



Historic Site Preservation Board Staff Report

Date: July 13, 2010

Case No: HSPB # 33 – Albert Frey Tramway Gas Station / Palm Springs
Visitors Center; Proposed Interior Reconfiguration

Application Type: Minor Architectural Approval (MAA) - Amendment

Location: 2901 North Palm Canyon Drive

Applicant: City of Palm Springs

Zone: CBD (Central Business District)

General Plan: CBD (Central Business District)

APN: 513-144-006

From: Craig A. Ewing, AICP, Director of Planning Services

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The request is for a certificate of approval for the interior remodel of the Palm Springs Visitors Center. The applicant has proposed to replace, relocate or revise furnishings, temporary display walls and attached partition walls to improve the functionality of the center. No changes are proposed to the building's exterior or to the interior structure.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Historic Site Preservation Board approve the certificate of approval.

PRIOR ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE PROJECT

On September 8, 1998, the Historic Site Preservation Board recommended the Tramway Gas Station to the City Council for Class 1 Designation.

On January 6, 1999, by adoption of Resolution No. 19448, the City Council designated the Tramway Gas Station as HSPB Class 1 Site #33,

On October 14, 2008, the HSPB approved a Certificate of Approval for revised exterior lighting at the site.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The attached memo from Jennifer Henning (June 28, 2010) describes the overall proposal, which is a reconfiguration of the interior of the Palm Springs Visitors Center. While most of the work involves relocation or replacement of furnishings, the major work entails:

- Removing free-standing display walls and replacing with new walls that provide a more open view through the interior;
- Removing certain attached partition walls;
- Relocating reception counters, merchandise racks and display kiosks.

New graphic appliqué for partition walls are also planned, but these and the relocation of furnishings are not part of HSPB review, as they are considered temporary and non-structural.

The purpose of remodeled wall systems includes maximizing interior work space, improving pedestrian flow and enhancing westerly mountain views from within the building:

REQUIRED FINDINGS

Definition of an Historic Site.

Section 8.05.020 of the Municipal Code provides the definition of an historic site as follows;

(a) Historic Site.

An historic site is any real property such as: a building; a structure, including but not limited to archways, tiled areas and similar architectural elements; an archaeological excavation or object that is unique or significant because of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship or aesthetic effect and:

That is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or

- 1. That is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history; or*
- 2. That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history; or*
- 3. That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or*
- 4. That presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or that possesses high artistic value; or*
- 5. That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*

6. *That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.*

Staff has evaluated this application and concluded that the interior revisions are minor and do not have any potential to affect the historic character of the property. All proposed actions could be reversed or removed at a future date without affecting the basic structure.

As a visitors center, the building has benefitted from a significant adaptive re-use from its original incarnation as a gasoline service station. Visitors centers are regularly updated with features, graphics and furnishings to keep them fresh, and the proposed revisions achieve this aim without adversely impacting the building's historic value.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review per Section 15301(L), (1) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines.

CONCLUSION

The proposed improvements are inconsequential revisions to the main structure, involving interior furnishings and partition walls. Their primary affect on the building is to open interior views to the west, which enhances the purpose of the visitors center.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Staff Memo from Jennifer Henning (June 28, 2010)
2. Current Interior Floor Plan
3. Proposed Interior Floor Plan
4. Interior Photograph



City of Palm Springs

Community Redevelopment Agency

MEMORANDUM

Date: June 28, 2010

To: Craig A. Ewing, AICP, Director of Planning

From: Jennifer Henning, Public Arts and Special Projects Coordinator

Re: HSPB Site #33 – Albert Frey Tramway Gas Station
Palm Springs Visitor Center Interior Reconfiguration

Staff is requesting approval for the reconfiguration of the interior computer work stations and the information/reception desk areas. Construction of the proposed tenant improvements will be overseen by City Staff and completed by the Tribe's Construction Division. In an effort to expedite construction and minimize the impact to staff and visitors at the Visitor Center will be closed for one week during construction.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

An application by the City of Palm Springs Redevelopment Agency for approval of interior remodeling which includes reconfiguration of existing computer work stations, reduction of partition walls, reconfiguration of the information/reception desk area for both the City and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians for the property at 2901 North Palm Canyon Drive, a Class 1 historic site (HSPB #33, Albert Frey Tramway Gas Station) now known as the Palm Springs Visitor's Center.

PRIOR ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE PROJECT

On September 8, 1998, the Historic Site Preservation Board recommended the Tramway Gas Station to the City Council for Class 1 Designation by a 7-0.

On January 6, 1999 by adoption of Resolution 19448, the City Council designated the Tramway Gas Station as HSPB Class 1 Site #33, pursuant to Section 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.

Improvements were made to the building and grounds when the gas station was converted to the Visitor's Center from 2003 to 2006. An amphitheater was constructed under the roofline with concrete flatwork, landscaping was added in conjunction with the amphitheater, and a low perimeter wall was added to the front of the center with associated low growing, water efficient landscaping.

