

ILGA World Conference

Los Angeles

2021

A Bid Presented by the

IT GETS BETTER PROJECT.

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Urban Light, an art installation at the LA County Museum of Art

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com



Letter of Intent

Los Angeles is home to a **rich and culturally diverse community** comprised of millions of people from around the world who, like me, came to the city in search of opportunity. Some came in search of fame and fortune, others for the sunny beaches, and more still to make their mark on one of the many hubs of industry that contribute to the United States' largest state-based economy. And, many simply come to find their tribe, a chosen family who would accept them no matter what, who would challenge them to explore their greatest potential.

The It Gets Better Project is a symbol of that search for family. It is an organization that strives to connect a global community that not only offers acceptance but also encourages us to live our best lives. Its sole purpose is to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ young people around the globe – and it will serve as an amazing **host for the 2021 ILGA World Conference**. I am so humbled by this opportunity to share the Los Angeles experience with the ILGA family. And, I have no doubt the memories made by those who travel to this vibrant city will be strong enough to last a lifetime.

Brian Wenke
Executive Director

Downtown Los Angeles skyline at Sunset

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

IT GETS BETTER PROJECT.

Why Los Angeles?

In the spring of 1959 – a full **decade before the Stonewall Riots** took place in New York City – a small riot took place one night in a coffee shop in downtown Los Angeles. That night played out as it had many times before, with two police officers from the Los Angeles Police Department – “*one of the most determined enemies of homosexuality in the nation* (see reference below)” – entering Cooper Donuts, a popular queer meeting place, to intimidate and harass the LGBTQ+ clientele that had gathered.

But this night was different: **the crowd rebelled**. The patrons – a collection of trans women, gay men, drag queens, and sex workers – had simply had enough. Someone threw a donut at the intruders, followed by many others, until paper cups and entire cups of coffee were hurled their way. The officers were forced to retreat, though they returned later with more squad cars, sirens blaring. Many were arrested as the riot ensued, and Main Street was cordoned off and shut down for the entire following day.

According to journalist and biographer Stuart Timmons, “this was perhaps **the first homosexual uprising in the world**” (*Gay L.A.: A History of Sexual Outlaws, Power Politics, and Lipstick Lesbians*, Basic Books, 2006). And it was just the beginning.

Facade of the downtown Los Angeles Theater

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com





What started that night as a small but potent riot 60 years ago has blossomed into **one of the most prolific and accomplished LGBTQ+ movements** the world has ever seen. Historically speaking, “more lesbian and gay institutions have started in Los Angeles than anywhere else on the planet” (*Gay L.A.*, 2006). This includes ONE Archives, the world’s largest repository of LGBTQ+ materials in the world, and the Los Angeles LGBT Center, which provides services “for more LGBT people than any other organization in the world.”

Today, Los Angeles continues as a **liberal trendsetter for the entire state of California** (the 6th largest economy in the world) and is one of the most inclusive major cities in the United States. Alongside incorporated cities like West Hollywood, Los Angeles boasts some of the most progressive laws in the world that protect its burgeoning and diverse LGBTQ+ community. It also supports internationally recognized television and film industries that are continuing to improve how they highlight queer artists and their stories.

What’s more, Los Angeles is a truly global city with a diverse economy in entertainment, culture, media, fashion, science, sports, technology, education, medicine, and research. With a population of over 13 million people, Los Angeles is the second-largest city in the United States and the 4th most diverse. Its residents enjoy more than 22 miles of wide sandy beaches, more museums than London, New York, and Tokyo, and 292 sunny days per year. The city’s international airport, LAX, directly serves over 170 cities around the world. It’s no wonder that millions of tourists and thousands of new residents flock to the city each year; **there’s no other place quite like LA.**

Participant holding a rainbow flag at a 2018 Pride event

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

If Los Angeles' proud queer history, progressive culture, and unbeatable tourist offerings aren't compelling enough, consider then the city's **unique political position** at this juncture in United States and world history. While conservative and outdated mindsets have taken hold in many places around the world as of late, Los Angeles's leaders and citizens haven't balked. Rather, they've resisted.

