



Historic Site Preservation Board Staff Report

Date: November 13, 2012

Case No: HSPB – 84

Application Type: Class 1 Designation Application

Location: 333-343 S. Palm Canyon Dr. – J.W. Robinson's Store (The Alley)

Owner: Marek Family LLP, (Mr. William Marek)

Applicant: Historic Site Preservation Board

Zone: C-D-B / Central Business District

APN: 507-274-003

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

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

An application by the Historic Site Preservation Board to designate the commercial building at 333-343 S. Palm Canyon Drive, known as the J.W. Robinson's Store (and presently occupied by "The Alley") as a Class 1 historic site. Such designation would:

1. Place the subject property under the guidance of Municipal Code Section 8.05
2. Require present and subsequent owners to maintain the buildings consistent with that ordinance,
3. Grant possible property tax reduction opportunities to the owners under the State of California Mills Act.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) open a public hearing, received any testimony and adopt the attached draft statement of historic significance and resolution recommending to the City Council a Class 1 historic designation for the property.

PRIOR ACTIONS

On July 10, 2012, the Historic Site Preservation initiated an investigation in accordance with Section 8.05.135 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code for possible designation of the subject property as a historic site.

On October 9, 2012, the HSPB discussed a draft statement of historic significance for the project.

BACKGROUND AND SETTING

Definition of an Historic Site.

Section 8.05.020 of the Municipal Code provides the definition of a 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:

- 1. That is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community; or*
- 2. That is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history; or*
- 3. That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history; or*
- 4. That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or*
- 5. 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*
- 6. That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or*
- 7. That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.*

A Class 1 Historic Site may also qualify for historic designation at the federal, state and/or county level.

Designation of Historic Sites.

The City Council is authorized to designate Historic Sites.

The Historic Site Preservation Board makes recommendations to the City Council that certain sites be designated as Historic Sites in accordance with Section 8.05.135 of the Municipal Code. The Board may initiate studies, surveys and investigations it deems necessary to adequately gather information in consideration of a recommendation.

Conditions that apply to Class 1 Historic Sites.

According to Section 8.05 of the Municipal Code, the following shall apply to a Class 1 Historic Site:

1. It shall meet the definition of a historic site as outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.020.
2. An archival file shall be maintained on the property by the City.
3. It may be qualified as 'historic' at the federal, state, and/or county level.
4. The structure/site may not be modified nor objects removed without the approval of the City Council.
5. The use may be limited by the City Council to the extent that it may impair the integrity of the site.
6. A plaque explaining the historic nature of the site will be installed at the site.
7. Compliance with all rules and regulations for Historic Sites and Historic Districts under Article IV of Chapter 8.05 of the Municipal Code shall be required.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Located on the southwest corner of South Palm Canyon Drive and West Baristo Avenue, the concrete slab construction building built in 1958 consists of 14,500 square feet of retail, office and receiving space on a 1.94 acre lot in downtown Palm Springs. The building was supplemented in 1972 with a 13,400 square foot addition. The pavilion-style modernist building is elevated from the street level by four long horizontal concrete steps.¹

The building has a glassed-in, well-lighted façade on the east side of the building which acts as a giant display window. Clerestory windows in the center of the building provide a view of the mountains and take advantage of the desert climate to provide bright daytime lighting to the main selling area (thereby saving on the costs of electrical lighting).

Broad roof overhangs are supported with load-bearing 4-inch steel pipe columns spaced at 9-foot intervals. These columns each have four "fins" or "ribs" which sprout from each column at 90-degree angles starting about at about 6.5 inches above the concrete sidewalk. These fins protrude about 2-inches near the ground, subtly increase to about 4-inches of width at an elevation of about 10-feet, and decreased again as the top of the column nears the building's overhang. The underside of the building overhang is punctuated with cylindrical spun-aluminum lighting fixtures also spaced at 9-foot intervals. A gold anodized aluminum fascia on the building exterior is now painted over.

Three of the exterior walls are characterized by three-dimensional horizontal diamond, or "harlequin," design 12"x12"x1" concrete decorative tile, creating interesting shadows throughout the day. (The original Robinson's store sign, now lost, echoed the diamond-like design of both the concrete tiles and the aluminum fascia.) There was also

¹ This description is derived from the application submitted by the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, revised July 10, 2012. Additional information is provided in the application, attached to this report.

extensive use of 12"x12"x12" single-core concrete block, primarily on the south elevation. The block creates a grid-like pattern that compliments, rather than competes with, the patterned concrete tile.

In 1972, in response to an apparent need for more retail space, an addition was constructed, connecting to the south end of the original building. Stylistically identical to the original Luckman & Pereira structure, records show the addition was supervised by architect William L. Pereira (who was then practicing independently). The seamless addition uses similar building materials, repeats the central clerestory windows and is virtually indistinguishable from the original building.

The record of City building permits is extensive and described in the application. The major permits are listed below:²

Date	Address	Type/Number	Owner	Remarks
8/26/57	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/9961	J. W. Robinson (Pearl McManus)	14,500 sq. ft. at cost of \$280,000
7/24/72	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/4794	J. W. Robinson	Add 13,400 sq. ft. at cost of \$275,000 Coble & Wessman

Other permits for interior work, electrical / plumbing / HVAC and signs were also issued over the years; however, the primary exterior design and features have not been significantly altered over the years.

DEFINING HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS

The building was recognized as significant from the time of its original construction. In an article entitled "Bazaar in an Oasis," the March 1958 issue of *Architectural Forum* described the Robinson's building in enthusiastic detail:

Built on a concrete platform at a busy center in Palm Springs, California, the branch of the J.W. Robinson Company, a West Coast specialty shop, has a two-way policy of visibility. Glass front walls, sheltered by deep overhangs, make the entire interior a showroom...enticing the motorist to park and come in. Once he is inside, in the center of the store, a 3-foot-deep clerestory perched on the roof gives him back his view of the mountains, in whose lap Palm Springs sits. The psychology is deliberate. Robinson's wanted to become a part of the sophisticated resort reputation of this famous watering spot, to catch the excitement in the air.

The design methods, besides providing great inward and outward visibility, include a feeling of lightness. The roof is a series of light steel trusses linked in a serrated pattern, and set on lean pipe columns...Nowhere does this roof rest on walls, even at the solid masonry rear of the store....The walls are faced with a

² This information is derived from the application submitted by the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, revised July 10, 2012. Additional information is provided in the application, attached to this report.

special tile of marble and quartz aggregate, patterned in a horizontal diamond to repeat the rhythm of the gold anodized aluminum fascia.

Inside, shopping arrangements are on the open plan. The air conditioning does not use conventional diffusers; tempered air is filtered into the store through small adjustable slots in the acoustical tile ceiling...which acts as a plenum.

The "Bazaar in an Oasis" article was part of a special *Forum* installment entitled "Six stores of distinction: Outstanding examples of new design trends in display and merchandising" which showcased a variety of significant commercial projects. The article also identified Raymond Loewy Associates as designer of the store's interiors and Robinson & Wilson, Inc. as the general contractor.

The building's patterned concrete tile, identified as "special tile of marble and quartz aggregate" in the *Forum* description, was part of the building industry's foray into the use of concrete block in more decorative expressions. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw an explosion in the use of decorative concrete block which was to take two major directions, i.e., one in the form of solid, load-bearing "Shadowal" concrete blocks and the second as airy, perforated, non-load bearing, concrete "screen block."

Today, both of these building materials can be found throughout Palm Springs in a profusion of patterns. The use of an expensive, aggregate-imbedded tile (versus an integrally decorative concrete block such as Shadowal) is an accurate snap-shot of an evolving building material which would ultimately become inexpensive, rugged and modular (and provide an alternative to expensive marble and quartz chips).

In the summer of 1958, the July issue of *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects* announced 1958's "National Honor Awards" in the field of architecture. This prestigious awards competition was juried by five nationally-prominent architects (including Los Angeles architect Welton Beckett). There were 312 entries in the competition which, according to the judges, evaluated entries based on "quality of unity in the entire work," "expression of strength without heaviness," "refinement," "aesthetic quality," and finally "originality and inventiveness." The "First Honor Award" went to the J.W. Robinson Department Store in Palm Springs.

Beyond its architectural significance as "The Jewel Box of the Desert," the Palm Springs J.W. Robinson's store represents a pre-shopping mall era, when Palm Canyon Drive, like Rodeo Drive and Worth Avenue in Palm Beach, Florida, was known as one of the world's famous streets for carriage-trade shopping. World-renowned upscale retailers sharing Palm Canyon Drive in their own free-standing buildings included Bullock's Wilshire, Saks Fifth Avenue, I. Magnin, Joseph Magnin, and a plethora of independent resort fashion houses and fine jewelers.

During this fashion era, sophisticated locals and visitors calmly shopped alongside Liberace, Red Skelton, the Gabor Sisters, Dinah Shore, Kirk Douglas, Frank Sinatra and Bob Hope. J W Robinson's first Palm Springs venture started as a small shop in the Desert Inn. The J.W. Robinson's corporation opened its free-standing store

at the present site in 1958 and sold it 30 years later when it merged with the May Company and opened a store in Palm Desert's Town Center. All of the other original stores, except for the Saks building at Ramon and Palm Canyon Drive are gone. The mid-century J.W. Robinson's building, now home to The Alley, is one of the few remaining relics of Palm Springs' shopping and fashion heyday of the 20th Century.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

As noted above in Background and Setting, Section 8.05.020 of the Municipal Code provides the definition of 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*". Seven other qualities are listed therein with the applicant's and staff's analysis provided below:

1. *The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state or community.*

The applicant asserts that the building's existence during the "gradual rise of a city's prominence in architectural excellence" provides adequate justification for this finding. Staff believes that a closer connection between the property and one or more specific events is necessary to meet this finding. No specific event of national, state or local history is known to be associated with the property save the occupation of the building by the J.W. Robinsons Company and subsequent tenants. Staff cannot support this finding.

2. *The property is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history.*

The applicant does not request designation based on this finding.

3. *The property reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history.*

The application describes the building as designed by the Los Angeles-based architectural firm of Luckman & Pereira, and further notes that the building's stylistic markers place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' Modern Period. One of the city's better-known commercial buildings, the structure is a prime, largely intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is widely known. As such it may be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important midcentury architecture, i.e., an historic trend that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. The building also expresses the post-war and pre-mall retailing era of the 1950's and '60's when major stores were located downtown and locals and visitors calmly shopped alongside world-famous celebrities. Staff supports this finding.

4. *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.*

The application states that the building possesses distinctive characteristics of modern architecture, such as overall horizontality, expression of structure, flat roofs, expansive amounts of glass, use of inexpensive, machine produced materials, and masonry. The structure is an important example of building practices in Palm Springs at midcentury. Staff supports the finding.

5. *The property presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or that possesses high artistic value.*

The application notes that the firm of Luckman & Pereira has long been recognized as a leading firm of the modernist movement and documentation on the firm is extensive. The J.W. Robinson Department Store building was immediately recognized by the architectural press and peers in the profession as an extraordinary effort that combined a sense of proportion, massing, refinement and use of modern materials and technology. Luckman & Pereira's J.W. Robinson Department Store certainly articulates the best of "corporate modernism" to a level of excellence and confidence that could easily be considered an aesthetic ideal. Staff supports the finding.

6. *The property represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.*

The application does not seek approval under this finding.

7. *The property has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.*

The application does not seek approval under this finding.

CONCLUSION

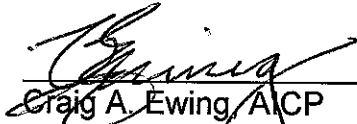
Both the original physical development of the site and its current condition provide a strong basis for historic designation. The 1972 addition expanded the building in a respectful and sensitive manner. The building exterior continues to demonstrate one of the most successful realizations of mid-century modern architecture in a department store retail context, and is a testament to a way of public life (downtown department store shopping) that has since passed into history.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

In accordance with Section 15331 (Historical Resources Restoration/Rehabilitation) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed designation is categorically exempt from environmental review as the proposed designation meets the conditions outlined for preservation of a historic resource.

NOTIFICATION

Pursuant to section 8.05.140 of the Municipal Code of Palm Springs, All property owners within three hundred (300) feet of the subject property have been notified and notice was made in a newspaper of general circulation. As of the writing of this report, staff has not received any inquiries on this matter.



