

## 2007: THE PRESERVATION YEAR IN REVIEW

2007 was an eventful year for historic preservation in Los Angeles, as the Office of Historic Resources (OHR) completed its first full year as a staffed office in the Department of City Planning. Among the OHR's key milestones included the following:

**Certified Local Government Status:** The OHR submitted Los Angeles' long-awaited application to become a "Certified Local Government" (CLG) for historic preservation; the City's CLG status was approved by the State Office of Historic Preservation and National Park Service in April.

**CLG Grant:** The OHR submitted and was awarded its first-ever CLG grant application, to support the public outreach program for the SurveyLA historic resources survey (see pp. 4 and 6).

**Mills Act:** The OHR processed a record 68 Mills Act Historical Property Contracts, providing property tax relief to owners of historic buildings. Last year's ap-

provals have brought the City's total Mills Act program to 382 properties. Of the 68 new contracts, 55 were for single-family homes, including 40 homes that are Contributing Structures in one of Los Angeles' 22 Historic Preservation Overlay Zones (HPOZs).



The Seki Home in the West Adams Terrace

HPOZ, one of the 68 new Mills Act properties.

**HPOZ Preservation Plans:** The OHR has worked closely with the Department of City Planning's Community Plan Bureau and HPOZ boards in completing HPOZ Preservation Plans for Hancock Park and Lincoln Heights, and initiating new Preservation Plans for Melrose Hill, Highland Park, Miracle Mile North, Adams-Normandie, and Lafayette Square.

**HPOZ Litigation:** The OHR has been assisting in the City's response to the first-ever legal challenges against the City's historic districts, in the Windsor Square and Hancock Park HPOZs. The Windsor Square HPOZ was reapproved by City Council in April, with a revised environmental clearance, and the Hancock Park HPOZ was similarly reapproved by the City Planning

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## OHR SEEKS PUBLIC COMMENTS ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO CITY'S PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

During 2008, the Office of Historic Resources and the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) will be pursuing a significant overhaul of the City's historic preservation ordinance – proposing important changes aimed at strengthening demolition review procedures, clarifying criteria for historic designation, and enhancing notification of private property owners.

The City of Los Angeles' Cultural Heritage Ordinance, originally approved by the City Council in 1962, created the procedures for the designation and protection of significant Los Angeles buildings and sites as Historic-Cultural Monuments. While the Ordinance has undergone several minor,

procedural modifications, it has never been comprehensively updated to give our City a state-of-the-art historic preservation program.

OHR staff has conducted considerable research on other cities' ordinances and has utilized guidance publications from the State Office of Historic Preservation to propose ordinance language that reflects "best practices" nationally. Among the proposed changes include the following:

**Increase number of Cultural Heritage Commissioners from five to seven**

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Commission and is awaiting final Council action in early 2008.

The OHR also officially launched SurveyLA, the Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey Project, including the following activities:

**Citywide Historic Context Statement:** The OHR conducted a national search and selected a talented consultant team, led by the Jones and Stokes, to prepare Los Angeles' first citywide historic context statement – the framework for the survey fieldwork to come – and a pioneering Field Guide to Survey Evaluation, which are now under development, for completion during 2008.

**Survey Plan:** The OHR completed a detailed Survey Plan, building on the research of the Getty Conservation Institute, to guide the City's implementation of SurveyLA.

**Community Outreach Program:** The OHR has developed a comprehensive community outreach and public participation program for SurveyLA, including a volunteer Speakers Bureau program, a SurveyLA video in production for LA Cityview, Channel 35, the SurveyLA web site, and coordinated outreach to Certified Neighborhood Councils.

**OHR/Survey Project Web Sites.** The Office of Historic

Resources web site ([www.preservation.lacity.org](http://www.preservation.lacity.org)) and the SurveyLA web site ([www.surveyla.org](http://www.surveyla.org)) were launched publicly in October.

**CRA Surveys:** The OHR has worked closely with the Community Redevelopment Agency to coordinate new historic resources surveys in Boyle Heights, Wilshire Center/Koreatown, Hollywood, Westlake/MacArthur Park, and the Central Avenue corridor, all in accordance with the goals and methodologies of SurveyLA.

**Pilot Survey Selection:** The OHR has selected three pilot surveys for initiation and completion during 2008 to test the methodology of the citywide survey work to come (see p. 4 for more information).

