This “museum” is temporary and is a planning phase for a permanent “museum” in the form of a series of public artworks that would acknowledge the cultural contribution to the city of people who have lived and worked in Skid Row LA, and recognize the history and shifting contours of the area.

Recognizing that the contours of the Skid Row and downtown Los Angeles have always been dynamic, the museum will include history and events outside the recognizable boundaries of Skid Row today—and illuminate the social dynamics and public policies that have and continue to shape the area and public perception of the area.

Skid Row is an amazing place with amazing community assets. Skid Row LA has the largest concentration of the most affordable housing in Los Angeles County. Skid Row has the largest concentration and most comprehensive set of services for homeless people in the county. Skid Row is the biggest recovery culture anywhere. Skid Row’s highly developed drug recovery consciousness includes free recovery programs and numerous AA, NA and CA groups. In short, the community has long been a generative site for visionary answers to social problems.

These visionary initiatives have come about through individual and collective concern by community members and moments of enlightened public policy and visionary non-profit efforts. Largely underappreciated is the extent to which the visionary efforts have been the work of community members. Without the civic engagement of citizens of Skid Row, the housing stock would not have been preserved, the people and social services would have been dispersed and the Safe Haven recovery community would not exist.

This show “Skid Row History Museum” is meant to highlight the cultural, civic and political initiatives and the community people who made them. This “museum show” is a dynamic process. During the course of the show we want to hear of additional people and initiatives. During events connected with the show and in the gallery there is space for you, the public, to contribute your knowledge of special people and initiatives.

Eventually the “museum” will be housed out of doors as a series of public artworks and plaques commemorating people in the places where they lived and worked. We invite you to suggest people and designs for these plaques. At the moment we are thinking of something like an alternative to a “walk of fame” because while these people are stars, their concern for the well-being of their community means that they are exactly not about setting themselves apart from everybody else, but rather about raising everybody up together. Enjoy the show and help us figure all this out.

-John Malpede
Director, LAPD

LAPD’s “Skid Row History Museum” will be installed at The Box Gallery, 977 Chung King Road, (one block west of Hill) in Chinatown, from June 28 to August 2, 2008, open Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 6 pm.
The show is open and FREE to all.
The floor map reflects the changing contours of Skid Row. Concrete and black blocks together represent Skid Row in 1980. Concrete blocks constitute today’s Skid Row neighborhood, with black blocks appropriated or claimed by recently invented or expanding neighborhoods.

Follow lines from map to other places in the gallery for more information about displaced and still intact community assets. Striped lines represent community assets relocated to the consolidated area.

This instead of being told what people want by newspapers, political leaders and developers.

We initiated a community conversation strategy conceived by UTOPIA/dystopia collaborating artist Harrell Fletcher. LAPD’ers and others were asked to identify and invite someone they knew who was doing something laudable, and important, something that represents the best of the current and future downtown. This meant we had a bunch of people each selecting people whose spirit they valued. It was a democratizing and randomizing strategy. It worked so well, that we ended up doing 5 such events, which eventually included 37 people. People invited to speak at one event often ended up selecting someone for the next event. So, the collective vision spiraled outward. In the back room we have dvds of these “37 Glimpses of Utopia” events.

The photos on the wall include those 37 people—and a few others—who were invited and couldn’t make it, or should’ve, would’ve been invited if we’d had one more such event. This is in keeping with the spirit of this show which is to keep finding and highlighting more community people and their work.

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS
Audio of General Dogon of LA Community Action Network (LA CAN), informing community members of their civil rights. Dogon wrote and performed this text in Los Angeles Poverty Department’s “Utopia/dystopia performance at REDCAT Theater, December 2007.

SIDEWALK OUTSIDE DESIGNATED SLEEPING ZONE
Another example of the resurgence of the 41.18d mentality. In 1997, in an effort to make 41.18d legal, certain areas were designated as “sleeping zones.” If you slept there—and disappeared by 6 am—the promise was that you would avoid police harassment and possible arrest.

Jim Hahn was LA City Attorney from 1985 to 2001 and he consistently refused to prosecute the homeless for sleeping outside unless the City provided them with an alternative. Hahn’s principled and reasonable stand had a number of unintended consequences that included not only 1997’s “designated sleeping zones,” but also the infamous “Urban Campground” opened by Mayor Tom Bradley in 1987, on a dusty lot at 4th and Santa Fe, by the LA River. More on the Urban Campground, in the timeline and resource table located in the back room of the gallery.
The timeline references significant events in the history of the Skid Row neighborhood, and a few written artifacts accompany the timeline. More artifacts and extensive written materials on the events in the timeline are to be found in the notebooks on the resource table.

**COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES**

Here are 3 possible designs for commemorative plaques honoring people and initiatives in Skid Row. The 3 represented in these mock-ups are all worthy honorees – but at this point they are only possible honorees. Each, in his or her own way, contributed to important advances in the neighborhood: decent housing, recovery and community empowerment. We don’t know how many initiatives and people will be honored or who they will be. We don’t know what the design will be either. We want your ideas on people and initiatives and on the design.

A second video monitor features the people whose faces are in the front room: talking about their work on Skid Row during LA Poverty Department’s “37 Glimpses of Utopia” events of last fall.

