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# MAKING THE CASE FOR THE DOWNTOWN LOS ANGELES ART WALK

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# **1 Meeting The Needs Of The Community We Serve**

## **1.1 Mission Statement**

The Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk operates a community-based “museum without walls” in and around Los Angeles’ Historic Core neighborhood on the second Thursday of each month, celebrating art, street life and cultural diversity and bringing thousands of visitors to a previously impoverished neighborhood. Our goal as an entity is to steward the continued growth of the Los Angeles Downtown Art Walk as an engine for reviving and sustaining the cultural and economic vitality of the community, facilitating job creation, economic stabilization, and promoting positive public space while respecting local history and culture.

## **1.2 The Challenges: Public Space, Growth & Scalability**

Since its inception in 2004, the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk has experienced spectacular growth in popularity, with attendance growing from tens of visitors in the first months to more than 10,000 in mid-2009. The growth in attendance coincided with the significant gentrification occurring in the Historic Core neighborhood. Now the intersections at the core of the event are overcrowded, and services are overtaxed to the breaking point. Without management of crowds and the planned programming of compelling cultural events on the perimeter of the Art Walk boundaries, the neighborhood will not be able to support the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk at its current growth rate.

In order to facilitate further growth of the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk, the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk board must develop an information program that addresses the basic question asked by regulars and first-time attendees: “now that I am at the corner of 5th & Main Streets, what do I do and where do I go?” There has been

a lack of coordinated information about irregularly scheduled events during the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk, and a lack of official, well-promoted cultural programming, resulting in a mass of visitors who do not understand the scope of the event or their options for enjoying it. This lack of information, when combined with long stretches of dark, inactive sidewalk between populated zones, causes crowds to pool around core intersections with no clear path to other active areas. For these reasons, the Art Walk has become for many visitors a confounding urban experience, and more of a street party than a cultural exploration. The management of Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk must, through maps, website calendars and a crew of docent staff members, provide clear and accessible information on what areas are part of the Art Walk and what programs and events are happening throughout the community, to make it easier for visitors feel comfortable leaving the well-understood and well-populated parts of the Art Walk (5th Street between Main and Broadway, Main Street between 4th & 6th) and explore outlying galleries and performance venues.

### **1.3 Old Buildings Need New Ideas**

For the past fifteen years, as redevelopment dollars have flowed into the neglected Historic Core, Downtown Business Improvement Districts (“BIDs”) and residential developers have been challenged by the need to answer two fundamental questions: “What do you do after 5pm? Why would you want to live Downtown?” The success of the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk helps answer these questions.

For a city to truly be great, it must have a vibrant population that inhabits its core. A city’s essential nature, its personality and its life’s spark, are formed by its citizens, who fill its streets at night, use its parks and restaurants, populate its open spaces and plazas, and enjoy its amenities and history. A connection to the past is essential to helping the future flourish, and so it is fitting that Los Angeles’ long-ignored Downtown, with its beautiful and historic buildings, would become the place where a

grassroots cultural movement like the Art Walk would be born, grow and thrive.

## 2 Goal

### 2.1 Affecting Social Change

Our goal is to facilitate the dissemination of information between art galleries, event promoters, performers and other creative programmers and their potential audiences, enabling those providing cultural programming within the borders of the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk to share their specialized information widely, thus reaching the members of the public who wish to explore and consume what is offered.

The creators of creative programming and their potential consumers can both be found literally within the borders of the event and virtually in the online communities (Facebook, Yahoo mailing list) associated with Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk. Sixteen thousand people visit the website <http://downtownartwalk.com> in a typical month.

The points of intersection for these varied communities is where social change is best affected: by bringing creative promoters together with their audiences, the exchange of information leads to the exchange of money, which is necessary to encourage and support creative Downtown programming at the Art Walk and all month long.

The Art Walk, which essentially turns Downtown Los Angeles into a living museum for one day out of the month, is a uniquely public space in which everyone involved should be able to gain and share access to the information they most desire.

