

THE LIVING NEW DEAL

ACTIVITIES & ACHIEVEMENTS FOR 2019

Dick Walker, Project Director

Green New Deal & First New Deal

After the introduction of the Green New Deal resolution in Congress, we realized that it needed to be connected to its New Deal roots. So we created a new section of the website on the GND, along with articles in the newsletter, presentations at conferences, and media outreach on the lessons the New Deal offers for solutions to the present crisis. Dick Walker had an op-ed published in the *Washington Post* in April on how the principles of the New Deal can guide public policy and the GND. Thanks to Lisa Thompson for creating the new section, Elena Ion for gathering content, and Susan Ives for newsletter articles.

San Francisco Mural Controversy

The Living New Deal has been a key player in the fight to save the magnificent 'Life of Washington' murals in the foyer of George Washington High School, a New Deal project. Artist Victor Arnautoff meant the murals to be critical by showing the first president as a slave owner and pointing white pioneers the way west over a dead Indian.

Some misguided people want the murals destroyed as 'racist'. The School Board voted to paint them over as 'too disturbing for students'. Reaction was swift from around the world. The School Board has backed off to merely covering the murals (for \$700,000!).

Susan Ives mounted a media and letter writing campaign which was instrumental in the school board backing off from destroying the murals. Current plans are to cover up the murals, but we and other groups are resisting. A city-wide ballot measure will determine the future of these and other public artworks.

Nevertheless, the fight continues with a lawsuit by an alumni group and a local initiative. Susan Ives has been monitoring developments and we have a new website section on the controversy.

Washington DC Map & Guide

Research continued throughout 2019 on the Washington DC pocket map & guide. Brent McKee has been leading the way, with help from National Associate Maureen Budetti and Research manager Elena Ion. They now have almost all the sites in and around the District documented and photographed, and work on the map itself has begun. We anticipate that the map will be published in Spring 2020 and launched with events in Washington.

Events

- A 1940 WPA scale-model of San Francisco was recovered, cleaned & restored by the SFMOMA and went on display in 29 branch libraries around the city for much of the year. The model was saved through the work of Gray Brechin and restored under the guidance of SFMOMA's Stella Lochman. Gray and other LND team members spoke at events around the model at MOMA.
- The Living New Deal team taught a course in the history, impact, architecture and art of the New Deal for the Berkeley Osher Lifelong Learning program (OLLI). Lectures were given by Dick Walker, Susan Ives, Gray Brechin and Harvey Smith) to a class of ~80 people. The course received rave reviews.
- We partnered with the National Park Service and Friends of the San Francisco Maritime Museum on history tours and a gala celebration of the 80th Anniversary of this WPA landmark.
- We co-sponsored an exhibit of the works of New Deal artist Jo Mora in San Francisco, which drew many people and received good reviews. The Living New Deal split the proceeds from sales with the Jo Mora Trust. Special thanks to Zach Steward for his generous donation of the historic Canessa gallery for the program.
- We ran a special session on New Deal Washington DC at the annual conference of the American Association of Geographers on April 7, 2019, in Washington. Gray Brechin, Brent McKee, Rachel Brahinsky, Alex Tarr and Joni Palmer were present at the session. Dick Walker organized it.

Website & National Map

- The Living New Deal website recorded about 750,000 visits in 2019, according to Google Analytics. In particular, visits shot up in the first half of the year as a result of interest among young people in the Green New Deal.
- Our National Map of New Deal public works hit 16,000 sites at the end of 2019. Most new sites are contributed by our National Associates and Core Team members, but we also receive submissions from new friends around the country.
- We moved to a new Base Map on the MapBox platform instead of Google maps (which no longer supports the database we use). Thanks to Lisa Thompson, who oversaw the switch and is working on getting the kinks out of the new system.
- We continue to add news posts on a weekly basis, as well as keeping track of announcements about LND events and press coverage.
- A "New Deal Speaks" page was added to the website to feature audios and videos of LND team members, speeches from the 1930s, and more. We will continue to add more content to that page over the coming years.

- Several new achievements were added to the "New Deal Worked" section by Brent McKee and Dick Walker.

