Hitting Our Stride

Dear Friends,

The Living New Deal is introducing a new generation to the New Deal and the spirit of government that inspired it. Our mission is to document, preserve and promote the New Deal’s legacy. With the help of our growing team and supporters like you, we are raising awareness about the importance of the New Deal—past and present.

In 2022 we added more than 1,500 New Deal sites to our expanding online archive of what the New Deal left to America. Our website topped more than three million visits last year, and we reached more people than ever through our publications, webinars, tours, social media and advocacy. The Living New Deal was even featured on the PBS NewsHour!

We believe we’re just hitting our stride. America needs a New Deal more than ever. As we reflect on the past year, we are grateful for your support. You make our work possible. Thank you!

Gray Brechin
Founder

Richard Walker
Director

The Test of Our Progress

The Living New Deal began as a research project at the University of California in 2006, documenting New Deal sites throughout the state. When we discovered the extent of the New Deal’s public works and art in just one state, we expanded our research nationally. We found the New Deal’s imprint extended to every state, county, and city and to hundreds of small towns in the form of civic buildings, schools, roads, bridges, parks, trails, amphitheaters, murals and more. Thousands of these public sites—built by our forebears during the Great Depression—still serve America to this day. When we realized that no archive of what the New Deal produced existed, we took up the challenge of creating one.

Today, having mapped 17,500 sites—and counting—we are incredibly proud to be bringing the New Deal’s accomplishments to light. All of this is thanks to a small, committed staff; fifty-five volunteer National Associates; a host of supporters and the efforts of historians, librarians, preservationists, and community activists who care deeply about preserving the New Deal’s overlooked and often endangered legacy.

There are serious challenges to this effort. Neglect and privatization threaten New Deal buildings, censorship looms over many New Deal artworks and political enemies seek to unravel the New Deal’s social safety net. But there are hopeful signs: support for a Green New Deal; landmark legislation to modernize the nation’s infrastructure; media attention focused on the New Deal’s relevance today.

This progress, on the heels of enormous economic and public health setbacks, is part and parcel of the New Deal playbook. Our goal is to show that a new New Deal is possible and that government can work creatively and accountably to meet the future, whatever challenges it brings.

“The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.”

—FDR, January 20, 1937


Visit us at livingnewdeal.org
The Living New Deal is a crowdsourced effort to assemble a digital collection of everything the New Deal built. A team of National Associates is documenting the physical legacy of the New Deal, community by community. All are volunteers with a passion for connecting others to the New Deal. Their sleuthing is helping us to build an online map and database of New Deal sites—city halls, post offices, libraries, schools, parks, hospitals, public works of art and more.

You can view our team’s profiles on our website, livingnewdeal.org, and learn how you can join the project. (As to the time commitment, that’s up to you). If you’re not ready to become a National Associate, we would still welcome your photos, New Deal discoveries and stories about the New Deal in your community.

To encourage scholarship and authorship about the New Deal, we presented the Living New Deal Book Award. In 2022, we received twelve nominations for eligible books (published in 2021). Scott Borchert, author of Republic of Detours: How the New Deal Paid Broke Writers to Rediscover America, (Farrar, Straus and Giroux) was named the winner. Republic of Detours, about the Federal Writers’ Project, is Borchert’s first book. A review committee called it “a beautifully written and timely book whose ramble through the lives of New Dealers reminds us of what can be accomplished when the federal government supports American artists to create an enduring legacy.”

We presented the award at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York. The 2022 award winner will be announced in June.

Building Connections to the New Deal

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Republic of Detours Win Living New Deal Book Award

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Teaching the New Deal

Founded at UC Berkeley, the Living New Deal’s mission is grounded in education. Our online teaching materials—a searchable map of New Deal sites, bibliographies, summaries of New Deal programs, articles and videos—serve a growing audience of educators and students. In 2022, thanks to a grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, we completed a high school curriculum guide to accompany our New Deal Map and Guide to Washington, DC.