The third monitor screens videos of community and social initiatives, including the work of Alexander the Poet a member of the Homeless Writer’s Coalition and LA Poverty Department, Becky Dennison talking about the Downtown Women’s Action Coalition, Scott Chamberlin and Tim Peters of Church of the Nazarene and Central City Community Outreach, O.G. Man talking about his initiatives Father’s Day in the Park and his children’s coloring book “Peace ‘N the Hood,” historical murals from inside Gravy Joe’s; Geoffrey Gilbert-Hammerling, former Associate Director of SRO Housing Inc, talking about the history of Skid Row and Gary Glaser’s documentary on Justiceville and its founder Ted Hayes.

**BASEMENT**

Objects refer to 3 significant political actions (that also qualify as ingenious art actions) by activists on Skid Row.

**FREE SHOPPING CARTS**

Periodically the LA Police Department has made life difficult for people by claiming that their shopping carts were “stolen property.” The Catholic Worker bought shopping carts and gives them away to people who want them. On video, Jeff Dietrich from The Catholic Worker describes this action and the Catholic Worker’s work on Skid Row.

**FREE SPEECH TENT**

David Busch, long-time homeless activist and sometime writer for “Making Change,” the homeless newspaper based in Santa Monica, put up a tent on Towne Street that had a sign affixed to it protesting the police sweep of people living on the street. When he was told to move his tent or face arrest, he refused on the grounds that removing it would violate his 1st Amendment right to free speech. (The resource table upstairs includes Rickey C. Mantley’s “Towne Street Incident,” a fictionalized account of David’s tent action. Rickey Mantley is a former editor of “Making Change” and a long-time LA Poverty Department member). On video David Busch speaks with LA Poverty Department in 2002 about another of his 1st Amendment actions, this one at the Getty Museum.

**RESIDENTIAL HOTEL**

Veronica Doleman of LA Community Action Network (LA CAN) made a model of an affordable hotel and its happy tenants. The hotel made a statement about the need for an ordinance to preserve affordable residential hotel stock, in a time of “adaptive re-use.” Veronica’s hotel model was one of LA CAN’s contributions to the monthly Downtown Art Walk. Largely through LA CAN’s ability to bring together hotel tenants to advocate for their own interests, the LA City Council recently enacted legislation to permanently preserve the affordable hotel stock. On video Veronica, Steve Diaz and other LA CAN members talk of their efforts to prevent the displacement of the long time resident community of downtown.

**BEANS**

Beans slowly, super slowly cooking at the Catholic Worker’s Hippie Kitchen.
OPENING RECEPTION
JUNE 28, Saturday, 6 – 9pm | @ The Box Gallery

PERFORMANCE & PUBLIC CONVERSATION
JULY 18, Friday, 6 – 9pm | @ Lamp Community Art Project Gallery
452 S. Main Street, Los Angeles, CA 90013

WORKSHOP
JULY 25, Friday, 2 – 6pm | @ The Box Gallery
Live From Skid Row: Workshop for Skid Row residents from Lamp Community and the Downtown Women’s Center. Food & drinks.

PERFORMANCE & PUBLIC CONVERSATION
JULY 26, Saturday, 6 – 9pm | @ The Box Gallery

CLOSING RECEPTION
AUGUST 2, Saturday, 6 – 9pm | @ The Box Gallery

This exhibition has been co-curated by John Malpede and Mara McCarthy, with help from the curatorial team of Henriette Brouwers, Pamela Miller-Macias, Roman Jaster, Kevin Michael Key. Head of installation, Hilary Graves. Graphic design, Roman Jaster. With contributions from Harrell Fletcher, Marina Peterson and Susan Gray. Newspaper by Pamela Miller-Macias.

Special thanks to Nicolas Gerber; Charles Jackson; Veronica Doleman and LA CAN; Jeff Dietrich, Catherine Morris and LA Catholic Worker; Alice Callahan; Clyde Casey; S.S. Jones; Moira LaMountain and Making Change Newspaper; Rickey Mantley; Steve Diaz; Ted Hayes and Justiceville/Homeless USA; Leslie Mejia, Monica Martinez and The Downtown Women’s Center.

about
Los Angeles Poverty Department
LAPD’s mission is to create performance work that connects lived experience to the social forces that shape the lives and communities of people living in poverty. Founded in 1985 by artistic director John Malpede, LAPD is committed to creating high-quality, challenging performance works that express the realities, hopes and dreams of people who live and work on Los Angeles’ Skid Row.

about
The Box Gallery
The Box gallery opened on June 9, 2007 with an inaugural installation by Spandau Parks. The Box is an alternative gallery, incorporating the voice of the artist and the public. The Box aims to push the concept of an art gallery, viewing it as a place of thought and education.

about
Community Redevelopment Agency
CRA/LA (www.crala.org), a public agency, is regulated by the State of California and operates within the City of Los Angeles. It attracts private investment into economically depressed communities to eliminate blight, revitalize older neighborhoods, build housing for all income levels and create and retain employment opportunities. CRA/LA manages 32 redevelopment projects areas and three revitalization areas in seven regions: East Valley, West Valley, Hollywood & Central, Downtown, Eastside, South Los Angeles and the Harbor.