

New Roles for an Historic Building



Photo by Ray Mulokaks

As Ventura City Hall marks its hundredth year it remains home to a modern “living” organization whose staff provides valuable services for today’s residents. Community Development and Public Works offices ensure safe neighborhoods of homes and streets. The Treasury office tracks payments for water bills and business licenses. Offices of the City Manager, City Clerk, City Attorney and City Council work towards a well-administered city.

City Hall West

In 1988, the architectural firm Rasmussen & Associates guided the Pinner Construction Company in the conversion of the Courthouse Annex – a “junior version” of its ornate neighbor built with matching terra-cotta, marble, woodwork and plaster coffered ceilings during the Depression. This former Sheriff’s Office and Jail is now called City Hall West and home to the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Partnerships whose mission is to create opportunities for residents to have a better life through people, parks, programs and partnerships.

Atrium

Linking both buildings is a small vaulted courtroom ornate with birch and fruitwood paneling, massive doors of carved oak and crown molding of law books and scrolls next to a copper-roofed loggia, arcade or bridge. Below, a new outdoor courtyard and atrium enclose what once were exterior walls of terra cotta to provide a modern space for concerts and meetings. A wood replica of the Juan Palo-Kangas WPA statue of Father Serra stands sentinel over Kathleen Conti’s replicas of Chumash rock art made by the area’s original inhabitants depicting eclipses and mythological beings.



Photo by Donna Granata

A City of Bells

The 172-bell Grand Symphony Maas-Rowe Carillon, Downtown Rotary Club of Ventura’s bicentennial gift in 1976, can produce 333 bell tones over four octaves from the console’s two 37-note manual keyboards, as rooftop speakers amplify tiny clappers striking 178 miniature rods (instead of bells) housed in five wall cabinets under the Grand Staircase. Automation in 1998 replaced 100 foot mylar player rolls with a digital timepiece computer and CD-ROM technology to chime the hours, concerts and holiday tunes from a 200-song repertoire.



Municipal Art Collection

City Hall became a tourist destination for the world’s art lovers in 2000 when new galleries with Bulgarian calacata cream marble floors and columns displayed its Municipal Art Collection.

Founded in 1998, the showcase for the county’s storied artists such as Beatrice Wood, Horace Bristol, Otto Heino and Jesse Arms Botke as well as major living artists such as John Nava, Ted Gall and Paul Lindhard spills over both floors with almost 100 works by 71 artists in sculpture, painting, photography, etching, ceramics and other multi-media.



Jesse Arms Botke

City Hall North

The Bridge Gallery featuring community arts and events connects City Hall and the five-story City Hall North at 505 Poli Street. Purchased by the City in 2006, this former county building has evolved into the futurist Ventura Commerce Center housing the City’s Information Technology Division, Ventura Chamber of Commerce, business incubators of the Ventura Ventures Technology Center (or V2TC), the Nonprofit Sustainability Center for social service and arts organizations and, at the top, The Trade Desk, an online media/data advertising exchange.