Over the past two years, Los Angeles **activists have come out and stood up in record numbers** against repeated attacks on our Muslim, trans, and immigrant communities. In January 2017, over 750,000 people descended on downtown Los Angeles for the inaugural Women's March, representing the largest gathering for that march anywhere in the world. Just over nine months later, Los Angeles would be the epicenter of the powerful #MeToo and #TimesUp movements against sexual harassment and assault.

With U.S. elections on the horizon in late 2020, it's more important than ever that cities like Los Angeles, ones that value progressive ideals and politics, continue to thrive. Hosting an ILGA World Conference would help in that effort – it would send a strong message to Washington, D.C. and other world centers that diversity and inclusion make our communities stronger and that **the global LGBTQ+ community is more united than ever.**



Protestors holding signs at the 2017 Women's March in Los Angeles

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

Organizing Team

It Gets Better Project

The [It Gets Better Project](#) is a Los Angeles-based nonprofit with a **mission to uplift, empower, and connect LGBTQ+ youth around the world**. The organization was founded in September 2010 when the first It Gets Better video was uploaded to YouTube. A viral, online storytelling movement quickly followed, one that has generated over 60,000 video stories to date. This represents one of the largest collections of LGBTQ+ stories the world has ever seen. The work of the It Gets Better Project's staff is to continue growing this collection to reflect the vast diversity of the global LGBTQ+ community and to make the story collection ever more accessible to LGBTQ+ youth everywhere.

Having a base in Los Angeles offers the It Gets Better Project unique access to the entertainment industry and to unbeatable opportunities to tell stories that are meaningful for LGBTQ+ youth. But while headquartered in Los Angeles, the **impact of the organization has always been global** due to the borderless nature of the Internet. Furthermore, through a growing network of affiliates, the It Gets Better Project is helping to equip communities with the knowledge, skills, and resources they need to tell their own stories. You can learn more about the organization's global affiliate network at itgetsbetter.org/global.



Display table at the 2018 Los Angeles Times Festival of Books

SOURCE: It Gets Better Project

But much of the It Gets Better Project's community-building efforts continue to happen right in Los Angeles, **in collaboration with other local LGBTQ+ nonprofits**. Currently, there are seven other ILGA member organizations based in the LA metropolitan area. These include:

- [American Institute of Bisexuality](#), an organization that encourages, supports and assists research and education about bisexuality through programs likely to make a material difference and enhance public knowledge, awareness, and understanding about bisexuality.
- [Christopher Street West/Los Angeles Pride](#), an organization working to create safe and inclusive spaces for self-expression, inspire an authentic sense of activism in the continued fight for equality, and celebrate the unique heritage and diverse cultures of Los Angeles' LGBTQ+ community and its allies.
- [The Democracy Council of California](#), an organization dedicated to promoting democracy, human rights, economic opportunity, and rule of law in developing countries.
- [Equality California](#), an organization working to bring the voices of LGBTQ people and allies to institutions of power in California and across the United States, striving to create a world that is healthy, just, and fully equal for all LGBTQ people.



Bird's eye view of sunbathers on Santa Monica Beach

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com



- [Long Beach Lesbian & Gay Pride Inc.](#), an organization that engages in and supports bridge-building activities that educate, encourage, and celebrate LGBT inclusion and pride.
- [Rainbow Advocacy](#) (formerly *Metropolitan Community Charities*), an organization that supports LGBTQ community-building and health-related initiatives and programs, with local, national and global reach.
- [USC Lambda LGBT Alumni Association](#), an organization working to build an enriching and supportive community that promotes education, networking, and increased visibility for LGBT students and alumni.

