on par with its cutting-edge technology.

How has the Conservancy changed since you started?

The Conservancy has more members and staff, more experience, and more great work under our belt! We're doing more to celebrate the full story of Los Angeles, including nominations of culturally significant sites, community outreach, and a wildly successful legacy business campaign. I'm excited for us to expand this work further.

The Conservancy also has more tools and has developed best practices we're now sharing with the public through our Community Leadership Boot Camps. Win or lose, there is much to be learned from every advocacy effort.

How has the Conservancy stayed the same?

We remain rooted in our values to find win-win preservation-minded solutions. When we're working on advocacy issues, we focus on options that preserve the historic building and also meet the project's end-goals, whether it is adding housing units or turning a commercial building into office space. The Conservancy is eager to demonstrate how historic preservation can be a tool in helping Los Angeles address critical issues, like housing or climate change.

Read more of our interview with Linda on our blog: tumblr.laconservancy.com.



Linda's interview with Preservation Magazine in 1992, not long after she became the new executive director of the L.A. Conservancy. Photo courtesy Preservation Magazine.



Linda at the 1993 rally to save "The Town House." In response, the City Council approved Historic-Cultural Monument designation. Photo: L.A. Conservancy Archives.



Linda at a 1994 rally to save the historic McDonald's in Downey. The rally gained international publicity and the building was saved. Photo: L.A. Conservancy Archives.



Linda and Conservancy volunteers celebrate the Palace Theatre's 100th birthday in 2011 as part of Last Remaining Seats. Photo by Gary Leonard.



Carthay neighborhood residents celebrate their first step forward in receiving National Register status.
Photo: Carley Michelle Hildebrand/L.A. Conservancy

The National Register: Dusting off a Preservation Tool

By Adrian Scott Fine

In historic preservation, we generally have a limited set of available tools, strategies and incentives, though we are always exploring new ideas and approaches that can help.

One tool that has been around since the mid-1960s, National Register listing, is gaining new interest and relevance. Residents of Los Angeles area neighborhoods are re-discovering the power of state and national recognition, especially as it kicks in protections for historic places at the local level. Two recent examples are the Carthay neighborhoods and Beverly Fairfax.

Why National Register listing now?

The City of L.A. and several other cities in the county are unique in how they treat National Register-listed properties, affording more than just recognition but also some protections. **(For more on the National Register, see sidebar on page 5.)**

For instance, the City's Office of Historic Resources (OHR) reviews any National Register-listed property in L.A. when a building permit is applied for to ensure proposed work does no harm, and is in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

This type of protection is why residents of the Beverly Fairfax area pursued National Register status in 2018 for their neighbor-

hood. Deeply rooted in Jewish American history, the Beverly Fairfax Historic District boasts a collection of largely intact Period Revival multi-family residences. Following several major development projects that threatened the neighborhood, a volunteer committee of six residents formed the group Save Beverly Fairfax.

Seeking safeguards, potential incentives, and a streamlined process in comparison to attaining Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) status, the group set out to meet residents and owners, build relationships, and raise funds to hire a preservation consultant to prepare the National Register nomination.

Dale Kendall and Nora Wyman, who led Save Beverly Fairfax, were seeing rapid changes happening all around them. "We were concerned that the historic identity and unique character of Beverly Fairfax would soon disappear, and felt that it was imperative to preserve its cultural and architectural history for generations to come." In 2019, the Save Beverly Fairfax community effort earned a Conservancy Preservation Award.

Another reason neighborhoods are increasingly seeking out National Register status is to bolster against state legislation that may weaken local land use controls and existing protections. In recent years a series of legislative bills have been introduced and, in

some cases, passed to stimulate more housing. The problem is some bill language has proposed to supersede existing preservation tools, including HPOZ protections.

Senate Bill 9 is a good example. While allowing an owner to subdivide an existing single-family residential lot to create a duplex and/or new infill construction, the original bill language provided no protections for historic places. Thanks to the work of the California Preservation Foundation and Senator Toni G. Atkins, language was added that exempts this law from historic places listed at the local, statewide and national levels.

Fear of future state legislation is a big reason why the Carthay neighborhoods and residents are currently seeking National Register status to strengthen protections, even with their existing HPOZ status in place.

In January, the Carthay Neighborhoods Historic District (comprising Carthay Square, Carthay Circle and South Carthay) received unanimous support from the State Historical Resources Commission, the first step in the process. Now they await official National Register status and approval by the National Park Service and Keeper of the Register. When this occurs, they will join nearly thirty other National Register historic districts across L.A.

Like Save Beverly Fairfax, the Carthay effort involved many people and community groups, including the Conservancy serving as the fiscal sponsor for the fundraising phase of the project. Resident and one of the leaders for this effort is Walter Dominquez, who describes it as taking a village of "dedicated, caring and hardworking" residents to "watch over our heritage of incredible architectural gems." The Conservancy is here to help if your neighborhood is also interested in securing historic status!



Photo: Marcello Vavalà/L.A. Conservancy

What is the National Register of Historic Places?

