



# CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING SERVICES

### MEMORANDUM

**Date:** February 9, 2016

**To:** The Historic Site Preservation Board

**From:** Ken Lyon, RA, Associate Planner *Ken Lyon*

**Subject:** HSPB #84 – J.W. Robinson's Department Store – "The 333 Building" Adaptive Reuse Resubmittal of Revised Landscape Scheme (Case 3.1903 MAA)

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At its meeting of October 12, 2015, the HSPB reviewed a certificate of approval for an adaptive reuse / renovation of the J.W. Robinson's Department Store. At that meeting the Board voted 6-0-1 (Dixon absent) to approve the certificate of approval for the proposed modifications to the building, but requested the applicant revise and resubmit the landscape. In continuing the matter, the board gave the applicant the following direction:

1. Consider an alternative to the dwarf olive hedge, citing pollen allergies.
2. Consider an alternative landscape plan that is more "period specific".
3. (From the staff recommendation): Substitute the proposed fencepost cactus along the Palm Canyon Drive frontage with a low-form shrub or ground cover that provides a pleasant lush "carpet" without obscuring the diamond patterned concrete block wall. (Examples such as creeping rosemary, creeping bougainvillea, natal plum, yellow lantana, or other low, spreading form of shrub.) Should fencepost cactus be desired, locate it along the south wall of the building. A low spreading variety of shrub along the south half of the western façade is also recommended.

The applicant has submitted a revised landscape plan, noting the following changes:

1. The dwarf Olive has been substituted with Little Leaf Cordia.
2. The fencepost cactus was reduced in quantity and changed from multi stem to single stem.
3. Golden Barrel cactus was added along the north and east side planters between the fencepost cactus.
4. Increased the number of Texas Ranger and incorporated it along the parking lot screen wall at the north.

The applicant has not indicated how the proposed revised plan is more "period specific" and has not proposed an alternative low, spreading groundcover plant for the fencepost cactus along the east façade. At this time, the board may:

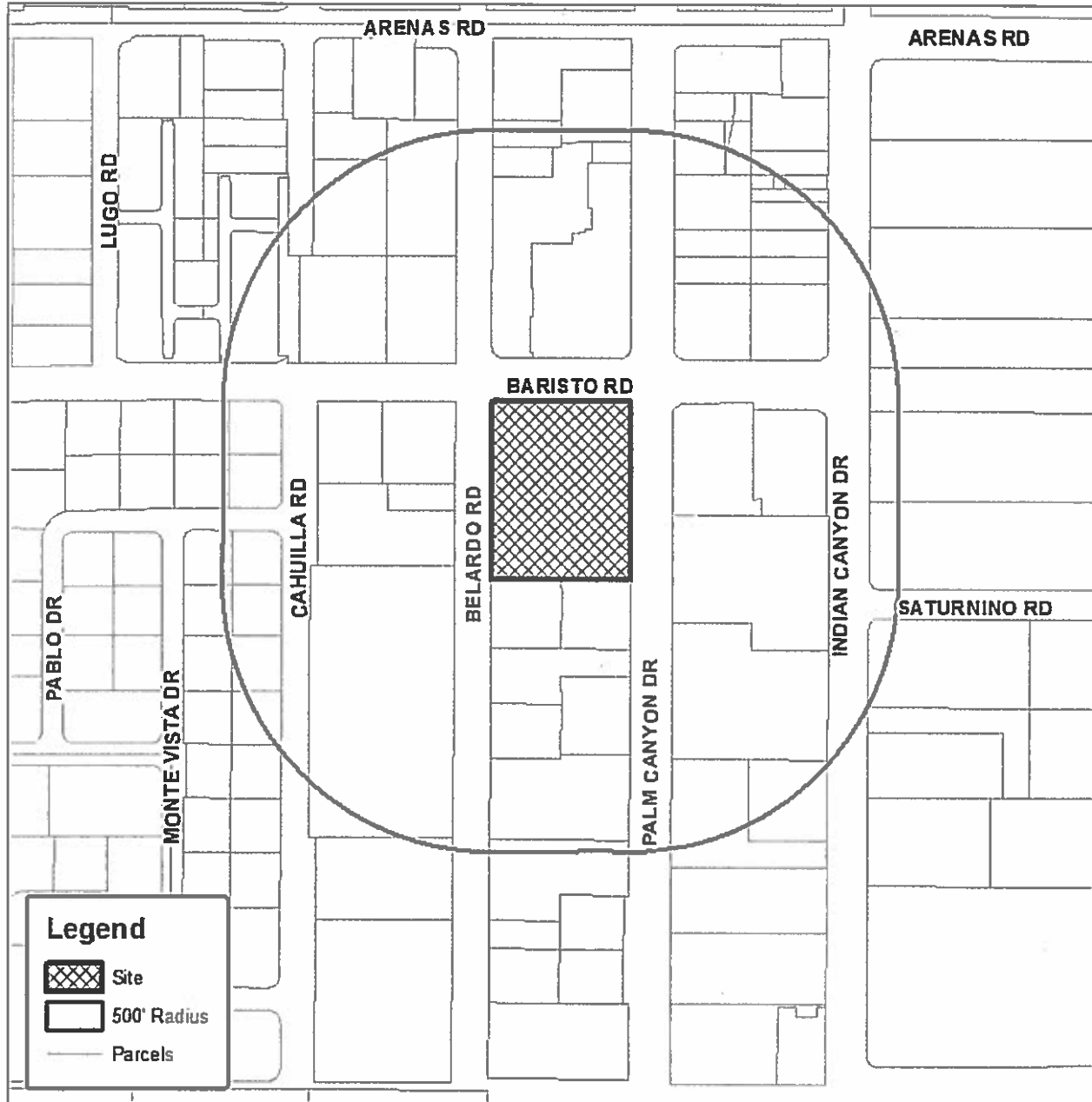
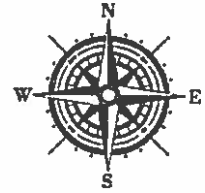
1. Grant a certificate of approval for the landscape plan as submitted.
2. Grant a certificate of approval for the landscape plan with direction to the applicant to revise the landscape design to reflect any further changes the Board believes are necessary.
3. Deny the proposed landscape plan and give the applicant further direction.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve the Certificate of Approval for the landscape as submitted with the condition that the fencepost cactus in the east planters be removed and a low spreading groundcover be used in their place.

