



## Historic Site Preservation Board Staff Report

Date: August 9, 2011

Case No: 3.2098 MAA / HSPB 45

Application Type: Certificate of Approval

Location: 2311 North Indian Canyon Drive

Applicant: Catherine Meyler

Zone: R-2 (Medium Density Residential)

General Plan: MDR (Medium Density Residential)

APN: 5504-260-021

From: Glenn Mlaker, AICP, Assistant Planner

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### **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The proposed project is to convert an existing 400-square foot garage to living space and construct a 440-square foot carport at the Grace Lewis Miller House, a Class 1 historic site.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

That Historic Site Preservation Board approve the conversion of an existing 400-square foot garage and the construction of a 440-square foot carport at the Grace Lewis Miller House.

### **PRIOR ACTIONS TAKEN ON THE PROJECT**

On July 17, 2002, the City Council voted unanimously to designate the Grace Lewis Miller House as a Class 1 historic site.

On November 12, 2002, the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) voted 6-0-1, to allow the property owner to construct a six (6) foot tall block wall around the perimeter of the property to include a front driveway gate.

On November 17, 2004 a building permit was issued for the construction of a pool to be located in the south-east corner of the property.

On January 10, 2006, HSPB approved plans to construct a guesthouse connected to the original Miller House.

On February 14, 2006, HSBP approved a garage conversion and the placement of a carport at the perimeter gate by a vote of 6-0-1.

On July 25, 2011, the Architectural Advisory Committee (AAC) reviewed plans for a garage conversion and construction of a new carport and voted 7-0 to recommend approval as submitted.

## **BACKGROUND AND SETTING**

The house was designed by Richard Neutra and constructed in 1937 for Grace Lewis Miller and has been recognized as the first desert modernist house. It was constructed in the International Style and contained less than 1,200 square feet. The plan included a large studio-living-dining room, entered from a screen porch, with kitchen, bedroom, and baths to the west. A reflecting pool filled the southeast corner near the porch and living room. Neutra appreciated the interrelationships between architecture and well-being and Miller used the studio to conduct her exercise program. Neutra incorporated climate control into the house design, including the pool and the wide overhangs on the east, south, and west.

In 1938, the house was included in a traveling exhibit of modern architecture while also winning the "House Beautiful Annual Small House Competition". The light cement structure with its silver-gray aluminum trim represented one of Neutra's masterworks. The minimalist detail of the house created an abstract effect and allowed the house to dissolve into the desert landscape. An example of the seamless transition between the structure and the natural landscape was the rock walk that surrounded the house.

The defining characteristics of the house as described in the original HSPB designation staff report include the following:

Roof Line: There are corrugated aluminum bands around the roofline

Pool: Shaded reflecting pool at southeast corner that acts as both climate control and creates lightness as water reflects off the ceiling.

**Screened Porch:** The screened porch provided the entrance into the joint studio-living-dining room. Some of the screens have been replaced by glass windows. The owner indicates that they will be restored to their original condition.

**Master Bedroom:** A creative addition to the master bedroom are French doors which open and connect to create a screened porch and provide ventilation for the room.

The house today is surrounded by a six foot tall block wall with mature perimeter landscaping. A gravel driveway leading from the front gate wraps around the north and west sides of the house leading to the existing garage.

## **DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS**

The property owner proposes to convert an original 400-square foot garage located in the rear of the house adjacent to an existing guesthouse. The exterior of the garage conversion will match the house walls with similar stucco finish and paint color. Windows will be added along with one door painted to match existing house frames.

In addition the applicant proposes to construct a carport that will be a simple structure located at the east property gate accessed from North Indian Canyon Drive. The new carport will equal 440-square feet constructed of eight (8) foot tall steel posts, with a twelve (12) inch thick natural wood roof structure sealed with a preservative. The support poles will be similar in style to the existing poles used in the Neutra House painted to match. The roof structure edge will be exposed wood with metal bolts. (see photo simulation of carport)

The original Resolution designating the site as a Class 1 historic property contained condition # 8 which states "To allow for public viewing of the structure, a public view corridor of 25% is required". It was determined at the November 12, 2002 HSPB meeting that the construction of a perimeter wall and gate would not impede this condition. Discussion at the February 14, 2006 HSPB meeting, to review plans for the garage conversion and new carport included concerns regarding the view corridor. The request was ultimately approved.