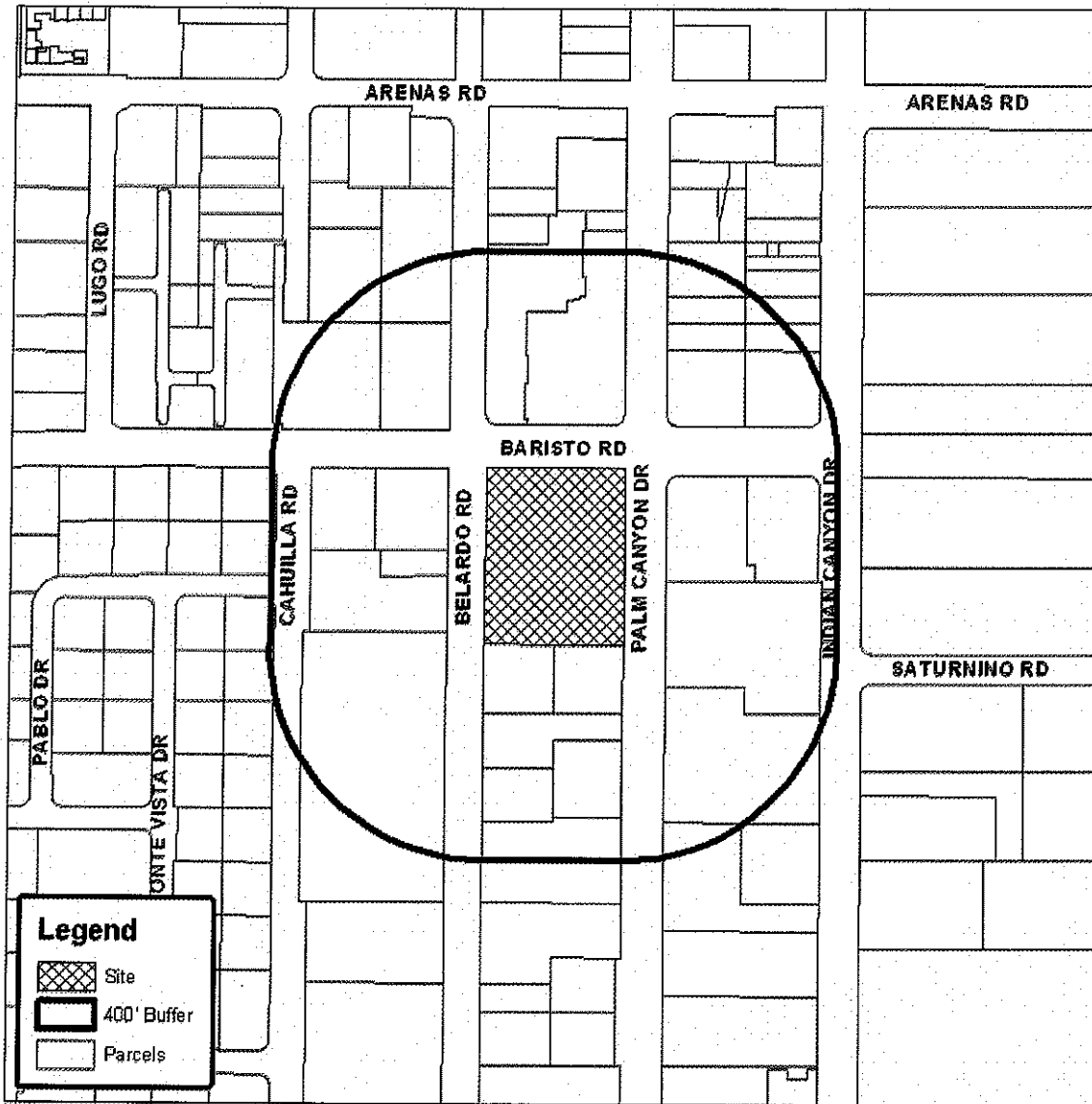
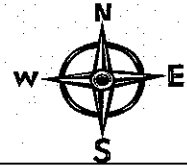
Craig A. Ewing, AICP
Director of Planning Services

ATTACHMENTS

1. Vicinity Map
2. Draft Resolution and Statement of Historical Significance
3. Application and Submitted Documents
4. Correspondence from William Marek, property owner, Aug. 9, 2012
5. Letter to Mr. Marek from Chair DeLeeuw, Sept. 18, 2012



Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

CASE NO: HSPB 84

APPLICANT: City of Palm Springs

DESCRIPTION: To consider designating the property known as the J.W. Robinsons Building ("The Alley") as a Class 1 Historic Site (Case HSPB 84). The subject site is located at 333 South Indian Canyon Drive. (APN 513-203-013).

HSPB RESOLUTION NO. 84

OF THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF
THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA,
RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL
DESIGNATE THE PROPERTY LOCATED AT 333-343
SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE ("J.W. ROBINSONS
BUILDING") AS A HISTORIC SITE, CLASS 1 – HSPB 84

WHEREAS, in 1958, the J.W. Robinsons Building, now "The Alley", was constructed (with an addition in 1972) on a flat, rectangular lot at the south-west corner of S. Palm Canyon Drive and Baristo Road, and with a site address of 333-343 S. Palm Canyon Drive; and

WHEREAS, the J.W. Robinsons Building was recognized as significant from the time of its original construction, including a "First Honor Award" from the American Institute of Architects in 1958 and significant mention in the March 1958 issue of *Architectural Forum*; and

WHEREAS, the defining characteristics of this building include:

- A pavilion-style building elevated from street level by four horizontal concrete steps;
- A glassed-in, well-lighted east elevation functioning as a display window;
- Clerestory windows in the center of the building;
- Broad roof overhangs supported by 4-inch finned steel pipe columns;
- Cylindrical spun-aluminum exterior lighting fixtures;
- Gold-anodized aluminum fascia
- Concrete decorative tile fascia in a three-dimensional horizontal diamond pattern on three elevations

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

WHEREAS, on July 10, 2012, the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) of the City of Palm Springs, initiated an application for Historic Site Designation for the J.W. Robinsons Building; and

WHEREAS, notice of a public hearing of the Historic Site Preservation Board of the City of Palm Springs to consider designation of the property, known as the Casa Palmeras residences, as a historic site was issued in accordance with applicable law; and

WHEREAS, on November 13, 2012, the Historic Site Preservation Board conducted a public hearing in accordance with applicable law to consider designation of the Casa Palmeras residences as a historic site; and

WHEREAS, the Historic Site Preservation Board has carefully reviewed and considered all of the evidence in connection with the designation, including but not limited to the staff report, application and historical research, all written and oral testimony presented.

THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD HEREBY FINDS AS FOLLOWS:

1. *The stated purpose and authority of the Historic Resources ordinance are furthered by this proposed designation.*
 - a. As a complete and largely intact example of the mid-century department store rendered in the modernist style, the J.W. Robinson's building holds an important place in the City's architectural and social history.
 - b. The designation will help with future stabilization and improvement of the building as it can promote the preservation of the building in its original configuration and design.
 - c. Designation of the building will foster civic beauty, strengthen the local economy and improve the citizens' education of Palm Springs' experience with modern architecture and carriage-trade retail shopping.

2. *The property reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history.*

The application describes the building as designed by the Los Angeles-based architectural firm of Luckman & Pereira, and further notes that the building's stylistic markers place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' Modern Period. One of the city's better-known commercial buildings, the structure is a prime, largely intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is widely known. As such it may be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important midcentury architecture, i.e., an historic trend that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. The building also expresses the post-war and pre-mall retailing era of the 1950's and '60's when major stores were located downtown and locals and visitors calmly shopped alongside world-famous celebrities.

3. *The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction.*

The application states that the building possesses distinctive characteristics of modern architecture, such as overall horizontality, expression of structure, flat roofs, expansive amounts of glass, use of inexpensive, machine produced materials, and masonry. The structure is an important example of building practices in Palm Springs at midcentury.

4. *The property presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or that possesses high artistic value.*

The building's architect, the firm of Luckman & Pereira, has long been recognized as a leading firm of the modernist movement and documentation on the firm is extensive. The J.W. Robinson Department Store building was immediately recognized by the architectural press and peers in the profession as an

extraordinary effort that combined a sense of proportion, massing, refinement and use of modern materials and technology. Luckman & Pereira's J.W. Robinson Department Store certainly articulates the best of "corporate modernism" to a level of excellence and confidence that could easily be considered an aesthetic ideal.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, based upon the foregoing, the Historic Site Preservation Board recommends that the City Council adopt the attached Statement of Historic Significance and designate the entire property located at 333-343 South Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, California (J.W. Robinsons building / The Alley) as a Historic Site, Class 1 subject to the following conditions;

1. The property owner shall permit the City to place a historic marker of the City's choosing at the site. The marker shall be placed in a location visible from the public right-of-way. The owner shall maintain the marker in the location installed and pay for the replacement cost if the plaque is lost, stolen, or otherwise removed from the property.
2. All future modifications of the existing structures, as well as any new buildings shall require HSPB review pursuant Municipal Code Ordinance 8.05.180.
3. No review for maintenance of the parking lot or landscaping shall be required, except that, subject to staff approval, any new landscape materials shall be native or desert-appropriate, including removal of turf, where practical.
4. All requirements of the Palm Springs Zoning Code shall be met.
5. That the City Clerk submit the Council Resolution to the County recorder for recordation within 90 days of the effective date of this resolution.
6. Any alterations or modifications to the exterior approved prior to the designation of this site by the City Council shall be considered legal, non-conforming only as to Section 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.

ADOPTED this ___th day of November, 2012.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS,
CALIFORNIA

Craig A. Ewing, AICP
Director of Planning Services
Historic Site Preservation Board Secretary

STATEMENT OF HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

J.W. ROBINSON BUILDING / THE ALLEY
333-343 SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SIGNIFICANCE: The J. W. Robinson Department Store building (1958) was designed by the Los Angeles-based architectural firm of Charles Luckman Associates and William L. Pereira. The commercial building exhibits numerous stylistic markers that place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' modern period. Additionally, the building is a largely intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is internationally known. As such, it should be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important midcentury architecture (i.e., an historic trend that exemplifies "a particular period of the national, state or local history").

DESIGNATION CRITERIA: The J. W. Robinson Department Store building has not been previously evaluated for Class 1 Historic Site eligibility but over the years has been frequently included on the Historic Site Preservation Board's (HSPB) "work program." The Robinson's building was not included in the 1987 HSPB Survey (possibly viewed as "too new") but does appear in the 2004 Citywide Historic Resources Survey (which incorrectly identifies the construction date as 1953). A brief summary of the evaluation contained in this nomination is as follows:

8.05.020 (a) paragraph 1 & 3- Events and Periods of History: These criteria recognize properties associated with events or historic trends, and for the purposes of this nomination, the gradual rise of Palm Springs' prominence in midcentury architectural excellence is a significant period of local history. The J. W. Robinson Department Store building is an outstanding example of commercial design and construction of buildings within the context of midcentury desert modernism. The nominated building is associated with this pattern of events for its ability to exemplify the modern period of the national, state and local history. Therefore, the building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criterion 3.

8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 4 & 5 - Design/Construction: The building is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses numerous distinctive characteristics that make up modernist style, including a flat roof, clerestory windows, expansive amounts of glass, novel use of new materials and engineering techniques, idiosyncratic use of concrete masonry, etc. Additionally, the work of the award-winning and nationally-recognized architectural firm of Luckman & Pereira must be catalogued as the work of "Master" architects because of the firm's impressive record of architectural excellence. For its distinctive characteristics, as the work of a Master, and for its high artistic values, the building qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criteria 3, 4 & 5.

SUMMARY: The evaluation contained herein finds the building eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site under 8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 1, 3, 4 & 5 of the local ordinance's seven criteria. Additionally, the building was found to retain a high degree of architectural integrity as noted in the following analysis.

INTEGRITY ANALYSIS

LOCATION

The J.W. Robinson Department Store building remains in its original location and therefore qualifies under this aspect.

DESIGN

Although the J.W. Robinson Department Store building has seen some minor alterations, the essential characteristics of form, plan, space, structure, and style have survived intact. Similarly, the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; and the type, amount, and style of detailing, has survived as well. The exterior surface materials (concrete block and metal fascia) have been painted but this is a relatively insignificant and reversible change. As previously mentioned, one of the primary design elements of the building is the elevation of the structure above the street level by four, long horizontal steps that create both a sense of arrival and impart a sense of importance to the building. Over the years bulky concrete planters have been installed to create a separation from the bus transportation activities on the east side of the site. Arguably, this has somewhat diminished the drama of entering the building. Fortunately, these changes (specifically the planters) could be removed or mitigated to more closely echo the original design. Fortunately, there is extensive documentation in the form of plans and photographs (including many taken by architectural photographer Julius Shulman) that clearly illustrate the original design intent of the architects.

SETTING

The setting of the J.W. Robinson Department Store building continues to reflect the architects' original design relationship of site and structure.

MATERIALS

As mentioned previously, the J.W. Robinson Department Store building's exterior surface materials have been painted, but this change does not constitute a significant loss of the physical elements that expressed the design during the building's period of significance; the particular pattern and configuration that today forms the building survives intact.

WORKMANSHIP

With the J.W. Robinson Department Store building, the workmanship is comprised of integral ornamental detailing reflected in concrete block, glass, steel, and even the exposed structural system itself. The property continues to express a high degree of contemporary period workmanship.

FEELING

Although the current culture's concept of glamour may have changed somewhat, the J.W. Robinson Department Store building was the very essence of Palm Springs glamour when built. As a commercial establishment that unapologetically catered to the rich and aspiring upper middle class, the "feeling" of the building necessarily had to exude urbanity albeit it in a more informal resort location. The late 1950s were a sophisticated, open and optimistic time, a feeling still expressed by the design of this building. As such, the J.W. Robinson Department Store building retains the integrity of feeling.

ASSOCIATION

As stated under Criterion 3: the J.W. Robinson Department Store building is an important example of midcentury commercial development in Palm Springs. The building represents the city's overall commercial development from the 1950s to the 1960s, and contributes to the scale and character of the city's midcentury commercial "banking district." As such, it continues its association with a period of history that has made a meaningful contribution to the community; the building retains integrity of association.

SUMMARY: The building appears to be in excellent condition due largely to the use of construction materials suitable for the harsh desert environment. The Integrity analysis confirms that the building still possesses all seven aspects of integrity. And while the building has undergone numerous minor alterations since it was built, virtually all of its character-defining features survive. The building retains a high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify it for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site.