It is the hope of the It Gets Better Project's board and staff to work closely with each and every one of these organizations (as well as any other organizations in Los Angeles that become ILGA members in the near future) to organize an unforgettable world conference in 2021. While the It Gets Better Project would lead this charge and be primarily responsible for the social program and evening meals for all participants during the conference, the organization welcomes input and support from each of the abovementioned ILGA members **to ensure a successful conference for all.**

Aerial view of Los Angeles' world famous suburban sprawl

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

Conference Sites

While preparing this bid, the It Gets Better Project's staff consulted with [Discover Los Angeles](#), the city's top tourist information center, and the [Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board](#) to identify **the best locations for an ILGA World Conference**. Three neighborhoods came out on top. They are described in detail below alongside information about local LGBTQ+ communities and businesses, access to public transportation, and potential hotel and social venues. All three are known for their thriving cultures and unique offerings and would be perfect settings for the 2021 conference.

[Downtown Los Angeles \(DTLA\)](#)

[Hollywood](#)

[West Hollywood](#)





Downtown Los Angeles (DTLA)

Both the **birthplace of Los Angeles** and the pulsating heart of the city, Downtown LA is a bustling area dotted with renowned art museums, modern high-rises, architectural landmarks, and scores of new and refreshed hotels, restaurants, and bars. It is the hub of LA Metro, the city's urban rail transit system, as well as LA's Music Center, Arts District, Chinatown, Little Tokyo, and Olvera Street, a Mexican marketplace built on the site of the city's birthplace.

But Downtown LA is more than just landmarks and tourist attractions. It's also one of the most diverse areas in the cities, with an almost even balance among the city's four major racial and ethnic communities. The neighborhood emerged as a **dynamic and diverse urban center** after experiencing a renaissance in the early 2000s, and today young folks and LGBTQ+ people are flocking to the city's core for both better transit options and a thriving nightlife. The downtown area is also closely connected to Silver Lake and Echo Park, two nearby neighborhoods known for their quirky styles and exciting art scenes.

[Hotel + Conference Venues](#)

[Social Venues](#)

Traffic View of Downtown Los Angeles

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

Hotel + Conference Venues

DTLA

Downtown LA offers a number of superb options for **hotels and conference venues** within short distances from multiple public transportation options. Some are large enough to accommodate all of the ILGA World Conference attendees at once, while any number of smaller hotels could be used in tandem. These include:

- [The NoMad Hotel](#), with 241 rooms and 10,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor meeting, event, and private dining space;
- [Hotel Indigo](#), with 350 rooms and 21,000 square feet of event space;
- [Intercontinental Downtown](#), with 800 rooms and 94,000 square feet of event space.



DTLA

Social Venues

As for potential **venues for social activities**, Downtown LA has a number of world-class options that can rival any other global city. These include:

- [Staples Center/LA Live](#), the “world’s most successful entertainment arena;”
- [Clifton’s Cafeteria](#), LA’s most iconic dining & nightlife destination with five floors of “transportive dining and cocktail environments;”
- [Dodger Stadium](#), the home field of the Los Angeles Dodgers, the city’s major league baseball team (the Dodger’s host an LGBT Night at the stadium every spring);
- [The Theater at Ace Hotel](#) - a flagship movie palace and one of LA’s most remarkable gems.

Nighttime view of Downtown LA from the Griffith Observatory

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

Hollywood

This iconic LA neighborhood has certainly earned its reputation as the “**Entertainment Capital of the World.**” For nearly a century, Hollywood has been the larger-than-life symbol of the most recognizable film and television industries in the world. The major film studios of Hollywood, which include Warner Bros. Studios and The Studios at Paramount, are the primary source of the most commercially successful and most ticket-selling movies ever made. Hollywood is where you can also find Grauman’s Chinese Theater and the star-studded Walk of Fame, as well as the Dolby Theater, the home of the Academy Awards.

