



# LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY NEWS



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*In September 2019, the former longtime residence of Hollywood actor Eva Gabor (a 1938 Colonial Revival-style home) was partially demolished without proper permits. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.*

## Los Angeles Needs Stronger Demolition Deterrents

by Adrian Scott Fine

Preservation is fundamentally about people and the stories told through historic places. If you no longer have the place, can you still tell the story? You can, but it won't be as real, tangible, or relatable if you can't see, touch, and experience the place in which the story took place.

Demolition is an ultimate and irreversible loss. Over time, we quickly forget a lost building and its stories ever existed. This is especially true for subsequent generations that will never have the opportunity to learn this history. It is the reason why the Conservancy works so hard to develop alternatives and press for ways to keep and reuse older and historic buildings.

Not all demolitions are the same, especially those that occur without first securing proper permits and approvals. The City of Los Angeles is clear, stating in its building code that "no person shall demolish any building or structure unless said person has obtained a permit." In late September 2019, the owner of 100 Delfern Drive in Holmby Hills began demolition without the necessary permits in hand. This 1938 Colonial Revival-style house was once the longtime residence of Hollywood actor Eva Gabor. Though the City's Department of Building and Safety issued a stop-work order, the damage was already done with the front of the house partially demolished.

This demolition was especially egregious as the house was currently pending review by the City's Cultural Heritage Commission as a potential Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM).

## Donate to the Preservation Advocacy Fund

Former Conservancy board member Beth Edwards Harris is generously **matching all gifts to the Preservation Advocacy Fund through December 31**, up to \$30,000. Your gift directly supports our efforts to preserve L.A. County's architectural heritage through:

- **Historic-Cultural Monument nominations**, which offer protection once a building is designated;
- **Encouraging local governments to protect historic places** through our Preservation Report Card;
- **Highlighting and helping legacy businesses** by providing technical advice and support.

These are just a few ways in which your tax-deductible gift to the Preservation Advocacy Fund enables us to respond quickly to urgent preservation issues.

Please join Beth Edwards Harris and double your gift to the Preservation Advocacy Fund today by donating online at [laconservancy.org/paf](http://laconservancy.org/paf), returning the enclosed envelope or contacting Development Manager Gabriela Philo at [gphilo@laconservancy.org](mailto:gphilo@laconservancy.org) or (213) 430-4204.

Thank you!

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# LOS ANGELES CONSERVANCY

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

### Saturdays, November

**ABOVE THE SKYLINE:** For a limited time, our seasonal Modern Skyline tour includes access to OUE Skyspace at the top of the U.S. Bank Tower and a ride on the Skyslide (4 p.m.; \$30 members and youth 17 and under; \$35 general public; [laconservancy.org/above-skyline](http://laconservancy.org/above-skyline))

### November 7, 21

**A WOMAN'S PLACE: UNION STATION & CHINATOWN:** Back by popular demand, this special tour explores the history of two beloved sites through the stories of women (6 p.m.; \$15 members, \$20 general public, \$10 youth 17 and under; [laconservancy.org/womans-place](http://laconservancy.org/womans-place))

### November 21 December 6, 13, 20

**HOLIDAYS AT UNION STATION:** Explore this L.A. landmark while it's decked out in its holiday finest! Plus, stay after the tour for Union Station's Cocoa Concert series (5 p.m.; \$10 members and youth 17 and under, \$15 general public; [laconservancy.org/holiday-union-station](http://laconservancy.org/holiday-union-station))

### Thursdays, December

**HOLIDAY HIGHLIGHTS:** The wait is over: our popular holiday tour returns in December! This 90-minute tour brings together some of our favorite downtown buildings, such as the Millennium Biltmore Hotel, the Central Library, and The CalEdison, decorated for the holidays (5:30 p.m.; \$10 members and youth 17 and under, \$15 general public; [laconservancy.org/holiday](http://laconservancy.org/holiday))

## Conservancy President & CEO Recognized as AIA|LA Presidential Honoree

The American Institute of Architects Los Angeles (AIA|LA) recently recognized Los Angeles Conservancy president & CEO Linda Dishman as a 2019 Presidential Honoree at their annual Design Awards program.