**J. W. Robinson
Department Store
Building**

**333-343 S. Palm Canyon Dr.
Palm Springs, California**

**Nomination Application
For City of Palm Springs
Class 1 Historic Site**

Robinson's

Prepared by

Ronald W. Marshall

for the

Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

June 2012 (Rev. July 10, 2012)

Acknowledgements

This nomination is part of an initiative by the

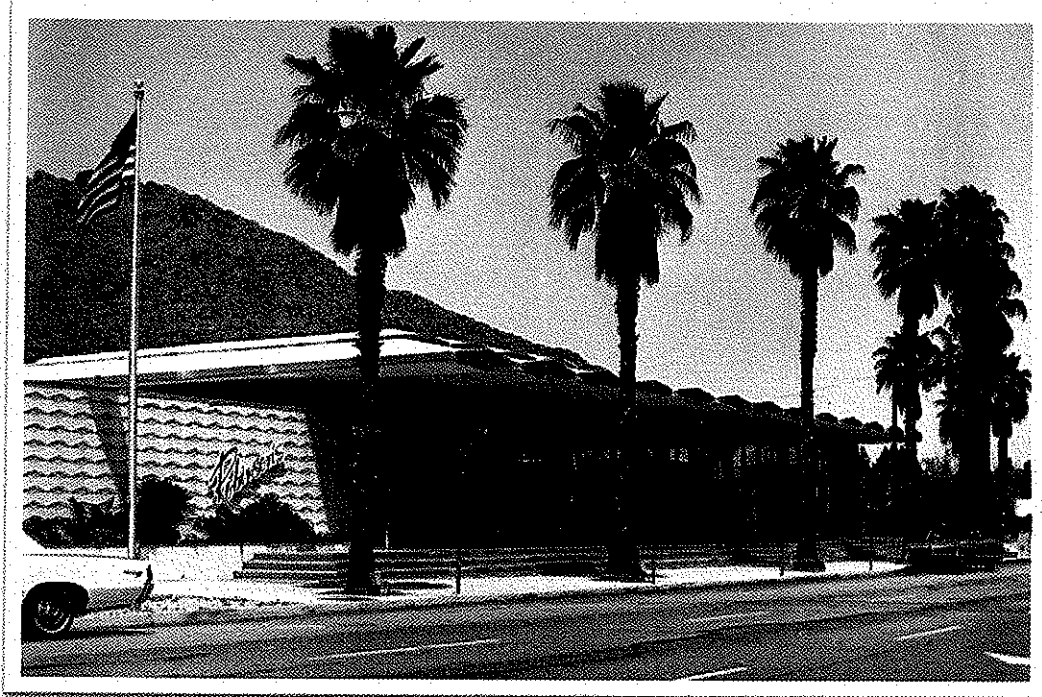
PALM SPRINGS PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

The author would like to thank the following individuals for editing and research assistance:

Barbara Marshall

James Harlan

Patrick McGrew



Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society

J.W. Robinson

Robinson's

Robinson's
CALIFORNIA

J. W. Robinson Department Store Building

**CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE NOMINATION
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SIGNIFICANCE: The J. W. Robinson Department Store building (1958) was designed by the Los Angeles-based architectural firm of Charles Luckman Associates and William L. Pereira. The commercial building exhibits numerous stylistic markers that place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' modern period. Additionally, the building is a largely intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is internationally known. As such, it should be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important midcentury architecture (i.e., an historic trend that exemplifies "a particular period of the national, state or local history").

DESIGNATION CRITERIA: The J. W. Robinson Department Store building has not been previously evaluated for Class 1 Historic Site eligibility but over the years has been frequently included on the Historic Site Preservation Board's (HSPB) "work program." The Robinson's building was not included in the 1987 HSPB Survey (possibly viewed as "too new") but does appear in the 2004 Citywide Historic Resources Survey (which incorrectly identifies the construction date as 1953). A brief summary of the evaluation contained in this nomination is as follows:

8.05.020 (a) paragraph 1 - **Events:** This criterion recognizes properties associated with events or patterns of events or historic trends, for the purposes of this nomination, the gradual rise of Palm Springs' prominence in midcentury architectural excellence. The J. W. Robinson Department Store building is an outstanding example of commercial design and construction of buildings within the context of midcentury desert modernism. The nominated building is associated with this pattern of events for its ability to exemplify the modern period of the national, state and local history. *The J. W. Robinson Department Store building is associated with this pattern of events, and is associated as well with Criterion 3 for its ability to exemplify a particular period of the national, state or local history. Therefore, the building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criterion 1.*

8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 3, 4 & 5 - **Design/Construction:** The building is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses numerous distinctive characteristics that make up modernist style, including a flat roof, clerestory windows, expansive amounts of glass, novel use of new materials and engineering techniques, idiosyncratic use of concrete masonry, etc. Additionally, the work of the award-winning and nationally-recognized architectural firm of Luckman & Pereira must be catalogued as the work of "Master" architects because of the firm's impressive record of architectural excellence. *For its distinctive characteristics, as the work of a Master, and for its high artistic values, the building qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criteria 3, 4 & 5.*

SUMMARY: The evaluation contained herein finds the building eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site under 8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 1, 3, 4 & 5 of the local ordinance's seven criteria. Additionally, the building was found to retain a high degree of architectural integrity.



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services

3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm
Springs, CA 92262

Telephone: 760-323-8245 ~ Fax: 760-323-
8360

HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION

The City of Palm Springs allows for the local designation of historic buildings, sites or districts within the City (Section 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.) This application packet is to be completed in order to request a historic designation. For additional information, please contact the Department of Planning Services at 760-323-8245 or planning@palmspringsca.gov.

APPLICATION

The completed application and required materials may be submitted to the Department of Planning Services. The submittal will be given a cursory check and will be accepted for filing only if the basic requirements have been met. A case planner will be assigned to the project and will be responsible for a detailed review of the application and all exhibits to ensure that all required information is adequate and accurate. Incomplete applications due to missing or inadequate information will not be accepted for filing. Applicants may be asked to attend scheduled meetings pertaining to their project. These will include the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) and the City Council.

HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD (HSPB)

Once the application has been determined to be complete, the HSPB will review the application to determine whether the site meets the minimum qualifications for designation pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. If such determination is made, a public hearing will be scheduled for a future meeting.

A public hearing will be held by the HSPB to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the HSPB will make a recommendation to the City Council. Notice will be provided as indicated below.

CITY COUNCIL

After receiving the recommendation of the Historic Site Preservation Board, a public hearing will be held by the City Council to receive testimony from all interested persons concerning the requested Historic Site Designation. The public hearing may be continued from time to time, and upon complete consideration, the City Council will then conditionally approve, deny, or approve the application as submitted. The City Council's decision on the application is final.

NOTIFICATION

Prior to consideration of the application by the HSPB and the City Council, a notice of public hearing for a Historic Site Designation request will be mailed to all property owners within 400 feet of the subject property a minimum of ten (10) days prior to the hearing dates.



Office Use Only

Date:
Case No.
HSPB No.
Planner:

**CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
Department of Planning Services**

HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION APPLICATION

TO THE APPLICANT:

Your cooperation in completing this application and supplying the information requested will expedite City review of your application. Application submitted will not be considered until all submittal requirements are met. Staff may require additional information depending upon the specific project. Please submit this completed application and any subsequent material to the Department of Planning Services.

This form is to be used to nominate individual properties for Class 1 or 2 historic designations, or to nominate the formation of historic districts. Applicants are encouraged to review two bulletins from the US Department of Interior for additional information:

- "How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form" (National Register Bulletin 16A / <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16a/>); and
- "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" (National Register Bulletin 15; <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>).

Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions in the Bulletins.

1. Property Information

Historic name: J. W. Robinson Department Store Building
Other names: *La Mirage Interiors, Crown Books, The Alley*
Address: 333-343 South Palm Canyon Drive
Assessor Parcel Number: 513 203 013 - 8
Owner's Name: Marek Family, LLP (Mr. William Marek)
Owner's Address: 72-240 Highway 111
City: Palm Desert State: CA Zip: 92260
Telephone: (760) 347-7200
E-mail address: none

2. Classifications

Ownership of Property. Fill as many boxes as apply.

- Private
- Public - Local
- Public - State
- Public - Federal

Category of Property. Fill only one box.

- Building (Note can include site)
- District
- Site (Exclusive of Structures)
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property. TOTAL must include at least One (1) in Contributing Column.

Contributing	Non-contributing	
1		Buildings
1		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
<hr/>		
2		Total

If the building or site is part of a larger group of properties, enter the name of the multiple-property group; otherwise enter "N/A".
"N/A"

3. Use or Function

Historic Use or Function: Commercial Building

Current Use or Function: Commercial Building

4. Description

Architect: Charles Luckman Associates and William L. Pereira (aka "Luckman & Pereira")

Construction Date and Source: 1957-58 (Multiple sources, including Appendix II, Permit History)

Architectural Classification: International Style - Desert Regional Variation

Construction Materials:

Foundation	Concrete slab	Roof	Tar and Gravel/Metal
Walls	Concrete block	Other:	

Building Description: *Attach a description of the Building / Site / District, including all character defining features on one or more additional sheets. (See pages 9-11)*

5. Criteria (Fill all boxes that apply for the criteria qualifying the property for listing.)

Events

(1) Fill this box if the property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

Persons

(2) Fill this box if the property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Architecture

(3) Fill this box if the property reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, State or local history, or

(4) Fill this box if the property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or

(5) Fill this box if the property represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or

(6) Fill this box if the property represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

Archeology

(7) Fill this box if the property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Other Criteria Considerations (Check all the boxes that apply.)

the property is owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes

the property has been removed from its original location.

the property is a birthplace

the property is a grave or cemetery.

the property is a reconstructed building, object, or structure

the property is commemorative

the property is less than 50 years of age or has achieved significance within the past 50 years (Note: Primary structure more than 50 years of age, however portions are less than 50 years of age)

6. Statement of Significance

The Client

The J. W. Robinson Company, or "Robinson's," was a chain of department stores operating in southern California and Arizona headquartered in Los Angeles, California. The first Robinson's store was built at 600 West 7th Street in Los Angeles (see Figure 1, Appendix VI for a vintage postcard of the first Robinson's store). The second Robinson's store was opened in Beverly Hills in 1952 on Wilshire Boulevard at Santa Monica Boulevard next to the Beverly Hilton Hotel (1953).

The relatively small Palm Springs Robinson's (1958) (which, interestingly, was preceded by a small boutique Robinson's store on the grounds of the Desert Inn) was intended to be an "open in winter only" store. A Robinson's on Colorado Boulevard in Pasadena followed. The Pasadena Robinson's was significant because it appears to have been the last "free-standing" store as the commercial concept of the shopping mall had begun to take root. The first stores adjacent or connected to shopping malls opened in Panorama City, Anaheim, Santa Barbara and Glendale. By the time J.W. Robinson's was dissolved into Robinson's-May there were almost 30 stores spread all across southern California from San Diego to Palm Desert to Santa Barbara.

Designed to serve the "carriage-trade," J. W. Robinson's was acquired by May Department Stores in 1986 with its acquisition of Associated Dry Goods (ADG). Robinson's had been acquired by ADG in 1957 as its West Coast flagship and operated primarily in southern California. In 1989, when May Company dissolved its Goldwaters division based in Scottsdale, Arizona, Robinson's took over the company's metropolitan Phoenix stores. The combined chain became Robinsons-May.

{Author's note: Unfortunately there are few primary sources of information concerning the J. W. Robinson Company and the foregoing section relies on secondary sources}

The Firm

Charles Luckman and William Pereira had both been students of architecture at the University of Illinois. In 1950, shortly after Luckman left his job as president of Lever Brothers, Pereira offered him a partnership. By 1955, the firm had 400 employees and more than \$500 million in projects in progress, including the NASA Space Facility at Cape Canaveral, the Los Angeles International Airport master plan and the CBS Television City Studio. However, despite this incredible success, their completely different personalities and work approaches eventually resulted in the firm's dissolution in 1958.

In a September 6, 1963 *Time* magazine article, Pereira was asked about the break-up of the architectural partnership of Luckman & Pereira. *Time* magazine reported that:

"...eight years after the partnership began, Bill Pereira abruptly broke it up. Given the differences between the two, it is surprising that the association lasted as long as it did.

Though trained as an architect, Luckman was a slick businessman with a flair for supersalesmanship; to Pereira, on the other hand, architecture was simply a profession. "The businessman who hires us," he once said, "doesn't need another businessman to do the work - he needs an architect." Pereira [said] after he left the firm: "It was like working in a factory. Everybody was standing in line with projects for us to do, like a line of railroad cars waiting to unload."

Yet despite Pereira's somewhat disconsolate view of the firm's working environment, Luckman & Pereira produced an extraordinary variety and high-quality of work during its eight years of existence (1950-1958) as evidenced by the numerous projects that received recognition in the national architectural press.

The Architecture & Building Description

Constructed from 1957-1958 at a cost of \$280,000 on land purchased from Palm Springs pioneer Pearl McManus, the J.W. Robinson Department Store building was designed by the Los Angeles-based architectural firm of Charles Luckman Associates and William L. Pereira. Sited on a 1.94 acre lot in the shadow of the San Jacinto Mountains, the concrete slab construction building consists of 14,500 square feet of retail, office and receiving space (this was supplemented in 1972 with a 13,400 square foot addition). Located on the southwest corner of South Palm Canyon Drive and West Baristo Avenue, the pavilion-style modernist building is dramatically elevated from the street level by four long horizontal concrete steps that create both a sense of arrival and impart a sense importance to the building.

One of the most prominent design elements of the building is the glassed-in, well-lighted façade on the east side of the building which acts as a giant display window. This design element lures automobile drivers off the main city thoroughfare into the large hidden parking lot located on the west side of the building site. This siting scheme recognized that the pedestrian and automobile-borne shopper were equally important.

In an article entitled "Bazaar in an Oasis," the March 1958 issue of *Architectural Forum* described the Robinson's building in enthusiastic detail:

Built on a concrete platform at a busy center in Palm Springs, California, the branch of the J.W. Robinson Company, a West Coast specialty shop, has a two-way policy of visibility. Glass front walls, sheltered by deep overhangs, make the entire interior a showroom...enticing the motorist to park and come in. Once he is inside, in the center of the store, a 3-foot-deep clerestory perched on the roof gives him back his view of the mountains, in whose lap Palm Springs sits. The psychology is deliberate. Robinson's wanted to become a part of the sophisticated resort reputation of this famous watering spot, to catch the excitement in the air.

The design methods, besides providing great inward and outward visibility, include a feeling of lightness. The roof is a series of light steel trusses linked in a serrated pattern, and set on lean pipe columns....Nowhere does this roof rest on walls, even at the solid masonry rear of the store....The walls are faced with a special tile of marble and quartz aggregate, patterned in a horizontal diamond to repeat the rhythm of the gold anodized aluminum fascia.