Attachments: Vicinity Map  
HSPB staff report dated October 12, 2015 with minutes  
Revised application materials.



# Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS



# HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE: October 13, 2015

NEW BUSINESS

SUBJECT: A REQUEST BY HAL J. HALL, ON BEHALF OF MAREK, INC, OWNER, FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL TO ALTER THE EXTERIOR OF "THE J. W. ROBINSON'S DEPARTMENT STORE BUILDING," A CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE LOCATED AT 333 SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE, TO ALLOW SUBDIVISION OF THE BUILDING FOR ADAPTIVE REUSE FOR OCCUPANCY BY MULTIPLE TENANTS; ZONE CBD (3.1903 MAA / HSPB 84). (KL)

FROM: Department of Planning Services

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## SUMMARY

The J.W. Robinson's Department Store ("RDS") has been occupied for many years by "The Alley" a gift and home accessory store. The current building owner desires to subdivide the building to create leasable space for multiple tenants. To accomplish this, modification of entries and other exterior features are necessary. New, wider entry canopies are proposed with detailing to match the original building at the columns, folded fascia, and curtainwall. The project also proposes to restore most of the exterior to its original condition and color, to re-landscape the entire site, and to remove planter walls that currently obscure portions of the wide steps and "plinth" at the northeast building entry.

## RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the Certificate of Approval with the following conditions:

1. Substitute the proposed fencepost cactus along the Palm Canyon Drive frontage with a low-form shrub or ground cover that provides a pleasant lush "carpet" without obscuring the diamond patterned concrete block wall. (Examples such as creeping rosemary, creeping bougainvillea, natal plum, yellow lantana, or other low, spreading form of shrub.) Should fencepost cactus be desired, locate it along the south wall of the building. A low spreading variety of shrub along the south half of the western façade is also recommended.
2. A sign program shall be submitted conforming to the sign ordinance for separate approval by the HSPB and Planning Commission.

**PRIOR ACTIONS:**

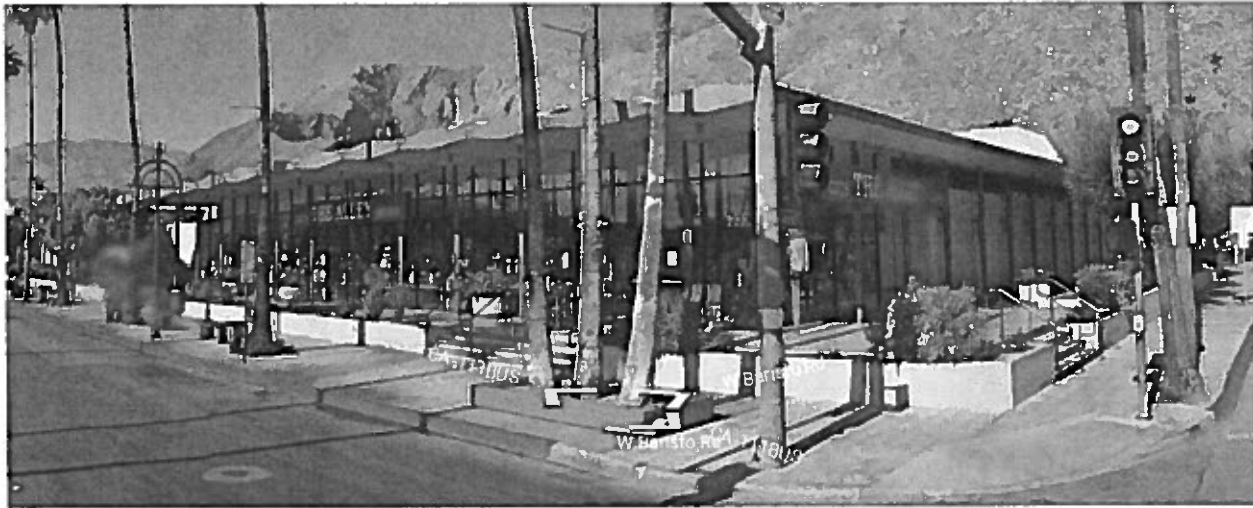
<i>Related Relevant City Actions by Planning, Fire, Building, etc...</i>	
1958	Date of construction.
1972	Department Store Addition
2013	City Council designated the J.W. Robinson Department Store a Class 1 historic site (HSPB 84, Council Resolution No. 23288).

**BACKGROUND:**

The 14,500 square foot J.W. Robinsons Department Store in Palm Springs was constructed in 1958 with a 13,400 square foot addition attached to the south of the building in 1972. The building was designed by the notable architectural firm of Charles Luchman Associates and William L. Pereira. It was recognized nationally as an architecturally significant commission in published articles in Architectural Forum magazine in 1958. It also received the First Honor Award in 1958 in the Journal of the American Institute of Architects (A.I.A.) and the Triennial Honor Award in 1960 by the Southern California Chapter of the A.I.A. It was designated a Class 1 historic site by the Palm Springs City Council on January 16, 2013.



AERIAL PHOTO OF EXISTING SITE



STREET VIEW AT THE CORNER OF PALM CANYON DRIVE AND BARISTO ROAD

In the 2012 Staff report regarding the proposed class 1 designation of the building, staff noted the following as the defining characteristics of the building that contribute to its historic significance:

- It is a pavilion-style building set up on a “plinth”. A wide expanse of gently sloped stairs along the north and east elevations connect the building on a pedestrian scale to the street.
- Expansive glass curtainwall “storefront” along the east and north elevations (and portions of the west) that functioned as a display window for the original department store.
- A central raised roof element with clerestory windows.
- Broad roof overhangs supported by 4-inch finned steel pipe columns.
- Cylindrical spun-aluminum exterior light fixtures.
- Gold-anodized aluminum fascia (currently painted).
- Concrete decorative tile fascia in a three-dimensional horizontal diamond pattern on three elevations.