The past year was also a busy one for the Cultural Heritage Commission. The Commission and the City Council approved 41 new Historic-Cultural Monuments – an increase from 28 in 2006. Among the notable resources designated as Historic-Cultural Monuments are Los Tiempos (the Norman and Dorothy Chandler estate in Windsor Square), the Higgins Building at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Main Streets downtown, the Boyle Hotel in Boyle Heights, the National Biscuit Company building in downtown's industrial district, the Barry Building (home of Dutton's bookstore in Brentwood), the Bakman House and Weddington House (two early San Fernando Valley homes), and Hollywood's Mayfair Apartments.

## MAYOR APPOINTS NEW CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMISSIONERS

The end of 2007 brought significant changes to the Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC), with two new appointments by Mayor Villaraigosa to the Commission to replace longtime commissioners Mary Klaus-Martin and Alma Carlisle.



New Commissioner **Oz Scott** is an accomplished and award-winning television, theatrical and motion picture director with over two decades of experience, having directed hundreds of television episodes along with dozens of stage productions, made-for-TV movies, and motion pictures. Scott's credits include *The Jeffersons*, *Archie Bunker's Place*, *Hill Street Blues*, *L.A. Law*, *Picket Fences*, *JAG*, *Soul Food*, *CSI*, and *Ed*. In addition, Scott directed both the video that introduced Jesse Jackson to the 1988 Democratic Convention and the Nelson Mandela Rally for Freedom at the Los Angeles Coliseum in 1990. He holds a Master of Fine Arts degree from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. A resident of Sherman Oaks, Scott has a longtime personal interest in architecture and enjoys scouting unique Los Angeles historic locations for his productions.



**Roella H. Louie** is coming back to the City of Los Angeles after a long record as a City employee. Louie has previously served as Deputy Director of the Workforce Development Division in the Community Development Department, and from 1989 to 2001 was Director of Public Art and Cultural Planning for the Cultural Affairs Department, where she created the "Percent for Arts Expenditure" program, which allocates one percent of private construction costs to public arts improvement. Louie holds a Master in Arts Administration degree from California State University at Dominguez Hills, and is a native of Los Angeles, currently living in Westwood Hills. She previously served on the CHC during 2004-2005, as an appointee of former Mayor Hahn.

The staff of the OHR wishes to recognize and thank Mary Klaus-Martin for her seven years of service to the CHC under three mayors, including nearly four years as a diligent and effective Commission President. We also thank Alma Carlisle, who brought a strong professional grounding in architectural history to the Commission over the past five years.

## PRESERVATION ORDINANCE CHANGES (CONTINUED)

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**Issue:** As a Certified Local Government for preservation, the Commission must have a required level of professional expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, architectural history, planning and related fields. A slightly larger commission size would allow access to a broader cross-section of professional expertise, while still ensuring diverse community representation on the panel.

### Spell out designation criteria for Historic-Cultural Monuments (HCM)

**Issue:** While the current ordinance does contain criteria for designation, they are ambiguously buried as a lengthy paragraph labeled “Definition of Monument,” rather than defined as clear, separate criteria to evaluate eligibility. The new ordinance would generally retain the existing language, but would clearly label these provisions as criteria and differentiate them in four numbered sections that would parallel California Register and National Register criteria. The major substantive change in this section is to require that designated HCMs retain their architectural or design integrity; the current ordinance is silent on the issue of integrity, often leading to confusion as to how the Commission should evaluate altered structures.

### Change procedures for temporary stay of demolition to allow a property owner to be notified of the initial HCM nomination hearing

**Issue:** The current ordinance does not allow for notification of the property owner that an HCM nomination has been filed until after the Commission holds an initial hearing to take the nomination officially under consideration. Many property owners therefore feel “blindsided” – particularly by the realization that they were unable to participate in an initial public hearing affecting their own property. The delay in owner notification is currently necessitated because the “stay” preventing demolition or alteration of a resource does not go into effect until the Commission officially acts to take the matter under consideration. On several occasions (most recently for one of the first homes built in Van Nuys), property owners have demolished a building before it could be considered for potential HCM status.

Under the new proposal, the stay of demolition would begin when an application is deemed complete by staff and scheduled for the Commission’s hearing, rather than after initial Commis-

sion consideration. While this would lengthen the “stay” period by 10-20 days, it would provide for the ability to notify property owners of the initial hearing without triggering a pre-emptive demolition, and provide more appropriate due process.