"The Honorary AIA|LA award recognizes a person who is not an architect but whose contributions to architecture have proven to be substantial for the betterment of the built environment," explains Carlo Caccavale, Hon., AIA|LA Executive Director. "Based on this description, the AIA|LA board of directors could not find a better person to embody this description than Linda. We all admire her relentless activism in protecting our most meaningful heritage and appreciate the many results achieved by the L.A. Conservancy under her leadership for landmarking buildings that would have been razed otherwise."

At the helm since 1992, Linda has expanded the Conservancy's reach in recognizing, preserving, and revitalizing L.A. County's architectural and cultural resources. Congratulations, Linda!



Photo by Shari Belafonte.

# Volunteering Has Its Benefits

by Bruce Scottow

If we were asked to describe a Los Angeles Conservancy volunteer in just one word, it would be “curious.” Our volunteers are very curious people. Case in point, what Conservancy volunteer could pass by a historic building without wondering “When was it built? Who lived or worked here? Where were they from? Who occupies the space now? How has the use of the building changed over time? What style is it and who designed it?”

Our volunteers know that the Conservancy’s programs—such as Last Remaining Seats, our weekly and special walking tours, youth programs, conferences and seminars, and presentations, book-signings, and award ceremonies—often open doors to buildings, places, or people that can enrich their knowledge, answer their questions, and satisfy their curiosities. That’s why they become volunteers.

As a volunteer, one month may find you leading a tour through a newly-renovated historic hotel lobby or checking in guests eager to explore a private, Mid-Century Modern home. The next month you could be ushering patrons down the aisles of a historic movie palace during our annual Last Remaining Seats film series. And, if you’re a Conservancy walking tour docent, any month of the year might see you leading a group of tourgoers—most of them just as curious as you—for an exploration of historic sites in downtown Los Angeles, a ride on Angels Flight, or an excursion up to the top of City Hall or the U.S. Bank Tower for

a panoramic view of the city. Other volunteers might prefer behind-the-scenes roles, such as researching the history of a former railroad station, diving into the career of a long-forgotten architect, or searching online for photos or documents relating to historic buildings.

But are those options enough to quench the curious nature of our volunteers? Not likely!

That’s why we’ve declared each November our “Volunteer Enrichment Month.” While we don’t hesitate to offer our volunteers special events whenever we can, it’s during November when we schedule a rich menu of special events tailored just for them and their guests. Each event is offered to pique their interest, ranging from private walking tours, guest speaker engagements, or rare “behind the scenes” access to familiar historic sites. Some of these events are suggested by the volunteers themselves, through special contacts or insights they have. In all cases, these events are provided to enrich the knowledge of our volunteers and to satisfy their curiosity of the built environment around us all.

So there you have it: Volunteer Enrichment Month. It’s our way of saying thanks to our volunteers for giving us their time and talents throughout the year.

Are you curious to learn more? Visit [laconservancy.org/volunteer](http://laconservancy.org/volunteer) for more information and to sign up.



Volunteers enjoyed food and cocktails at the Freehand Los Angeles in downtown L.A. during our 2018 Volunteer Appreciation Party. Photo by Larry Underhill.

## Call for HPOZ Board Members

Do you live in one of Los Angeles’ thirty-five Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs)? The City’s Office of Historic Resources (OHR) is looking for Angelenos interested in serving their communities as HPOZ board members.

The HPOZ program aims to identify and protect the distinctive architectural and cultural resources of L.A.’s historic neighborhoods. In neighborhoods designated as HPOZs, all exterior work, including landscaping, alterations, additions, and new construction, is subject to review. Each district has a Preservation Plan with design guidelines and an HPOZ Board that reviews proposed work.

While most positions must be filled by residents of the HPOZ, there may be a spot for you if you don’t live in the HPOZ.