#### ANALYSIS:

The current owner is proposing a major renovation and restoration of the building. The scope is as follows:

1. Restoration of the gold anodized aluminum fascia.
2. Restoration of the original color palette on the patterned concrete block walls.
3. Reconstruction of the expansive steps at the raised terrace at the corner of Palm Canyon Drive and Baristo Road.
4. New drought-tolerant landscaping.

5. Creation of four (4) entry points along the east and west elevations and subdivision of the interior into four (4) separate tenant spaces.

The proposed project preserves the pavilion style form of the building. It restores the wide expanse of gently sloped stairs that previously had been obscured by recently installed planters. The expansive glass curtainwall is retained and restored and where new doors are proposed they are done to match the color, material and dimensional profile of the existing glass curtainwall. The clerestory windows at the center of the building will remain (the interior volume created by this roof "pop up" will be subdivided, however the appearance of the clerestory on the exterior and its ability to convey natural daylight into the center of each tenant space will be retained). The broad overhangs and uniquely finned steel pipe columns are all retained and finishes restored to their original color. The area where the wide roof overhang is proposed to be expanded at the doorways, is proposed to match in material, finish, scale, and proportion the original roof overhang. The spun aluminum exterior light fixture will be retained and relamped. The gold anodized aluminum fascia will be stripped of paint and restored in its original color as will the decorative concrete diamond-pattern block wall with gold accents.

The creation of the four exterior sets of entries will require altering the existing east and west facades. Currently the east façade features a long glass and anodized aluminum curtain wall that wraps the northeast corner of the building. This curtainwall will be restored and adapted to allow a second set of entry doors to be installed facing Palm Canyon Drive. The new mullion and storefront components are proposed to replicate the profiles and style of the existing storefront. Further south along the Palm Canyon Drive frontage, an existing single set of storefront doors and sidelights is proposed to be widened to again create two more separate entrances. The building has a unique "folded" fascia and roof that extends outward a considerable distance from the face of the building at the existing entries to create shelter. These folded-fascia entry features are proposed to be expanded side-to-side to cover the widened entry areas so they reflect the same general configuration as originally conceived. The slender "finned" steel tube columns will be replicated and new ones added to provide support to the widened roof areas.

The Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Structures typically suggests that proposed alterations to a historic structure should not attempt to imitate the elements and detailing of a historic structure, however in this case, a compelling argument can be made that integrating the widened roof canopies by continuing the existing "folded" fascia and casting new thin, steel ribbed tube columns as well as the continuation of the original color palette will better integrate the proposed modifications than if these new elements were designed to be "different". The original building and the 1972 addition appear nearly seamless and it is appropriate that the current modifications be done in a way that they appear "seamless" also.

Along the west façade, a similar modification is proposed. Currently on the parking lot side, there are two segments of storefront glass and doors. These both are proposed to

be widened and the roof canopies extended as described above to continue the same architectural treatment over the widened entry ways.

To enable the widening of the glazed storefront entry areas, portions of the existing decorative concrete block wall will need to be removed. The clerestory windows over the top of these decorative concrete block walls will remain and be restored.

*Evaluation of the proposed project:*

There are no specific findings required to grant a Certificate of Approval, however, according to Section 8.05.190 of the Municipal Code, the HSPB shall consider the following in reviewing and acting upon a certificate of approval application:

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

The historic value and significance of the RDS Building is well documented in the historic resources survey submitted by the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation. The alteration and restoration of the exterior is proposed in a manner that is both respectful of and sensitive to the architectural significance and detailing of the structure. The building's defining characteristics will be retained and restored.

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

The modifications are proposed using materials, forms, and colors that are consistent with the original details and articulation of the RDS building, including restoration of the gold anodized aluminum fascia, replication of the finned, tapered round steel pipe columns, reconstruction of the broad stairs on the Palm Canyon Drive side, and restoration of the storefront.

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

The proposed alteration is compatible in color, material, scale, proportion, and overall aesthetic of the original historic Robinsons building. It allows the current "single tenant" department store building to be adapted to the changing contemporary commercial trends in the retail environment which there are fewer large retail tenants and more smaller "specialty" retailers wishing to occupy prime locations in the City's Central Business District. New landscape is proposed for the entire site. Along the Palm Canyon frontage, tall fencepost cacti are proposed in front of the decorative concrete block walls. Staff believes these tall cactus will ultimately obscure the richness of the concrete block wall, and suggests a lower type of plant, such as creeping rosemary, creeping bougainvillea, natal plum, lanatana, or other type of plant with a "low,

spreading" habit, would be more appropriate in that area. The taller form of the fence post cactus may be more appropriate along the south façade of the building.

4. *Archaeological or ecological significance of the area.*

There is no known archeological or ecological significance at this site.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The proposed alteration and reconfiguration of the Robinson's Department Store Building is deemed a Project under the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Pursuant to Section 15064.5 "*Determining the Significance of Impacts on Historical and Unique Archeological Resources*", Robinsons' is a "historic resource" under CEQA because it is listed in the local register of historic resources (Class 1, HSPB #84).

According to CEQA, a project with an effect that may cause a "*substantial adverse change*" in the significance of a historical resource is a project that may have a "*significant effect*" on that resource. "Substantial adverse change" includes alteration of *the immediate surroundings* of the historic resource such that the significance of the resource would be *materially impaired*.

The proposed project affects the historic resource by enlarging storefront areas, introducing additional doors, subdividing the interior into multiple tenant spaces, replacing aging and poorly maintained landscaping, removal of previously added planters to restore the original wide expanse of steps at the northeast corner of the building, replicating the custom finned steel tube columns and "folded" fascia, restoring the anodized aluminum at the existing folded fascia and restoring the original polychromatic paint scheme on the existing decorative concrete block walls.

CEQA allows for a Class 31 Categorical Exemption (*Historical Resource Restoration / Rehabilitation*) for projects involving maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (1995), Weeks and Grimmer.

The project will not impact the site to the level of "a substantial adverse change" nor will it "materially impair" the significant defining historic characteristics of the building. Therefore, pursuant to Section 15331 (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation) of CEQA, a Class 31 Categorical Exemption is proposed for the project.