### Add provision for Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) review for all designated historic resources

**Issue:** Today, the CHC may only “object” or “not object” to the issuance of a permit for demolition or alteration, and its objection period is limited to 180 days, with a possible 180-day extension by the City Council. By contrast, the City’s HPOZ Ordinance has a well-defined “Certificate of Appropriateness” (COA) process to review major additions, alterations, and demolitions. The new ordinance would parallel the COA procedure in the HPOZ Ordinance, placing historic preservation concerns earlier in the project review process to improve clarity for the development community.

A COA process is found in most big-city preservation ordinances – including the ability to deny a demolition request, not just temporary delay demolition. The Commission’s COA decisions would be appealable to the City Council; today, the Commission’s 180-day demolition objections are not further appealable. The City currently provides a higher level of protection for thousands of often-modest “contributing structures” in HPOZs, as opposed to its most cherished historic resources, the nearly 900 HCMs.



The Philharmonic Auditorium, built in 1906, was declared an HCM in 1969, but demolished in 1985. The current ordinance only allows the CHC to temporarily delay a demolition.

### Other Proposed Changes

The ordinance changes are also likely to include: an update of sections addressing the purpose and duties of the Commission and ordinance definitions; clarification of the process for potential repeal of HCM status; new language on compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); new enforcement and penalties provisions, including a statement on property owners’ duty to keep a historic resource in good repair; and a listing within the ordinance of the City’s preservation incentives.

### We Welcome Your Comments

The CHC has scheduled an initial public workshop on these ordinance amendments for February 7, 2008, 10:00 a.m. in Room 1010 of City Hall (200 N. Spring St., in downtown Los Angeles). We also welcome your written comments and suggestions on these proposals in the coming weeks as the OHR and Commission finalize a draft ordinance for submission to the City Council later this year.



## PILOT SURVEYS SELECTED FOR SURVEYLA

The OHR, with the active input of its Survey Project Advisory Committee and a peer review committee of historic preservation professionals, has selected proposed Pilot Surveys for the SurveyLA project.

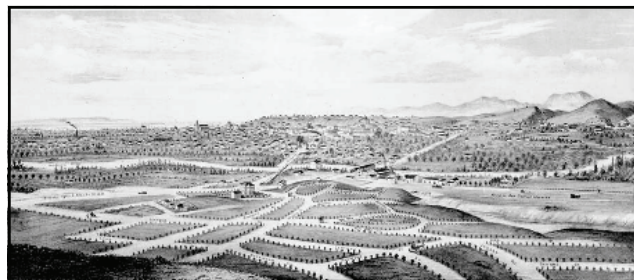
The Pilot Surveys to be conducted in April through December of this year will lay the foundation for the successful completion of the citywide field surveys during the three-year Implementation Phase of SurveyLA. The pilot survey areas and subjects are being chosen to generate important “lessons learned” for the Implementation Phase while also providing valuable survey data covering many areas of Los Angeles.

The Pilot Surveys will test the methodology of the SurveyLA project before it is used citywide, including: the efficacy of the citywide Historic Context Statement and Field Guide to Survey Evaluation, survey documentation methods, data management, use of survey equipment; communications and public participation strategies, and the review and approval of survey findings.

Two of the surveys will test specific historic contexts across various areas of the city, and one survey will test several historic contexts in a specific, historically-rich geographic area of the city.

The three pilot surveys will be:

**Boyle Heights Community** – This survey will test the application of multiple citywide contexts within a geographic area that is extremely rich in ethnic and cultural history. The pilot survey will focus on Boyle Heights’ residential neighborhoods, and will complement the Community Redevelopment Agency’s historic resources survey of the Adelante Eastside Redevelopment Area (in progress) which focuses on commercial and industrial properties in Boyle Heights. Survey results will contribute to the Department of City Planning’s New Community Plan for Boyle Heights.



Panoramic view of Boyle Heights 1877 (LAPL)

**Street Car Commercial Development, ca. 1910-1930** – Much of Los Angeles’ early commercial development was shaped by the city’s extensive streetcar system. This pilot survey will test this context, reviewing smaller-scale commercial architecture of our city. Two commercial corridors have been selected for this context: Vermont Avenue between Martin Luther King Boulevard and Manchester Boulevard, and Pico Boulevard from the 110 Freeway to Crenshaw Blvd.