Inside, shopping arrangements are on the open plan. The air conditioning does not use conventional diffusers; tempered air is filtered into the store through small adjustable slots in the acoustical tile ceiling...which acts as a plenum.

The "Bazaar in an Oasis" article was part of a special *Forum* installment entitled "Six stores of distinction: Outstanding examples of new design trends in display and merchandising" which showcased a variety of significant commercial projects. The article also identified Raymond Loewy Associates as designer of the store's interiors and Robinson & Wilson, Inc. as the general contractor.

Not mentioned in the *Forum* description is that the clerestory windows in the center of the building not only provide a "view of the mountains" but take advantage of the reliably sunny Palm Springs weather to provide bright daytime lighting to the main selling area (thereby saving on the costs of electrical lighting).

The broad overhangs of the building's roof are supported with load-bearing 4-inch steel pipe columns spaced at 9-foot intervals. These pipe columns each have four "fins" or "ribs" which sprout from each column at 90-degree angles starting about at about 6.5-inches above the concrete sidewalk. These fins protrude about 2-inches near the ground subtly increasing to about 4-inches of width at an elevation of about 10-feet (only to thin again as the top of the column nears the building's overhang).

The underside of the building overhang is punctuated with cylindrical spun-aluminum lighting fixtures also spaced at 9-foot intervals (originally, the silver cylindrical lighting fixtures counterpoised nicely with the gold anodized aluminum fascia which is now, unfortunately, painted over).

Additionally, the building changes character as the sun grazes the applied three-dimensional horizontal diamond, or "harlequin," design 12"x12"x1" concrete decorative tile, creating interesting shadows throughout the day (and on what would otherwise be the less interesting concrete block walls of the building). The original Robinson's store sign (now lost) echoed the diamond-like design of both the concrete tiles and the aluminum fascia. Also not mentioned in the *Forum* description was the extensive use of 12"x12"x12" single-core concrete block on the exterior walls (most notably on the south elevation). The block creates a grid-like pattern that compliments, rather than competes with, the patterned concrete tile.

The building's patterned concrete tile, identified as "special tile of marble and quartz aggregate" in the *Forum* description, was part of the building industry's foray into the use of concrete block in more decorative expressions. The late 1950s and early 1960s saw an explosion in the use of decorative concrete block which was to take two major directions, i.e., one in the form of solid, load-bearing "Shadowal" concrete blocks and the second as airy, perforated, non-load bearing, concrete "screen block." Today, both of these building materials can be found throughout Palm Springs in a profusion of patterns. The use of an expensive, aggregate-imbedded tile (versus an integrally decorative concrete block such as Shadowal) is an accurate snap-shot of an evolving building material which would ultimately become inexpensive, rugged and modular (and also eventually shed such affectations as expensive marble and quartz chips).

In 1972, in response to an apparent need for more retail space, an addition was constructed, connecting to the south end of the original building. Stylistically identical to

the original Luckman & Pereira structure, records show the addition was supervised by architect William L. Pereira (who was then practicing independently). The seamless addition uses similar building materials, repeats the central clerestory windows and is virtually indistinguishable from the original building.

"The Award"

In the summer of 1958, the July issue of *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects* announced 1958's "National Honor Awards" in the field of architecture. This prestigious awards competition was juried by five nationally-prominent architects (including Los Angeles architect Welton Beckett). There were 312 entries in the competition which, according to the judges, evaluated entries based on "quality of unity in the entire work," "expression of strength without heaviness," "refinement," "aesthetic quality," and finally "originality and inventiveness." The "First Honor Award" went to the J.W. Robinson Department Store building (Palm Springs) designed by Luckman & Pereira (the second award went to another California project, Edward Durrell Stone's Stuart Pharmaceutical Company in Pasadena).

This is perhaps the most prestigious architectural award ever received by any Palm Springs project, commercial or residential, at the time of its construction.

The Local Impact of the "Fashion Jewel Box of the Desert"

The February 1958 issue of *Palm Springs Villager* magazine published an article entitled "Desert Fashion Center" which reported the arrival of the new J.W. Robinson Department Store to the city. Interviews with those involved with the project shows that cutting-edge architecture was a deliberate and integral part of the store's selling strategy. In the *Villager* article it was conveyed that:

The opening of the new J.W. Robinson, one of the top fashion stores of the West Coast, emphasizes anew the importance of Palm Springs as a desert fashion center.

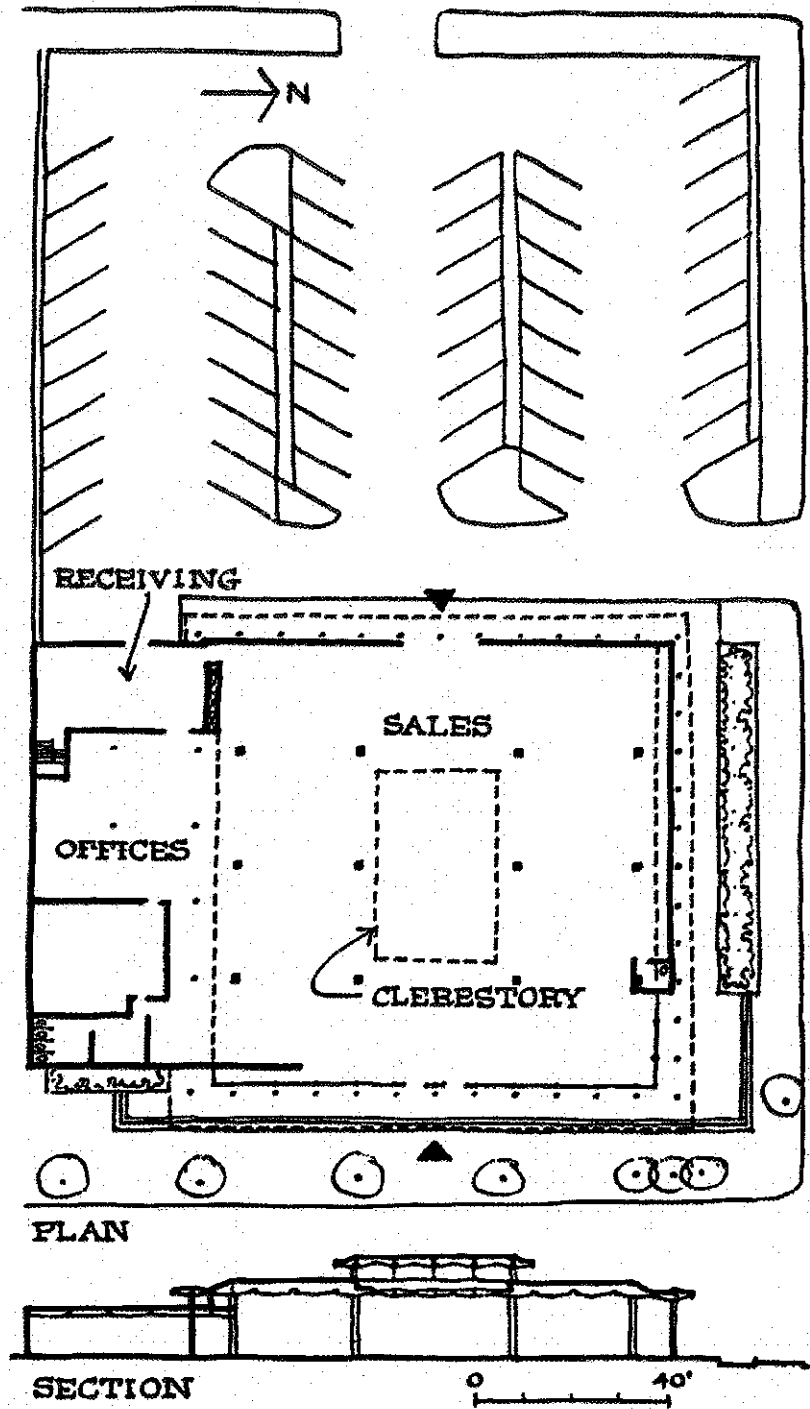
"Palm Springs is in the process of fulfilling a brilliant destiny"...said Robinson's president, Donald Buckingham. "Opening a beautiful new store two and one-half times larger than the old...we are showing our confidence and faith in the future of Palm Springs."

At a cost of a million dollars, the new Robinson's is as ultra-modern in architectural design as is its fashionable content. A special feature is the extensive use of glass across the front, carried to the sides and roof, which gives the entire store the appearance of a huge display window, above which is an umbrella-type of roof [which] seems to float as if on air.

"Our primary aim is to make Robinson's Palm Springs store the fashion headquarters for the entire desert region," said Pierre Bouscaren, its manager, "to be always first with the newest and most authentic in fashions for all who live in or who visit this area - men, women and children."

(The "old" store referred to was the modest Robinson's store on the grounds of the Desert Inn).

The 1958 opening of the Palm Springs J.W. Robinson Department Store (sometimes referred to as "JWR Palm Springs") was attended by throngs of local residents and at least one celebrity (pianist Wladziu (or Władziu) Valentino Liberace).



Site plan and section from the March 1959 issue of *Architectural Forum*

HISTORIC CONTEXT

To qualify as a Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site, a property must be significant; that is, it must represent a significant part of the history, architecture, or archeology, of an area, and it must have the characteristics that make it a good representative of properties associated with that aspect of the past. The significance of an historic property can be properly understood when it is evaluated within its historic context. Historic contexts are those patterns or trends in history by which a specific site is understood and its meaning (and ultimately its significance) within history is made clear. In order to decide whether a property is significant within its historic context, it must be determined which facet of history the property represents; the significance of that facet of history; whether the subject property has relevance in illustrating the historic context; how the property illustrates that history; and an analysis of the physical features the property possesses to determine if it conveys the aspect or history with which it is associated. If the subject property represents an important aspect of the area's history (under any of the seven criteria recognized by the Municipal Code) and possesses the requisite quality of integrity, it then qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Site.

BACKGROUND / HISTORIC CONTEXT

The relatively short history of Palm Springs can be organized into three more or less distinct periods that include Prehistory, the Settlement Period, and the Modern Period. It is within the context of the last period that this building will be evaluated.

Modern Period (1925-1960s): This period can be considered to have begun with the construction of the area's first "modern" structure, Rudolph Schindler's Paul and Betty Popenoe Cabin in 1922. With this building, the area's then predominant architectural style based on Mexican and Spanish Colonial motifs already well-established in Southern California began to change. Incorporation of the town of Palm Springs followed in 1938. During the post-WWII era, Palm Springs' economy prospered through tourism. Hollywood celebrities discovered the desert oasis and patronized its hotels, inns, nightclubs and restaurants; celebrity-seeking tourists soon followed, transforming Palm Springs from a sleepy village into an increasingly cosmopolitan environment that saw the construction of schools, hospitals, an airport and other important public works projects. The commercial core along Palm Canyon Drive (originally Main Street) flourished. In the 1950s the downtown core was expanded by the construction of the cross-axis of Tahquitz-McCallum Way that extended from the center of the original settlement to the airport, spurring new development along the way. Early private residential development also expanded into new sub-divisions composed of midcentury modern second homes in the flat lands surrounding the town's original core.

Palm Springs' Hollywood associations certainly imparted an air of sophistication to the city. This was an association the J.W. Robinson department store chain wanted to be part of. Additionally, by 1958, the city had built a reputation for cutting edge architecture as a result of local architectural practitioners like John Porter Clark, Albert Frey, E. Stewart Williams, William F. Cody and Donald Wexler. While these local names permeate the town's collective consciousness, there are many "outside" architects who made significant contributions to the city's stock of great midcentury architecture.

Certainly Luckman & Pereira, along with architect Rudi Baumfeld of Victor Gruen Associates (Bank of America Building) and Richard Neutra (Kaufmann House) must be numbered among these outsiders.

EVALUATION:

Criterion 1: Significant Event (Completed because Criterion 1 is marked above)

To qualify for listing under this criterion, a property must be associated with one or more events important in the defined historic context. *Criterion 1 recognizes properties associated with events or patterns of events or historic trends, such as the gradual rise of the city's prominence in architectural excellence in midcentury modern architecture that is an important pattern of events within this associated context. The J.W. Robinson Department Store building is an outstanding example of commercial design and construction of buildings within the context of midcentury desert Modernism. The J.W. Robinson Department Store commercial building is associated with this pattern of events for its ability to exemplify the modern period of the national, state and local history. Therefore, the building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criterion 1.*

ARCHITECTURE (Criteria 3 – 6)

Criterion 3: (That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history.)

The J.W. Robinson Department Store commercial building (1958) was designed by the Los Angeles-based architectural firm of Luckman & Pereira. The building's stylistic markers place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' Modern Period. One of the city's better-known commercial buildings, the structure is a prime, largely intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is widely known. As such it may be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs' image as a center of important midcentury architecture, i.e., an historic trend that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. The building qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 3.

Criterion 4: (That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; or) Type, Period, and Method of Construction: "Type, period, or method of construction" refers to the way certain properties are related to one another by cultural tradition or function, by dates of construction or style, or by choice or availability of materials and technology. To be eligible under this Criterion, a property must clearly illustrate, through "distinctive characteristics" a pattern of features common to a particular class of resources. "Distinctive characteristics" are the physical features or traits that commonly recur in individual types, periods, or methods of construction. To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction. Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials.

The building is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses distinctive characteristics that make up the many qualities of the style, such as overall horizontality, expression of structure, flat roofs, expansive amounts of glass, use of inexpensive, machine produced materials, masonry, etc. The structure is eligible as a specimen of its type or period of construction because it is an important example (within its context) of building practices in Palm Springs at midcentury. The building qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 4.

Criterion 5: (That (a): represents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or (b): that possesses high artistic value).

5a: Work of a Master: A master is a figure of generally recognized greatness in a field, a known craftsman of consummate skill. The property must express a particular phase in the development of the master's career, an aspect of his work, or a particular idea or theme in his craft. A property is not eligible as the work of a master, however, simply because it was designed by a prominent architect. For example, not every building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright is eligible under this portion of Criterion 5, although it might meet other Criteria.