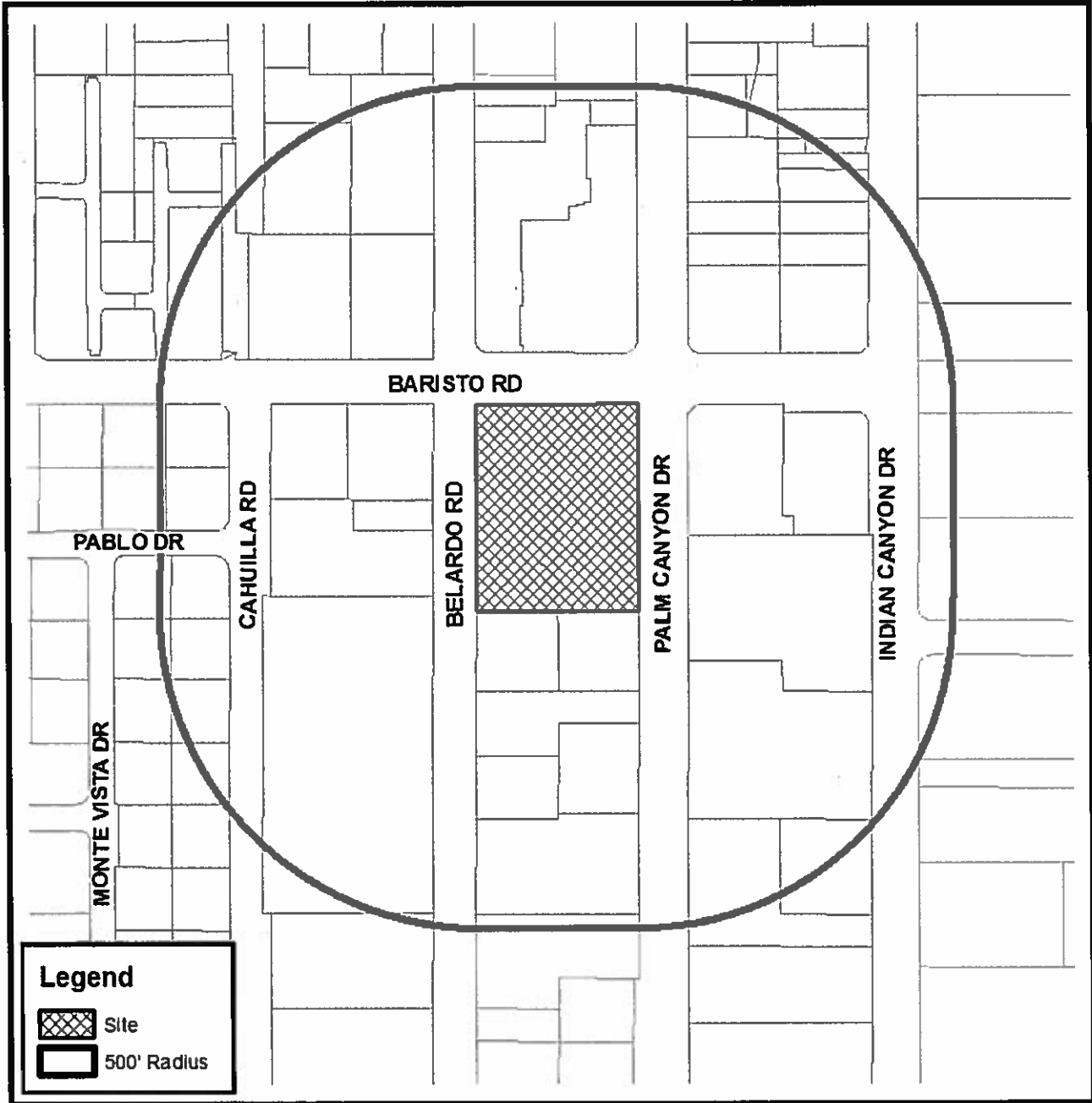
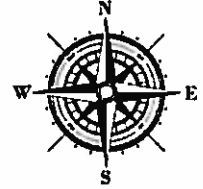
## CONCLUSION:

The proposed project sensitively alters this Class 1 historic site and restores many aspects of the original building's color palette and material details. The project



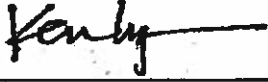


# Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

represents a carefully detailed adaptive reuse that will allow this historic building to continue to meet the contemporary retail needs of the community. Staff believes the proposed renovations meet the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior Standards and is consistent with the factors in the City's Municipal Code Section 8.05.190 for granting a certificate of approval by the HSPB.



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Ken Lyon, RA  
Associate Planner

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Flinn Fagg, AICP  
Director of Planning Services

**Attachments:**

1. Vicinity Map
2. Proposed plans, site, elevations, photos.
3. Copy of City Council resolution designating the J. W. Robinsons Department Store Building a Class 1 historic site.
4. Public Comment Letter

~~John Lacasio (HRG) summarized the post-World War II findings and the relevance of the 1990's revitalization of Palm Springs and the increasing awareness of the collection of historic resources from the mid-century period (roughly 1945 – 1969).~~

The draft reports were distributed to HSPB members at the end of the meeting with the request to provide comments to staff prior to the November HSPB meeting.

**4. UNFINISHED BUSINESS (none).**

**5. NEW BUSINESS:**

**5.A. CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL REQUEST BY HAL J. HALL ON BEHALF OF MAREK, INC. OWNER, FOR ALTERATIONS & RESTORATION OF "THE J.W. ROBINSON'S DEPARTMENT STORE"; A CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE LOCATED AT 333 SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE (ZONE CBD, HSPB #84, CASE 3.1903 MAA).**

Staff member Lyon summarized the staff report.

James Cioffi, architect representing the applicant summarized the project. He noted the original building had been designed on a 9 foot structural grid and all exterior elements and components were designed within that grid.

Member Hays stated the proposal exemplifies the viability of adaptive reuse of historic structures. He asked if the aluminum can lights would be restored (yes, Mr. Cioffi noted there may be new architectural lighting proposed also). Hays asked about subdivision of the clerestory space (yes it will be subdivided). He recommended the signage when submitted be reflective of the original signage and architectural style of the building.

Member Burkett asked if the lobby will be retained (no, the space will be subdivided into 4 retail spaces).