New York LND Branch

The Living New Deal-NYC Working Group held its first major public event, "A New Deal for New York City: Looking Back, Looking Forward," on May 7. The New York AIA hosted the event, which was attended by over 200. Co-sponsors included City Lore, FDR Library, Gotham Center at CUNY, Historic Districts Council, MCNY, National Jobs for All, and Roosevelt House at Hunter College.

In May, group members led New Deal tours of Red Hook and Astoria, part of the annual "Jane's Walks" tours. In October, Deborah Gardner was featured speaker at a series sponsored by the NYC Department of Design and Construction for city officials, planners, designers, and others involved in the construction industry.

The group worked with a graphic designer on a prototype for signs to be mounted at New Deal sites around the city, starting with the 11 Olympic-size WPA swimming pools. The next step is get the approval of the Parks Department.

Lisa Thompson created a new section of the Living New Deal website for the New York branch, along with group director, Peggy Crane. Donations can now be earmarked for New York group, which raised funds to print 5000 of LND's "Map and Guide to Public Works and Art in NYC" to distribute around the city.

Outreach

- Our mailing list has grown to over 4,000 subscribers, who receive the quarterly Newsletter, monthly Lowdown, Special Event announcements, and more.
- We produced four Newsletters, featuring articles and reviews on New Deal topics past and present. The newsletters are edited by Susan Ives and articles are contributed by both Core Team members and National Associates.
- We sent out 11 monthly reports, the "New Deal Lowdown", highlighting our work and current events. Those are created by Elena Ion.
- On Social Media, we added more videos to our YouTube channel; continued to post photographs and galleries of New Deal works on Instagram; and kept up our Facebook page, which reaches 1500 followers.
- Team members Gray Brechin, Harvey Smith, Dick Walker and Brent McKee all gave a number of talks and tours on New Deal topics over the course of the year.

LND app for iPhone

Our crowdsourcing app, created by Kevin Friedly of Indiana, is about ready for public release. Lisa Thompson worked with Kevin on the design – simple but effective and user-friendly. It has to be beta-tested and then approved by Apple for the App Store.

Staff News

- Elliot Medrich of Berkeley joined our Core Team in the Spring as National Associate Coordinator. He reached out to our NAs, seeking their input and getting them more involved in the Living New Deal. His impact is being felt and he has signed up new Associates, Milton Jordon, Sara Rutkowski & James Thomas.
- Kurt Feichtmeir of Portland OR was hired as Development Director, using a generous grant from one of our board members. Kurt recently retired from the Exploratorium in San Francisco and was looking for a new challenge, which he certainly has found! He came down to meet with the Core Team in October and he is already having a positive effect on our organization, planning and funding.
- Elena Ion continued as Manager, responsible for news, events and website content. She also serves as Research Manager and gatekeeper for all new site submissions going up on the national map. Elena spent half of the year in Romania to help out after her father's death, returning to grad school at Harvard in the Fall.
- Margaret (Peggy) Crane continued to head up the New York branch of the LND and our efforts to get signage on major New Deal sites around the city. As noted above, she has attracted a host of new members and the group is already on a roll.
- Brent McKee continued as our Project Historian, working mostly on the Washington DC map research this year. The quality of his work is always impressive and he has built up a fine site database in and around DC.
- Susan Ives continued as our Communications and Events Director, putting out newsletters, organizing exhibits and arranging fundraising appeals. She acted as our point person on the Washington HS murals controversy in San Francisco.
- Evan Kalish continued as our Researcher-At-Large, making road trip forays to Delmarva Peninsula, Puerto Rico and elsewhere, which he converts into hundreds of new map sites. He also tries to keep watch over the quality of our site submissions and database.
- Lisa Thompson continued to manage and update the Living New Deal website, making a number of improvements – many of which are not visible but matter enormously – and keeping the system running through any and all hang-ups.

Finances

The Living New Deal took in about \$150,000 this year and paid out over \$100,000; much of the surplus is already committed to staff for 2020. The LND is financed entirely by private donations, and we thank our donors for their generosity and support. By hiring a Development Director, we intend to ramp up fundraising efforts in 2020 to expand our work -- because there is so much to do!

A full 2019 Financial Report for the Living New Deal has been submitted to the Executive Board.