Both Charles Luckman and William Pereira are important as nationally-prominent practitioners of Modernist architecture. Short biographies of Luckman and Pereira can be found in Appendices III and IV respectively. The firm of Luckman & Pereira has long been recognized as a leading firm of the modernist movement and documentation on the firm is extensive. Further, the J.W. Robinson Department Store building was immediately recognized by the architectural press and peers in the profession as an extraordinary effort that combined a sense of proportion, massing, refinement and use of modern materials and technology. In short, the Robinson Department Store building exemplifies all of the stylistic markers of the maturing modernist movement in the late 1950s.

5b: Properties possessing high artistic values: High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture. A property is eligible for its high artistic values if it so fully articulates a particular concept of design that it expresses an aesthetic ideal. As mentioned above, as an example of the maturing modernist movement, Luckman & Pereira's J.W. Robinson Department Store certainly articulates the best of "corporate modernism" to a level of excellence and confidence that could easily be considered an aesthetic ideal. As the work of a Master, and for its high artistic values, the building qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criterion 5.

Criterion 6: (That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction). This Criterion was created to address the resources contained within a potential historic district. Since no claim has been brought forward regarding an historic district in this tract, the building does not qualify as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criterion 6.

ARCHEOLOGY

Criterion 7: (That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.) *The building does not qualify for listing on the local registry under Criterion 7.*

7. Integrity Analysis

INTEGRITY

This is the ability of a property to convey its significance. To be listed in the local registry, a property must not only be shown to be significant under the criteria, but it also must have integrity. The evaluation of integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, convey their significance) or they do not. The definition of integrity includes seven aspects or qualities. To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant. The following sections define the seven aspects and explain how they combine to produce integrity.

LOCATION

Location is the place where an historic property was constructed or the place where an historic event occurred. The relationship between the property and its location is often important to understanding why the property was created or why something happened. The actual location of a historic property, complemented by its setting, is particularly important in recapturing the sense of historic events and persons. Except in rare cases, the relationship between a property and its historic associations is destroyed if the property is moved. ***The J.W. Robinson Department Store building remains in its original location and therefore qualifies under this aspect.***

DESIGN

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. A property's design reflects historic functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. It includes such considerations as the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; textures and colors of surface materials; type, amount, and style of ornamental detailing. ***Although the J.W. Robinson Department Store building has seen some minor alterations,***

the essential characteristics of form, plan, space, structure, and style have survived intact. Similarly, the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; and the type, amount, and style of detailing, has survived as well. The exterior surface materials (concrete block and metal fascia) have been painted but this is a relatively insignificant and reversible change. As previously mentioned, one of the primary design elements of the building is the elevation of the structure above the street level by four, long horizontal steps that create both a sense of arrival and impart a sense of importance to the building. Over the years bulky concrete planters have been installed to create a separation from the bus transportation activities on the east side of the site. Arguably, this has somewhat diminished the drama of entering the building. Fortunately, these changes (specifically the planters) could be removed or mitigated to more closely echo the original design. Fortunately, there is extensive documentation in the form of plans and photographs (including many taken by architectural photographer Julius Shulman) that clearly illustrate the original design intent of the architects.

SETTING

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the *character* of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves *how*, not just *where*, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space. Setting often reflects the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it was intended to serve. In addition, the way in which a property is positioned in its environment can reflect the designer's concept of nature and aesthetic preferences. ***The setting of the J.W. Robinson Department Store building continues to reflect the architects' original design relationship of site and structure.***

MATERIALS

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The choice and combination of materials reveals the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of particular types of materials and technologies. ***As mentioned previously, the J.W. Robinson Department Store building's exterior surface materials have been painted, but this change does not constitute a significant loss of the physical elements that expressed the design during the building's period of significance; the particular pattern and configuration that today forms the building survives intact.***

WORKMANSHIP

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components. It can be

expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques. Workmanship is important because it can furnish evidence of the technology of a craft, illustrate the aesthetic principles of a historic or prehistoric period, and reveal individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles. Examples of workmanship in historic buildings include tooling, carving, painting, graining, turning, and joinery. ***With the J.W. Robinson Department Store building, the workmanship is comprised of integral ornamental detailing reflected in concrete block, glass, steel, and even the exposed structural system itself. The property continues to express a high degree of contemporary period workmanship.***

FEELING

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. For example, a rural historic district retaining original design, materials, workmanship, and setting will relate the feeling of agricultural life in the 19th century. ***Although the current culture's concept of glamour may have changed somewhat, the J.W. Robinson Department Store building was the very essence of Palm Springs glamour when built. As a commercial establishment that unapologetically catered to the rich and aspiring upper middle class, the "feeling" of the building necessarily had to exude urbanity albeit it in a more informal resort location. The late 1950s were a sophisticated, open and optimistic time, a feeling still expressed by the design of this building. As such, the J.W. Robinson Department Store building retains the integrity of feeling.***

ASSOCIATION

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character. For example, a Revolutionary War battlefield whose natural and man-made elements have remained intact since the 18th century will retain its quality of association with the battle. Because feeling and association depend on individual perceptions, their retention alone is never sufficient to support eligibility of a property for the National Register. ***As stated under Criterion 1: the J.W. Robinson Department Store building is an important example of midcentury commercial development in Palm Springs. The building represents the city's overall commercial development from the 1950s to the 1960s, and contributes to the scale and character of the city's midcentury commercial "banking district." As such, it continues its association with a pattern of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the community; the building retains integrity of association.***

Integrity Summary: The building appears to be in excellent condition due largely to the use of construction materials suitable for the harsh desert environment. The Integrity analysis confirms that the building still possesses all seven aspects of integrity. And while the building has undergone numerous minor alterations since it was built, virtually all of its character-defining features survive. The building retains a high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify it for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site.

8. Bibliography

Attached is a list of books, articles, and other sources cited or used in preparing this application and other documentation that may be relevant.

Books

Architectural Resources Group, *Citywide Historic Resources Survey*. San Francisco: 2004.

Cygelman, Adele, *Palm Springs Modern*. Rizzoli International Publications, New York: 1999.

Hess, Alan, and Andrew Danish, *Palm Springs Weekend: the Architecture and Design of a Midcentury Oasis*. Chronicle Books, San Francisco: 2001.

National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. U. S. Department of the Interior (National Park Service), Washington, D. C.

William Pereira, edited by James Steele, USC Architectural Guild Press, Los Angeles, 2002

Magazines

Journal of the American Institute of Architects, Volume 30, No. 1, July 1958, pages 29-31, "The 1958 National Honor Awards."

Architectural Forum, Volume 110, Number 3, March 1959, p. 112, "Six Stores of Distinction" (the Palm Springs' J.W. Robinson Department Store building entry is entitled "Bazaar in an Oasis").

Palm Springs Villager, February 1958, p. 33, "Desert Fashion Center"

Other Sources Consulted:

Palm Springs Assessor's Office

Palm Springs Historical Society

Palm Springs Public Library

City of Palm Springs Planning Department (HSPB files)

9. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 1.94 acres (or approximately 84,506 sq. ft.).
Property Boundary Description: The boundary includes all of APN 513203013-8.

10. Prepared By

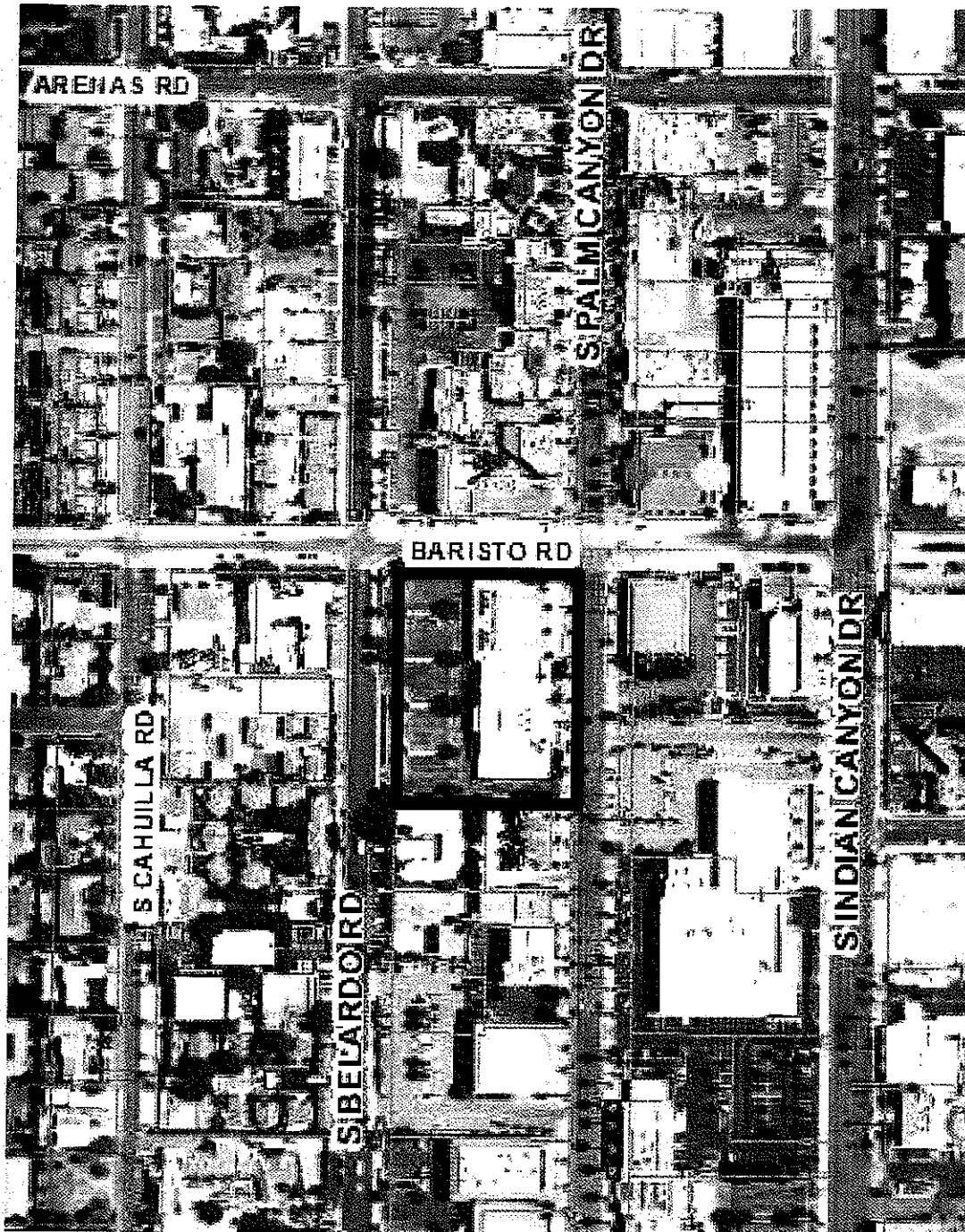
Name/title: Ronald W. Marshall
Organization: N/A (submitted on behalf of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation)
Street address: 2685 East Livmor Avenue
City: Palm Springs State: CA Zip: 92262
Telephone: (760) 808-6988
e-mail address: modpod_one@yahoo.com

11. Required Documentation

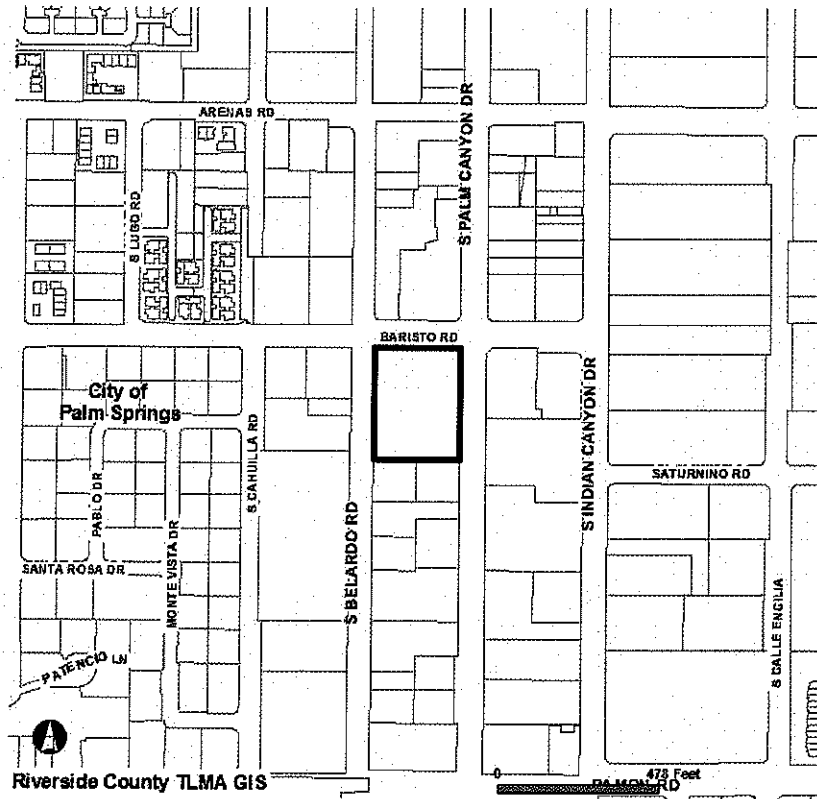
Submit the following items with the completed application form. **Do not mount any exhibits on a board.**

1. **Attachment Sheets.** Include all supplemental information based on application form (above).
2. **Maps:** For Historic Districts, include a sketch map identifying the proposed districts boundaries.
3. **Photographs:** Eight (8) sets of color photographs showing each elevation of the property and its surroundings.
4. **Non-owner's Notarized Signature:** If the applicant is not the owner, a notarized affidavit shall be provided (see following page).
5. **Site Plan:** One 1/8" to 1/4" scale drawing of the site, and eight reduction copies (8 1/2 x 11 inches) The site plan shall show all of the following: Property boundaries, north arrow and scale, all existing buildings, structures, mechanical equipment, landscape materials, fences, walls, sidewalks, driveways, parking areas showing location of parking spaces, and signs. **Indicate the square footage and use of each building and the date(s) of construction.**
6. **Public Hearing Labels:** Three (3) sets of typed self-adhesive labels of all property owners, lessees, and sub-lessees of record. **The labels shall include the Assessor's parcel number, owner's name and mailing address of each property with 400 feet from the exterior limits of the subject property.** Additionally, all Assessor Parcel Maps clearly indicating the 400-foot radius and a certified letter from a title company licensed to conduct business in Riverside County, California shall be submitted.