**Post WWII Suburbanization in the San Fernando Valley, ca. 1945-1965** – A large proportion of Los Angeles’ built environment dates from the post-World War II era, including large portions of the San Fernando Valley and the Westside. To evaluate the speed at which large residential tracts may be evaluated during the Implementation Phase of the project, this Pilot Survey will examine suburbanization in the San Fernando Valley. This pilot survey includes two sub-areas – the East Valley communities between Victory Blvd. to the north, the 101 Freeway to the south, Whitsett Avenue to the east, and Woodman Avenue to the West, and West Valley communities between Vanowen St. to the north, the 101 Freeway to the south, Balboa Boulevard to the east, and Winnetka Avenue to the west.

The OHR looks forward to learning important lessons from these pilot surveys that will help refine the Implementation Phase of SurveyLA, scheduled to begin in December 2008.

### Background

**SurveyLA: The Los Angeles Historic Resources Survey Project** is the first-ever comprehensive inventory of our city’s historic resources. The project will bring together all that is known—and much that is presently unknown—about Los Angeles’ built heritage and make this information readily accessible on the web to shape decisions by policymakers, developers, planners, community organizations, and property owners.

The survey findings will have a multiplicity of benefits and uses: it will help direct future growth, shape the revision of Los Angeles’ 35 Community Plans, streamline environmental review processes, provide opportunities for public education, assist in disaster planning, and spur heritage tourism and the marketing of historic neighborhoods and properties.

The J. Paul Getty Trust and the City of Los Angeles have entered into a grant agreement for SurveyLA under which the Getty has committed to providing up to \$2.5 million to the project, subject to certain matching requirements by the City. The survey is organized in two phases, to be completed over a five-year period. The first two years of the project comprise the “Initiation Phase” during which survey tools and methods will be developed and tested. Field surveys and evaluations will occur in the “Implementation Phase,” years three through five of the project (late 2008 to late 2011). The Getty Conservation Institute (GCI) is also providing technical and advisory support for SurveyLA separate and apart from the grant funding.

## LOS ANGELES' NEWEST HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENTS

Between October 18 and December 31, 2007, the Cultural Heritage Commission and the City Council completed the approval of 10 new properties as City Historic-Cultural Monuments. Los Angeles' newest landmarks include an International Style house built for the feminist writer Anais Nin, homes designed by R.M. Schindler and John Lautner, a 19<sup>th</sup> Century landmark of Boyle Heights, a nautical-themed home of Christian ministry, and a notable home designed by prominent African-American architect Paul R. Williams.



**Boyle Hotel – Cummings Block, HCM #891** (101 North Boyle Avenue): This four-story, Victorian-Italianate style, residential/commercial building was built in 1889 for George Cummings and Maria del Sacramento Lopez, granddaughter of Claudio

Lopez who was Mayor of Los Angeles in 1826 under Mexican rule. The building served as a prominent commercial building that became a social and political center and encouraged the residential and commercial development of Boyle Heights. In recent years, the building has housed up to 80 mariachi musicians, who gather at Mariachi Plaza across the street. It has been purchased by the East Los Angeles Community Corporation for rehabilitation as affordable housing.



**Nin-Pole Residence, HCM #892** (2335 Hidalgo Avenue): Built in 1960 and located in Silver Lake, this one-story residential building exhibits character-defining features of International Style architecture.

The exterior is clad in wood panel and concrete block, with wood casement windows from base to roof. There are significant interior elements including a concrete block fireplace, folding partitions separating spaces, built-in cabinetry, and clerestory windows. It was designed by Eric Lloyd Wright, grandson of Frank Lloyd Wright and son of Lloyd Wright, for his brother, Rupert Pole, and well-known writer and feminist, Anais Nin (1903-1977).



**Castera Residence, HCM #893** (651 North Siena Way): Paul R. Williams (1894-1980), one of the foremost Los Angeles architects in the mid-twentieth century, designed this two-story French Provincial style residence in Bel Air. Its off-centered

entrance has a Classical-style pediment, flanking shutters and oval windows, and a high-hipped roof covered in composition shingles. The home was built in 1936 for George and Evelyn Castera who established the California Institute for Cancer Research in 1945, and who later sold it to Edgar Ward and actress Jane Wyatt, in 1963. Williams was the first certified African-

American architect west of the Mississippi River, the first African-American member of the American Institute of Architects, and served on the first Los Angeles Planning Commission in 1920.



**Monroe Cottage, HCM #894** (6310 Crescent Street): Built circa 1898-99, this one-story residential building exhibits character-defining features of Victorian Folk style architecture that began in the late 1880s and gained popularity at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The house was built for a James Monroe and is emblematic of the early development of working class homes in the town of Garvanza, adjacent to Highland Park in Northeast Los Angeles.