By becoming the go-to place for worthwhile information on what can be found at the Art Walk, our channels of communication will serve as essential tools for helping the Art Walk grow, and its participants

to benefit. For consumers, this means providing access to vibrant and stimulating experiences calibrated to their specific interests. For producers, this means providing a means of connection to a supportive and interested audience that participates with their hearts, minds and pocketbooks.

### **3 Objectives For Next Two Years**

#### **3.1 Measuring Success**

The creation of positive public space is the yardstick by which the success of two seemingly orthogonal goals—the free celebration of creativity and the economic redevelopment of the Historic Core neighborhood—can be measured. Positive public space does many things: it reduces crime by activating streets and other public areas, it promotes local businesses—people out for their pleasure stop in local cafes and shops—it simply encourages people to walk, drawing them effortlessly along from one place to the next, encouraging them to look, to linger, to become fully engaged in the space they’re in.

#### **3.2 Infrastructure**

To improve the overall public space in which the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk event occurs, management has the following specific objectives for 2009 & 2010.

##### **3.2.1 Transportation**

1. Add a second bus to the existing Main/Spring shuttle route, thus reducing wait times and crowding, and encouraging visitors to get

off in more remote areas knowing that they can catch another shuttle soon.

2. Add one bus to a new Western spur shuttle route connecting Pershing Square to Main and Spring Streets via 5th & 6th Streets.

### **3.2.2 Cultural Programming**

#### **3.2.2.1 Program one or more official Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk Lecture Series**

1. Develop and sponsor a series of lectures by social historian Allon Schoener, to be titled COSMOPOLIS, demonstrating the relationship between our global society today (New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai) and its historical antecedents in Alexandria, Naples, Rome, etc.
2. Develop and sponsor a series of free neighborhood history lectures hosted by independent scholars Nathan Marsak, Hillsman Wright, Rick Mechtly and others. These will focus on Bunker Hill, Historic Core, The Broadway Corridor, Main Street, neon sign history, etc. Each lecture in the series will include a walking tour component prior to the lecture through the neighborhood to be discussed.

**3.2.2.2 Develop a program of free walking tours hosted by downtown experts and community members** Current guides include Ed Rosenthal (who is both an accomplished poet and a real estate broker who has had his hand in many of the major deals in the Historic Core for the last fifteen years), Art Walk Director Richard Schave, rhyming educator Mike the PoeT, and others. These tours are a tremendous ways for newcomers to make an immediate and unthreatening connection with the Art Walk, getting a sense of the area in which the event occurs, exploring its history and getting options for how they can spend the rest of their visit. It is the most important aspect of our outreach due to the potential for one-to-one contact with the attendees, and the ability to address specific questions and needs.

**3.2.2.3 Develop a program of free discussion Salons on various compelling subjects** Each Salon is led by an interesting local figure who can provide expert structure to the dialog and encourage group participation. By scheduling these Salons in the early evening, and holding them in a space where people can also ask questions of Art Walk staff and get printed maps, attendees will have an attractive option for starting their Art Walk experience in a warm and welcoming environment, from which they can then go off to explore on their own.

### **3.2.3 Public Services**

1. Obtain an allocation of more frequent visits from BID cleaning crews.
2. Invite groups promoting urban tree planting to bring their services to within the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk borders.
3. Obtain an allocation of intersection control officers at key intersections during the crowded evening hours of the event (approximately 6pm-9pm). Identified intersections that would benefit from intersection control are 4th and Main, 5th and Main, and 5th and Spring.

## **3.3 Helping Art Galleries Succeed**

1. Schedule activities and programs meant to "activate" (make safe and appealing) the less populated transition zones within the Art Walk borders, thus drawing visitors to the galleries and other spaces located on the outlying borders of the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk.
2. Develop means by which participating cultural entities can promote their offerings to the thousands of people visiting the Art Walk each month, through the online map and calendar, the printed map, and Art Walk's regular publicity (for the press) and announcement (for visitors) streams. These will include free listings for non-commercial



events and (temporarily) for art galleries, and reasonably priced ticketed listings for retail, corporate and paid events.