Member Ploss stated this was a good example the City could highlight to encourage adaptive reuse of historic sites. She asked if the previously installed ADA ramp could be eliminated [no, but Mr. Cioffi referenced Chapter 8 of the California Building Code (CBC) seeking relief for work on historic structures.] She encouraged the applicant to maximize off-street parking and suggested an alternative to the olive plants citing pollen and allergies.

Member Williamson supports the proposal except the landscape.

Chair Johns asked about more lighting on the Palm Canyon façade in areas that are currently rather dark. He spoke favorably about the proposal.

Member La Voie stated his support for the project and that he felt it was a thoughtful and sensitive solution. He recommended re-evaluation of the landscape suggesting it be of a design that is more "period specific".

M/S/C (La Voie/Ploss, 6-0-1 Dixon absent) to approve the project with the exception of the landscape which was requested to be re-evaluated and resubmitted to the Board for approval.

~~5.B. AN APPLICATION BY ACBCI TRIBAL ALLOTTEE OWNERS OF ALLOTMENT PARCELS #5A AND 35A, TO DEMOLISH A CLASS 3 HISTORIC SITE LOCATED AT 436 THROUGH 490 SOUTH INDIAN CANYON DRIVE (ZONE LSC; SECTION 14 SPECIFIC PLAN; CASE 3.1009 MAA).~~

Staff member Lyon summarized the staff report noting two buildings on the site, one a multi-tenant commercial building (referred to as the "440 Building") and a former automobile service station (referred to as the "490 Building").

Moriano Patencio spoke on behalf of the twenty or so property owners and summarized the background and characteristics of the buildings proposed for demolition. He noted that the 440 Building was comprised of several buildings built over time behind a façade designed by Donald Wexler. He summarized the history of zoning regulations on tribally-owned land and old 25-year limitations in land leases for tribal-allottee-owned parcels that had the effect of diminishing development opportunities.

Chair Johns asked Mr. Patencio if the owners had any plans for the property. (Mr. Patencio noted the owners are not developers but that developers had approached them with proposals for various residential development concepts for the parcel, which the owners rejected in favor of commercial or mixed use options. There are no development plans for the site at this time.)

Member Burkett asked Mr. Patencio if the owners had considered talking to developers on possible salvage of the façade to integrate it with future development on the site. (Mr. Patencio noted that no private developers had come forward with offers to salvage the façade).

Member Hays opined that tearing down the building with no approved redevelopment was akin to "trading a treasure for a dirt lot". He noted the collection of buildings behind the Wexler façade were of questionable historic merit. He noted saving the Wexler façade would add value to a potential future re-development and generate a greater return on the investment. He noted the Board is interested in trying to find a way to save the façade referring to it as "a gem".

Mr. Patencio stated it was "very sad" that no one has come forward to the owners with a plan to save or preserve the façade.

Member Williamson asked for clarification about the authority of the ACBCI Tribal Council to override actions of the City Council.



LEUCOPHYLLUM L. 'LYNN LEGACY'



CORDIA PARVIFOLIA

**PLANTING PLAN**

PLANTING PLAN	PLANTING SIZE	SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME
1 TREES	36"-48"	CERCIDIUM H.	DESERT MUSEUM
PALMS	MULTI TR.	DESERT MUSEUM	PALO VERDE
ACCENTS	14	WASHINGTONIA ROBERTA	MEXICAN FAN PALM
	37	9' - 10' 1/2" H. MIX	ECHINOCACTUS GRUSSONI
	22	12" H. YUCCA ROSTRATA	BARREL CACTUS
	137	2'-4" H. VARIETIES	STENOCAERUS MARGINATUS
			BARNEYS YUCCA
			MEXICAN FENCE POST
SHRUBS			COMMON NAME
	68	5' GAL	LEWIS LEGACY
			LEWIS LEGACY
			CORDIA PARVIFOLIA
			LITTLE LEAF CORDIA
			CORDIA PARVIFOLIA
			27 DEPTH 3/8" PALM SPRINGS GOLD MOUNTAIN PLANTERS
			BY SOUTHWEST BOULDERS AND STONE
			7" DIA. APACHE SUNSET BOULDERS
			BY SOUTHWEST BOULDERS AND STONE

**PLANTING NOTES**

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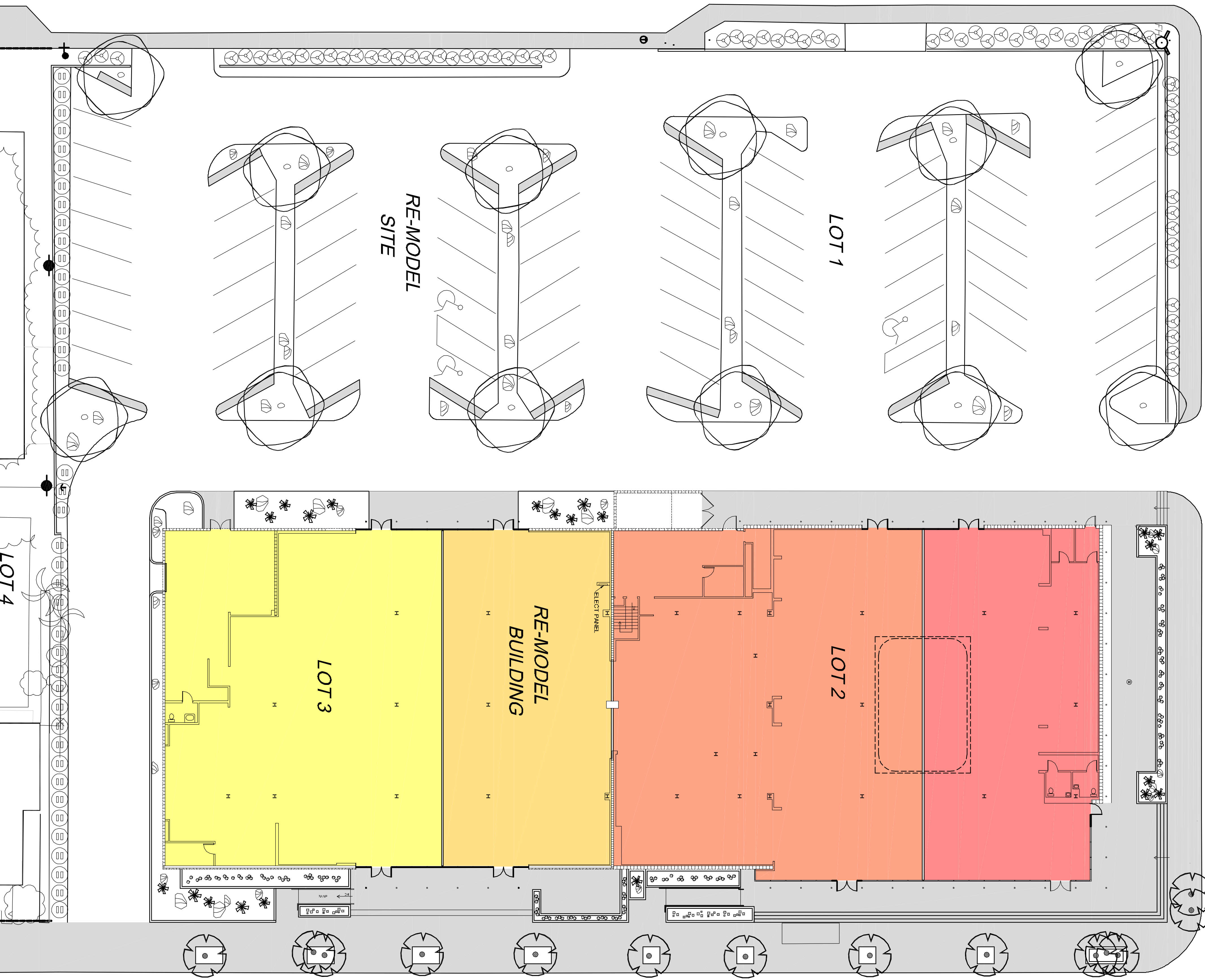