**Dynamite Shed (aka Minnie Hill Palmer Residence HCM #133)** (22360 Devonshire Street): Built between 1890 and 1900, this one-story structure in Chatsworth is lined with quarry stone. The shed is located on the historic Homestead Acre

in Chatsworth Park South, and appears to have been built to house dynamite during the construction of the Santa Susana Pass Tunnel, between 1898 and 1904. City Councilmember Greig Smith initiated this designation through a Council motion. Because of its proximity to the Minnie Hill Palmer Residence, it has been incorporated into the existing HCM designation for this property.



**How House, HCM #895** (2422 North Silver Ridge Avenue): This Silver Lake home represents one of the most significant and influential works by internationally recognized architect R.M. Schindler. Built in 1925, the two-story residential

building has character-defining features of the International style. Distinctive interior elements include wood siding, and built-in furniture and cabinetry. Its design influenced later Southern California architects such as Frank Gehry, Michael Rotundi, and Frank Israel.



**Harpel House No. 1, HCM #896** (7764 West Torreyson Drive): Built in 1956, this one-story residential building in the Hollywood Hills exhibits character-defining features of the International style. The irregular plan has a roof of rolled composition

that consists of a trellis of 26 interlocking triangles supported

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## LOS ANGELES' NEWEST HISTORIC-CULTURAL MONUMENTS (CONTINUED)

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by concrete caissons. The house was designed by architect John Lautner (1911-1994), who is recognized as one of the premier American architects of 20<sup>th</sup> century Modernism. Lautner's noteworthy designs include the iconic Chemosphere House, Silvertop House, and the Midtown School.



**Haven of Rest, HCM #897** (2432 North Hyperion Avenue): This Streamline Moderne style structure in Silver Lake was built in 1941 by a Christian singing quartet known as "The Crew of the Good Ship Grace." The building embellishes a nautical theme prevalent in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century Christian ministries, with its concrete walkway resembling a ship gangway leading to the entrance, symmetrically arranged porthole windows, and nautical lights placed between doors and windows. Designed by an unknown architect, it served as a recording studio and base for the group's ministry.



**Van Nuys Building, HCM #898** (210 West Seventh Street): Built in 1911-1912, this 11-story steel-frame commercial building in Downtown Los Angeles, now being adaptively reused as senior housing, is designed in the Beaux-Arts style. Situated on the southwest corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Spring Streets in Downtown Los Angeles,

the building features Italianate details and colossal fluted Corinthian columns that span the lower two stories. The building was designed by the noted Los Angeles architectural firm of Morgan, Walls & Morgan for Isaac Newton Van Nuys, a prominent Los Angeles landowner and businessman. Constructed by the Van Nuys Building Company, it contributed to the concentration of financial services firms and facilities that made South Spring Street the "Wall Street of the West" from the early 1900s through 1940s.



**Charles C. Chapman Building, HCM #899** (756 South Broadway Street): This 13-story commercial building in Downtown Los Angeles was built in 1911-12 in the Beaux-Arts style. Architect Ernest McConnell designed the building for the builder, The Los Angeles Investment Company, a major landowner and housing developer in the early twentieth century. The building was sold in 1920 to Charles C. Chapman, founder of Chapman College in Orange County and the first mayor of the City of Fullerton. More recently, the building has been converted to loft condominiums.



## JOIN THE SURVEYLA VOLUNTEER SPEAKERS BUREAU

Are you passionate about historic preservation, architecture, or local history? Are you looking for a way to make a meaningful contribution to our community? Are you interested in becoming part of a ground-breaking historic preservation project for Los Angeles? If so, we hope you'll become part of the SurveyLA Volunteer Speakers Bureau.

Speakers Bureau volunteers will be the heart and soul of the Office of Historic Resources' public outreach program throughout Los Angeles. The Speakers Bureau will be comprised of volunteers who will explain why the citywide survey is important, elicit meaningful input from all segments of Los

Angeles' communities, and help community members understand how they can get involved in the project.

Speakers will receive training beginning in February, including background on the survey project and guidance on how to give presentations on this important program. Volunteers will also be equipped with a video presentation, written materials, and "Frequently Asked Questions" on the survey project.

We are especially in need of volunteers who speak more than one language. Contact Janet Hansen at (213) 978-1191, or [janet.hansen@lacity.org](mailto:janet.hansen@lacity.org) to sign up on our interest list.

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