

LIVING NEW DEAL Annual Report of Activities, 2020

With the end of 2020, it is time to review the accomplishments of the Living New Deal over the last year. This document serves as the official annual report to our Board and will be made available to our followers and the public on our website.

Despite the trials of the past year, the Living New Deal has made important progress. We took the time to focus on our mission and organization, coming up with a stronger presentation of our goals, better management of our resources and a clearer division of labor on the team. While in-person events were truncated and the Washington DC New Deal map launch was postponed because of the epidemic, we were able to do the first in a new series of webinars and improve the completed DC map.

In the development arena, we cleaned up our donor records, wrote a new mission/case statement, and prepared five short funding proposals that set forth our plans for 2021. In communications, we launched a new monthly newsletter (*The Fireside*), reformatted our periodic report of activities (*The Lowdown*), and revived our Twitter account.

We now have regular communication with our 42 National Associates. Internally, team members have a much clearer idea of their responsibilities, and relations with our New York City group have been clarified. Finally, we began the process of reconstructing our website and bringing on extra support for our webmaster after a major hack.

Development: With the arrival of Kurt Feichtmeir (in late 2019), we have been able to put our development effort on a more professional basis. A first step was implementing the NEON CRM donor management system to streamline donor records. A second was undertaking an assay of potential foundations and reaching out to those that might have an interest in us. The third was coming up with a new Mission or Case Statement to clarify our goals, means and needs.

An essential step forward in development was preparing five proposals for potential donors or foundations – short, pithy statements that articulate program priorities and financial requirements. The five priority areas for funding are: Research, Policy, Social Media, Website Support and Endangered Art. They are the pillars of a strategic plan.

Finally, we spoke individually with almost all members of our Advisory and Research Boards (~30 in number) to seek their advice on funding and direction. This process has already yielded valuable new ideas, useful criticisms, helpful leads and closer relations between the Living New Deal's core team and advisors.

Communications: We launched a new monthly newsletter, *The Fireside*, with a more stylish look (with help from Linda Herman) and longer articles connecting the New Deal to current issues, plus links to media coverage of the New Deal, events and more. This is the work of Susan Ives, assisted by Lisa Thompson and Sheera Bleckman. Our periodic report on people and activities of the Living New Deal, *The Lowdown*, got a

new look, as well, thanks to the same team. Feedback from our followers (now over 4000 strong) is very positive.

We are also trying to make a stronger push on social media, with Susan Ives on Facebook, Elena Ion posting on Instagram and Brent McKee reviving our Twitter account. The need for a specialized staffer in this realm is clear to all, however, and we have a funding proposal to do just that.

National Associates: With Elliott Medrich now in charge of our National Associates, we continue to see the fruits of his labor this year. Associates now cover all 50 states and Elliott is in regular communication with the NAs, who feel much more a part of the Living New Deal than they did before and who submitted around 400 new sites this year. Some inactive Associates have dropped off the list, but Elliott has brought on a half-dozen new recruits. Special mention needs to be made of Judith Kenny in Portland, who has taken the role of regional coordinator for the Northwest.

New York City: Under the able direction of Peggy Crane, the Living New Deal-New York is prospering. The organizing committee registered the signal achievement of getting the NYC Parks Department to agree to put medallions crediting the WPA (designed by the LND folks) on all 11 New Deal swimming pools in the city. They held a successful webinar, "From the New Deal to the Green New Deal" (to replace a live program) in the Fall, with over 400 registrants and 1,000 viewers. That success has encouraged us to plan a series of webinars for 2021, starting on January 7th.

The Website and Online Map: The good news is that the Living New Deal website continues to attract a huge number of online visitors – over a million in 2020, according to Google analytics. Led by Barbara Bernstein, we added a new section on Endangered Art, with advice on how to preserve and protect New Deal art and sites, along with a registry of imperiled artworks. Our team, especially Brent McKee and Elena Ion, continue to add to existing sections such as New Deal programs, New Deal news, New Deal Worked, New Deal videos, Green New Deal and more. A new section called "On the Road" launched with a series of photo essays by Associate Fern Nesson.

The map and database are growing steadily, with around 16,500 sites mapped by the end of the year. Under the direction of Lisa Thompson, we completed the migration to a new map platform, MapBox, which has important advantages over Google maps; MapBox eliminates irrelevant commercial sites and has clearer icons and better color. As one might expect, it took time to debug a new system, which is now fully functional.

The Hack: The bad news is that our website suffered a major attack from an unknown source in September, which removed all photographs and documents while leaving text, layout and details intact. Normally, everything should have been restored from backups, but our server host, Nestify, failed us and all backups since May were lost. We are putting in hundreds of hours finding and restoring thousands of lost photographs.

Nevertheless, some good came out of this miserable experience. It's clear that the Living New Deal's website, map and online presence have far outgrown the technical foundation established almost a decade ago. Thanks to our Webmaster, Lisa Thompson, we have moved to a new level of security and a new, higher grade server host, as well as bringing on board new technical expertise and support. The hope is to redesign the website from scratch, leaving behind the overstretched and cranky WordPress framework. We have a funding proposal to accomplish that.

Outreach: We began the year with in-person talks by Gray Brechin, Harvey Smith and Brent McKee, and a wonderful exhibit at the Canessa Gallery in San Francisco, "Posters for Social Change." The latter, organized by Susan Ives and Harvey Smith, was done in conjunction with the Creative Action Network and Sunrise Movement.

With the epidemic, plans changed. Harvey gave online talks for LaborFest on "Berkeley and the New Deal" and "New Deal Art: Anita Brenner and Cultural-Bridge Builders." For SF History Days, he gave another talk on "The New Deal, Treasure Island, and Organized Labor." Gray did a talk on New Deal Marin and Sonoma Counties.

Given the success of the pioneering New York webinar, we decide to do a series of webinars in 2021 under the leadership of Susan Ives and Peggy Crane. The first will be "Art and Activism: Posters for Social Change"; others will include Endangered New Deal Art, Reinvesting in Public Health, and From Public Works to Infrastructure.

New Deal Washington DC map: After cancelling the planned April 2020 launch due to Covid, we took the opportunity to upgrade the map by adding over new 100 sites. As a result, the map now shows over 500 New Deal sites in the District of Columbia. The design and cartography by Linda Herman and Molly Roy are stunning and the draft is being reviewed and proofread by Susan Ives. Our plan is to print it in early 2021, and we will soon be organizing a new launch and seek funding for printing and distribution.

Finances: We carried out our usual mid-year and year-end appeals for donations and did as well as in previous years, despite the pandemic. We also garnered a generous annual donation from a faithful major donor and another large donation came in response to the hack. Thanks to Kurt Feichtmeir and Susan Ives for doing the appeals.

Our funds should carry us through 2021, but the goal is to build up our financial foundation and expand the organization's capacity in the directions indicated by our five new funding proposals: Research, Policy, Social Media, Website and Endangered Art. We are actively pursuing this goal with the help of our advisors and major donors.

People: We are pleased to announce that Prof. Derrick Hamilton of the New School and Prof. Laura Pulido of the University of Oregon are new members of our Research Board. We are sad to report that Jan Roosevelt Katten, the first member of our Advisory Board, passed away in November. Two of our staff also suffered family losses and health problems but have gamely returned to work. Our hearts go out to these members of our band of Living New Dealers and their families.