But while Hollywood is best known for its glamorous movie history, it’s also a lively area full of hip dining hotspots and clubs, historic old theaters, and beautiful hotels and mega-venues. Not to mention it’s home to the Los Angeles LGBT Center that serves over 42,000 visitors each month – more than half a million each year. In other words, Hollywood is much more than movies and television; it’s **one of the cornerstones of LA’s’ LGBTQ+ community.**

[Hotel + Conference Venues](#)

[Social Venues](#)



Hollywood

Hotel + Conference Venues

Hollywood offers a number of superb options for **hotels and conference venues** within short distances from multiple public transportation options. Some are large enough to accommodate all of the ILGA World Conference attendees at once, while any number of smaller hotels could be used in tandem. These include:

- [W Hollywood](#), with 305 rooms and over 24,000 square feet of event space;
- [Loews Hollywood](#), with 328 rooms and 76,000 square feet of flexible meeting space;
- [Sheraton Universal Hotel](#), with 442 rooms, over 28,000 square feet of event space, and a grand ballroom that can host up to 1200 guests;
- [Hilton Los Angeles/Universal City](#), with 495 rooms and 35,000 sq. ft. of flexible indoor and outdoor event space.



A view down Hollywood Boulevard at sunset

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

Hollywood

Social Venues

As for potential **venues for social activities**, Hollywood and its surrounding neighborhoods simply can't be beat. These include:

- [Universal Studios Hollywood](#) and the [Universal Citywalk](#), a film studio, theme park, and entertainment district known for its incredible attractions;
- [Griffith Park](#), one of the largest urban parks in North America featuring the [LA Zoo & Botanical Gardens](#), the [Griffith Observatory](#), and the [Greek Theater](#);
- [Hollywood Bowl](#), the premier destination for live music in Southern California;
- Numerous movie theaters, including the [Dolby Theater](#), the home of the Academy Awards, [Grauman's/TCL Chinese Theater](#), and [El Capitan](#), the Walt Disney movie palace.



Tourists taking a stroll along the Hollywood Walk of Fame

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

A photograph showing the undersides of several palm trees against a clear blue sky. The trees are tall and slender, with their fronds fanning out. The perspective is from below, looking up at the trees.

West Hollywood

The City of West Hollywood is the **thriving epicenter of the LGBTQ+ community** in Los Angeles, and has been known as an inclusive place for all communities throughout its history. The city was incorporated in 1984, after a coalition of local Jewish seniors (most of whom were Russian immigrants) and queer people banded together to fight back against unjust rent increases. It is now home to roughly 35,000 residents, roughly 50% of whom identify as LGBTQ+, making it one of the queerest municipalities in the world.

In addition to its inclusive attitudes and counterculture (or perhaps because of them), West Hollywood is known as one of Los Angeles' prime entertainment destinations. It is **home to the annual L.A. Pride Festival & Parade**, the largest Pride celebration on the U.S. West Coast. It's also home to the popular gay district known colloquially as WeHo, as well as the famous Sunset Strip, a mile-and-a-half stretch of Sunset Boulevard famous for its cutting edge boutiques, restaurants, bars, and nightclubs, as well as its array of huge, colorful billboards.

[Hotel + Conference Venues](#)

[Social Venues](#)

Underside view of palm trees along Santa Monica Blvd. in West Hollywood

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

Hotel + Conference Venues

WeHo

West Hollywood offers a number of superb options for **hotels and conference venues**. While none are large enough to accommodate all of the ILGA World Conference attendees at once, many smaller hotels are within a short distance of each other and could be used in tandem. These include:

- [The London](#), with 226 rooms and several incomparable outdoor and indoor meeting spaces;
- [The Jeremy](#), with 286 rooms and a stunning 6,700 square foot ballroom;
- [The Beverly Hilton](#), with 569 rooms and over 18,000 square feet of meeting space in neighboring Beverly Hills.





Social Venues

WeHo

As for potential **venues for social activities**, West Hollywood offers one of the most notorious LGBTQ+ neighborhoods in the world. Social activities and venues include:

- [A Tour of Weho](#), an event co-hosted by the City of West Hollywood and the West Hollywood Chamber of Commerce that would give ILGA World Conference attendees a unique opportunity to celebrate local LGBTQ+ businesses, entertainers, and community members;
- [Pacific Design Center](#), a 1.6 million square-foot campus situated on 14 acres of land in the heart of West Hollywood that features some of Los Angeles' top artists.