The OHR accepts candidates for all HPOZ boards on an ongoing basis, but the following ten boards are most in need of new members:

- Adams-Normandie
- Angelino Heights
- Hancock Park
- The Harbor: Banning Park and Vinegar Hill
- Harvard Heights-Western Heights
- Highland Park-Garvanza
- Lincoln Heights-El Sereno Berkshire
- Pico-Union
- Spaulding Square
- The Valley (Balboa Highlands, Stonehurst, and Van Nuys)

For more information on the City’s HPOZ program, visit [planning.lacity.org](http://planning.lacity.org) or contact Melissa Alofaituli at [melissa.alofaituli@lacity.org](mailto:melissa.alofaituli@lacity.org) or (213) 847-3644.



*The Lawrence and Martha Joseph Residence and Apartments, an important example of Storybook architecture in Los Angeles, are protected from demolition and incompatible alterations thanks to an easement held by the Conservancy. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.*

## Easements Demystified

by Adrian Scott Fine

Saving historic places rarely takes a one-size-fits-all approach; the Conservancy most often applies a different set of tools and strategies in each case. While much of our work typically involves years of effort nudging a project toward a preservation outcome, the best way to permanently save a historic resource is through a conservation easement. An easement is a legal agreement recorded on the title of the property that runs in perpetuity with the deed, regardless of the owner.

### Easements in a Nutshell

An easement is a private or partial legal interest transferred by a property owner to a qualified preservation nonprofit organization (in this case, the Conservancy) or government entity. The owner continues to own the property but transfers the specific set of rights represented by the easement to the easement-holding organization. As the easement-holder, the Conservancy is responsible for monitoring the property's condition, reviewing any proposed changes to the

property, and ensuring that any alterations conform to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (nationally recognized and widely used preservation standards).

Since accepting our first conservation easement in 1981, we have worked to ensure long-term protection and preservation for some of the most visible landmarks throughout Greater Los Angeles. Easements come to us in various ways, sometimes as a result of an advocacy effort. When the 1931 Pellissier Building and Wiltern Theatre faced demolition in 1979, the Conservancy helped to delay demolition by negotiating with the City, providing a feasibility study for alternative use, and holding a massive public rally. Backed by hundreds of supporters, the effort led to the Conservancy's first major victory. Developer Wayne Ratkovich rescued the building by purchasing it, completing an extensive sensitive restoration, and donating an easement on the property to the Conservancy.

### Why People Donate Easements

Many owners of historic landmarks look to conservation easements because they provide even stronger protection than traditional landmark or historic district designation. Many local preservation ordinances allow for only a delay, not denial, in the demolition of a designated landmark, as is currently the case in Los Angeles. Easements also are not subject to political issues that can threaten designated properties.

While many owners have the best intentions and wishes for their historic properties, future owners may not share the same values. As we have seen all too often, it is risky to assume that future owners will continue to preserve a historic structure, even if they voice such intentions. Residences, especially from the mid-twentieth-century, can be particularly vulnerable. As original or longtime owners move or pass away, the properties they stewarded for decades can be seen as dated, in need of too much repair, or simply inferior to the development potential of the lot.

An easement requires both current and

future owners to properly maintain the property, and it provides a legal means of enforcement. Because easements are recorded on the title for the property and run in perpetuity, regardless of the owner, they serve as a vital tool to protect historic places for future generations.

Some people donate easements to take advantage of potential economic incentives. For qualified projects, an owner may be able to take a charitable contribution deduction from their federal income taxes for the value of the conservation easement, if the contribution meets Internal Revenue Service requirements.

The value of an easement for the purposes of the federal tax deduction varies by property, based on a qualified appraisal performed by a qualified appraiser. The property's development potential can also affect the easement value. For instance, properties that theoretically could otherwise be redeveloped at a much higher density might have a higher value of the easement de-

duction. Anyone donating an easement should obtain solid tax and legal advice specific to their circumstances.

Conservation easement properties are generally privately owned by individuals or organizations who wish to see them preserved, not harmed, and are outstanding stewards. Though ready if necessary, the Conservancy has not yet needed to take legal action to defend and enforce any of our easements.