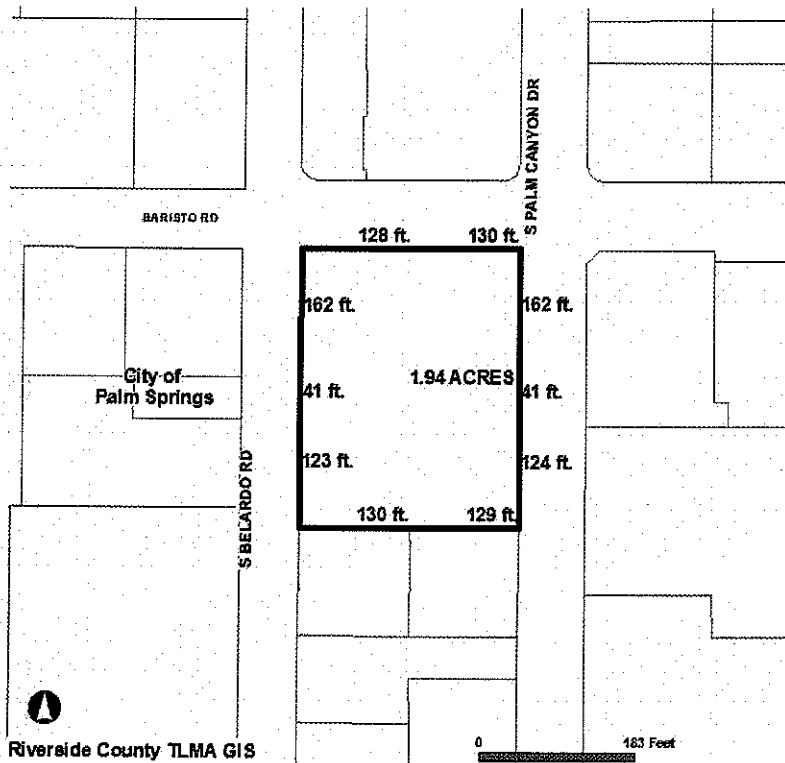
Note: If any property on this list is owned by the United States Government in trust for the Agua Caliente Indian Tribe or individual allottee, copies of notices with postage paid envelopes will be submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to notify the individual Indian land owners of the public hearings.



Aerial View of J.W. Robinson Department Store Building (2011) (County of Riverside)



J.W. Robinson Department Store Building parcel



J.W. Robinson Department Store Building parcel dimensions

Appendix II: Permit History (333-343 South Palm Canyon Drive)

Date	Address	Type/Number	Owner	Remarks
8/26/57	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/9961	J. W. Robinson (Pearl McManus)	14,500 sq. ft. at cost of \$280,000
9/5/57	333 S. Palm Canyon	Plumbing/10033	J. W. Robinson	
9/10/57	333 S. Palm Canyon	Grading report	J. W. Robinson	Pacific Materials Laboratory
10/22/57	333 S. Palm Canyon	Electric/8749	J. W. Robinson	
11/12/57	333 S. Palm Canyon	Sewer/13	J. W. Robinson	
Various	333 S. Palm Canyon	Job Record Card	J. W. Robinson	
5/21/62	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/4491	J. W. Robinson	Repair roof
7/24/72	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/4794	J. W. Robinson	Add 13,400 sq. ft. at cost of \$275,000 Coble & Wessman
Various	333 S. Palm Canyon	Job Record Card	J. W. Robinson	Coble & Wessman
7/31/72	333 S. Palm Canyon	Electric/5706	J. W. Robinson	
8/8/72	333 S. Palm Canyon	Plumbing/2309	J. W. Robinson	
8/11/72	333 S. Palm Canyon	Concrete compression test	J. W. Robinson	So. California Testing Laboratories Arthur Pereira AIA Coble & Wessman
8/15/72	333 S. Palm Canyon	Concrete compression test	J. W. Robinson	So. California Testing Laboratories Wm. Pereira AIA Coble & Wessman
8/22/72	333 S. Palm Canyon	Electric/5771	J. W. Robinson	
9/28/72	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/5166	J. W. Robinson	Interior partitions
12/8/72	333 S. Palm Canyon	Temporary Certificate of Occupancy	J. W. Robinson	
12/27/77	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/1958	J. W. Robinson	Remodel interior Spencer & Reynolds
1/5/78	333 S. Palm Canyon	Plumbing/5939	J. W. Robinson	

1/5/78	(In file)	Sewer/6327	(not indicated)	
1/5/78	333 S. Palm Canyon	Electric/608	J. W. Robinson	
11/9/79	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/2011	J. W. Robinson	Job Record Card Re-roof
7/23/90	(In file)	Letter	La Mirage Interiors	Re-roof proposal
Illegible	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building Application	La Mirage Interiors	Demo store fixtures
8/16/90	333 S. Palm Canyon	Job Card/18775	La Mirage Interiors	
8/16/90	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building	La Mirage Interiors	Re-roof
9/10/92	333 S. Palm Canyon	Sign/0254	Super Crown	
9/23/92	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/23608	Crown Books	Non-structural demo
Illegible	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building Application	Crown Books	John Ash Group Architects
12/4/92	333 S. Palm Canyon	Insp. Corrections/23667	(not indicated)	
12/11/92	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/24004	Super Crown	Install signs
3/24/93	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/24529	(not indicated)	Handicap ramp/contractor Eloulian & Elloulian (sic)
4/1/93	333 S. Palm Canyon	Building/24576	Crown Books	Parking lot lighting
4/12/93	333 S. Palm Canyon	Certificate of Occupancy	Crown Books	
4/19/93	333 S. Palm Canyon	Insp. Corrections/24567	(not indicated)	
12/14/93	343 S. Palm Canyon	Building/26131	(not indicated)	Re-roof/contractor Jerry Illovlian

Appendix III: Charles Luckman Biography

The "boy wonder" of American business in the late 1930s and the 1940s, and then a leader in the field of architecture, Charles Luckman—an only child—was born in Kansas City, Missouri, in 1909. Following graduation from Kansas City's Northeast High School in 1925, and a stint in a Kansas City junior college, he took a job as a draftsman in an architect's office in Chicago. He then enrolled in the University of Illinois in 1927, where he graduated with a degree in architecture in 1931. There he met his future architectural partner, William Pereira.

Lacking professional opportunities in architecture because of the Great Depression, Luckman entered the business world, joining Colgate-Palmolive-Peet as a draftsman in the advertising department in 1931. That same year he married Harriet McElroy (1908-2003) (the couple's three children were Charles, Jr.; James; and Steven). Luckman then transferred to sales. He achieved impressive gains in the sales of his company's soap on Chicago's South Side, which earned him a reputation as a superb salesman and set the stage for a remarkable rise in the business world.

His progress at Colgate led to an offer from Pepsodent, which he joined as sales manager in 1935. Luckman successfully promoted Pepsodent to customers throughout the United States and claimed to know over 35,000 druggists by their first names. Such effective salesmanship resulted in Luckman's rapid rise through the Pepsodent hierarchy, becoming vice-president in charge of sales in 1936. In 1941, Luckman was promoted to executive vice-president, and in 1943 came the crowning achievement of the presidency. By that year Pepsodent had the largest sales of dentrifice in the United States. His \$100,000 per year salary was remarkable for that time (he also held ten percent of Pepsodent's stock).



Luckman on cover of June 10, 1946 issue of *Time* magazine

The next major step in Charles Luckman's career occurred in 1944, when Lever Brothers acquired Pepsodent for ten million dollars. Luckman continued as president of Pepsodent and became a vice-president of Lever Brothers, which was the United States branch of the international corporation Unilever. In 1946 he was named president of Lever Brothers in the United States becoming the head executive of one the country's largest corporations, and one of the country's youngest head executives as well. This feat earned him a place on a 1946 cover of *Time* magazine.

Luckman was also involved in significant public service. He served on President Harry Truman's "President's Committee on Civil Rights," which evaluated the state of human rights in the United States (1947). Luckman chaired Truman's "Citizens' Food Committee," charged with conserving American grain supplies, so that the savings could be used to feed desolate post-war Europe.

In a move that was headline news, Luckman resigned from Lever Brothers in 1950 after a meeting with the directors of Unilvever, the parent company. The exact reason or reasons for his departure remain unclear, but Lever had failed to equal its rival Proctor and Gamble in such areas as the marketing of synthetic detergents, and by 1949 Lever Brothers was in the red.

Luckman returned to his old profession, architecture, after his resignation, answering the invitation of William Pereira, his fellow architecture student at Illinois. Luckman's renewed interest in architecture was stimulated in part by his instigating the building of the Lever House, the corporate headquarters in New York City. The ground floor of the twenty-six story tall skyscraper was open, with landscaping and fountains, an unusual design for its time. That it was one of the first steel and glass skyscrapers added to its novelty and perhaps stands as Luckman's greatest contribution to American architecture.

Luckman & Pereira was highly successful, and among its many accomplishments were the CBS Television City in Hollywood, the Hilton Hotel in Berlin, the Disneyland Hotel, the "Theme Building" at Los Angeles International Airport, and United States military bases in Spain.

In a disagreement over approaches regarding architectural and marketing practices, Pereira and Luckman split in 1958. Luckman then formed Charles Luckman Associates (CLA), which proved to be hugely successful. By 1968 the firm was one of the country's five largest, with offices in New York, Los Angeles, and Phoenix. Its architectural accomplishments included the Madison Square Garden in New York, Boston's Prudential Center, NASA's manned flight center in Houston, and countless projects in Los Angeles, including the Los Angeles Zoo and what is now Macy's Plaza. In 1968, Charles Luckman's second son, James, became president of the firm, while he became chair of the board. That same year CLA merged with Ogden Corporation, a union that lasted until 1973.

Luckman had his architectural critics. Reflecting his strong business background, he marketed his firm as one that would design projects to suit the client's tastes and needs, rather than create designs based only on the vision of the architect. In honor of this unusual approach to architecture, the American Management Association awarded him its highest honor in 1982, the Henry Laurence Gantt Medal for "distinguished achievement of management as a service to the community."

Luckman's public service was considerable. An active supporter of public education, he served on the California State Board of Trustees from 1960 through 1982 and was twice chair of the board. Notable during this tenure was his strong stand against the campus unrest of the 1960s. He also established teaching awards at different

universities. Besides this educational service, Luckman served as president of the Los Angeles Ballet and as chair of the board of UCLA's Brain Research Institute.

Luckman retired from Charles Luckman Associates in 1977, although he remained an active presence there (the firm was later reorganized as the Luckman Partnership, with son James as president). Charles Luckman died in 1999 in Los Angeles.

{Note: Much of the foregoing biography is courtesy of Loyola Marymount University (Los Angeles). LMU's William H. Hannon Library houses the Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles. As such, the Hannon Library holds papers of many of Los Angeles' public officials, real estate and industrial developers, and prominent Roman Catholic families. Included in this collection are 96 archival boxes containing the "Charles Luckman Papers, 1908-2000 (CSLA-34)"}.

Appendix IV: William Pereira Biography

William L. Pereira, was an architect and urban planner who designed the Transamerica building in San Francisco and was the designer of the master-planned community of Irvine, California. Throughout his career, Pereira brought to his designs a strong belief in the integration of architecture and environment. The pyramidal Transamerica building, for example, was designed to allow light onto the streets of a city that Pereira believed was becoming crowded with "building-block" skyscrapers.

His plan in the early 1960's for the community of Irvine called for the conversion of 93,000 acres of land in Orange County into a modernistic community of homes for people in various income groups, hotels and theaters, and for the preservation of 30,000 acres of mountain wilderness for recreation. Some of his vision was realized, although a booming real estate market later in the decade transformed Irvine into a more ordinary, if unusually large, suburb.

In the early 1930's, Pereira began his architectural career by designing many theaters around the United States for the movie chain of Balaban & Katz. The popularity of the theater designs led him to a job designing a Hollywood studio for Paramount. His deep research into the movie industry for the project led him to stray, for a time, into a variety of projects in the film industry. In 1942 he shared an Oscar award with other special effects experts for his work on Cecil B. DeMille's film, "Reap the Wild Wind." He was also the producer, for RKO-Radio, of the mystery-melodrama "Johnny Angel," starring George Raft, and the romance "From This Day Forward," starring Joan Fontaine.



Pereira on cover of September 6, 1963 issue of *Time* magazine

In 1949 he returned to architecture and, in 1950, established the architectural firm of Pereira and Luckman with Charles Luckman. The firm flourished, quickly gaining a reputation for the master-planning of building complexes. Among their designs were those for the pilot plant of CBS Television City in Hollywood, the rocket-launching installations at Cape Canaveral, the Los Angeles International Airport, jet bases in California for major airplane manufacturers, and the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California.

In 1958, he set up his own firm, William L. Pereira Associates, and in the following years designed many major buildings in California, including the Hollywood Film Museum and the monumental Los Angeles County Museum of Art. He had originally

designed a pyramidal skyscraper for the ABC headquarters in Manhattan, but that building was never realized. His design for a 48-story Transamerica building was initially controversial - some called it a "dunce cap" - but the building, built in 1973, quickly became a trademark of San Francisco's skyline.

Pereira also designed many buildings for colleges and universities around the country, including the campuses of the University of Missouri, Occidental College in Los Angeles, Pepperdine University and Brigham Young.