Mexico's celebrated street tacos at a restaurant in West Hollywood

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

Program – Speakers

Another perk of hosting the 2021 ILGA World Conference in Los Angeles is the direct access it offers to some of the most **recognizable and influential voices** in the global LGBTQ+ community, as well as to its allies and leaders in politics and entertainment. This includes local LGBTQ+ leaders such as:

- [Sheila Kuehl](#), Los Angeles County's current 3rd District Supervisor, who in 1994 became the first openly gay legislator in California and in 1997 became the first woman in history to be named Speaker pro tempore of the California State Assembly.
- [Katie Hill](#), the U.S. Representative for California's 25th congressional district, an openly bisexual woman who was formerly the Executive Director of People Assisting the Homeless (PATH), a statewide nonprofit organization working to end homelessness in California.
- [Mark Takano](#), the U.S. Representative for California's 41st congressional district, who in 2013 became the first openly gay person of Asian descent in the U.S. Congress.





The LGBTQ+ community in Los Angeles, as well as others throughout the state of California, also count on a number of **close allies in local, state, and federal politics**, including:

- [Eric Garcetti](#), the Mayor of Los Angeles, who happens to be the city's first elected Jewish mayor, its youngest mayor in history, and its second consecutive Mexican American mayor.
- [Gavin Newsom](#), the Governor of California, who gained national attention in 2004 when, as Mayor of San Francisco, he directed the San Francisco city-county clerk to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples in violation of the then-current state law.
- [Kamala Harris](#), a U.S. Senator for California (the state's third female U.S. Senator and the first of Jamaican and Indian ancestry) who in January 2019 officially announced her campaign to run for the Democratic nomination for the President of the United States in 2020.
- [Nancy Pelosi](#), the U.S. Representative for California's 12th congressional district and the current Speaker of the House of Representatives (Pelosi is the first and only woman to have served as Speaker and is the highest-ranking elected woman in U.S. history).

A skateboarder cruising down the streets near Venice Beach

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

Furthermore, Los Angeles is home to some of the **biggest LGBTQ+ names in the entertainment world**, including but not limited to the following:

- [Janet Mock](#), the internationally celebrated trans activist and New York Times bestselling author for her debut memoir *Redefining Realness*.
- [Ryan Murphy](#), the Emmy Award-winning screenwriter, director, and producer best known for his collection of successful television series including *Nip/Tuck*, *Glee*, and *American Horror Story*, making him one of the most applauded gay figures in the industry.
- [George Takei](#), the actor, activist, and Internet sensation best known for his role as Hikaru Sulu, helmsman of the USS Enterprise in the hit television and film franchise *Star Trek*. Takei is also a survivor of the U.S. internment of Japanese-Americans during World War II.
- [Jane Lynch](#), the Emmy and Golden Globe-winning actress from *Glee*, who in 2005 was named one of Power Up's "10 Amazing Gay Women in Showbiz."





- [Dustin Lance Black](#), the Academy Award-winning screenwriter of *Milk*, the biographical movie about Harvey Milk. In June 2018, Black announced the birth of his first child by surrogacy with British Olympic diver Tom Daley.
- [Laverne Cox](#), the first openly trans Emmy Award-nominated actress who rose to prominence with her role as Sophia Burset on the Netflix original series *Orange is the New Black*.
- [Margaret Cho](#), the Grammy and Emmy Award-nominated stand-up comedian celebrated for her activist efforts on behalf of women, Asian Americans, and the LGBTQ+ community.

If chosen to host the 2021 ILGA World Conference, the It Gets Better Project's board and staff would lead the charge in getting **the best and strongest voices from Los Angeles**, many of whom have been identified above, to commit to speaking and participating in this global event.

A blue street sign highlighting one of Los Angeles' most notorious boulevards

SOURCE: Shutterstock.com

Los Angeles, California, USA



Watch [#EveryonesWelcome](#) from Discover Los Angeles