3. Work to support the development of high-toned cultural events during the Art Walk which will be a draw for the type of person who is also interested in collecting art. As this target audience of current or potential collectors may be hesitant to participate in the more spirited atmosphere that Art Walk takes on during the evening, we will explore the notion of developing afternoon programming such as gallery tours, curator's and artist's lectures, and daylight openings catering specifically to this audience.
4. Provide Downtown gallery owners with opportunities for networking and cross promotion, through special Art Walk events and publicity.
5. Create and distribute a quarterly Art Walk flier. This flier will have much in common with the Art Walk map, and can be used to get around the Art Walk in the absence of the monthly map. However, this less-frequently updated, more elaborate flier will be larger and convey more information about the community and its offerings. It will exist simultaneously as a guide to the Art Walk and a guide to cultural offerings available all month long within the footprint of the Art Walk. The market for this flier is in distribution through LAINC and the central BID's Visitor Centers, and also through hotel concierge outreach. It is meant to be a calling card for the event and the culture of creativity and vitality that it promotes throughout Downtown. It is meant to create a sense of destination, and to contain the Art Walk's brand identity.
6. Create a monthly map for distribution at the event and online, to include galleries, sponsors, shuttle routes, and a selection of free cultural events programmed by the Art Walk staff.

### **3.4 Distributing crowds**

1. Create a locus for the event at the Spring Arcade building in the Paseo which spans Broadway and Spring between 5th and 6th

Streets. This significant example of Downtown public space is the natural gathering point to harness all the different energies that come together at Art Walk: Spring Street with its community of young residents and late night diners, and Broadway, which has the most vibrant and exciting sidewalk culture in Los Angeles, with a markedly more commercial, Latino bent, and a tendency to shut down after 6pm.

2. Activate the stretch of 6th Street between Hill and Broadway. The area is largely dark and inhospitable, with closed, gated storefronts. That two-block section is all that stands in the way of creating an appealing pedestrian bridge to the metro station that is closest to the most populated sections of Art Walk. Possible solutions are sidewalk closure (permitting the Art Walk management to set up informational kiosks and performers to be booked on the sidewalk) or a full street closure (banning cars from the street for a set period of time). Another idea that's been proposed to make this area more appealing is curating a program of painting art on the roll-down gates that line that street between Pershing Square and Broadway, thus creating a gallery of art that would in itself be a destination for pedestrians moving between the Metro station and the Art Walk.

### **3.5 Art Walk Website and Other Web Development**

1. Create a Wiki Travel page promoting the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk and neighborhood cultural attractions.
2. Develop an interactive Smart Phone Application that will provide real-time proximity search, alerting users to the cultural resources and friends they are near.
3. Develop a Geo-caching game to encourage exploration of the entire Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk while collecting virtual "stamps" in a virtual "passport."
4. Focus on the enhanced functionality of the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk website for visitors, cultural programmers, art galleries and

Downtown businesses. Help all these different specialized groups that exist within the footprint of the Art Walk to share resources and knowledge. This creation of a networked virtual community will start to have a positive impact on the real community.

5. Implement a morning-after Facebook app called Friday Findings to survey guest activity at the Art Walk, including demographic information, galleries and other venues visited, hours of arrival/departure, form of transportation used, where they came from, how often they attend and what they are looking for at future Art Walks. Some of this information will be available specifically to the Art Walk management for research purposes, but much of it in aggregate form will be accessible in real-time to users, thus providing them with suggestions for galleries and restaurants to visit. A popular gallery which receives many visits on the Art Walk will be featured on the Friday Findings page for the next 30 days, thus encouraging visits after the event.

## 4 History

In July 2009, the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk became a California Public Benefit Corporation charged with the stewardship of this remarkable grassroots event which has contributed to the transformation of the neighborhood over the five years of its existence. From humble beginnings—five galleries and an estimated 75 people in attendance—the event now has forty participating galleries and attendance figures hovering around 10,000. Participating Art Walk galleries extend throughout Downtown, but the core of the event roughly corresponds to the boundaries of the Historic Core district: Second to Ninth, along Main, Spring, and Broadway.

