



Fact Sheet

Address and Location

The Italian American Museum of Los Angeles is located in the historic Italian Hall on North Main Street overlooking Olvera Street in downtown Los Angeles. Built in 1908, the Italian Hall is listed on the *National Register of Historic Places* and is the oldest remaining structure from the city's little Italy.

Vision

Slated to open in 2015, the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles (IAMLA) will be a 21st century, interactive museum that documents the history and contributions of Italian Americans in Southern California and the nation. The IAMLA will feature exhibitions and a variety of cultural-educational programming. It will welcome an estimated two million visitors of all origins annually, including 300,000 students.

Governance and Organizational Background

Established in 1996, the Historic Italian Hall Foundation (HIHF) is a 501 c (3) organization whose mission is to support the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles and the continued preservation of the historic Italian Hall. The HIHF possesses a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the City of Los Angeles, who owns the Italian Hall as part of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historic Monument.

Mission

The Mission of the Italian American Museum of Los Angeles is to foster understanding of Southern California's diverse heritage through research, historic preservation, exhibitions and educational programs that examine the history and contributions of Italian Americans and Italians in Los Angeles and the United States.

Historical Background

Italian settlement in Los Angeles began in 1827, more than two decades prior to California's statehood. By 1900, the city possessed a sizable Italian American community, most of which lived in the vicinity of downtown Los Angeles. In 1908, the Italian Hall was constructed on North Main Street in what was the heart of the Italian enclave. The building served as the community's focal point until the 1950s, hosting a variety of social and charitable events. The Italian Hall also played an integral role in the city's early free speech and labor movements.

In 1953, the State of California acquired the Italian Hall in order to incorporate the building and surrounding structures in the El Pueblo Historic District. The Italian community ceased to use the site, and in the years that followed, the building fell into severe disrepair.

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In the early 1990s, a development project threatened to erase the Italian Hall's historic character. Soon thereafter, the Historic Italian Hall Foundation was created in order to raise funds to restore the building and establish a museum. During the project's first phase, the Foundation raised over \$1.5 million, and renovations addressing the most critical historic preservation and deferred maintenance issues commenced. The project's current phase focuses on the opening of the Museum and the ongoing historic preservation of the Italian Hall, a \$3 million public-private partnership between the Historic Italian Hall Foundation and the City of Los Angeles.

Project Description

The 5,000-square-foot Museum will merge multiple aims to create an environment for education and exploration. Following the restoration of the historic interior, the second floor will house exhibitions utilizing advanced audiovisual technology and artifacts, and will be designed in a manner conducive to hosting programs and events. On the first floor, a museum store will be developed in area of the building that was once housed an elegant Italian saloon. Finally, the lobby leading from Main Street to the second floor will be restored to serve as the Museum entrance.

Corsini Stark Architects of Los Angeles and architect Dan Lawrence are leading the project. Renowned conservator Enzo Aiello, who has led restoration projects for the Vatican, Getty, and government entities throughout Europe and the Middle East, will restore the Italian Hall's mosaic entry. Robert Checchi, Senior Exhibition Designer at the Getty, is creating the IAMLA's permanent exhibitions with the Museum's executive director and historian Marianna Gatto. Finally, preservation firm Chattel Architecture will complete a Historic Preservation Compliance Review confirming the project's fidelity to historic preservation standards.

Events and Programming

The IAMLA hosts a number of events annually, including the extremely popular *Taste of Italy*, a cultural-gastronomic event featuring over 50 fine food and beverage purveyors. An excess of 75,000 people visited the IAMLA's most recent temporary exhibition, *Sunshine and Struggle: The Italian Experience in Los Angeles*, which premiered in three cities. Recent conferences have included *Italian Americans, California Italians*, at UCLA, and *Hidden Voices: Italian Americans and the Making of Los Angeles*, at El Pueblo.

Education

The HIHF and IAMLA is the principal organizer for Italian Heritage Month in the City of Los Angeles, a series of events and programs that celebrate Italian American culture. The IAMLA's educational programs are aligned with California State Educational Standards and consistent with the Museum's mission. Working with the Italian government and local non-profit organizations, the Museum will also present Italian language classes for children and adults.

Collections

IAMLA's collection contains approximately 5,000 artifacts, photographs and archival documents. The ever-growing collection spans from the 18th century to recent history. Italian Americans and Italians in the West are the Museum's collections priorities and the Museum serves as the only repository of its kind in the Western U.S.

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