



National Trust for Historic Preservation
**Where Women
Made History**
Telling the full American story.



**LOS ANGELES
CONSERVANCY**

A Toolkit for Change: The Los Angeles Women's Landmarks Project

The Importance of Outreach & Partnerships

Expanding your preservation practice to be more inclusive and representative increases your work's impact, effectiveness, and relevance while creating opportunities to grow your network of partners, supporters, and resources in ways that you didn't think were possible. But keep in mind that a sincere commitment to outreach is essential to doing this work well. Your success depends on whether both traditional and non-traditional preservation partners see value in your project, support your goals, and feel empowered to participate on their own terms. Here are a few suggestions that can help you strengthen your existing relationships and cultivate new long-term partnerships.

For more information about the power of partnerships, see article from **The Alliance Review: *Something We All Can Agree On—Women's History is Our History*** in the Partnerships section of the toolkit.

Your Network is Bigger Than You Think

Start by making a list of who you know and work with on a somewhat regular basis. While you certainly can do this on your own, it is more effective as a small group exercise with at least a few of your colleagues. Include on the list:

- Those that you think of as traditional preservation partners: commissions and staff, historical societies, preservation non-profits, or advocacy organizations
- Less obvious and perhaps more infrequent collaborators: neighborhood groups, consultants and architects, house museums or local history museums, representatives of local historic districts, Main Street organizations, elected officials, political leaders, etc.
- Content experts such as women's studies or ethnic studies specialists.

Identify the group or organization, at least one person you know (even if you don't know them very well) and their contact information.

Now review the list with your colleagues, divide it up, and make a plan to intentionally reach out to each person on the list as you have time. It doesn't matter if you can only connect with or meet one person every month. That is still valuable progress. Invite them to meet with you to

introduce your project and its goals, and genuinely welcome their questions, ideas, and participation. You'll be surprised by how much people appreciate your consideration and are excited to join you in bringing more attention, recognition, and respect to women's accomplishments!

Who Do You Want to Know?

It's been our experience that the LA Women's Landmarks project opened many doors which otherwise would have remained closed. Be creative and ambitious in your thinking about who would be interested in partnering with you and who you would like to build relationships with.

For instance, **libraries and institutions with archives** usually are willing to support efforts that make good use of their collections for public benefit.

Community colleges, local colleges and universities often have programs or specific courses dedicated to history, public history, cultural heritage or preservation, women's studies, oral histories, or ethnic studies. Don't be shy about approaching instructors to ask if they lead **local research projects with students**, or if there are opportunities to work with **students as paid interns**. Both can be excellent ways to incorporate the perspectives and priorities of a younger generation into your project and your own thinking.

Local museums are another excellent potential partner since they may have **collections, exhibitions, catalogues, curators, or archivists** with a focus on women's history and other underrepresented histories that will be valuable sources of information for you. Alternately, they may be interested in collaborating with you on public programs that feature these histories.

Also keep in mind that women frequently played prominent roles in the creation or preservation of **public parks and gardens, public artworks, and arts and cultural institutions**. Consider attending one of their events or reaching out to them with the shared goal of researching and highlighting the foundational roles that women played in your community's well-known public institutions.

The Best Ideas Usually Aren't Your Own

We found that our network grew exponentially thanks to the many suggestions people generously shared with us during our meetings. Ask for their recommendations of groups, individuals, and professionals that they believe will be interested in and aligned with your project. You may already have connections to some people they recommend, but many will be new to you and can meaningfully expand your network in unexpected ways.

Don't make the mistake of dismissing a potential contact just because you don't see an obvious connection at first. Those more tangential contacts can become some of your most creative and thought-provoking partners! They bring a different perspective and force you to challenge your preconceptions.

These meetings also are the perfect time to solicit ideas for places and stories of women's history or other underrecognized histories that are important to your new contacts and the

communities they care about. By hosting a series of these informal, open conversations, our new collaborators introduced us to the stories of *hundreds* of women of all backgrounds and identities who had shaped Los Angeles. It was their suggestions that formed the foundation of our extensive database of new potential Historic-Cultural Monuments centered on diverse women's histories.

The Power of Respect

This is arguably the most important piece of advice we can offer. You are asking people to be generous with their time, their knowledge, their contacts, and their ideas. You must be gracious and respectful of this gift.

Listen to what they have to say carefully, with humility, and demonstrate that you are open to learning from them. Respond to their generosity with your own. Offer to meet at their convenience, ideally in person over coffee or lunch, if possible, to make a more personal connection and give them your full attention.

Your goal is to build a relationship and build trust around your shared interests, not to extract information. Commit to valuing the contributions of groups and individuals who choose to partner with you in a substantive way (providing their knowledge in an oral history, developing or leading a program or activity you, student interns assisting with research or a designation) by providing them with honoraria or fair compensation for their time, information, and expertise.

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