

THE LIVING NEW DEAL

Report of Activities for 2021

As we embark on a new year, it is time to review the accomplishments of the Living New Deal over the course of 2021. Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, the project continued to make steady progress. Highlights of the year include getting out the New Deal Washington, DC map; launching the New Deal Book Award; expanding our core team and National Associates; making major strides in upgrading the website; hosting a flock of webinars and talks over Zoom; publishing a stream of *Fireside* articles and increasing our revenues.

LND New Deal Washington DC Map Published and Publicized

After Covid squelched a 2020 launch of the map, we upgraded the content and design, then published it in early 2021 to widespread appreciation. Hearty thanks are due to Linda Herman for design, Molly Roy for cartography, and Susan Ive for editing and oversight. Hundreds of maps were distributed to local history, academic, preservation and community organizations. Hundreds more went to members of Congress with a cover letter touting the transformative effect of the New Deal on the nation's capital and the need for a 21st century New Deal.

LND Director Richard Walker and Project Historian Brent McKee gave a dozen Zoom talks about the map and the New Deal's massive impact on the city to a variety of local organizations, such as the Committee of 100, Northwest Neighborhood Village and the Cosmos Club, as well as to university audiences at Georgetown and George Washington. Student Assistant Shae Corey, hired to help with contacts, publicity and distribution, tabled at the DC Preservation League's annual festival and made TikTok videos of several New Deal sites around the city. A brief write-up on the map appeared in *The Washingtonian*. A new grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation enabled us to begin work with DC public school officials and teachers to develop a DC Map Educators' Guide for use in high school courses on DC history, which are required for all seniors there.

LND New Deal Book Award Launched

We are pleased that the first Annual New Deal Book Award is off to a successful start. We received 14 nominations, so the word of the award clearly got around. The award was spearheaded by Development Director Kurt Feichtmeir and LND Research Board member Professor Eric Rauchway of the University of California, Davis, who chairs the distinguished 5-member panel of scholars reviewing books nominated by authors and publishers. The review is underway and a winner will be announced in Spring 2022. A prize of \$1,000 will be awarded at the annual Roosevelt Library Reading Festival in Hyde Park, NY next summer – Covid willing.

A Full Slate of Events and Outreach for the Year

We continued to spread the word about the New Deal and the Living New Deal with webinars and talks on a wide variety of topics. Communications Director Susan Ives organized a fine series of LND webinars featuring leading authors and scholars on "Art and Activism: Posters for Social Change," "Reigniting the Spirit of the New Deal's Federal Writers' Project," "The Rise, Fall and Rebirth of the Federal Writers' Project," "Why the New Deal Matters" and "Biden's Civilian Climate Corps: Lessons from the Original CCC." Webmaster Lisa Thompson created a new section of the website dedicated to our webinars.

As part of our public education work, LND team members gave talks and interviews on topics germane to today's concerns. Gray Brechin spoke on "The New Deal Comes To—And Transforms— Dutchess County" (home of FDR) and was interviewed on "The Lasting Impact of President Roosevelt's New Deal" on WOSU radio. Harvey Smith and Brechin were featured on Episode 73 of *East Bay Yesterday*, "The New Deal's Local Legacy," which aired on KPFA radio. Brent McKee spoke on the Washington DC map and lectured on "The New Deal and Radio" for an OSHER Life Long Learning class in Maryland. LND Director Richard Walker was interviewed about the Washington map and the New Deal for *Letter and Politics*, also on KPFA.

Although in-person events were largely curtailed, we managed to host a small end-of-year gathering for Living New Deal friends and donors at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, where the monumental Pan American Unity mural, a 1940 masterwork by Diego Rivera, is on exhibit. Will Maynez, longtime curator of the mural, discussed its history, its connection to the WPA, and the characters brought to life by Rivera's artistry. Harvey Smith led a walking tour of "WPA Berkeley" and a panel on "Murals Under Attack" for Bay Area LaborFest. Harvey and Barbara Bernstein also advised UC San Francisco staff about the disposition of Bernard Zakheim murals in a building about to be demolished (the murals were saved).

Expanding Our Media Communications Efforts

Communications Director Susan Ives put out our stellar monthly newsletter, *The Fireside*, with its new, stylish look and longer articles connecting the New Deal to current affairs; links to media coverage of the New Deal; lists of events and more. *The Fireside* was supplemented by semi-annual reports on people and activities of the Living New Deal in *The Lowdown*. Thanks to Susan, Lisa Thompson and RA John Elrick, articles from our newsletters going back a decade are now indexed and searchable on the website. Richard Walker also co-authored an article on the CCC and racial discrimination that appeared in the online version of *Jacobin Magazine*.

We made a stronger push on social media in 2021, with Susan Ives posting on Facebook, Elena Ion handling Instagram (with help from Shae Corey) and Brent McKee building up our Twitter account. A happy surprise was the work of Student Assistant Shae Corey in Washington DC, who took the initiative to set up an LND TikTok account and create a number of sharp, short TikTok videos on the capital city's New Deal sites. The need for a specialized staffer in this realm remains clear and we are soliciting targeted donations to keep Shae on board through 2022 to expand our video work on TikTok, Instagram and YouTube.

LND New York City Chapter Active and Growing

The LND New York City Chapter produced webinars on “Health of a Nation: Past Inspirations, Recent Lessons and Equitable Planning for the Future,” “Parks, Pools and the New Deal in Greater New York: Legacies and Prospects” and “The New Deal and Far-Right Extremism: Saving the Republic.” These events averaged more than 300 viewers. The Chapter co-sponsored two events with Roosevelt House at Hunter College: a webinar called “Ill Housed: Housing Policy for the New Deal and Today,” organized by team member Deborah Gardner, and a one-day conference, “The New Deal Then and Now: What Is the Role of Government in Response to Great Crises?” featuring New Deal scholars and descendants of New Dealers.