The Living New Deal’s 2022 webinar series explored New Deal photography; the Federal Theater Project; the Harlem Renaissance; the influence of Mexican muralists on WPA artists; Native American art of the New Deal; and contemporary issues ranging from censorship of New Deal art, to affordable housing, to the pandemic.

We hosted a tour of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art exhibition, “A Living for Us All, Art of the WPA,” and a guided walk of the New Deal in New York City’s Central Park.

Looking Ahead

It’s been a landmark year for the Living New Deal. We accomplished all we set out to do and more. We also hatched a number of ideas that we hope to put into action in 2023—a new initiative to advocate for endangered New Deal art, mapping the New Deal in Los Angeles, and a number of events commemorating the 90th anniversary of the New Deal.

Other possibilities are a merger with the National New Deal Preservation Association and developing a Visitor Center with the USS Potomac Association, the keepers of the presidential yacht.
SUMMARY OF FINANCIALS

Revenue
- Individual Donations $73,634 (24.6%)
- Map Sales $1,225 (4%)
- Major Gifts $225,000 (75%)

Expense
- Administration $8,741 (4%)
- Development $27,316 (12.6%)
- Research $63,372 (29%)
- Outreach Programs $61,187 (28%)

Total Revenue: $299,859
Total Expense: $218,524

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Research Board members are scholars and public intellectuals with expertise in New Deal history and preservation who advise the Living New Deal team.

Individual Donations: $73,634 (24.6%)
Map Sales: $1,225 (4%)
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NATIONAL ASSOCIATES
National Associates in 35 states and Washington, DC document New Deal sites for the database, and write and speak on New Deal topics.

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Remembrance
Paul Groth, 1949-2022

Paul was professor of Geography and Architecture at the University of California, Berkeley, and a nationally admired expert on the vernacular architecture of America.
His popular courses taught thousands of students to appreciate ordinary places. His vast slide collection, amassed over decades of travel, is now archived at University of New Mexico. Paul loved our work discovering and mapping New Deal sites. A longtime supporter, he left the Living New Deal a generous bequest.

Remembrance
Ying Lee, 1932-2022

Ying was indomitable presence around Berkeley, active in every good cause. She taught at Berkeley High for more than two decades. As Berkeley’s first Asian American city council member, she fought for rent control and more diversity on the Council. She served as assistant to Representative Ron Dellums; opposed the Vietnam War and became active in Grandmothers Against War when the US invaded Iraq. Ying was an early advisor to the Living New Deal and a voice for social and racial justice throughout her life.
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OUR THANKS TO 2022 WEBINAR PRESENTERS

Emilia Mickevicius and Josie Johnson
Reality Makes Them Dream:
Revisiting New Deal Photography
Deborah Kaufman and Alan Snitow
Town Destroyer: Victor Arnautoff
and the Art of Controversy
Barbara Bernstein
Painting the Mail:
Post Office Art of the New Deal
Susan Quinn and Dan Jacobs
The Federal Theater:
Revisiting the Dream
Annie Rothstein-Segan
New Deal Photography
Through the Lens of Arthur Rothstein
Stephanie Anne Johnson
Art and Intersections:
The Harlem Renaissance
Meets the New Deal
Harold Porcher
Los Tres Grandes: Mexican Muralists’
Influence on Artists of the WPA
Jennifer McLerran
A New Deal for Native Art
Robert Leighton
Preparing for War: How the
New Deal Helped America
Fight Fascism and Win the War

Filmmakers Alan Snitow and
Deborah Kaufman at a screening
of “Town Destroyer,” a benefit for the
Living New Deal.
“The WPA produced 1,000 miles of new and rebuilt airport runways, 651,000 miles of highway, 124,000 bridges, 8,000 parks and 18,000 playgrounds and athletic fields, some 84,000 miles of drainage pipes, 69,000 highway light standards and 125,000 public buildings were built, rebuilt or expanded. To this day, Americans still rely on its works for transportation, electricity, flood control, housing and community amenities.”

Michael Hiltzik
The New Deal: A Modern History

A 501(c)(3) organization, the Living New Deal is a project of the Department of Geography, University of California, Berkeley.