## Every Easement Tells a Story

Most of the Conservancy's easements cover only the exterior of protected buildings, typically only the façades. Depending on the owner's intent and the particular property, an easement might be much

more detailed and specific. The Lawrence and Martha Joseph Residence and Apartments is a good example. Built between 1946 and 1970, this is one of the most significant examples of Storybook architecture in L.A. Nicknamed "the Hobbit Houses," the eclectic cottages were designed by Lawrence Joseph, a former Walt Disney Studios artist who later worked on classified aircraft design projects for the Lockheed "Skunk Works" facility in Burbank. The Conservancy holds an easement protecting the original landscaping, as well as the exterior façade and interior features created by Joseph.

Not all of the Conservancy's easement properties are located in L.A. In Downey, the Conservancy holds a façade easement on the Casa de Parley Johnson, a two-story Monterey-style residence designed and built in 1927 by noted architect Roland Coate. Built for Parley Johnson, a prominent local citrus farmer, and his wife, Geline "Gypsy" Johnson, the home and its gardens were originally situated in the center of the

Johnsons' fifty acres of orange groves. Surrounded by whitewashed walls, the house features balconies and patios integrating the interior spaces with the outdoors. Parley Johnson's widow Gypsy lived in the house until her death in 1986, when it was bequeathed to the Assistance League of Downey.

Each of the Conservancy's easement properties has its own unique story and significance. Thanks to the protection provided by easements, these stories can continue to inspire us for years to come. To see photos of these properties and learn about others, and to learn more about the Conservancy's conservation easement program, visit

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



The Conservancy holds a façade easement on the Casa de Parley Johnson in Downey. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.

## Preservation Snapshots

In August 2019, the University of Southern California (USC) completed a \$315 million renovation of the **Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum**. In addition to restoring historic features, the project added new seating, suites, and a press box.

Designed by Parkinson & Parkinson, the Coliseum was constructed between 1921 and 1923 as a tribute to local World War I veterans. The site holds national and international significance as the centerpiece of the 1932 and 1984 Summer Olympic Games and is a designated National Historic Landmark.

The Conservancy worked closely with USC to ensure compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

In October, Governor Gavin Newsom signed **Senate Bill 451** into law, an important bill that creates a statewide historic rehabilitation tax credit. Specifically, the legislation:

- Creates a state 20% tax credit for the rehabilitation of historic structures and a 25% tax credit for certain projects, such as affordable housing;
- Enhances state tax revenues through increased economic activity, employment, and wages;
- Increases local revenues through increased property values, sales tax, and heritage tourism; and
- Establishes a review process to ensure that development projects supported by this tax credit result in a payback to the State through increased state and local tax collections and jobs.

Thank you to everyone who wrote to their representatives and signed our petition to the Governor to get this bill passed! Plus, a huge thanks to our friends at the California Preservation Foundation for taking the lead on this years-long effort to pass this legislation.

Stay up to date on all of our issues, by subscribing to our email list at [laconservancy.org/subscribe](http://laconservancy.org/subscribe)

## Demolition continued from page 1

Councilmember Paul Koretz initiated the nomination and the full city council voted to support this effort in early September, prompting an emergency stay on any demolition activity and major alterations.

While the house at 100 Delfern Road is important for its association with Eva Gabor, its story is more than that alone. It was designed by Paul R. Williams, one of our pre-eminent architects whose career spanned almost six decades, from 1923 to 1973. Williams achieved success where others failed, breaking through racial barriers and becoming the first African American member (and later, Fellow) of the American Institute of Architects (AIA).

The Gabor house now sits with its grand portico and front details in a pile of strewn debris while awaiting an outcome on its potential HCM status. This is an especially sad commentary on how some consider older and historic homes only for their location and lot size. While not every older home needs to be preserved, far too many are needlessly thrown away without considering alternatives or the impacts of out-of-scale new construction on adjacent homes and neighborhoods.