The kernel for all of this change came out of the CRA (Community Redevelopment Agency) in the late 1980s, as staff looked out their office windows in the Herman Hellman building on the corner of 4th and Spring to the underused assortment of aging hotels, banks and office buildings

along Spring and Main Streets. They envisioned a paradigm shift in the way in which they redeveloped neighborhoods: rather than clearing lots and building fresh, the concept that new ideas need old buildings. By preserving and redeveloping historic buildings, one whole block at a time, a neglected neighborhood could be encouraged to come back as a healthy and vibrant community.

It was anticipated that the path to revitalization and the block by block repopulation of the Historic Core would be driven by early adopter artist communities. While a small segment of the projected overall population, these artists would do most of the preliminary heavy lifting: organize cultural events, open and shop in bookstores and cafes, and by living and playing in the community bring an overall increase in the perception of positive public space to the target blocks.

In 1990 this was still just an idea discussed in a report on the proposed revitalization of Spring Street. In 1998, Gilmore Associates expressed interest in the block delineated by Main, Spring, 4th and 5th. To encourage this deal, the CRA cleared a tax lien on the Continental Building, whose owner had entered into partnership with Gilmore Associates. The removal of the lien made Federal money available, and in early 1999 Gilmore Associates purchased the Farmers & Merchants Bank, the Isaias Hellman Building, and the San Fernando Building on the opposite side of Main Street.

That same year, Downtown's adaptive re-use ordinance—the framework under which commercial space can be converted to residential—was passed. The tide had turned. At 6th & Spring (the other pole of the Art Walk) Izek Shomof began converting the former Pacific Stock Exchange into a 37-unit, loft-style apartment building called the Spring Tower Live-Work Lofts. In 2000 the Spring Tower was fully occupied and by 2001, Gilmore's San Fernando Building was, too. And so the repopulation of Downtown Los Angeles began in earnest, fifty years after the CRA had emptied it of 9,000 residents with the razing of Bunker Hill.

In 2003, the City Council created the Downtown Los Angeles Neighborhood Council (DLANC) to represent the growing number of community stakeholders. That same year, DLANC's Arts, Aesthetics and

Culture Committee (AAC) requested that the City designate a portion of the Historic Core as Gallery Row. This area—Main and Spring Streets between 2nd and 9th Streets—would come to comprise the heart of the Downtown Art Walk. The Gallery Row concept was the work of Kjell Hagen, owner of Inshallah Gallery, and Nic Cha Kim, co-chair of the AAC. At that time, the neighborhood had just three galleries: Hagen’s Inshallah Gallery (Main Street near 3rd), bank (Main Street near 4th) and 727 Gallery (Spring Street near 7th). The City Council’s motion to designate Gallery Row was passed in July 2003, co-sponsored by Jan Perry and Antonio Villaraigosa, and Gallery Row street signs were installed that fall.

In September of 2004 Bert Green, with the encouragement of gallerist Shane Guffogg, launched the first Art Walk, during which twelve people passed through the doors of Guffogg’s Pharmaka Gallery. Five years on, as the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk reorganized as a California Public Benefit Corporation, the event reached the landmark estimated attendance of 10,000 people, with more than three thousand people visiting Pharmaka alone.

The event has grown in magnitude and scale beyond the founders’ wildest hopes and dreams, and consequently has an entirely new set of challenges to be met. Scalability, dissemination of information about the event, and cohesion between the diverse neighborhoods involved are some of the more important external challenges we face. And with our new structure comes a set of internal challenges as well. The process of seeking tax-exempt status with the Internal Revenue Service to allow raising funds from individual donors requires us to demonstrate that Art Walk exists to benefit the larger Los Angeles community and serves a cultural purpose not limited to helping gallery owners attract new business. For this reason, and for the purpose of ensuring an organization that will have broad appeal to the larger Los Angeles and Southern California community, the initial Board of Directors is primarily comprised of a broad cross-section of persons from outside the art sales world. The founding Board also includes individuals with talents in the many different areas needed to help get this organization off the ground. The plan will be to grow the Board in the future with persons who can contribute in other ways, including financially, to the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk. This approach is consistent with how other non-profit entities organize

themselves at the outset.