William Pereira died in 1985 in Los Angeles at the age of 76.

{Note: The foregoing biography is derived from two sources, Pereira's obituary, entitled "William L. Pereira, Architect; A Specialist in Planned Cities," by Douglas C. McGill which appeared in the November 15, 1985 edition of the New York Times, and *William Pereira* published by the USC Architectural Guild}

Appendix V: Photographic Documentation of Building and Site

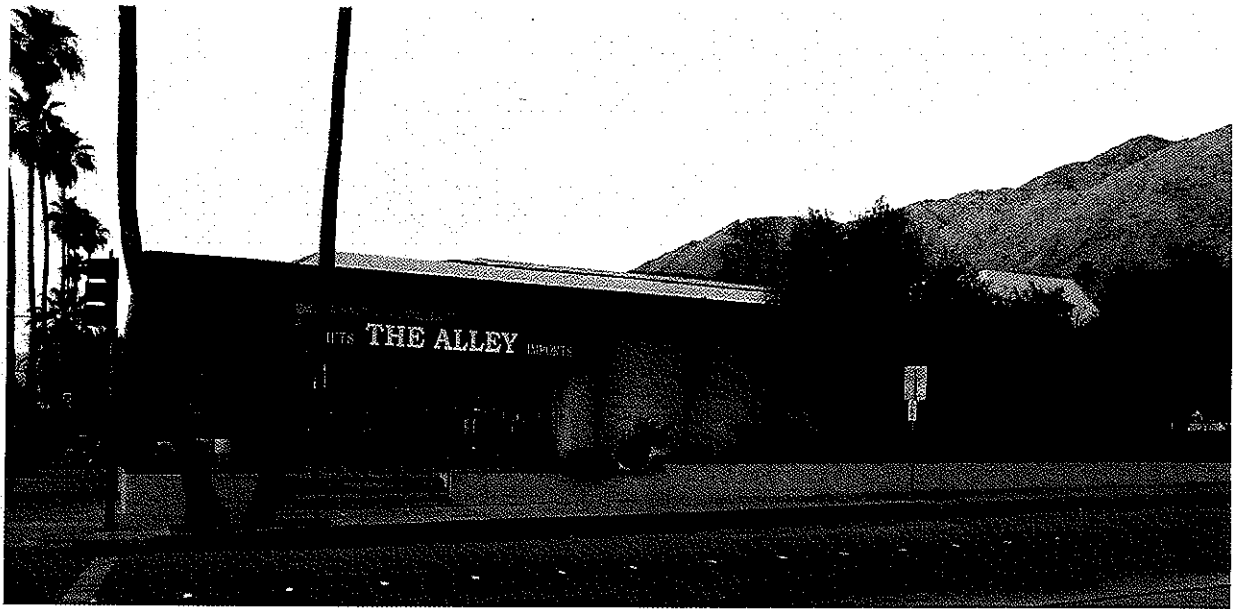


Figure 1: North elevation (2012)



Figure 2: East elevation (2012)

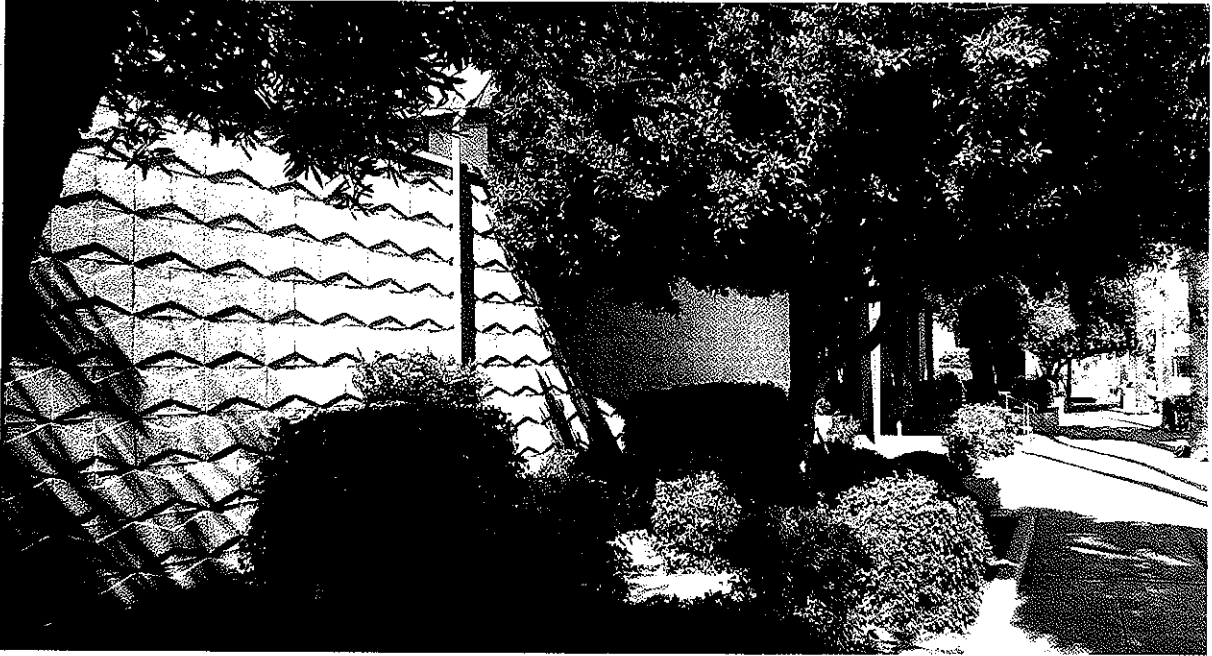


Figure 3: East elevation (southeast corner) (2012)



Figure 4: South elevation (southeast corner) (2012)

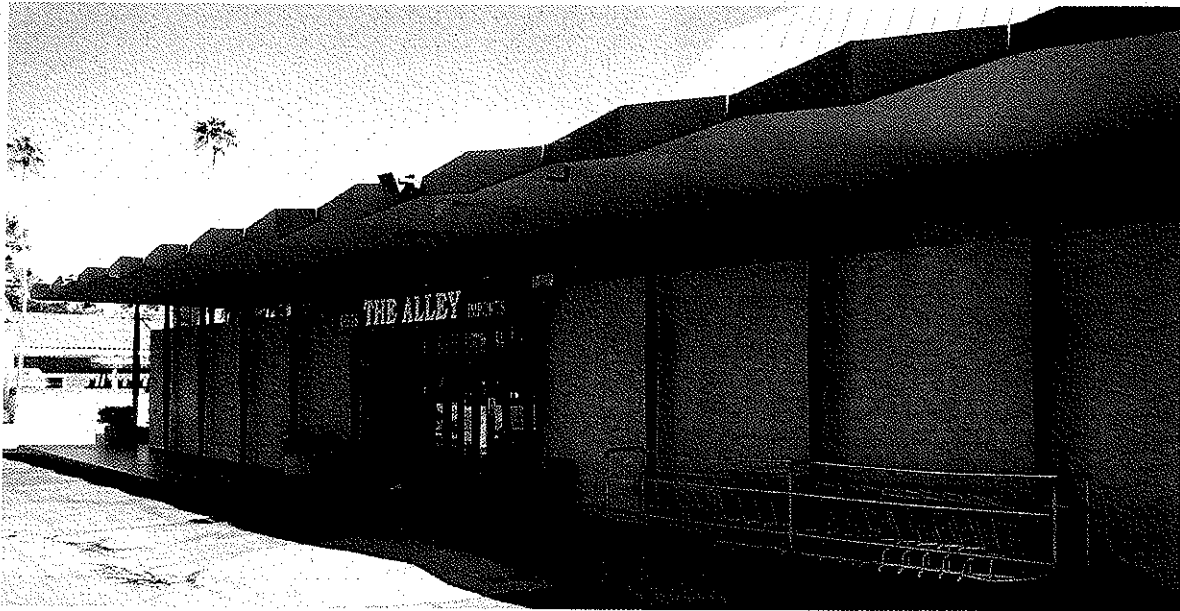


Figure 5: West elevation (northwest corner) (2012)



Figure 6: West elevation (southwest corner) (2012)

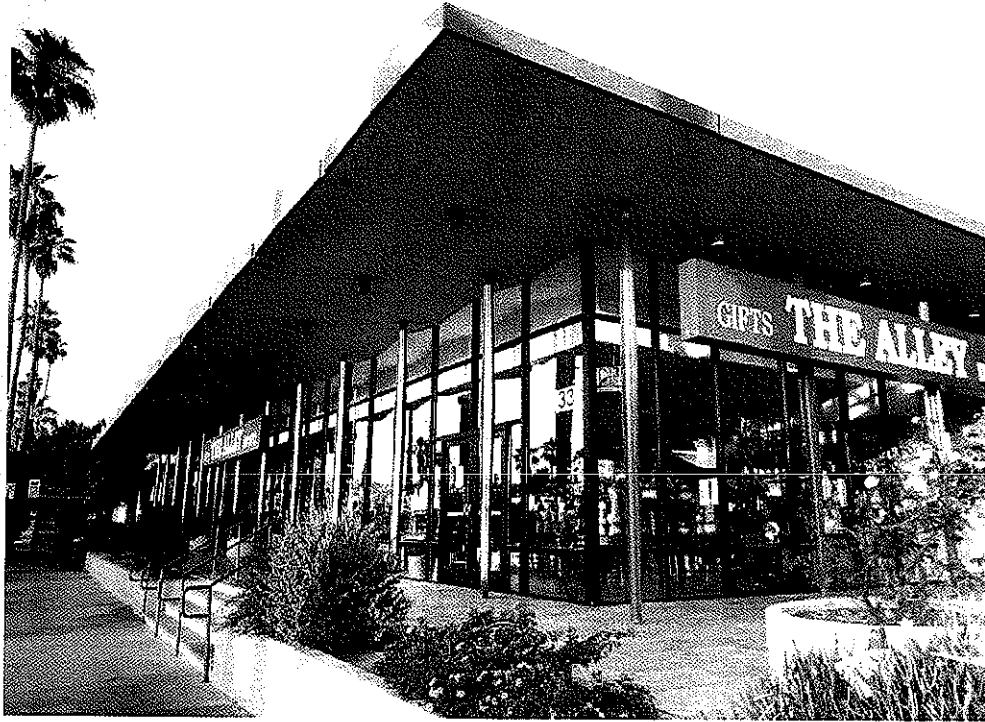


Figure 7: The northeast corner of the building still exhibits much of the “transparency” intended by its designers (2012)

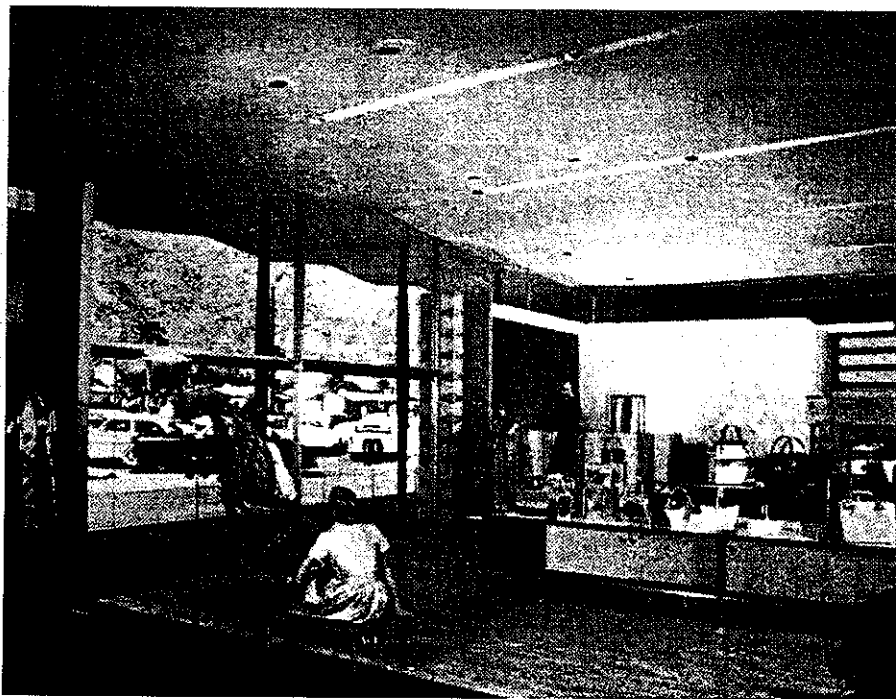


Figure 8: Interior photograph showing ceiling air-conditioning plenums (1958)