While it is still too soon to know what will happen with the Gabor house, other historic homes are currently under demolition threat—or have already been demolished—including more than a few designed by Williams. An example is the 1938 Tudor Revival-style Gladys Collins Lehman house in Toluca Lake. Most recently advertised for sale as an “utterly enchanting home” by “‘architect to the stars,’ Paul Williams,” the home was demolished in August 2019, despite its owners acquiring a permit to remodel only and add onto the existing house. Unfortunately, these are not the first nor likely the last houses by Paul R. Williams to be demolished.

### Guardrails for Demolition

This is a familiar story in Los Angeles, with demolition becoming the norm. Some may recall the Art Deco Mole-Richardson building, in Hollywood at La Brea and Willoughby, and its surprise demolition in 2014. In a period of only five days, a demolition permit was applied for and issued. The community remained unaware of the permit until



*In late October 2019, the 1927 Tudor Revival house at 361 N. Citrus Ave. in Los Angeles was demolished, causing shockwaves amongst residents. Its new owner applied for a demolition permit on the day of closing and did not provide adequate notice to the public. Photo by Adrian Scott Fine/L.A. Conservancy.*

the building was razed months later. At that time, the City lacked a process or requirement for public notice of demolitions.

Through our efforts and those of Hollywood Heritage, the loss of the Mole-Richardson building prompted the City to approve the Demolition Notification Ordinance, a citywide policy that requires public disclosure of demolitions for structures older than forty-five years.

Established in late 2014 and amended in 2018, property owners must inform abutting neighbors and their councilmember’s office of any planned demolition activity and post a visible public notice on the property. This process creates a thirty-day window for stakeholders to potentially negotiate preservation alternatives. This could include nominating a property for HCM designation, as has occurred

for other threatened historic properties since this ordinance went into effect. We owe many thanks to Councilmember Mitch O’Farrell for leading this effort toward passage.

The City’s “scorched earth” policy is another tool available to discourage illegal demolitions. If a building is found to have been demolished illegally, the City can impose penalties, including monetary fines and a five-year

construction moratorium on the site. Though too late to save the building, it can act as a deterrent to demolition. For instance, in 2013, the owner of an early 1920s Spanish Colonial Revival house in the Whitley Heights Historic Preservation Overlay Zone (HPOZ) tore down the property in its entirety, despite having been issued a permit for interior remodel work only. In 2014, the owner of the San Marino Villas demolished the Mediterranean Revival apartment building and HCM without any permits. In both of these cases, the City invoked its scorched earth policy, limiting development on

the site.

In May, Councilmember O’Farrell introduced a motion to revisit the City’s current tools to address unpermitted demolition, remodels, and additions. Some offenders factor in the penalties for violations as a cost of doing business and proceed even without proper permits because the potential for profit is too enticing. With the problem only escalating, the Conservancy strongly supports this effort. We look forward to seeing what comes of this motion.

If you suspect a historic home in your neighborhood is threatened with demolition, give us a call at (213) 623-2489. •

**Help preserve Los Angeles County’s cultural and architectural heritage with a gift to the Preservation Advocacy Fund.** See page 1 for details.

# AUG 16 / OCT 15 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.

## GRANITE

(\$2,500 - \$4,999)

Linda Brettler  
Cooper Design  
Space  
Richard and Eileen  
Garson  
Gilmore Associates  
Pouring with Heart

Brad and  
Cindy Buckner  
Rick and Adele Burke  
Karen and  
Robin Constine  
Madeline Cripe  
Susan Flores  
Michael and  
Joy Forbes  
Diane and

## LIMESTONE

(\$1,000 - \$2,499)

James Arnone  
JoAnne and  
Wade Bourne  
James and  
Delia Camp  
City National Bank  
Clark Construction  
Group  
Gruen Associates  
Hackman Capital  
Partners  
William Handley  
MATT Construction  
DJ Moore and  
Nick Hentschel  
Park & Velayos LLP  
Monica Salinas and  
Oswaldo Borraez  
Howard Sherman and  
J. Gregg Houston  
Corky Hale Stoller  
and Mike Stoller  
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Jann Williams