Established in 1966 as part of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Register of Historic Places creates a federal list of places, recognized for local, state and/or national importance.

Once listed, certain properties are eligible to use financial incentives including the Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit and conservation easements. They will soon be able to also tap into a California Rehabilitation Tax Credit that goes into effect later this year.

Like the federal National Register, the state created the California Register of Historic Resources in 1988. Listings in the National Register receive an automatic listing in the California Register. Historic and archeological resources may also be nominated for the California Register directly.

In most places around the country National Register listing is primarily an honorific approach, broadening public awareness and acknowledging significant historic places but, in and of itself, not affording protections. The one caveat to this is if federal funds are involved. National Register status can trigger a required federal environmental review process known as Section 106, which involves the consideration of preservation alternatives and mitigation measures.

Real protections and required design review most often come through local laws and designation, known in the City of L.A. as either a Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) designation or the establishment of an Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ). The City of Los Angeles currently has thirty-five HPOZs and more than 1,200 designated HCMs.

Preservation Snapshots



Photo: Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy

Paul Revere Williams House

Great news! On February 16, the City Council voted unanimously in support of the Conservancy's pending Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM) nomination for the Paul Revere Williams House, making it official and now included as part of the City's list of designated HCMs. Thank you Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson for your support!

In August, 2021, the Conservancy submitted a HCM nomination for the house to the City's Cultural Heritage Commission to ensure the house is protected. *Thank you to Teresa Grimes for preparing the nomination for the Conservancy!*

For 30 years, Paul Revere Williams and his family lived at this simple Craftsman-style house at 1271 West 35th Street. While living there, Williams created some of his most famous designs: from lavish celebrity homes to the Golden State Mutual Life Insurance Building to the iconic Crescent Wing at The Beverly Hills Hotel.

Despite Williams being one of the most prominent architects in California, if not the country, racial housing covenants prevented him from designing his dream home, in his neighborhood of choice, until 1951.

This nomination is a great step forward for historic preservation: approximately less than 4% of the city's Historic-Cultural Monuments are related to Black history. This achievement helps increase representation of African American heritage in L.A.'s landmarks program.



Photo: Marcello Vavalà/L.A. Conservancy

The West L.A. Chili Bowl

Sad news to report on the preservation battle to save the Chili Bowl in West Los Angeles. On February 16, the iconic Chili Bowl sign was removed from the building, all but ensuring demolition of this rare, intact example of programmatic architecture. How did we get here?

On December 7, 2021, the City of Los Angeles Planning and Land Use Management Committee (PLUM) voted against the pending HCM nomination for the historic Chili Bowl in West Los Angeles. In the 3/1 vote, Councilmember Gil Cedillo voted in favor of the nomination but Councilmember Mike Bonin, who represents the district where Chili Bowl is located, refused to reconsider his objection. While the Conservancy prevailed in having the City Council rescind its previous vote and rehear this matter, due to violating the California Brown Act in June, we were ultimately not able to change Councilmember Bonin's position.

We believe this decision is shortsighted. A design review process could have been afforded to incorporate the Chili Bowl with new housing development, or potential relocation to a safe, new receiving site.

The rejection of the Chili Bowl as a Historic-Cultural Monument is a loss that only serves to erase more of L.A.'s increasingly endangered programmatic buildings. Los Angeles deserves something better: opportunities to celebrate our unique history, while also adding to it with new housing and adaptively reusing historic buildings.

The Crenshaw Women's Center

Feminists Joan Ellen Hoffman Robbins, Dorothy Bricker, and Marianne Yatrovsky opened the Crenshaw Women's Center in January 1970, making it the first center of its kind to be established in L.A. Using other women's centers across the country as models, the Crenshaw Women's Center offered a speakers' bureau, self-defense classes, abortion counseling, a volunteer switchboard, and a Women's Liberation School to teach women practical skills and encourage them to be more self-reliant. In just three action-packed years, the Crenshaw Women's Center generated an enormous amount of energy, pivotal change, and several firsts for the Women's Rights Movement.

The modest building at 1027 South Crenshaw Avenue is threatened with demolition, and is currently proposed to leave only a "site of" marker in its place. The Conservancy has spoken in opposition to this as it sets a dangerous precedent for historic preservation, diminishing the value and role of culturally significant historic places.

The Woman's Building

The Beaux Arts style building at 1727 N. Spring Street was designed in 1914 by Myron Hunt. But in 1973, it became home to the Feminist Studio Workshop (FSW) and was named "The Woman's Building" in honor of the creative achievements of women. For nearly 20 years, the Woman's Building fostered experimental lesbian and feminist art.

Created by and for women, FSW exemplified the impulse among feminists, including lesbians and bisexual women, to establish autonomous spaces outside of traditional, patriarchal institutions. Inside The Woman's Building's walls, cultural expression gave a voice and face

to political movements and allowed women to have full expression of self. The building was also the site of dances and parties, and the FSW used their resources and platform to support other women organizations like the Alcoholism Center for Women (ACW). In 2018, the Los Angeles City Council voted to declare it a Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM).