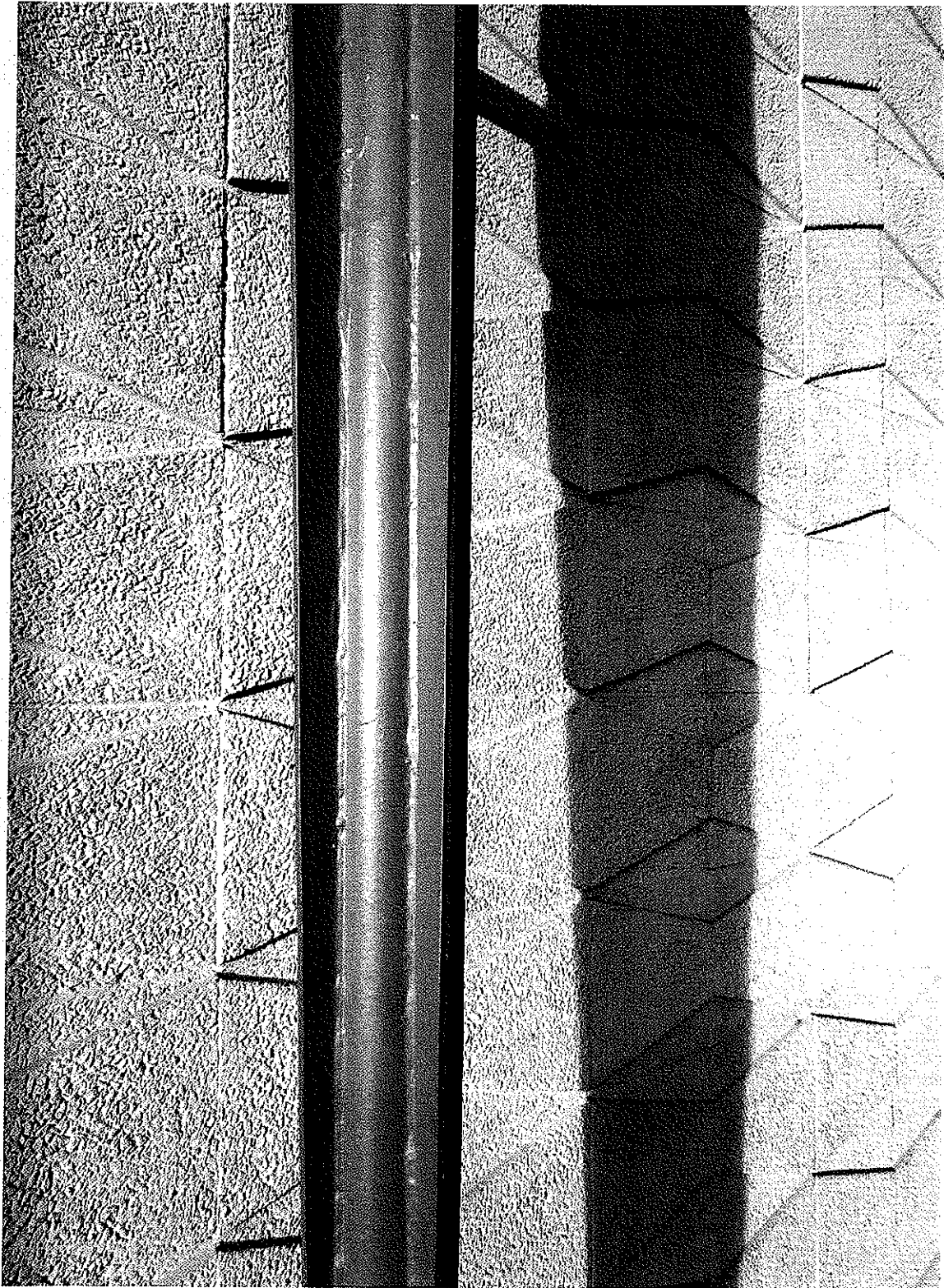


Figure 9: Load-bearing 4-inch "finned" steel pipe columns and harlequin-patterned facing tiles (2012)

Appendix VI: Miscellaneous Documentation



J. W. Robinson Company Store Building, Los Angeles.

Figure 1: The first Robinson's Store in Los Angeles



Figure 2: The boutique Robinson's in Palm Springs "on the grounds of the Desert Inn" (1948)




Liberace (center), famous piano artist, photo graphed here with large crowd; waiting outside store of J. W. Robinson's new store on opening day.

Figure 3: Liberace waiting outside the Palm Springs Robinson's on opening day (from February 1958 *Palm Springs Villager* magazine)

JWR PALM SPRINGS

YOURS FOR THE LIGHT SIDE OF LIVING!
OUR JUST-OPENED FASHION JEWEL-BOX OF THE DESERT



Robinson's

SPARKLING 75TH

SELECTION OF THE SMARTEST IN RESORT WEAR FOR MAN, WOMAN, AND CHILD BECOMES ONE OF THE DELIGHTS OF A PALM SPRINGS VACATION AT JWR. HERE TOO, THE QUALITY FAMOUS FOR 75 YEARS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S FINEST STORE, J. W. ROBINSON, LOS ANGELES, BEVERLY HILLS, PALM SPRINGS, AND SOON PASADENA. ROBINSON'S PALM SPRINGS - 333 SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE, FAIRVIEW 4-9691. STORE HOURS MONDAY THROUGH SATURDAY 10 AM TO 6 PM.

Figure 4: Robinson's advertisement (from February 1958 *Palm Springs Villager* magazine)



City of Palm Springs

Historic Site Preservation Board

3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way • Palm Springs, CA 92262
Tel: 760-323-8245 • Fax: 760-322-8360

September 18, 2012

Nancee and Will Marek
The Alley Corporate Offices
80250 Highway 111
Indio, CA 92201

Dear Mr and Mrs. Marek,

As Chair of the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board, I would invite you to please reconsider your position on the possible historic designation of your Palm Springs store. While I could recite the significance of this unique Luckman-Pereira designed building and its important role in the development of Palm Springs and Southern California, I suspect you are already familiar with its design heritage and value to the community.

Instead, I would like to provide some assurance that historic designation is not a significant burden to your ownership or operation. In brief, the City requires all commercial buildings to go through a design review process for any exterior change. This is called Architectural Approval. For the properties that are designated as historic, the historic review process is generally conducted within the same timeframe as Architectural Review. We work very hard to prevent historic status from being an additional burden on the property owner.

I have attached a short document listing the "myths" of historic preservation prepared by the Los Angeles Conservancy. I believe it describes how we look at preservation here in Palm Springs – with one important exception: We are your neighbors, your fellow business owners and your customers. We are not a remote or anonymous group of people and we value our relationships with the community.

We hope you will favorably consider the possibility that the 343 S. Palm Canyon Drive building might join the community's treasured inventory of historic sites, such as the Santa Fe Federal Savings building across the street from your store. If you have any questions, feel free to call Craig Ewing at the City at 760-323-8269.

Sincerely,

Tom DeLeeuw
Chair, Historic Site Preservation Board

The Top Ten Myths About Historic Preservation **- From The Los Angeles Conservancy**

Despite unprecedented awareness of historic preservation in Los Angeles, a surprising number of misconceptions still abound. Some people close their minds to preservation based on inaccurate information, while others cling to unrealistic expectations about the impacts or benefits of preservation tools. Below is a "top ten" list of the most prevalent myths about historic preservation.

Myth #1: "If a property is designated as a historic landmark, it's protected forever and can never be demolished."

Fact: Landmark designation ensures a more thorough review of demolition proposals, but it does not prohibit demolition outright. In the City of Los Angeles, designation as a local historic landmark (Historic-Cultural Monument) allows the city's Cultural Heritage Commission to prevent the issuance of a demolition permit, but only for 180 days. The City Council may then extend this demolition delay for an additional 180 days. Many East Coast cities, including New York, do prohibit demolition of their landmarks, with an exception for cases of demonstrated economic hardship. Even listing in the National Register of Historic Places, which sounds more elevated than "mere" local listing, does not provide for more iron-clad protection. In California, demolition of a designated landmark additionally requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Report to assess the feasibility of alternatives to demolition. Yet a truly determined property owner may be able to obtain approval to destroy even our most cherished landmarks.

Myth #2: "Historic designation will lower my property values."

Fact: Study after study across the nation has conclusively demonstrated that historic designation and the creation of historic districts actually increase property values. Why? In part because historic designation gives a neighborhood or an individual historic site a caché that sets it apart from ordinary properties. Many buyers also seek out the unique qualities and ambiance of a historic property. Historic district designation gives potential homebuyers two rare and economically valuable assurances: that the very qualities that attracted them to their neighborhood will endure over time, and that they can safely reinvest in sensitive improvements to their home without fear that their neighbor will undermine this investment with a new "monster home" or inappropriate new development.

Myth #3: "If my property is designated as historic, I won't be able to change it in any way, and I don't want my property to become like a museum."

Fact: Owners of designated historic structures can make significant changes to their property. Historic preservation laws, at their essence, are not meant to prevent change, but, rather, to manage change. The tool to manage change is the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the nationally accepted benchmark for evaluating changes to historic structures. The standards don't require that every element of a historic site remain intact: you need not keep every doorknob! However, the most significant, or "character-defining," historic elements of a property should be retained. New additions to the historic property are allowed, but should be compatible with the site's historic architecture. The standards urge the repair of deteriorated historic features, but do allow for replacement where the severity of deterioration leaves no other option.

Myth #4: "Preservation is only for the rich and elite, and for high-style buildings."

Fact: Historic preservation isn't just about house museums anymore. Today's preservation movement is increasingly diverse: here in Los Angeles, many of our newest historic districts

(Historic Preservation Overlay Zones, or HPOZs) home to economically and ethnically varied populations. Preservation today also addresses not just grand architectural landmarks, but more modest sites of social and cultural significance. Just look at the small Ralph J. Bunche House in South Los Angeles, boyhood home of the pioneering African-American diplomat, and Little Tokyo's Far East Café, a beloved gathering place for the city's Japanese-American community – both restored in recent years. Or, consider a current preservation effort to save the modest Vladeck Center, a Boyle Heights building that was the center of the Jewish labor and immigrant resettlement movements of the 1930s. Such sites underscore that preservation can be about the "power of place" found at sites containing rich social and cultural meaning.

Myth #5: "Historic preservation is bad for business."

Fact: Historic preservation is at the very heart of our nation's most vibrant economic development and business attraction programs. From Southern California examples such as Old Pasadena or San Diego's Gaslamp Quarter, to traditional, historic southern cities such as Charleston or Savannah, to the recent boom in heritage tourism, today's economic development strategies no longer see preservation and business development as competing values. The National Main Street Center, a program that uses historic preservation to revitalize town centers and neighborhood commercial districts, has tracked economic results in 1,700 Main Street communities. These preservation-based programs have created over 231,000 new jobs and resulted in over \$17 billion in reinvestment to date, with every dollar spent on a Main Street program yielding \$40 in economic reinvestment.

Myth #6: "Preservation is more expensive than new construction."

Though this is certainly true at times, historic preservation is typically more cost effective than new construction. Why? Because the upgrades that historic buildings might need are usually less expensive than the costs of building all-new foundations, structural systems, roofs, and building finishes. The State of California learned the potential savings from historic preservation in comparing the construction of two state office buildings in Los Angeles: the Ronald Reagan State Office Building on Spring Street at Third Street, and the Junipero Serra State Office Building just two blocks away on Broadway at Fourth Street, in the renovated former flagship location of the Broadway Department Store. The historic renovation not only reused and reinvigorated an important landmark from 1914, but it saved taxpayers money by delivering office space at about half the cost per square foot of the all-new Reagan building just a few years before.

Myth #7: "If I buy a historic property, there's lots of government money available to help me fix it up."

Unfortunately, there are few large government or foundation grants available to owners of historic properties, and even those few typically limit eligibility to government agencies or nonprofits. What *is* available tends to be tax incentives for private owners of historic buildings. Owners of sites listed in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places can take advantage of a Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit that provides a 20% tax offset for the cost of rehabilitation. National Register properties are also eligible to benefit from conservation easements – binding legal agreements with preservation organizations such as the Los Angeles Conservancy that can allow owners to claim a charitable deduction on their Federal income taxes. Finally, the state's Mills Act program, implemented by local governments, including Los Angeles, allows historic property owners to take often significant property tax reductions.

Myth #8: "Old buildings are less safe than new ones."

Although historic structures sometimes require structural retrofits or the addition of fire sprinklers to enhance safety, historic buildings often perform better than newer construction in

earthquakes and other natural disasters. What determines the safety of buildings is the quality of construction, not age, and, in many ways, "they just don't build 'em like they used to." Los Angeles' signature historic structures have survived every major temblor of the past eight decades. In the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the most catastrophic damage occurred not to historic buildings but to newer construction such as parking garages, concrete tiltup buildings, and apartments with "tuck-under" parking.

Myth #9: "Preservation is an un-American violation of property rights."

Historic preservation laws no more infringe on property rights than do many other laws and rules that Americans have long accepted. Though everyone likes to believe "my home is my castle and I can do whatever I want," this statement simply doesn't reflect reality. Zoning laws prevent you from replacing your single-family home with an apartment building or a five-story vertical mansion. We should all be happy that such laws prevent our neighbor from putting a landfill or a skyscraper behind our back fence. If you live in a condominium (or a gated community), your property rights are limited by Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs), documents that can legally prevent you from owning a pet, washing a car in your driveway, or having a basketball hoop over the garage. CC&Rs are far more onerous than historic preservation laws, yet are commonly accepted even by vocal property rights advocates.

Myth #10: "Preservationists are always fighting new development and only care about the past."

Historic preservationists do care deeply about the past – generally not just to wallow sentimentally in a bygone era, but as a way of anchoring ourselves as we move forward into the future. Historic preservation is not about stopping change and is certainly not about squeezing out creative and exciting new architecture and development. Preservation allows us to retain the best of our shared heritage to preserve sites of unique quality and beauty, revitalize neighborhoods, spur economic revitalization, and, quite simply, create better communities.

- Los Angeles Conservancy

Craig Ewing

From: William Marek <CustomerService@TheAlley.info>
Sent: Thursday, August 09, 2012 3:06 PM
To: Craig Ewing
Subject: Re: The Alley - Palm Springs

Dear Craig,

As I said in the voice mail I left you, we don't want it to become a historic landmark. We are not looking to change anything on the building, but don't want to limit our options by a historical landmark designation.

Best Regards,

Will Marek

Corporate Offices
The Alley
80250 Highway 111
Indio, CA 92201
(760) 347-7200 Fax (760) 345-1076

From: Craig Ewing <Craig.Ewing@palmsprings-ca.gov>
Date: Thu, 9 Aug 2012 11:44:23 -0700
To: <customerservice@thealley.info>
Subject: The Alley - Palm Springs

Hello,

The City of Palm Springs is looking to designate the property at 333-343 S. Palm Canyon Drive (J.W. Robinsons / The Alley) as a historic property. A hearing is set for September 11, 2012 and we would appreciate an acknowledgement from the property owners regarding their position on the proposed designation. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions at 760-323-8269.

**Craig A. Ewing, AICP
Director of Planning Services
City of Palm Springs
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262
760-323-8269**

When I am working on a problem I never think about beauty.
I only think about how to solve the problem.
But when I have finished, if the solution is not beautiful,
I know it is wrong.
- Buckminster Fuller (1895-1983)