The Art Walk has both shaped the community which created it and is in turn been shaped by community emerging out of it. But the Art Walk would not exist, and cannot exist going forward, without the active support of our community.

## **5 Organization**

### **5.1 Board of Directors**

1. Kim Cooper
2. David Hernand
3. Sandie Richards
4. Richard Schave
5. Bonnie Tseng
6. Wicks Walker

### **5.2 Board Member Biographies**

#### **5.2.1 Kim Cooper**

Kim Cooper's genre-busting bio is testimony her creative dynamism. She is the creator of 1947project, the crime-a-day time travel blog that spawned Esotouric, the offbeat bus adventure company that upends the concept of a group tour with its provocative excursions. Spin-off local history blogs include On Bunker Hill and the new inSROland, which shares its borders with the Downtown LA Art Walk. At the Art Walk, Kim can usually be

found on the Hippodrome shuttle, working with performers and helping newcomers experience the event.

Kim received her MA in Art History from UC Santa Barbara, was exhibition coordinator for the Museum of Contemporary Art's landmark performance art survey "Out of Actions," and curated Gary Leonard's debut downtown architectural photography show, "Phoenix." For fourteen years Kim published and edited *Scram*, a journal of unpopular culture dedicated to celebrating neglected musical genius. Her pop history books include "Bubblegum Music is the Naked Truth," "Lost in the Grooves" and the best-selling 33 1/3 series title "Neutral Milk Hotel's 'In the Aeroplane Over the Sea.'"

As a publicist, for her own projects and a select group of clients, including writers, filmmakers, restaurants, pop groups and a fire-fighting goat, Kim has gotten coverage on NPR's Talk of the Nation, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The New York Times*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *Los Angeles Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *The Times of London* and all local TV networks. Her one-month campaign to preserve the LA Public Library's book buying budget and staffing resulted in a reversal of a planned \$1.6 million budget cut by the city's Budget and Finance Committee.

### 5.2.2 David Hernand

David M. Hernand is a partner of the well-known law firm Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher. He is co-chair of the firm's Media, Entertainment and Technology Practice Group, a member of the Mergers & Acquisitions Practice Group and the Business Restructuring and Reorganization Practice Group. Hernand advises companies, investment banks, private equity and venture capital firms and high net-worth individuals and families in public and private merger and acquisition transactions, corporate control contests, strategic partnering arrangements, public and private capital raising transactions and general company representation matters. David has handled transactions involving companies including Business.com, Club Penguin, DemandMedia, Homestore,

Intermix (MySpace), IGE, LegalZoom, LowerMyBills, PriceGrabber, ProvideCommerce, Rent.com, ReachLocal and SeeBeyond.

Prior to joining the firm, Mr. Hernand had practiced with Latham & Watkins since 1994, with a two-year hiatus as managing director at Idealab, a Pasadena, California-based technology company incubator and later as CEO of New.net, an Idealab portfolio company. Mr. Hernand serves Vice-Chair of the Corporations Committee of the Business Law Section of the California State Bar, is a proud board member of The Painted Turtle and is a member of the Socrates Society Steering Committee of the Aspen Institute.

### **5.2.3 Sandie Richards**

Rev. Sandie Richards received her Master of Divinity degree from Union Theological Seminary in the City of New York, specializing in urban mission. She was first ordained as a United Methodist Pastor in 1993.

The United Methodist tradition is one of worship, study, and action; Rev. Richards's faith in action has led her to become an advocate for living wages, affordable housing, freedom to marry, fair treatment of immigrants, and help for the homeless. She is recognized as one of Los Angeles's premier interfaith leaders for social justice.