ECHINOCACTUS GRUSSONI

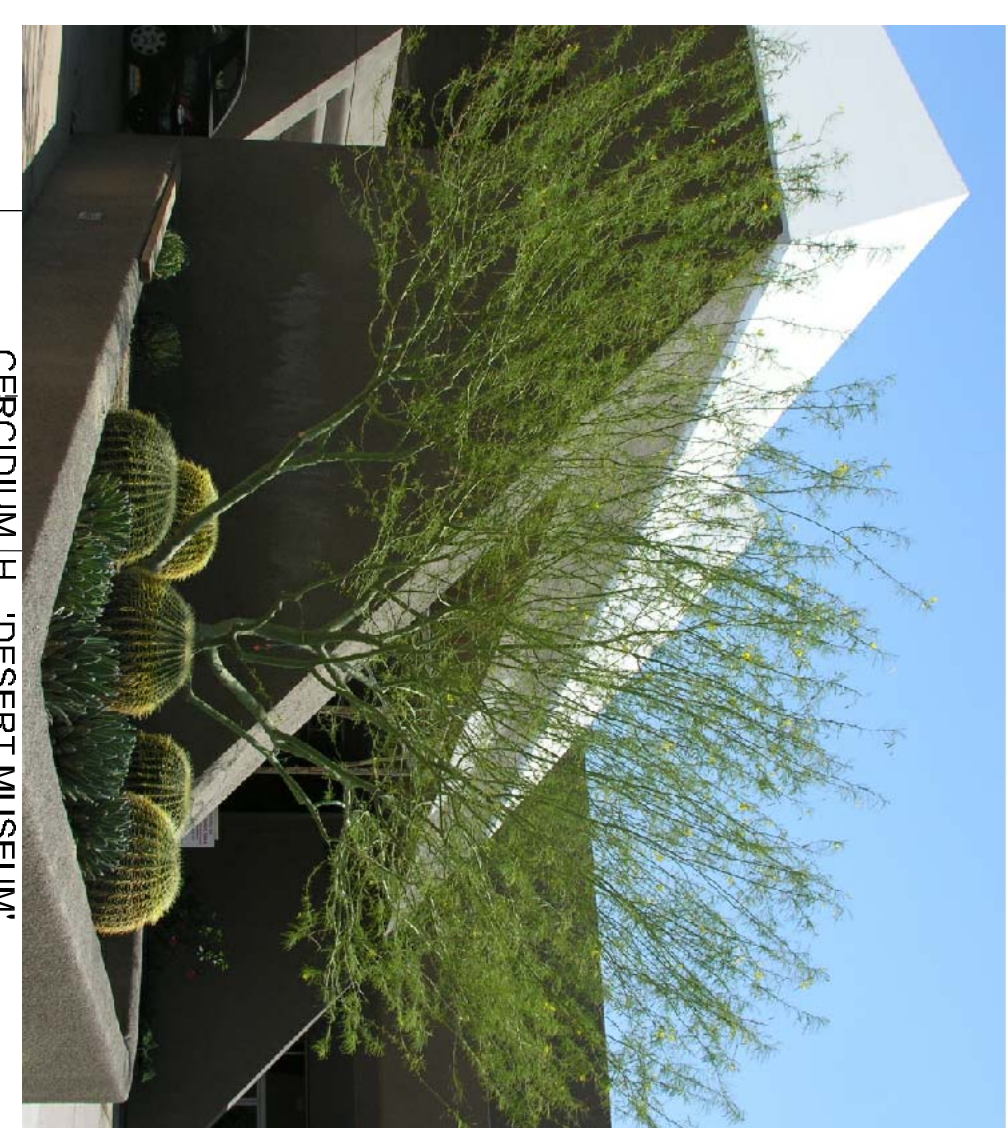


APACHE SUNSET BY SOUTHWEST BOULDERS AND STONE

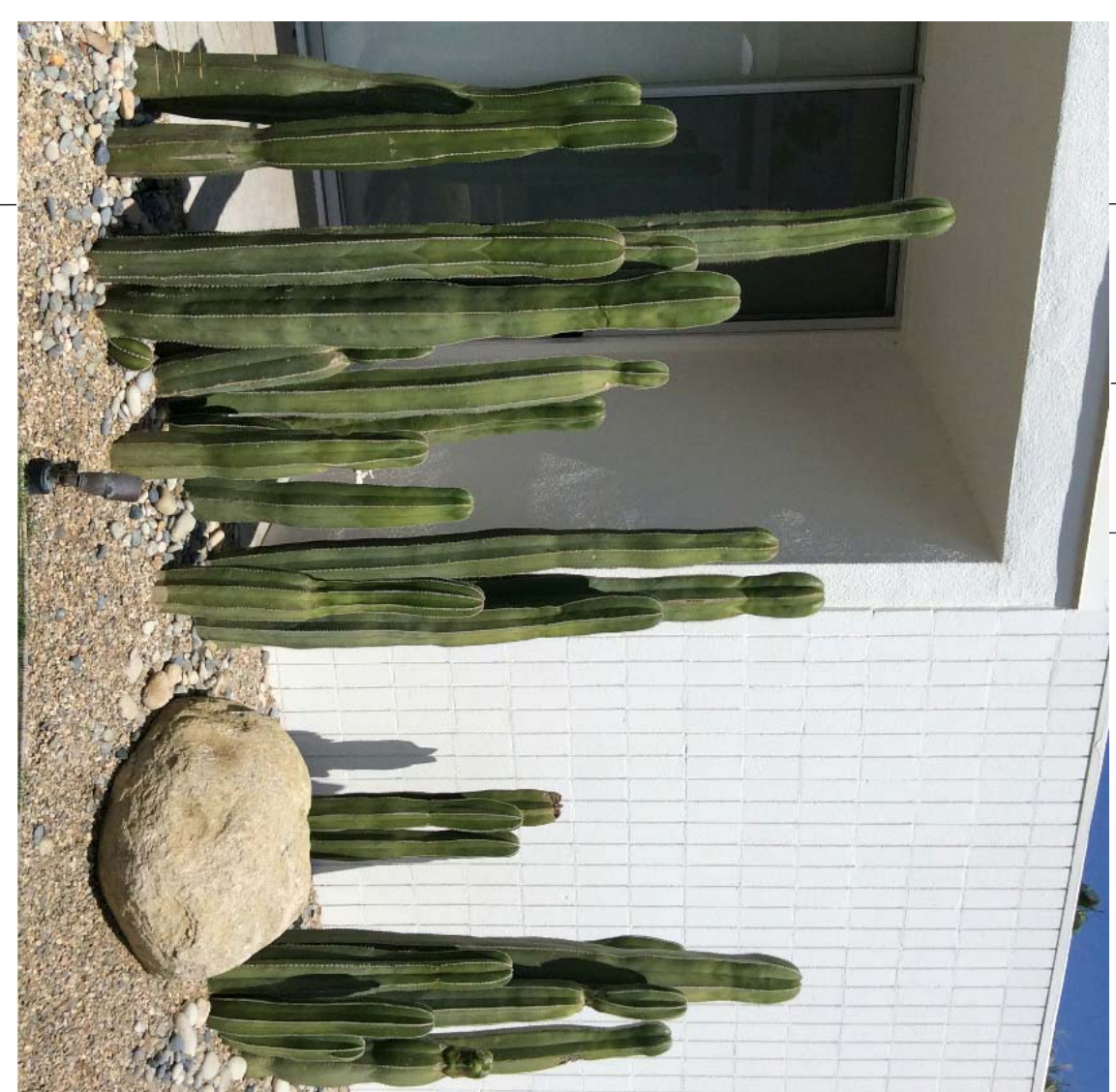
BELARDO ROAD



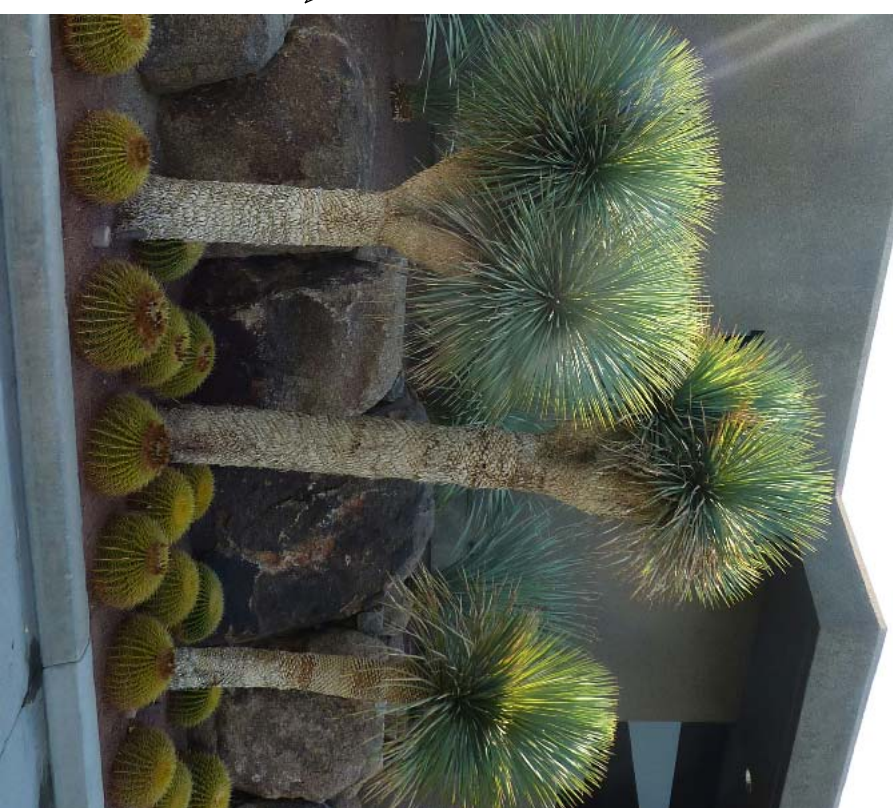
SOUTH PALM CANYON DRIVE



CERCIDIUM H. 'DESERT MUSEUM'



STENOCAERUS MARGINATUS

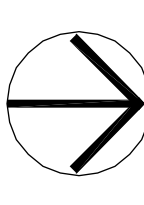
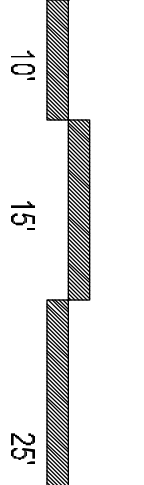


YUCCA ROSTRATA

**LANDSCAPE PLAN**

SCALE: 1/16"=1'-0"

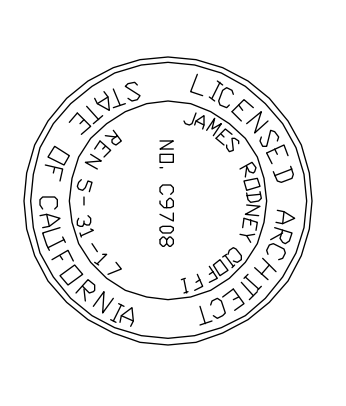
TOTAL: 28,230 SQ. FT. (EXISTING)



**J.W. ROBINSON  
DEPARTMENT STORE  
BUILDING**  
333 - 343 S. PALM CANYON DRIVE  
PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

**InsideOutside**  
insideoutsideinc.com  
william@insideoutsideinc.com T: 760.413.6989

**Cioffi**  
ARCHITECT



Δ	REVISION
12-18-15	

SCALE: 1/16" = 1'-0"  
PROJECT NO. 1512  
FILE: 1512-SITE  
SHEET  
**L-1.0**

JAMES CIOFFI ARCHITECT  
2710 E. THUNDER CANYON BLVD. #111  
PALM SPRINGS, CA 92262  
TEL: 760.413.6989  
WWW.CIOFFIARCHITECT.COM

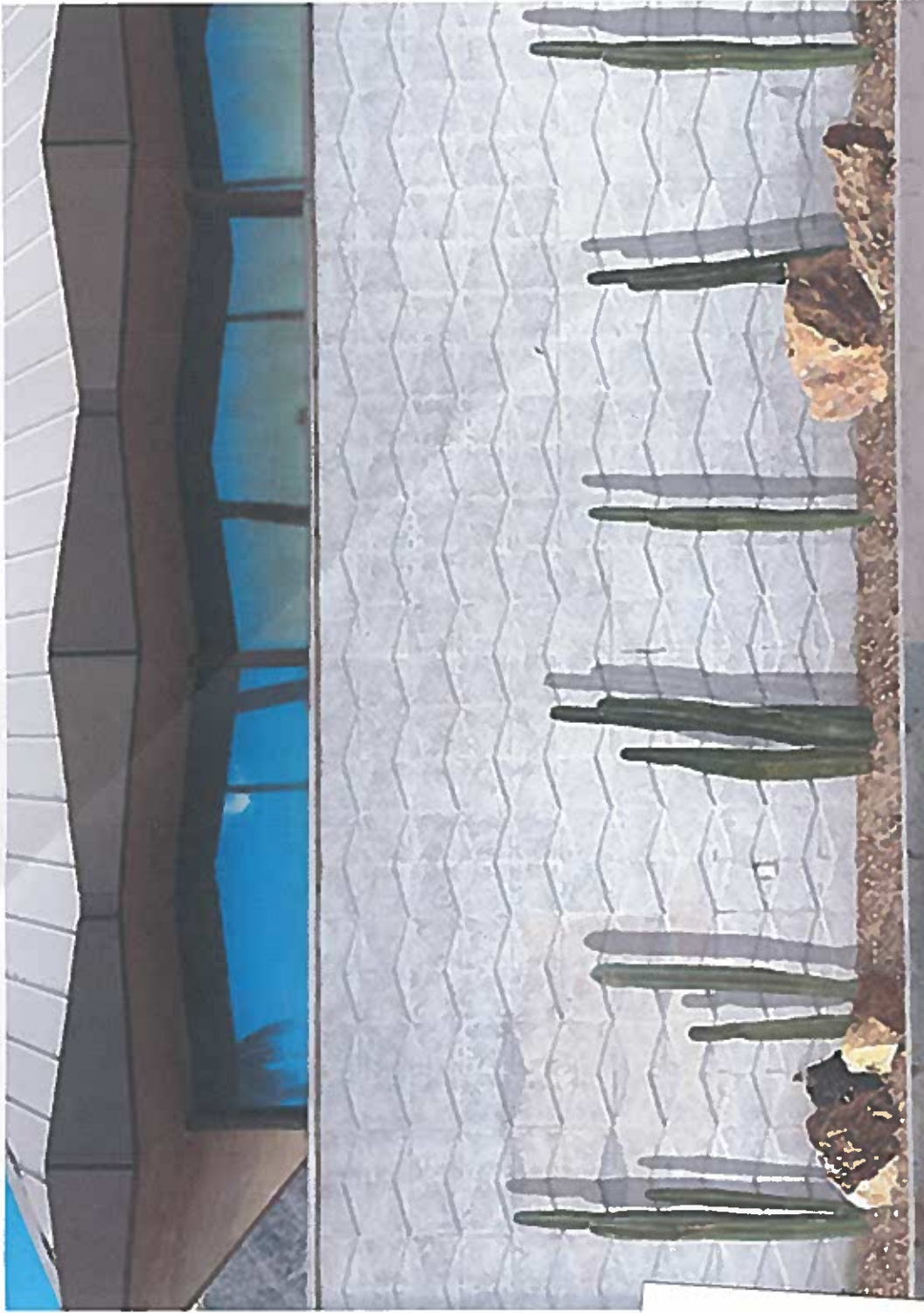
DESERT MODERN  
LANDSCAPE DESIGN



GARY FRIEDLE  
PROPRIETOR



917.886.3454  
gary@themonkeytreehotel.com



STENOCCEREUS MARGINATUS RESEMBLE THE EXISTING CUSTOM COLUMNS  
SURROUNDING THE BUILDING AND CONVEYS VERTICALITY TO AREAS  
WHERE COLUMNS ARE NOT LOCATED.

**RECEIVED**

JAN 19 2016

PLANNING SERVICES  
DEPARTMENT

**LANDSCAPE INSPIRATION**

H5f6 84/

3.1903



EXISTING IMAGE OF NORTH EAST CORNER



PROPOSED RENOVATION OF NORTH EAST CORNER



EXISTING IMAGE OF NORTH WEST AND SOUTH CORNER



PROPOSED RENOVATION OF NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST CORNER



EXISTING IMAGE OF SOUTH EAST CORNER



PROPOSED RENOVATION OF SOUTH EAST CORNER



Δ	REVISION