The current proposal to place a carport at the front gate has been revised from the 2006 proposal. The new design scheme will include the use of thin support poles with low landscaping and boulders to separate the house yard from the edge of the carport. This use of landscaping material will not block view sheds as required.

The Architectural Advisory Committee reviewed the proposal on July 25, 2011 and voted 6-0 to recommend approval as presented.

## REQUIRED FINDINGS

### Factors to be considered

Section 8.05.190 of the Municipal Code provides factors to be considered upon an application for alteration upon a Class 1 historic site. The Grace Lewis Miller House, a Class 1 historic site must be evaluated based upon the following factors:

- 1) *The historic value and significance, or the architectural value and significance or both, or the structure and its relation to the historic value of the surrounding area;*

The Grace Miller Lewis House contains unique architectural detailing and is an excellent example of Richard Neutra's minimalist design. The original house built as a light cement structure with its silver-gray aluminum trim with its slim crisp detailing will be incorporated into the design elements of the garage conversion and the carport design. The garage conversion will use like building materials for the exterior to include stucco, windows and paint colors to match the details of the existing house. The new carport will be supported by thin poles similar in size, scale and color to existing house elements and Staff concludes that the request has met this finding.

- 2) *The relationship of the exterior architectural features of any structure to the rest of the structure itself and to the surrounding area;*

The garage conversion and use of similar building materials for the infill construction will retain the look of the original house design. The window frames and glazing and new door will match materials on the existing adjacent guesthouse. The new carport steel tube posts will be painted silver to match those of the existing house. The roof framing will be natural wood, sealed with a persevant. Staff concludes that this finding has been met.

- 3) *The general compatibility of exterior design, arrangement, texture and material which is proposed by the applicant;*

The addition of a carport located at the driveway entrance gate and proposed landscaping details will not impede the required 25% view corridor of the house. The use of tube steel posts to support the carport structure and low landscaping will allow the new construction to be compatible with the original intent of the historic designation and Staff concludes that this finding has been met.

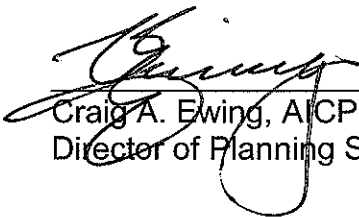
## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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

## NOTIFICATION

There are no public notification requirements for this application.

  
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Glenn Mlaker, AICP  
Assistant Planner

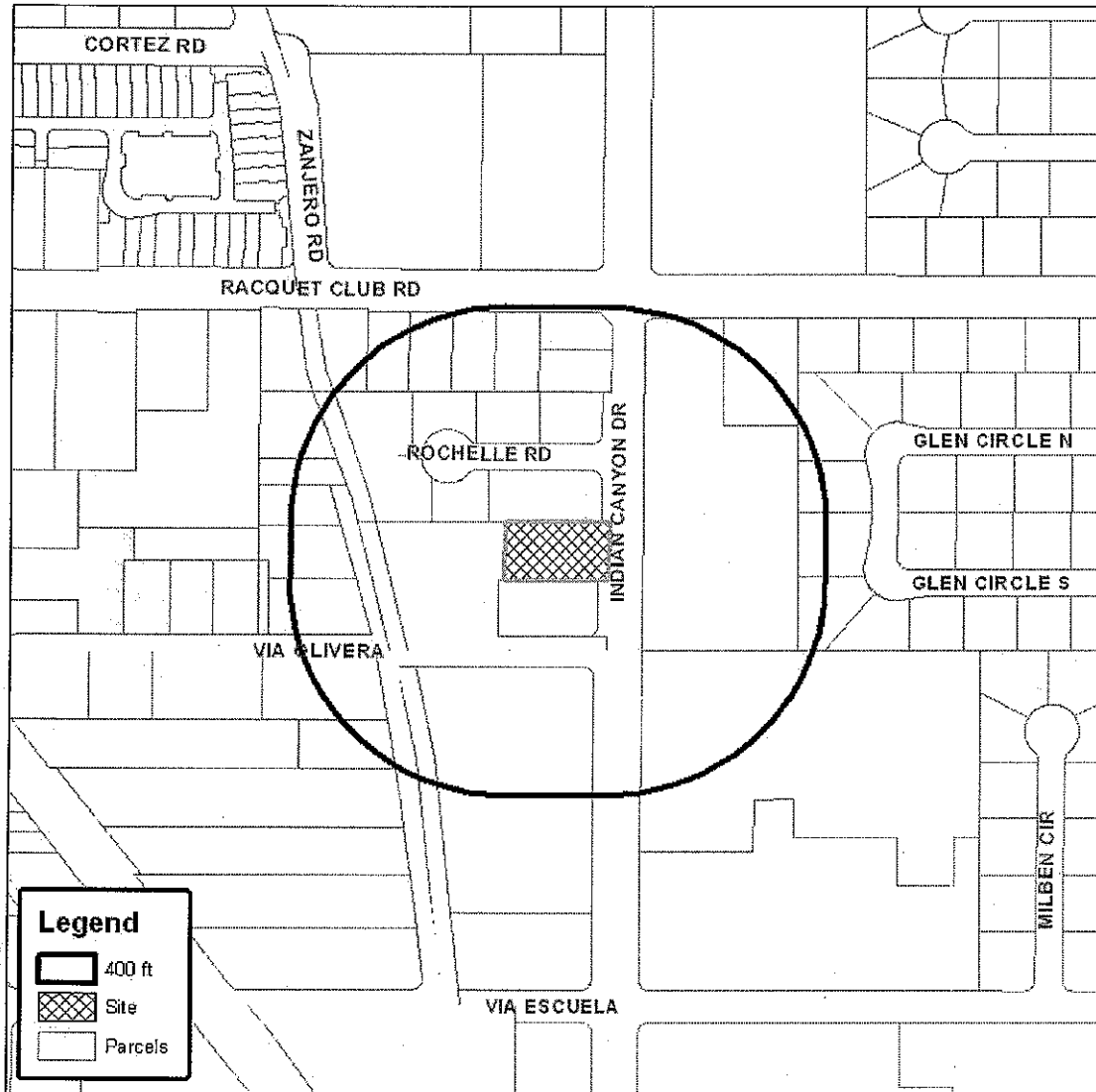
  
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Craig A. Ewing, AICP  
Director of Planning Services, AICP

## ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Plan
3. Building Elevations
4. Class 1 Designation Resolution
5. Minutes of the February 14, 2006 HSPB Meeting
6. AAC Minutes
7. Site Photographs



## Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map

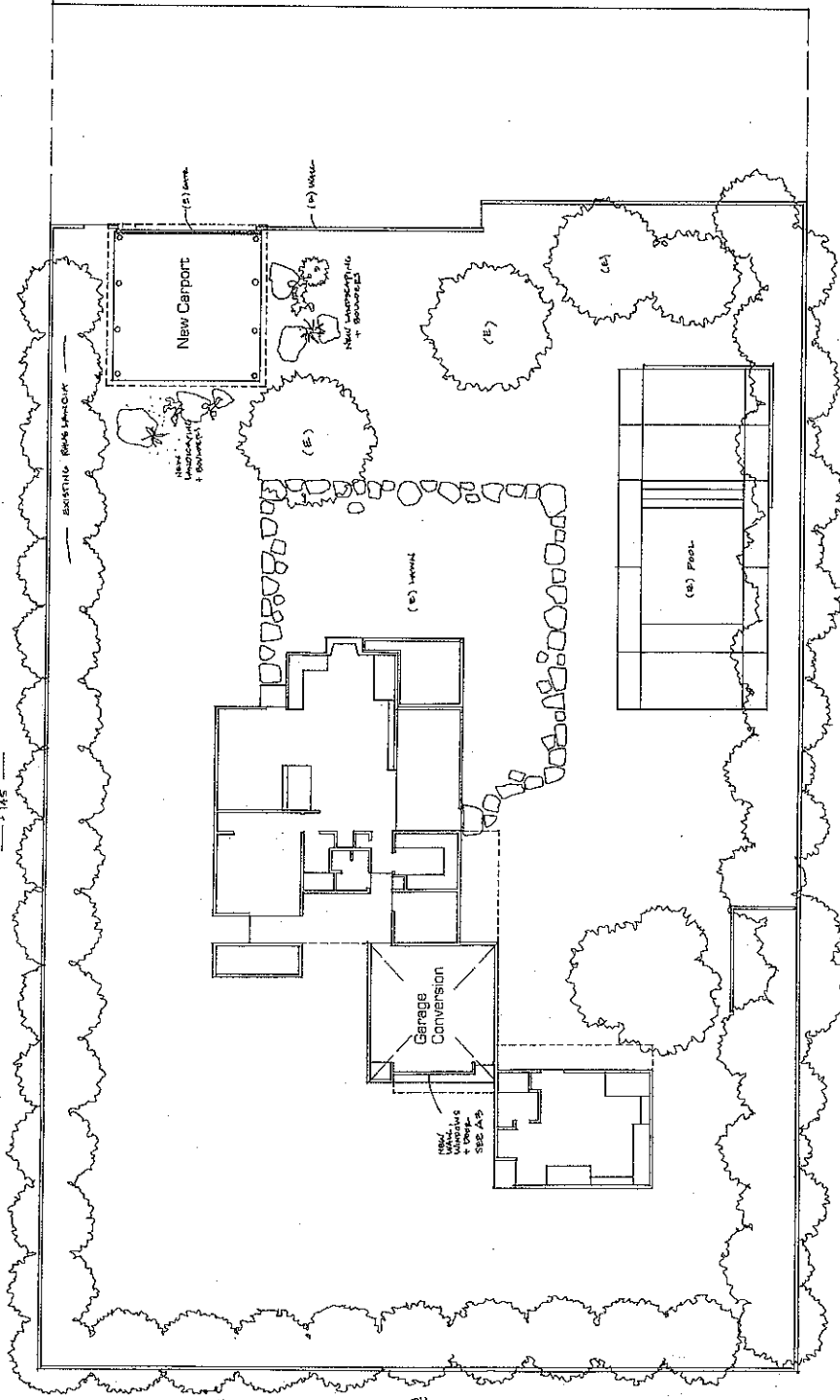


### CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

**CASE NO:** 3.2098 MAA / HSPB 45

**APPLICANT:** Grace Lewis Miller House

**DESCRIPTION:** The conversion of a 400-square foot garage to living space and the construction of a 440-square foot carport at the Grace Lewis Miller House a Class 1 historic property located at 2311 N. Indian Canyon Drive, Zone R-2, Section 3.



North Indian Canyon Drive

# A1

Site Plan  
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

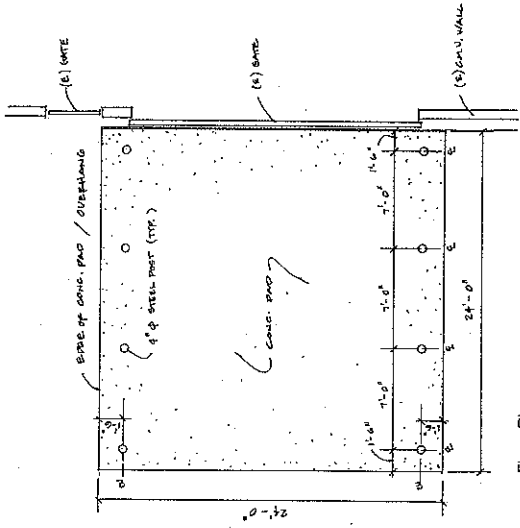
Meyler Residence:  
Garage Enclosure / New Carport  
2311 North Indian Canyon Drive  
Palm Springs, California