LND-New York City has been growing, with a working group of 14 regular members and eight prestigious advisors, and has been renamed the Living New Deal–New York City Chapter. The Chapter's Working Group has been forging connections with local and state elected officials to advocate for signage on New Deal sites around the city and is engaged with the Central Park Conservancy to urge that New Deal sites in the park be included in Conservancy tours. Peggy Crane, NYC Chapter Director, has set up a new system for sending out chapter announcements and receiving communications from LND followers around the New York region.

Expansion of LND Boards, Core Team and National Associates

LND added four more distinguished historians to our Advisory and Research Boards in 2021: Professors Lizabeth Cohen of Harvard, Nelson Lichtenstein and Alice O'Connor of UC Santa Barbara and Touré Reed of Illinois State. We also expanded the Living New Deal Core Team (which includes both paid staff and volunteers across the country) with the addition of Judith Kenny, our Northwest Region coordinator, and three members of the New York City Chapter – Jeff Gold, Deborah Gardner and Lou Venech.

Thanks to team member Elliott Medrich for shepherding our wonderful crew of volunteer National Associates, who added hundreds of New Deal sites to our national map this year and helped mightily with finding photographs for hundreds more that were deleted in the 2020 hack. Special thanks to Barbara Pendleton, Ernie Blevins, Susan Allen, Andrew Laverdiere, Frank Da Cruz and Judith Kenny for their contributions.

Boston Associate Fern Nesson, with the help of Project Manager Elena Ion, added another thirty elegant photo essays to our website's *On the Road* series, inspired by visiting sites up and down the East Coast that had originally appeared in the famous WPA American Guidebooks. Two Associates, Mary Jane Appel and David Gates, published books related to the New Deal.

The number of National Associates hit fifty with the addition of four new volunteers: Mary Jane Appel (Washington, DC). Ted Gravsted-Nordbrock (Iowa and South Dakota), Claire Nickell (Arizona and Colorado) and Barbara Pendleton (Kansas). Sadly, we mourn the passing of long-time National Associate Will Cook of Columbia, Maryland.

Website Expansion and Major Progress on the Website Rebuild

The Living New Deal's website continues to attract over a million online visitors per year. It is a major resource for students and teachers. Our team, led by Project Historian Brent McKee and Project Manager Elena Ion, added more content to the website's sections on New Deal programs, New Deal News, the New Deal Worked, and New Deal Speaks, among others. Webmaster Lisa Thompson did her usual yeo(wo)man work keeping the site running and growing. At the same time, Lisa has been laboring long hours redesigning and reconstructing the LND website to be more elegant, user-friendly and resilient.

The project of rebuilding the LND website made major advances in 2021. After putting the whole system on a higher level of security and securing a better server host early in the year, Lisa began the massive job of laying out and describing the entire architecture of the website – an essential foundation for an expert programmer to tackle the work of a full rebuild from the ground up. This was no small task, given the website's complex framework and the immense amount of content hung on that structure. This stage of the project is nearly complete and Lisa has a programmer ready to begin the reconstruction. We are grateful to the donors who have made possible such a major undertaking.

Continued Growth and Improvement of the Online Map and Site Documentation

The LND's national map and database are growing again, after hundreds of hours of staff and volunteer time devoted to restoring lost photographs taken out in the 2020 hack. We now have over 16,700 sites mapped and Judith Kenny reports that Oregon just passed the 200th site mark.

Unfortunately, we are still working to fix some functions of the online map on computers and smartphones. Lisa has found a new, highly qualified subcontractor who has resolved many of the issues and will continue to work with us in 2022 to keep the maps functioning correctly.

Happily, we received a large donation earmarked to help turn recent discoveries by Project Founder Gray Brechin into New Deal site submissions for our database and map. Team member John Elrick began to winnow through a trove of articles from the 1930s and 40s that appeared in the trade journal, *Parks and Recreation*. Meanwhile, volunteer Kevin Friedly made further improvements to the LND iPhone app for crowdsourcing sites. We will be making a concerted push to alert LND map users to the app's existence.

First Steps Toward a New Deal Los Angeles Map and Guide

We are partnering with the USC Institute on the History of California and the West, directed by LND Research Board member Professor William Deverell, to undertake a city map and guide for Los Angeles along the lines of our previous maps of San Francisco, New York City and Washington DC. We hope to get the map out in 2023, the 90th anniversary of the New Deal, which began in 1933. Kurt Feichtmeir has assembled a distinguished panel of project advisors

around the Los Angeles basin and submitted a well-crafted grant proposal to the California Humanities Foundation, with more foundations targeted for 2022.

Mapping New Deal Los Angeles will be a huge undertaking, and not just because Metro LA is such a gargantuan urban region. The goal is to involve local organizations from museums and libraries to grassroots groups so as to reach Latino/a, African American and Asian American communities around Los Angeles to help gather site information, publicize the map and bring the New Deal legacy to the attention of ordinary Angelenos.

A Successful Year of Fundraising and Growing Finances

The results of our mid-year and year-end fundraising appeals were reassuring – donations increased about 25% over 2020. In addition, we received generous gifts from faithful major donors for staff support and website reconstruction. We also were awarded grants from the National Trust for Historic Preservation for education work around the Washington DC map and from the Kinsman Foundation for research by Judith Kenney on the New Deal in Oregon. Thanks to Kurt Feichtmeir and Susan Ives for producing the appeals and to Kurt for his tenacity in seeking foundation grants and reaching out to donors.

Richard Walker, LND Project Director, January 15, 2022.