The Alcoholism Center for Women

Founded by Brenda Weathers, a lesbian activist and self-identified recovering alcoholic, and Lillene Field, a lesbian social worker, the Alcoholism Center for Women (ACW) was created by women for women. With a robust peer support program and ethos of "self-help," staff empowered participants with the tools, and community, to support them in their recovery process.

The program itself was structured so that participants themselves could help shape the program and care for the buildings: this not only created a more in-touch recovery process but was central to the ACW's mission of giving women agency over their lives. In the 1980s the program began a pioneering program led by and for Black and Latinx women.

In 1987, the buildings at 1147 and 1135 S. Alvarado Street were threatened with demolition to make way for a mini-mall. ACW organized a coalition of supporters, including the Conservancy, to landmark the buildings as HCMs and then purchase and rehabilitate them. Today, ACW clients continue to care for the buildings and grounds as part of their recovery.

Watch "**People + Places: '70s Women Spaces and Places**," on YouTube and learn more about these buildings and the women behind them: [youtube.com/laconservancy](https://www.youtube.com/laconservancy).

Membership Matters: An Interview with Alan Merson

Photo courtesy Alan Merson



Alan Merson has been a Conservancy member since 1990 and supports the organization in multiple ways. The Conservancy's Director of Development Liz Leshin explores why.

LL: How did you first get involved with the Conservancy?

AM: I became a member while working for Morley Builders, focusing on historic seismic upgrade projects. One was the Powell Library at UCLA which won a Conservancy Preservation Award.

LL: Why is it important to you to support preservation?

AM: My early introduction to preservation was on the playground of Carthay Circle Elementary School, watching a wrecking ball demolish the historic Carthay Circle Theatre. The earlier preservation awareness and neighborhood education begins, the better. Greater awareness helps people care more about the neighborhoods where they live, work, and go to school. I'm happy the Conservancy is doing this through current student programs.

LL: What compelled you to become a member of the Pillar Society (the Conservancy's planned giving group)?

AM: Los Angeles Conservancy has been included in my estate planning for many years. Once the Pillar Society was created, joining became a very easy decision as it recognizes and makes public what I was already doing. Hopefully, the public recognition will incentivize and motivate others to do the same.

LL: You generously provided a matching gift to the Conservancy's Preservation Advocacy Fund in 2021. What motivated you to do this?

AM: Supporting the matching gift initiative is a great way to leverage funds, which increases the effectiveness of the Los Angeles Conservancy's advocacy efforts.

LL: You have been a Conservancy member since 1990, working your way up to being a Granite Cornerstone member; why is membership support important?

AM: As a long-term member, my support has increased in multiple ways over the years, including supporting LAC's recent successful effort to nominate the Carthay neighborhood as a National Register Historic District. As property values rise, the tension between development and preservation also increases, as does the need to support the LAC and other preservation groups.

Read Alan's full interview at [tumblr.laconservancy.org](https://www.tumblr.com/laconservancy).

DECEMBER 16 / FEBRUARY 3 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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Learn how Art Deco became a defining architectural style in the city. **Saturdays, 10:15 a.m.**

Broadway Historic Theatre and Commercial District:

Explore L.A.'s magnificent movie palaces and learn about the Broadway's revitalization. **Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.**

Historic Downtown:

Take a ride on Angels Flight® and step inside Grand Central Market! **Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.**

Union Station:

See the beautiful architecture of this iconic L.A. landmark up close and personal. **Saturdays, 11:00 a.m.**



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March is Women's History Month! Consider supporting the many women-owned legacy businesses across Los Angeles County, this month and every month! Legacy businesses are neighborhood anchors, economic engines, and provide a shared sense of community pride. #ISupportLegacyBusinesses.



Photo by John Vincenti

Sona Chaandi

18307 Pioneer Boulevard
Artesia, CA 90701
(562) 402-0030

Established in 1980 by Mala Malani, Sona Chaandi specializes in authentic, Indian-made clothing for all occasions. Her 11,000-square-foot shop in the heart of Artesia's Little India boasts richly colored saris, jewelry, and offers services like eyebrow threading. Lose yourself browsing the aisles of the largest Indian boutique in the country. sonachaandi.com



Photo by Leslie T. Yelp

Needle Hearts

18900 1/2 Ventura Boulevard
Tarzana, CA 91356
(818) 344-6277

Charleene Feldman's needlepoint store has been in the same place in The Valley since 1970. Competitively priced, the shop boasts a large selection of canvases and the longtime staff can help with everything from thread selection to decorative stitching. Their needlepoint classes are also popular, with some Instagram-worthy projects. needlehearts.com



Photo via Google Street View

Super Pan Bakery

4951 S Central Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90011
(323) 681-8998

Originally located in Virgil Village, family-owned Super Pan was forced to close their doors after 20 years when the property changed ownership in 2018. Thankfully, Super Pan's story didn't end here. Owner Doña Elvia relocated the bakery to South Central. Find their pan dulce and other freshly baked breads and Guatemalan fare at their new location.