doughbuddendesign  
7 July 2011

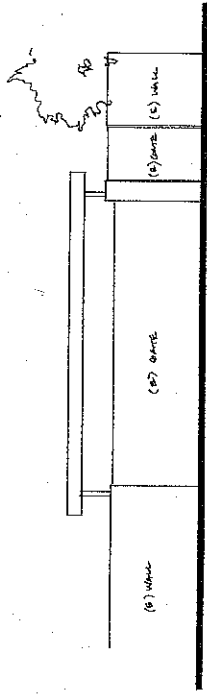
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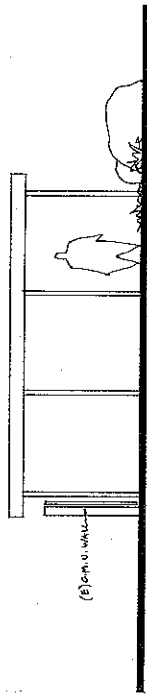
PLANNING SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT  
3.2098



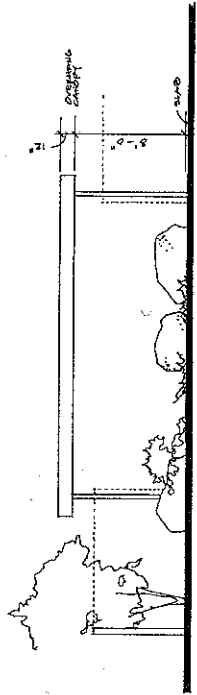
Floor Plan



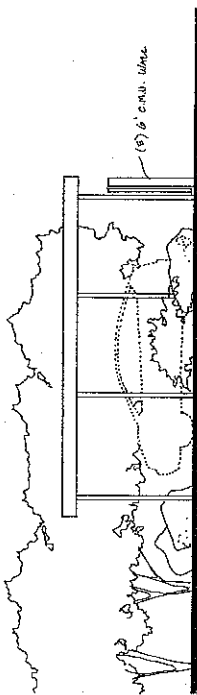
East Elevation



North Elevation



West Elevation



South Elevation

A2

Carport Plan & Elevations  
Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

Meyler Residence:  
Garage Conversion / New Carport  
2311 North Indian Canyon Drive  
Palm Springs, California

606ghusmidsjrh

7 JULY 2011

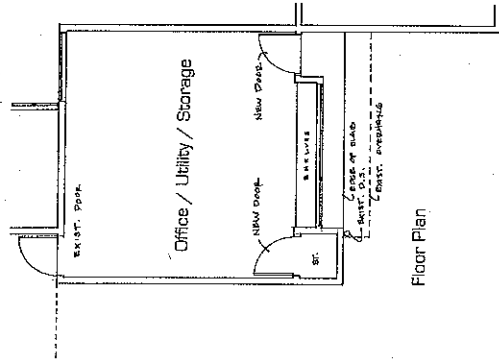
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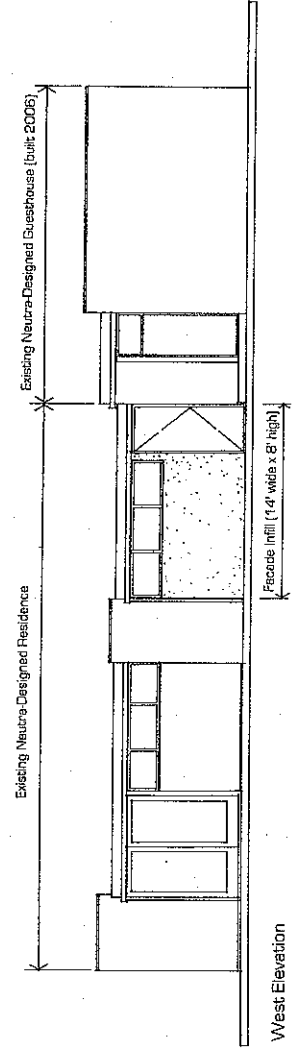
PLANNING SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT

3.2098





Floor Plan



West Elevation

**A3**  
 Garage Conversion  
 Scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

Meyler Residence:  
 Garage Conversion / New Carport  
 2311 North Indian Canyon Drive  
 Palm Springs, California

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7 July 2011

3.2098

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**PLANNING SERVICES  
 DEPARTMENT**

RESOLUTION NO.

OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS,  
CALIFORNIA, DESIGNATING THE MILLER HOUSE LOCATED AT  
2311 NORTH INDIAN CANYON DRIVE, AS A CLASS 1 HISTORIC  
SITE

WHEREAS, in 1937, Grace Lewis Miller commissioned architect Richard Neutra to develop the desert's first modernist house; and

WHEREAS, in 1938, the house won the "House Beautiful Annual Small House Competition"; and

WHEREAS, in 1938, Miller House was included in a traveling exhibit of modern architecture; and

WHEREAS, the defining characteristics of these homes are the aluminum roof line, the reflecting pool, and the screened porch; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code allows for the designation of historic sites; and

WHEREAS, the current property owner, Catherine Meyler, filed an application for Historic Site Designation; and

WHEREAS, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2002, the Historic Site Preservation Board conducted a public hearing in accordance with applicable law to consider designation of the Miller House as a Class 1 historic site; and

WHEREAS, on June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2002, after receiving public comment and reviewing all evidence presented, the Historic Site Preservation Board, by a 4-0-1 vote, recommended to City Council that the Miller House be designated as a Class 1 historic site; and

WHEREAS, notice of a public hearing of the City Council of the City of Palm Springs to consider designation of the Miller House as a Class 1 historic site was issued in accordance with applicable law; and

WHEREAS, on July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2002, the City Council conducted a public hearing in accordance with applicable law to consider designation of the Miller House as a Class 1 historic site; and

WHEREAS, the designation of the Miller House shall further the purpose and intent of Chapter 8.05; and

WHEREAS, the designation of the Miller House shall promote the sensitive preservation of said site; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has carefully reviewed and considered all of the evidence presented in connection with the designation, including but not limited to the staff report, all written and oral testimony presented.

14C

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Palm Springs, California as follows:

- Section 1: The Miller House located at 2311 North Indian Canyon Drive is designated as a Class 1 historic site pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.
- Section 2: No permit for the alteration to the roof design shall be issued as the roof design is considered a defining characteristic of the home.
- Section 3: No permit for the alteration of the reflecting pool shall be issued as the reflecting pool is considered a defining characteristic of the home.
- Section 4: The screened porch should be restored to its original condition. Restoration is encouraged but not required.
- Section 5: No permit for the alteration of the french doors shall be issued as the french doors are considered a defining characteristic of the home.
- Section 6: All existing alterations are considered acceptable noting that restoration is encouraged but not required.
- Section 7: All future exterior modifications including but not limited to building, site, landscaping, lighting, walls, and fences shall require Architectural Approval pursuant to Section 94.04.00 of the Palm Springs Zoning Ordinance and Historic Site Preservation Board review.
- Section 8: To allow for public viewing of the structure, a public view corridor of 25 percent is required.
- Section 9: The property owner shall permit the City to demark the Miller House as an historic site with a plaque of the City's choosing. Owner shall maintain the plaque in the location installed and pay for the replacement cost if the plaque is lost, stolen, or otherwise removed from the property.
- Section 10: This resolution, and the historic designation put in place by it, shall not affect title to the property.

1402

PUBLIC HEARING: N O N E

**ARCHITECTURAL APPROVAL:**

6. Case 3.917 - Diana DiAmico of Tyler's Hamburgers for a canopy remodel at 149 South Indian Canyon Drive, Zone CBD, Section 15, (Class 1 Historic Site #22 - La Plaza) (originally submitted at November 8, 2005 HSPB Meeting)

Board had asked for a re-study and re-work of the plans submitted at the November meeting. A new architect was hired to re-design the awnings (Peter Blackburn, from O'Donnell & Escalante Architects).

The sub-committee of James Hayton and Bud Riley met to review project being submitted today and recommended approval.

**BOARD CONCERNS:**

- Colors and drops - sand color canvas and paint
- Pipe supports will be wrapped with canvas
- Attachment to building, arch support, pole and strut locations
- One member expressed favor of keeping the umbrellas to continue the "Spanish style" setting
- Owner of La Plaza should review re-design and approve

**M/S/C (Riley/Hayton - 6-Yes - 1 Absent - 0 Abstentions) to approve the new design and colors for the awnings at Tyler's Hamburgers as presented.**

→ 7. Case 3.2098 - Catherine Meyler to convert garage to living space and construct a new free-standing 440 s.f. carport at 2311 North Indian Canyon Drive, Zone R2, Section 03, (Class 1 Historic Site #45 - "Grace Lewis Miller (Neutra)" home). Addition per original plans and approval as part of HSPB designation on 6-11-02.) (originally submitted for remodel 12-15-05)

Applicant Catherine Meyler read brief background from the time she bought the property in 2000. Neutra designed this in 1937. There is no storage space in the current house. Conversion to provide more storage and living space with new carport to replace original. A four foot wall was approved to allow a view corridor thru the gates and over the wall for the 25% viewing requirement.

**BOARD CONCERNS:**

- Carport blocking the 25% view corridor into the property
- Side walls of carport may block view
- Public view point will be over a moving gate through the driveway

**M/S/C (Scott/ Riley - 6-Yes, 1 Absent, 0 Abstentions) to approve Case 3.2098 as presented subject to resolution of zoning compliance.**

**AGENDA ITEM #1: MEDIA OUTREACH SUB-COMMITTEE UPDATE - MEMBER J. WILLIAMS.**

No report.

**AGENDA ITEMS #2: HISTORIC SITE PLAQUE SURVEY UPDATE - STAFF**

No report. Staff is preparing budget for fiscal year 2006/2007 with line item for plaques. Board requested the budget include funds for staff to attend meetings and conferences specifically related to historic issues. Status of plaque installation at designated sites: there are seven plaques to be installed: The Willows, Fire Station #1, Ingleside Inn, O'Donnell House, Ship of the Desert, Raymond Loewy, and Catherine Meyler (client has plaque); two plaques need to be ordered: Cork 'N Bottle plaque (if new owners will allow a plaque); and (2) Neel House #47. Language on both has to be finalized. Chairman Hayton to check on Cork 'N Bottle.

- 3.c Larger plant box sizes should be used when possible.
- 3.d Limit hardscape rock material to 2 or 3 varieties.
- 3.e Agave to be planted the entire front of building.

**ACTION:** M/S/C (Fauber / Purnel, 5-0-1, Kleindienst abstain) To recommend approval with conditions.

After the vote, Chair Kleindienst returned to the Chamber.

**AGENDA ITEM #4: Case 3.2089 MAA – HSPB #45 – Grace Lewis Miller House**

Meyler Residence for the conversion of an existing garage to living space and the construction of a 440 square foot carport at the Grace Lewis Miller House a Class 1 historic property located at 3211 N. Indian Canyon Drive, Zone R-2, Section 3. (GM)

As the sole proprietor, Planning Commissioner Hudson stepped down from the dias and moved to the audience to represent the applicant.

Assistant Planner Mlaker presented a brief history of the property and stated that the request will include the construction of a simple carport, and the conversion of an existing garage to living space.

Doug Hudson, project Architect gave a detailed overview of the project and stated that the carport should be constructed in a way that will not mimic the original house. He stated the design is similar to an existing carport at the Raymond Loewy House (HSPB 33) a Class 1 designated property which was designed by Albert Frey.

Member Fauber asked for clarification on the color of the exposed roof line on the carport. Will there be a walkway leading from the carport to the house.

Member Purnel stated that the carport appears to be unrelated to the existing house.

**ACTION:** M/S/C (Fauber / Jensen, 6-0) To recommend approval as presented.

**CHAIRMAN / COMMITTEE / STAFF COMMENTS:**

Principal Planner Robertson informed the Committee that the Planning Commission will be interviewing a perspective candidate for the AAC. Once a new member is seated Staff will organize a work session.

Vice Chair Harlan asked Staff to review the status of landscaping in the median in front of Smoke Tree Commons. In addition, he asked Staff to describe the parking lot configuration at the Springs Shopping Center relative to the middle drive aisle and lack of properly signed junctions with cross parking lot traffic.