For Rev. Richards, the sacred is located within the bonds of community, and expressed in and through the ways in which we as the human community care for one another. She is a collaborative leader; she loves diversity and its challenges. She is dynamic, passionate, warm-hearted, and fun.

### **5.2.4 Richard Schave**

Richard Schave is the Director of the Downtown Los Angeles Art Walk, a California public benefit corporation, which serves as custodian of this



very successful project and is charged with the continued expansion and organization of the event. Mr. Schave became involved with the Art Walk when he was asked to host the free shuttle, which he transformed from a staid DASH bus to the vibrant curated Hippodrome performance space that is among Art Walk's signature images. Richard's passion for downtown Los Angeles is life long: he memorized page 634 in the Thomas Guide when he was 15, so he could go to Cole's once he had his driver's license. Richard has a deep and fundamental interest in the history of public space in downtown. He is the web architect of On Bunker Hill, a social history site dedicated to revealing the lost lore of a demolished neighborhood, and leads occasional bus and walking tours that explore the notion of creating positive public space in the urban center. Richard has been at various times an art historian, a mason, an HVAC technician, an independent film producer, a computer programmer and the host and author of the Esotouric bus adventure series of literary and architecture bus tours. Richard has spoken about urban development in Los Angeles at Zócalo at the Hammer Museum and at the Canadian Centre for Architecture in Montreal. His preservation activities include the landmarking of Charles Bukowski's East Hollywood home, the survival of the Union 76 gas station signs and a campaign to name a street corner in honor of downtown bard John Fante.

### **5.2.5 Bonnie Tseng**

Bonnie Tseng is an Assistant Vice President and Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) Contributions Officer with City National Bank charged with overseeing their CRA Department's annual contributions budget and CRA community involvement for California, New York, and Nevada. She joined City National in 2005 following her six-year career in entertainment and marketing which began as a Director of Operations for a boutique art studio, and later as an agent for over 30 artists working in film, commercials, and TV. She eventually transitioned into the music industry as Director of Artists and Repertoire (A&R), talent manager, and business manager for a record label.

Bonnie currently volunteers on several boards, development, advisory, and event committees for organizations including: Center for the Pacific Asian Family (CPAF), Salvation Army Alegria, Chrysalis, Para Los Niños, and Shelter Partnership. She also participates in Step Up Women's Network, the LA Downtown Center Business Improvement District's (DC BID) Marketing Committee, and Bankers In Support Of (BISO). Her corporate philanthropy and service to the community has earned her several awards. It is one of her personal missions to help end homelessness to improve the quality of life in L.A. County.

#### **5.2.6 Adam "Wicks" Walker**

Adam "Wicks" Walker has founded and built numerous companies in the Internet media, advertising and technology sectors, thrice landing among the top 100 of the Inc. 500® list of fastest-growing private companies in the U.S. He is the strategist and dealmaker in each company, and commonly oversees marketing, branding, communications, and corporate finance. Known as a fierce negotiator, he has led numerous venture and private equity investments, debt and liquidity financings for companies he's been involved with, securing more than \$100 million to date in nearly a dozen transactions, with total valuation approaching over a billion. Walker's most recent company is Hydra, one of the leading online advertising networks, where he was a founding partner and served as Chief Strategy Officer and Acting CFO. He is also a partner in entertainment production company Intrinsic Entertainment/FNB, and music recording and technology company Organism Music.

Wicks is an Internet industry innovator, speaker, and author. In 2000, he was nominated for the Ernst and Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award, and won the organization's prestigious Award for Business Leadership. Since then, he has had companies featured often among the fastest growing lists of the Los Angeles Business Journal, the Deloitte Technology Fast 50, the Inc. 500, and others. He lives in the Hollywood Hills and enjoys music, art, motorcycles, architecture, and the pursuit of perfect sushi.

Press coverage has included AdRants, Adotas, Advertising Age, American Banker, BusinessWeek, Forbes, The Industry Standard, Internet Retailer, the Los Angeles Business Journal, The Los Angeles Times and many others.