CURRENT ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE PROJECT

In 2003 the Redevelopment Agency of the City of Palm Springs created the Visitor Center facility for the purpose of operating visitor information desks to promote the

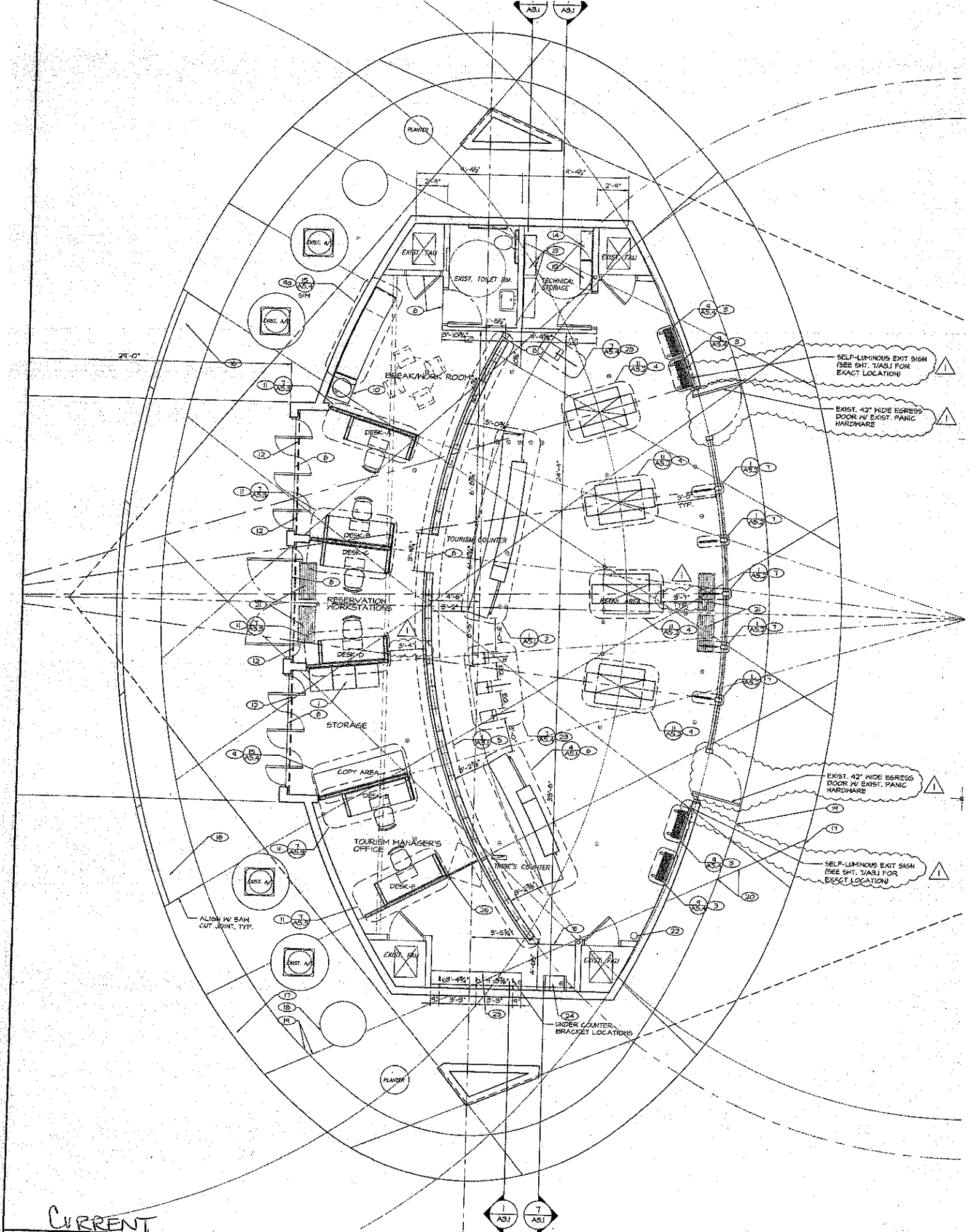
cultural and economic enterprises connected with the City, Bureau of Tourism and the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. These entities operate services which provide information to tourists and local residents.

In an effort to maximize the interior work space, improve pedestrian flow and reintroduce views of Mt. San Jacinto and the Chino Cone City Staff procured the services of architect Lance O'Donnell to assess the interior space and determine if it could be redesigned to create a more open floor plan. Working in conjunction with Lance O'Donnell and the Tribal Media Group, Caliente Ink, staff has developed design concepts which would provide the Visitor desk areas and backdrop wall with a more contemporary look, complementing the interior reconfigurations.

The design concepts and reconfiguration of the existing floor plan, developed during the preceding months, are based on input and comments from the participating users of the space, City Council and Tribal Council. The new floor plan places the City and Tribal Visitor Desks and backdrop walls at a slightly rotated angle and reversed to be convex; the existing walls are now concave. The current opening to the computer workstation area will be expanded to create a larger display area at the rear of the building and will feature an Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Cultural Museum and new Modern Architecture display cases.

Graphic design concepts using vinyl wraps have been designed to cover the backdrop walls and Visitor Desks. The vinyl skins have been chosen because they provide sharp, colorful graphics that are durable yet temporary and can be changed, replaced or removed as needed. The skin of the backdrop walls will depict large boulders reminiscent of the San Jacinto Mountains and canyons and each desk will be wrapped with complementary images. The City's desk will display images of the built/architectural environment while the Tribe's desk will display the natural environment of the Tribal offerings.

The integrity of the building will be maintained and no alterations to the structure will occur. The only aspects of the physical interior which are being affected are the partition walls which were approved and constructed in order accommodate the sites function as a Visitor Center. There will be no changes to the existing lighting, windows, doors, ceilings or exterior areas.



CURRENT

PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN

THE NEW CONFIGURATION OF THE FLOOR PLAN

The desks and walls will be rotated slightly and the walls reversed to be convex instead of concave. The current opening in the wall will be greatly expanded to open a larger display area to the rear of the building and will feature the ACBCI Cultural Museum display and a new Modern Architecture display