Jack Garlock  
Jeanne Gerson  
Annelle Grajeda  
Kathy Henkel  
Bret Israel  
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John Kaliski and  
Lorraine Wild  
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Mark Pogachefsky  
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Rosemary Simmons  
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(\$100 - \$249)

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Jackie Brearley  
Marina Busatto  
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Ray Johnson  
David Falconer  
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M. Alfred and  
Marilee Karlsen  
Teresa Kennedy and  
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David Nufer  
Gordon Quan  
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Katie Simonton  
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George and  
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Mary Alice Toomey  
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Jane Madelon  
Anthony  
Russell Avery  
Ronald A. Biduk

# Pillar Society Member Spotlight: Janis Ashley

by Gabriela Philo

We had the pleasure of interviewing Janis Ashley, one of our longstanding volunteer docents, and member of the Conservancy's legacy giving group, the Pillar Society.

## What compelled you to become a member of the Conservancy?

"After taking tours with the Conservancy, I became a member and a docent. I am still both. I really enjoy leading weekly walking tours – my specialty is the Art Deco tour - and helping at the special tour events, like the Fashion District tour, the Chinatown tour, and the *From Goose to Google* benefit. I also can't forget Last Remaining Seats, which is a great event both for classic movies and historic theaters."

## Which neighborhood do you live in and what makes it full of character and distinct?

"I was born in downtown L.A. at the Methodist Hospital of Southern California. I currently live in Santa Clarita which derives its character through its history. It is home to silent film star William S. Hart's retirement home and to the first commercially successful oil refinery. In 1929, it was the site of the Great Saugus train robbery. In 1876, Charles Crocker drove a gold spike with a silver hammer that joined the rails linking L.A. to San Francisco."

## Why did you become a member of the Pillar Society?

"I am a Pillar Society member because I really believe in the work the Conservancy does to protect the built environment of L.A. So many amazing and historical buildings have been torn down, and buildings tell the story of L.A. With each lost building a bit of the city's history also disappeared."

## Every year, the Los Angeles Conservancy holds an annual luncheon for Pillar Society members. What did you enjoy about it?

"I was able to attend my first Pillar Society luncheon last year, which was held at the historic 1922 Tam O'Shanter pub. It was an opportunity to meet other members who share a belief in the Conservancy's mission. The luncheon was held at one of my favorite restaurants— where I got engaged!"



Photo by Douglas Hill.

## Become a Pillar Society Member and Join Us On December 2

Just as pillars support buildings, members of the Conservancy's Pillar Society substantially support our efforts to protect L.A.'s historic and culturally significant places.

The Conservancy established the Pillar Society to acknowledge those who have made plans to leave the organization a legacy gift in their wills or estate plans. These gifts make a significant and lasting contribution to our cultural heritage by allowing us to continue our mission to preserve and revitalize L.A.'s architectural and cultural resources for generations to come.

If you've remembered the Conservancy in your will or estate plan, or are planning to do so, you are already a member of the Pillar Society and we invite you to join us at a special wine tasting and luncheon at the historic San Antonio Winery on Tuesday, December 3!

To learn more about the Conservancy's Pillar Society and event, contact Director of Development Liz Leshin at (213) 430-4213 or [lleshin@laconservancy.org](mailto:lleshin@laconservancy.org), or visit our website [laconservancy.org/pillar-society](http://laconservancy.org/pillar-society).



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# weekly walking tours

DETAILS AND RESERVATIONS AT  
[laconservancy.org/tours](http://laconservancy.org/tours)

**ANGELINO HEIGHTS**  
first Saturday of the  
month, 9:45 a.m.

**BROADWAY THEATRE  
DISTRICT**  
Saturdays, 10 a.m.

**MILLENNIUM  
BILTMORE HOTEL**  
Sundays, 2 p.m.

**ART DECO**  
Thursdays, 11 a.m.  
Saturdays, 10 a.m.

**HISTORIC DOWNTOWN**  
Wednesdays, 11 a.m.  
Saturdays, 10 a.m.

**UNION STATION**  
Saturdays, 10 a.m.

CUSTOMIZED GROUP TOURS AVAILABLE BY SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT