



## CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: October 5, 2016

PUBLIC HEARING

SUBJECT: AN APPLICATION BY THE PALM SPRINGS PRESERVATION FOUNDATION (PSPF) ON BEHALF OF THE DESERT STAR HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, (OWNERS), FOR CLASS 1 HISTORIC DESIGNATION OF 1611 SOUTH CALLE PALO FIERRO, "THE DESERT STAR APARTMENTS," ZONE R-2 (HSPB 102) (MASTER APN 508-353-002) (KL).

FROM: David H. Ready, City Manager

BY: Department of Planning Services

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### SUMMARY

The Desert Star Apartments ("DSA") were designed in 1956 by architectural designer Howard Lapham (1914 – 2008) in what has become known as the "Desert Modern" style of architecture. The DSA meets the definition of a historic site as outlined in this staff report.

If designated as a Class 1 site, the property would be subject to the regulations of Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05 ("Historic Preservation"). Present and subsequent owners will be required to maintain the site consistent with that ordinance.

In addition, the property would be eligible for the application of a Mills Act Historic Property Maintenance Agreement ("a Mill's Act Contract"); a State-initiated financial incentive program for owners of recognized historically significant sites.

### RECOMMENDATION:

1. Open the public hearing and receive public testimony.
2. Close the public hearing and adopt Resolution #\_\_\_, "A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, DESIGNATING THE PARCEL AT 1611 SOUTH CALLE PALO FIERRO "THE DESERT STAR APARTMENTS" AS CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE #HSPB - 102, SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS."

ITEM NO. 2A

**BACKGROUND AND SETTING:**

The Desert Star Apartments are comprised of a single building located on a single 14,400 square foot lot in the Tahquitz River Estates Neighborhood Organization. It is located on the south side of Palm Springs, just north of East Palm Canyon Drive and east of South Palm Canyon Drive.

The site is in a fully developed part of the City and is surrounded by numerous other small hotels, apartments and single family residences.

<i>Related Relevant City Actions by HSPB, Planning, Fire, Building, etc...</i>	
March 28th & 30th, 2016	Site inspection by members of the HSPB and City Staff.
September 13, 2016	HSPB voted to recommend Class 1 designation by the City Council.



AERIAL VIEW OF A PORTION OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD IN WHICH THE DESERT STAR APARTMENTS ARE LOCATED

As noted in the report, the DSA was initially developed by a group of three co-owners (Lyons, Michaelides, & Yordon). Soon after its completion it was sold to Anthony & Louise Sennes who appear to have been the first operators of the apartments. Around 1977 the property was subdivided into seven legal “parcels” as fractional ownership (condominiums).



Desert Star individual unit locations. Unit #7 is the original owner's unit and maid's quarters (now combined).  
(Google Maps)

## ANALYSIS

Historic Preservation activities in Palm Springs are regulated under Municipal Code Section 8.05 (“*Historic Preservation*”). The purpose of the Historic Preservation Ordinance is:

*“... for the purpose of preserving areas and specific buildings of the city which reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, political, architectural and archaeological history. This chapter is intended to stabilize and improve buildings, structures or areas which are considered to be of historical, architectural, archaeological or ecological value, to foster civic beauty, to strengthen the local economy and to promote the use of specific buildings for the education and welfare of the citizens.”*

### Designation of Historic Sites

Only the City Council is authorized to designate historic sites. When the Historic Site Preservation Board determines that Class 1 historic designation of a certain site or district would further the purpose of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Board may initiate studies, surveys and investigations it deems necessary to adequately gather information in consideration of such a recommendation to the City Council.

### Definition of an Historic Site

Section 8.05.020 of the Municipal Code provides the definition of a historic site; the nomination report provides an evaluation of the subject property in accordance with this definition. The following summarizes staff’s analysis of the subject site against the definition of a historic site.

(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*

The historic resources report asserts the DSA is associated with “*patterns of events or historic trends*” and describes the City’s rise in prominence in architectural excellence in midcentury modern architecture and the growth of small hotel construction in the post-World War II period as “*patterns of events or historic trends*”. The City’s definition under Criterion 1 does not include “*patterns of events*” nor “*historic trends*”. These qualities are more appropriately evaluated under Criterion 3 and staff analysis is provided under that heading below; (sites that reflect or exemplify a particular period in national, state, or local history). Staff is not aware of any specific events of historic significance associated with the subject project.

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

The report notes that Howard Lapham might be considered a person of local significance, however it deemed Lapham’s significance “*too tenuous*”. Beginning on page 9 of the report, considerable mention is given to Lapham, including an impressive list of commissions throughout the Coachella Valley that the report notes “*were recognized at both a local and national level*”. Furthermore, Lapham’s roughly thirty years of architectural design contributions to the local built environment from the time of his arrival in 1954 until his retirement in the 1980’s appears significant. Staff believes based on the information provided in the report, that Lapham made a meaningful and noteworthy contribution to the collection of midcentury modern buildings that bring international recognition to Palm Springs and thus could be identified as a person who has made a meaningful contribution to the local community.

- 3. That reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history; or*

The report states the Desert Star Apartments reflect the post-war period in Palm Springs during which a prolific number of buildings accommodating all types of uses were designed and built in the midcentury modern style. It was also a period during which Palm Springs grew at a very rapid pace, with dozens of small hotels and “*vacation apartments*” such as the Desert Star built in response to the increasing popularity of Palm Springs as a preferred vacation

destination. The “apartment hotel” building typology – in which short term accommodations included full kitchens and separate bedrooms - appealed to tourists able to spend several months to an entire season in Palm Springs and who wanted more amenities than a simple hotel room could offer. In light of the above, the Desert Star Apartments reflects the post-war period in Palm Springs.

*4. That embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction;*

The report asserts that the DSA embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. From the photos of the site that accompany the report, it appears that the Desert Star was built using the “post and beam” method of construction and inexpensive, mass-produced materials. The roof projections (eaves) in the courtyard reveal exposed heavy wood beams roughly 4” x 10” in dimension with 2” x 6” tongue and groove boards spanning roughly six feet on center laid on top of the beams. The exterior walls are clad in stucco with steel sash casement windows, accent panels of “T-111” plywood and perforated “Masonite” (“pegboard”) accent panels. The use of these inexpensive, mass-produced materials such as plywood and Masonite panels was also characteristic of the post-war period of construction in Palm Springs.

Post & Beam construction was very common in the post-war era in Palm Springs; most likely because it was fast to erect, relatively inexpensive to build using standard-cut dimensional lumber, did not require highly skilled labor, and allowed significant flexibility to the designer in the placement and size of windows and doors.

Many architects and designers working in the Modern architectural style in the design of dwellings, offices, schools and other modestly-scaled building types used wood post and beam construction in their designs, not only in light of the characteristics noted above, but also because it allowed the building’s structural system to be exposed and visually expressed both on the inside and the outside of the buildings - a common stylistic marker of the Modern period in architecture.

In consideration of the above, the Desert Star Apartments embody the construction characteristics and techniques commonly used during the post-World War II period.

*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;*

As noted on page 10 of the report, Architectural designer Howard Lapham had a rather prolific career designing a variety of building types from high-end residential projects for wealthy clients to small scale commercial and office buildings. Stylistically, Lapham’s designs reflect the general tenets of the Modern Movement in architecture. In particular, the use of extensive eaves to provide shade, large areas of glass to provide visual and physical connectivity between interior and exterior spaces, the “U” shaped configuration of units around the pool and courtyard that promoted casual social interaction among the guests while also creating privacy

from the street, all reflect Lapham’s sensitivity to the climate and his responsiveness to his client’s desire for casual and convenient “indoor-outdoor” living.

Furthermore, as noted in the report, the visual interaction between the simple flat roof and sloped roof planes of the complex create a dynamic sense of interplay between geometric elements, surfaces and planes. This simple relationship between the roof surfaces gives the complex visual interest.

While Lapham’s designs demonstrate a competent or proficient understanding of space, proportion, movement, scale, composition, and function, his work does not rise to the level reflecting “*individual genius that influenced his age*”, nor does it possess “*high artistic value*”. The Desert Star Apartments are an attractive, pleasant, well-designed compound that reflects the basic design tenets of the Modern Movement.

- 6. *That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;*

The subject property does not meet this criterion.

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

The subject property does not meet this criterion.

### DEFINING HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS

The physical character-defining historic features of this site include the following:

1. The slumpstone planters and exterior walls.
2. The pegboard wall-mounted light fixtures in the courtyard.
3. The large expanses of windows facing the courtyard including the clerestory windows, steel sash casement windows and fixed sash picture windows.
4. The intersecting horizontal roof planes at Unit 7 (owners' unit) that intersects the vertical glass wall plane.
5. The open courtyard and pool with direct access into each unit.
6. The Masonite pegboard transom panels above the doors.
7. The wide cantilevered eaves on the facades facing the courtyard.
8. The raked stucco accent panels.
9. The thin, round steel pipe columns and connecting roof element at the courtyard entryway.
10. The T-111 plywood accent panels at the front (east) façade.
11. The clerestory windows at the front (east) façade.
12. The slumpstone front (east) privacy wall.
13. The slight cant (or angle) of the fascias.

The non-contributing features include the following:

1. The frosted glass privacy panel at the east side façade.
2. The pair of frosted glass front security doors.
3. The security doors at the back side patios.
4. The frosted glass window & security door assembly at the owner's unit.
5. Miscellaneous surface-mounted electrical conduit and boxes.
6. The sliding glass door at the west elevation of the owner's unit.
7. The replacement window assemblies where original operable window units were removed. (from the historic photos, these were originally vertical stacked awning windows: six awning window units stacked vertically on the east façade and four awning window units stacked vertically on the courtyard side of the owner's unit (unit 7).
8. The landscape material. (plants, shrubs, etc.)
9. The pendant light fixtures at the front entry gate and courtyard.
10. The sliding glass doors facing the rear patios (images of the architectural drawings of the complex show small, steel-sash casement windows and solid wood doors).
11. The metal roof fascia.
12. Slumpstone firepit in courtyard.

### REQUIRED FINDINGS

In considering a recommendation for Class 1 historic designation, pursuant to PSMC Section 8.05.160, the City Council must make findings that the purposes of the Historic Preservation chapter are furthered by designation of such property as a historic site or district. The purpose of the Historic Preservation chapter of the Municipal Code is outlined in PSMC 8.05.010:

*This chapter is adopted pursuant to the authority of (California) Government Code Section 37361 for the purpose of preserving areas and specific buildings of the city which reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, political, architectural and archaeological history. This chapter is intended to stabilize and improve buildings, structures or areas which are considered to be of historical, architectural, archaeological or ecological value, to foster civic beauty, to strengthen the local economy and to promote the use of specific buildings for the education and welfare of the citizens.*

Class 1 designation of the Desert Star Apartments would further the purpose of the historic preservation ordinance because the site reflects elements of the City's architectural, social, and cultural history as follows:

- Criterion 2 *It is associated with lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history. (Howard Lapham)*
- Criterion 3: *It reflects or exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. (The post World War II period reflecting the rapid growth of tourist accommodations in Palm Springs).*
- Criterion 4: *It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. (Post & beam construction with wide eaves for shade and large picture and clerestory windows facing the courtyard).*

Based on these findings, the Desert Star Apartments could qualify for Class 1 designation pursuant to the criteria listed in PSMC Chapter 8.05.


Historic Site or District? Although the Desert Star is a multi-family residential complex, the City has evaluated it as a historic “site” rather than a historic “district”. Generally, the designation of “district” applies when there are multiple properties, multiple parcels, and/or multiple buildings. In this case, the Desert Star is comprised of one contiguous building on a single site; thus it has been evaluated as a possible historic “site”, rather than a historic “district”.

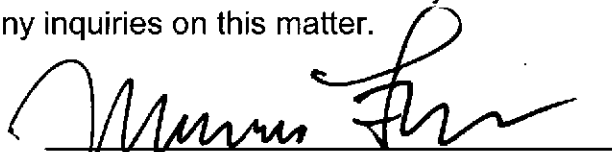
### ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

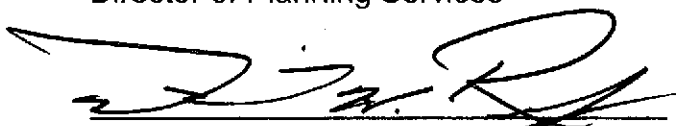
The proposed historic site designation is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical changes to the environment, directly or indirectly.

### NOTIFICATION

Pursuant to section 8.05.140 of the Municipal Code of Palm Springs, All property owners within five hundred (500) feet of the subject property have been notified and notice was made in a newspaper of general circulation. The agenda for today’s meeting was also made available to recognized neighborhood organizations within a half-mile radius of the subject site. As of the writing of this report, staff has not received any inquiries on this matter.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Flinn Fagg, AICP  
Director of Planning Services

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Marcus L. Fuller, MPA, PE, PLS  
Assistant City Manager/City Engineer

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
David H. Ready, Esq., Ph.D.  
City Manager

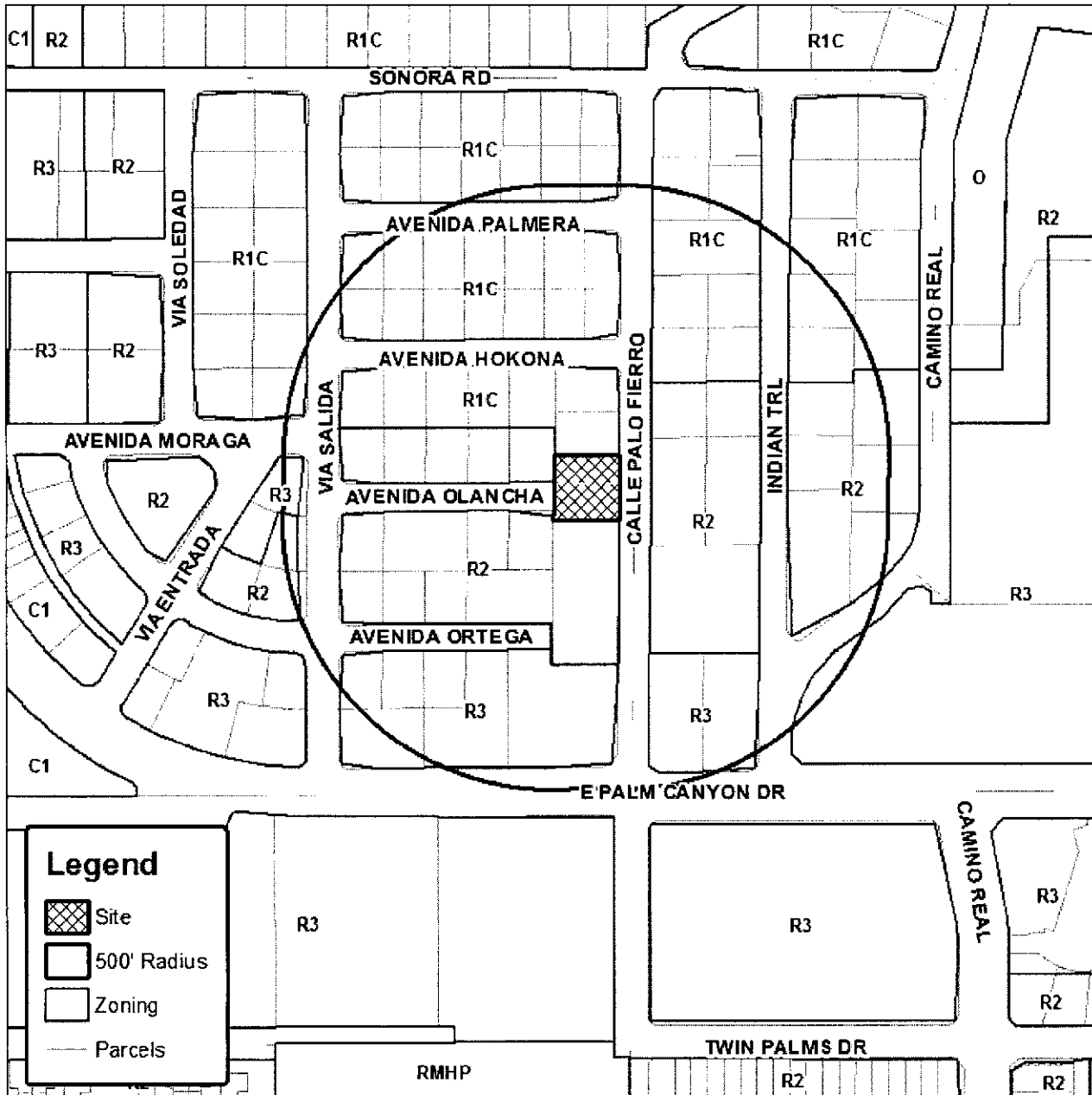
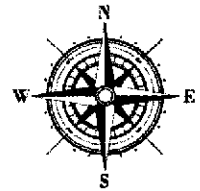
### Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Draft Resolution
3. Historic resource nomination report and application
4. Minutes excerpt - Historic Site Preservation Board meeting





# Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map



## CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

RESOLUTION NO. \_\_\_\_

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, DESIGNATING THE PARCEL AT 1611 SOUTH CALLE PALO FIERRO (MASTER APN #508-353-002), "THE DESERT STAR APARTMENTS", A CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE #HSPB 102, (ZONE R-2)

THE CITY COUNCIL FINDS AND DETERMINES AS FOLLOWS:

- A. The Desert Star Apartments Homeowners Association, ("Applicant and owner") in collaboration with the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (PSPF) have filed an application with the City pursuant to Article III of Section 8.05 ("*Procedure for Designation of Historic Sites or Historic Districts*") of the Palm Springs Municipal Code requesting Class 1 historic site designation for the parcel located at 1611 South Calle Palo Fierro (Master APN: 508-353-002).
- B. On March 28<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>, 2016, members of the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) and city staff conducted site inspections to familiarize themselves with the subject site.
- C. A notice of public hearing of the Historic Site Preservation Board of the City of Palm Springs, California to consider designation of the Desert Star Apartments was given in accordance with applicable law.
- D. On September 13, 2016, a noticed public hearing to consider Case HSPB 102 was held by the HSPB in accordance with applicable law at which time, the board carefully reviewed and considered all of the evidence presented in connection with the hearing on the project, including, but not limited to the staff report and all written and oral testimony presented and voted to recommend Class 1 historic site designation of the Desert Start Apartments to the City Council.
- E. A notice of public hearing of the City Council of the City of Palm Springs, California to consider designation of the Desert Star Apartments was given in accordance with applicable law.
- F. The proposed historic site designation is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical changes to the environment, directly or indirectly.
- G. On October 5, 2016, the City Council held a public hearing to consider designation of the Desert Star Apartments as a Class 1 historic site. At said hearing the City Council carefully reviewed and considered all of the evidence presented in connection with the hearing

on the project, including, but not limited to, the staff report, and all written and oral testimony presented.

H. ANALYSIS OF THE SITE AGAINST THE DEFINITION OF A HISTORIC SITE: The subject parcel is eligible for consideration as a historic site because it conforms to the following criteria established in Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.020 (“Definitions”) for 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*

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clients to small scale commercial and office buildings. Stylistically, Lapham’s designs reflect the general tenets of the Modern Movement in architecture. In particular, the use of extensive eaves to provide shade, large areas of glass to provide visual and physical connectivity between interior and exterior spaces, the “U” shaped configuration of units around the pool and courtyard that promoted casual social interaction among the guests while also creating privacy from the street, all reflect Lapham’s sensitivity to the climate and his responsiveness to his client’s desire for casual and convenient “indoor-outdoor” living.

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The subject property does not meet this criterion.

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#### I. DEFINING HISTORIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SITE:

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13. The slight cant (or angle) of the fascias.

J. NON-CONTRIBUTING FEATURES OF THE SITE: The non-contributing features of the subject site include the following:

1. The frosted glass privacy panel at the east side façade.
2. The pair of frosted glass front security doors.
3. The security doors at the back side patios.
4. The frosted glass window & security door assembly at the owner's unit.
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11. The metal roof fascia.
12. Slumpstone firepit in courtyard.

#### K. REQUIRED FINDINGS

In considering a recommendation for Class 1 historic designation, pursuant to PSMC 8.05.160, the City Council must make findings that the purposes of the Historic Preservation chapter are furthered by designation of such property as a historic site or district. The purpose of the Historic Preservation chapter of the Municipal Code is outlined in PSMC 8.05.010:

*This chapter is adopted pursuant to the authority of (California) Government Code Section 37361 for the purpose of preserving areas and specific buildings of the city which reflect elements of its cultural, social, economic, political, architectural and archaeological history. This chapter is intended to stabilize and improve buildings, structures or areas which are considered to be of historical, architectural, archaeological or ecological value, to foster civic beauty, to strengthen the local economy and to promote the use of specific buildings for the education and welfare of the citizens.*

Class 1 designation of the Desert Star Apartments would further the purpose of the historic preservation ordinance because the site reflects elements of the City's architectural, social, and cultural history as follows:

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- Criterion 4: *It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction. (Post & beam construction with wide eaves for shade and large picture and clerestory windows facing the courtyard).*

Based on these findings, the Desert Star Apartments qualifies for Class 1 designation pursuant to the criteria listed in PSMC Chapter 8.05

THE CITY COUNCIL RESOLVES:

Based upon the foregoing, the City Council hereby designates the parcel at 1611 South Calle Palo Fierro "The Desert Star Apartments" (MASTER APN #508-353-002), Class 1 Historic Site #HSPB 102.

ADOPTED THIS FIFTH DAY OF OCTOBER, 2016.

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE ) ss.  
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS )

I, JAMES THOMPSON, City Clerk of the City of Palm Springs, California, do hereby certify that Resolution No. \_\_\_\_\_ is a full, true, and correct copy, and was introduced at a regular meeting of the Palm Springs City Council on \_\_\_\_\_ and adopted at a regular meeting of the City Council held on \_\_\_\_\_ by the following vote:

- AYES:
- NOES:
- ABSENT:
- ABSTAIN:

\_\_\_\_\_  
James Thompson, City Clerk  
City of Palm Springs, California

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# Desert Star

1611 South Calle Palo Fierro  
Palm Springs, CA 92264

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

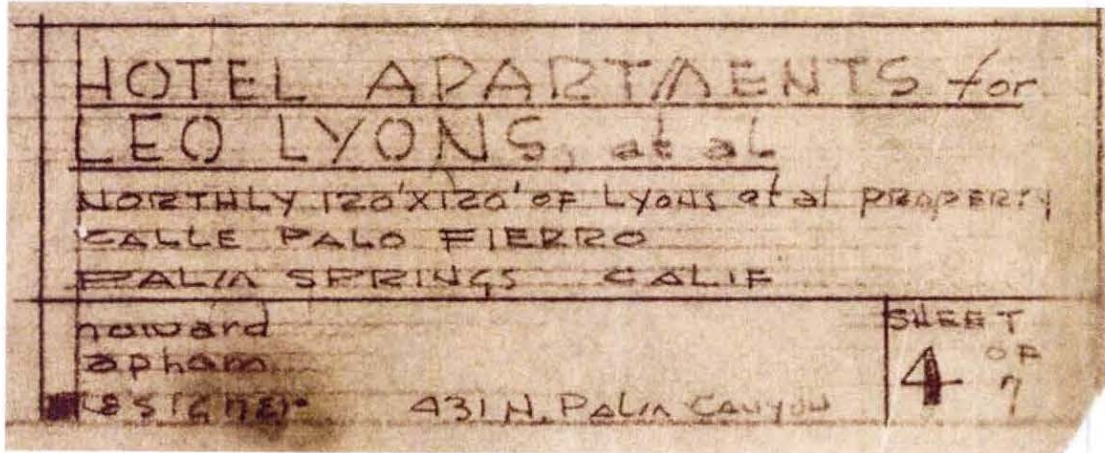


Prepared by  
Ron & Barbara Marshall  
for the  
Palm Springs Preservation Foundation  
February 2016

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors would like to thank the following individuals for either research or editing assistance:

**Vincent Williams  
Ken Lyon  
Jim Harlan  
and  
Ron Duby**



Title block from designer Howard Lapham's blueprint for the Desert Star (i.e., "HOTEL APARTMENTS for LEO LYONS, et al."). The title block is notated "designer" and shows Lapham's business address as "431 N. Palm Canyon." (Courtesy Desert Star)

Cover Image: Desert Star today

# Desert Star

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- I Owners' Letter of Support
- II Assessor's Map, Assessor's Parcel Numbers and Legal Description
- III Architectural Details
- IV Miscellaneous Historical Photographs & Ephemera

## Introduction

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (PSPF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is “to educate and promote public awareness of the importance of preserving the historical resources and architecture of the city of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley area.”

In February of 2015, the PSPF board of directors, in consultation with the owners of the Desert Star, assigned the task of writing the property’s Class 1 Historic Site nomination to board members Ron and Barbara Marshall.

On March 20, 2015 Palm Springs city planner Ken Lyon met with the authors at Desert Star to discuss the appropriateness of writing the nomination as either a Class 1 Historic Site or a Historic District. The consensus opinion was to frame the nomination as a Class 1 Historic Site primarily due to the “integrated roof structure” of the building.

The Owners’ Letter of Support is at Appendix I.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**SIGNIFICANCE:** The Desert Star was designed by architectural designer Howard Lapham in 1956. As an important and highly intact example of a desert modernist resort hotel, the structure exhibits numerous stylistic markers that place it in the historic context of Palm Springs' modern period. It is also a fine example of a small hotel, an important building type in the local history.

**DESIGNATION CRITERIA:** The Desert Star has not previously been evaluated for Class 1 Historic Site eligibility.

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. In this nomination, the applicable "pattern of events" is two-fold: (1) the gradual rise of Palm Springs' prominence in midcentury architectural excellence, and (2) the construction of certain building types (specifically the small seasonal hotel) to support the rising tide of tourism to Palm Springs. Hence, the Desert Star is both an outstanding example of commercial design and the construction of buildings within the context of midcentury desert modernism and a fine example of a specific building type. *The Desert Star is associated with these patterns of events, and is associated as well with Criterion 3 for its ability to exemplify particular periods of the national, state or local history. Therefore, the Desert Star qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criterion 1.*

8.05.020 (a) paragraphs 3, 4 & 5 - **Design/Construction:** The Desert Star is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses numerous distinctive characteristics that make up the modernist style including overall horizontality, expansive amounts of glass, use of inexpensive man-made materials, etc. Additionally, the work of architectural designer Howard Lapham must be catalogued as the work of a "Master" architect because of his record of nationally-recognized excellence. Further, the Desert Star is a fine example of a historically important building type, the small hotel (25 units or less), a building type which slowly gained prominence in Palm Springs between 1920 and 1965. *Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics, as the work of a Master, for its high artistic values, and for its ability to represent a locally important historic building type, the Desert Star qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Site under Criteria 3, 4 & 5.*

**SUMMARY:** This evaluation finds the Desert Star 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 Desert Star retains a very high degree of physical integrity.



# CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

## Department of Planning Services

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

## **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](mailto: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.

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**1. Property Information**

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Historic name: Desert Star

Other names: Also occasionally referred to as "Desert Star Hotel"

Address: 1611 South Calle Palo Fierro, Palm Springs, CA 92264

Assessor Parcel Number: 508353002-4 (See Appendix II)

Owner's Name(s): Richard & Debra Hovel (representatives)

Owner's Address: 1611 South Calle Palo Fierro

City: Palm Springs State: CA Zip: 92264

Telephone: (800) 399-1006

Fax number: N/A

E-mail address: [debrahovel@gmail.com](mailto:debrahovel@gmail.com)

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## 2. Classifications

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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		<b>Total</b>

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"

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## 3. Use or Function

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Historic Use or Function: Hotel

Current Use or Function: Condominiums

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## 4. Description

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Architect: Howard Lapham (architectural designer)

Construction Date and Source: 1956 (multiple sources)

Architectural Classification: International Style - Desert Regional Variation

Construction Materials:

Foundation: Concrete slab on grade

Roof: Composition

Walls: Concrete slumpstone block and frame wood construction covered with stucco

Other: Perimeter wall of 6"x6" concrete block

Building Description: *Attach a description of the Building/Site/District, including all character defining features, on one or more additional sheets. (See pages 12-16)*



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

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**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

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## 6. Statement of Significance

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### Summary

In early 1955 a consortium of three married couples, Arthur P. Yordon & Frances J. Yordon, Leo N. Lyons & Audrey Lyons, and Leo P. Michaelides & Faye Michaelides, hired architectural designer Howard Lapham to design a small resort hotel for them. The new hotel was to be sited on a lot the three couples owned together. The venture was apparently a speculative one as the hotel was almost immediately sold to the second owners, Anthony J. & Louise Sennes (see "First Owners and Later Owners"). Newspaper accounts at this time refer to the hotel as "Sennes Desert Star" so it seems likely that the second owners chose the name of the hotel.

Based on the building permit history, construction on the Desert Star started in late 1955 and appears to have been largely completed by early 1956. Local newspaper accounts confirm that the hotel was already receiving guests by late 1956 (some Riverside County property records incorrectly cite 1957 as the "year built").

The Desert Star is a remarkably intact modernist hotel and represents a particular building type important to the history of Palm Springs (the small hotel). It is also one of Lapham's earliest commissions in Palm Springs.

### The Architectural Designer

As an "architectural designer" rather than architect, Howard Lapham is routinely left off lists of those who contributed significantly to Palm Springs' built environment. Nevertheless, Lapham's impressive body of work argues for a fuller appreciation of his



**Architectural designer Howard Lapham (with cigar) in 1956.  
(*Desert Sun* newspaper)**

many contributions. Over the course of his career Lapham's commissions were recognized both locally and nationally. Fortunately, in recent years there has been a burgeoning appreciation of architectural designers like Lapham (Herbert Burns for one) who were forced to compete professionally with architects like William F. Cody, E. Stewart Williams, Donald Wexler, et al. Despite the stiff competition, architectural designers like Lapham frequently secured commissions usually by virtue of their own creative designs. The most complete biography of architectural designer Howard Lapham, who was born on May 11, 1914 in Oklahoma City, is found on the city of Rancho Mirage's website. It is repeated here as it cites one of the few primary sources available on Lapham (i.e., an October 4, 2002 interview with Lapham):

"In 1954 at [the] age [of] 40, Howard Lapham arrived in the Coachella Valley from Stamford, Connecticut. Although he was a registered designer, Lapham intended on becoming a builder in his new desert home. Within a year, however, he was designing residences for wealthy and influential members of the Thunderbird Country Club along the Club's fairways and up the slopes of what became known as Thunderbird Heights. A number of Lapham's buildings appeared in *Architectural Digest*, including the Hyatt von Dehn Residence (1960, Thunderbird Heights), the Kiewit Residence (1960, Thunderbird Country Club), the Clarke Swanson Residence (1961, Thunderbird Country Club), the Morrow Residence (1961, Silver Spur Ranch, Palm Desert), and the 1961 remodel of the Thunderbird Country Club clubhouse. He remodeled the famous Chi Chi nightclub in 1959, giving it an ultra-modern new façade. Lapham also designed Lord Fletcher's English Pub in 1966 on what became known as 'restaurant row' on Highway 111 in Rancho Mirage. One of Lapham's largest residential projects was the Mayan-themed Cook House, known as Ichpa Mayapan, built atop Thunderbird Heights in 1970. Lapham also drew the initial plans for the Eisenhower Medical Center, although [architect] Edward D. Stone obtained the commission. Lapham officially retired in the 1980s..."

Lapham continued to maintain an office at 577 East Sunny Dunes Road in Palm Springs for many years after his retirement. Lapham died on April 16, 2008 in Palm Springs, California.

Over the years Howard Lapham designed many of the area's commercial and residential buildings. The following projects list, while incomplete and derived largely from secondary sources, illustrates the breadth of Lapham's contribution to the region's "built environment":

- Model Plumbing Supply Building (495 Industrial Place) (1955)
- Skylark Hotel Expansion (1466 North Palm Canyon) (1956)
- Desert Star (1611 South Calle Palo Fierro) (1956)
- Kelly's Home Furnishings (4525 East Ramon Road) (1956)
- Tranquilla Villa (291 Camino Monte Vista) (1956)
- Store Building (1074 North Palm Canyon/1061 North Indian Canyon, now DaVita Dialysis) (1958)
- Palm Springs Greyhound Bus Depot (311 North Indian Avenue, now Woody's Burgers) (1959)
- Chi Chi Club Remodel (217 N. Palm Canyon) (1959)
- Peter Kiewit Residence (Thunderbird Country Club) (1960)
- North Shore Club Hotel (Lake Tahoe at Crystal Bay, Nevada) (1960)
- Hyatt Robert von Dehn Residence (Thunderbird Heights) (1960)
- Commercial Building (577 East Sunny Dunes Road, Lapham's later business office) (1961)
- Thunderbird Country Club Clubhouse Remodel (1961)
- Clarke Swanson Residence (Thunderbird Country Club) (1961)
- Morrow Residence (Silver Spur Ranch, Palm Desert) (1961)
- Model Commercial Park (Ramon Road) (1962)
- Apartment Buildings (Avenue 44 & Arabia Street, Indio) (1962)

(continued)

Palm Springs National Bank (441 South Palm Canyon Drive) (1963) (with architect Richard Harrison)  
Smoke Tree Village (Hwy. 111 & Sunrise Way) (1965) (with architect Richard Harrison)  
666 Building (666/668 North Palm Canyon Drive) (1965)  
Mr. & Mrs. Robert O. Naegles Residence (70-209 Calico Road, Thunderbird Heights) (circa 1965)  
Mr. & Mrs. Alan Stoneman Residence (70-146 Calico Road, Thunderbird Heights) (circa 1965)  
Lord Fletcher's Inn (70385 Hwy. 111, Rancho Mirage) (1966)  
Commercial Complex (South Palm Canyon Drive & Sunny Dunes Road) (1966)  
Orchid Tree Lane Estates (Alejo Road & Burton Way) (1966)  
Crocker-Citizens National Bank (Smoke Tree Village) (1967)  
Medical Office Building & Laboratory (140 Luring Drive) (1969)  
Cook Residence (Ichpa Mayapan) (Thunderbird Heights) (1970)  
Downey Savings & Loan Association Tennis Complex (Smoketree Commercial Center) (1973)  
Tennis Courts (Riviera Hotel) (1974)  
Bank of America (Smoke Tree Village) (1975) (with architect Richard Harrison)  
Bob's Big Boy Restaurant (North Palm Canyon Drive & Stevens Road) (1977)  
Professional Offices (North Palm Canyon Drive & Indian Avenue, north of Tachevah Drive) (1977)  
Las Palmas Plaza (across from Old El Mirador Hotel) (1977)

Lapham collaborated with Romanian-born architect Haralamb H. Georgescu (1908-1977) on a number of projects. While the full extent of Georgescu's involvement is not known, one secondary source states:

Between 1959 and 1963, Georgescu was associated with Palm Springs-based designer Howard Lapham and designed several large residences, apartment buildings, restaurants and a country club in the desert resort communities in and around Palm Springs.

While architect Georgescu's career was noteworthy in its own right, additional research on Georgescu was deemed of little value to this nomination as the design of the Desert Star pre-dates Lapham's relationship with the architect.

### **Local Historical Context**

The city of Palm Springs saw a number of buildings erected immediately after World War II. These were designed by a variety of talented and important architects including Richard Neutra's Kaufmann House (1947), E. Stewart Williams' Frank Sinatra Residence (1947), William F. Cody's Del Marcos Hotel (1947) and Paul R. Williams' and A. Quincy Jones' Town & Country Center (1948) to name just a few. Howard Lapham's Desert Star (1956) must likewise be recognized as a noteworthy example of the city's modernist architecture designed during the period.

### **Site Description**

Location. The Desert Star is located in Section 4 of the Tahquitz River Estates neighborhood of Palm Springs. The complex is bounded by South Calle Palo Fierro to the east and various residential and commercial parcels to the north, west and south. Due west of the Desert Star is the eastern terminus of East Avenida Olancha. The complex is sited around a large pool and takes full advantage of mountain views to the west. Landscaping includes palo verde trees, palm trees, ficus, and a variety of cacti. There is limited on-site parking. The Assessor's Parcel Map and a legal description of the Desert Star property is provided at Appendix II.



**Aerial view of the Desert Star (oriented north) showing the site and surrounding commercial and residential parcels. (Google Maps)**

## **The Building Type**

The Desert Star exemplifies the small seasonal hotel that flourished in post-World War II Palm Springs. This building type slowly gained prominence in Palm Springs between 1920 and 1965.

Herbert Burns' Town & Desert Apartments (1947) in Palm Springs shares many of the characteristics of the Desert Star, most notably scale and function. This description of the Town & Desert Apartments, which appeared in the May 1948 issue of *Architectural Record* magazine, is likewise applicable to the Desert Star:

"If the "motel" is the modern version of a hotel, this one is a similar model of an apartment hotel for a vacation spot. Its rooms are really small apartments, designed for Californians who can afford to get-away-from-it-all in elegant seclusion in Palm Springs. While the convenience and informality notes are clear, this is far removed from the roadside sleeping concept of the more typical motor courts. Its design contemplates a commune-with-nature type of holiday where a swim and a sun bath are the doctor's prescription."

The grant deed history indicates that the Desert Star started its transition into individual unit ownership in 1977.

## The Architecture

The Desert Star complex is a single-story building which was originally configured with eight functioning units (i.e., six rental units with an owner's unit and a maid's quarters). The units were equipped with small efficiency kitchens.



**Desert Star individual unit locations. Unit #7 is the original owner's unit and maid's quarters (now combined).  
(Google Maps)**

Siting and Orientation. The Desert Star units surround a courtyard and large rectangular pool creating a "U"-shaped or horseshoe configuration. The complex is symmetrical about an east-west axis that (like many Palm Springs hotels) is bore-sighted on the stunning views of the mountains to the west.

Street-side Façade. Looking west from South Calle Palo Fierro, the street-side façade of the Desert Star is distinguished by overall horizontality. A triangular concrete slumpstone block planter (about 2-feet high) originates at an angle from the front façade to create visual interest. The planter's triangular shape brilliantly mimics the Desert Star's shed roof—thereby cleverly reflecting in "plan" what is seen in "elevation." The slumpstone fireplace in the owner's unit pierces the shed roof; expresses the "materiality" of the slumpstone; softens the overall horizontality of the structure; and creates visual interest. Viewed from the street a wide variety of materials are integrated into a cohesive whole including metal (roof fascia), concrete (slumpstone walls), glass (clerestory windows, etc.), and wood (tongue-in-groove paneling).



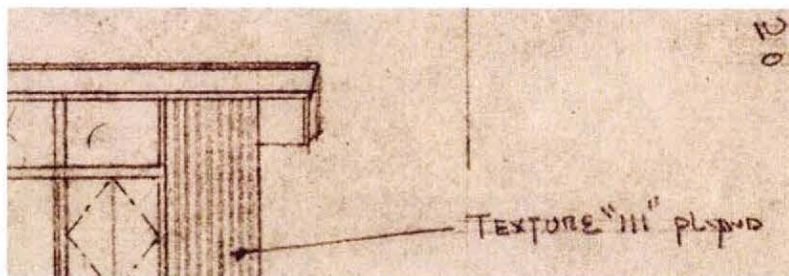
Roofs and Rooflines. There are two roof structures, (1) a shed roof, which covers the south units, owner's and maid's quarters, and (2) a flat roof which covers the north units. At the midpoint of the structure, the two roof lines seem to almost "collide" with the shed roof overlapping the flat roof. This design allows for the shed roof to create a functional eave and allows for the clerestory windows in the owner's unit to face the preferred north. The flat roof cleverly pierces the volume of the owner's unit and transitions into a functional soffit. The juxtaposition of the overlapping shed and flat roof creates a pleasing aesthetic effect.

Outdoor Lighting Sconces. The tall, "floating" light sconces are oriented vertically and ingeniously punctuate the horizontality of the structure. Framed in wood, the light fixture (covered with opaque white glass) supports a likewise framed decorative pegboard panel. Despite being an inexpensive man-made material, the decorative pegboard panel produces a sophisticated effect.

Planters. Slumpstone planters can be found throughout the complex and are of varying height, length, width and geometry. Most of the slumpstone planters are integrated into the structure, one is stand-alone. Overall the variety and syncopation of the planters creates visual interest and can either soften or reinforce the rectilinear architecture. Additionally, the planters create an opportunity for plant materials to do the same. Other planting areas are flush with the concrete flatwork.

Miscellaneous Architectural Details. Other architectural details at the Desert Star include deep eaves to moderate the harsh desert sun; clerestory windows and metal casement windows; two exposed 3-inch diameter steel-pipe columns (which express the structure of the building); wood tongue-in groove ceilings and wall paneling; and private patios accessed by large sliding glass doors (providing abundant natural light to the units).

T-111 (or T1-11) Plywood. While T-111 plywood is specified in the original plans, it is opined that this material was either never used or replaced at a later date with vertically



**Close-up of portion of Desert Star blueprint showing specification of "Texture '111' plywd."  
(Courtesy Desert Star)**

"raked" (or "combed") concrete stucco. The raked concrete stucco has been in-situ for at least two decades arguing that during construction (or at an early date) it replaced the T-111 plywood. While conjecture, this may have happened because the concrete stucco was deemed a more suitable material. Regardless, the raked stucco (as would



be the case with T-111) creates a vertical pattern that punctuates the horizontality of the structure.

Concrete Slumpstone. Undoubtedly the most prominent architectural feature of the Desert Star is the generous use of concrete slumpstone block (which has a surface texture suggestive of adobe). Slumpstone (a trademarked name) is well-suited to the desert environment and is a material that was used for many notable commercial and residential buildings throughout Palm Springs, including the Maurice and Dinah (Shore) Smith Residence (1964, Donald Wexler). The use of slumpstone for the Desert Star appears to be an early local use of the material.

Safety, Security and Privacy. As has been the case with virtually all small hotels in Palm Springs, in addition to privacy, there has been an effort to provide more overall security and to control access to the pool for safety. These additions include a six-foot high concrete block wall around much of the site's perimeter (permitted in July of 1961) and much later steel gates, solid doors, steel and wood-framed glass panels, etc. The cumulative impact of these additions (which are all reversible) is discussed in the "Integrity" portion of this nomination.

**First Owners and Additional Owners.** An April 11, 1956 grant deed for the Desert Star parcel (see Appendix II, "Assessor's Map, Assessor's Parcel Numbers and Legal Description") lists the first owners as three married couples, Arthur P. Yordon and Frances J. Yordon, Leo N. Lyons and Audrey Lyons, and Leo P. Michaelides and Faye Michaelides. Later owners included:

<u>Date</u>	<u>Owners</u>
April 11, 1956	Anthony J. & Louise Sennes
December 27, 1957	W. John & Bonnie Lee Williams
June 8, 1961	La Mont L. & Emma N. Neumann
December 21, 1962	Gordon & Barbara Hamilton Rankin
April 27, 1964	W. John & Bonnie Lee Williams
[Illegible]	Paul Evans
January 12, 1967	Daniel E. Manning
March 29, 1967	Forest Campbell
December 18, 1968	Kenneth G. & Elizabeth B. Paulson
May 23, 1977	Milton & Pauline Diafos <sup>1</sup>
October 27, 1977	Joe & Dorothy Thompson <sup>2</sup>
October 31, 1977	Anthony T. Cona <sup>3</sup>
July 19, 1991	Elizabeth Paulson <sup>4</sup>
December 10, 1992	Betty Jean Herdeck, Karen Herdeck & Kathryn Herdeck <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Grants an undivided one-seventh (1/7<sup>th</sup>) interest in and to the real property designated as Unit No. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Grants an undivided one-seventh (1/7<sup>th</sup>) interest in and to the real property designated as Unit No. 5.

<sup>3</sup> Grants an undivided one-seventh (1/7<sup>th</sup>) interest in and to the real property designated as Unit No. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Surviving spouse of Kenneth G. Paulson.

<sup>5</sup> Heirs of Elizabeth Paulson received an "undivided 3/7<sup>ths</sup> interest...commonly known as 1611 Calle Palo Fierro, Palm Springs, California, 92264, together with the exclusive right to occupy Apartment 1 therein."

According to the Orange Coast Title Company, beginning in 1977 individual, numbered units were sold as a 1/7<sup>th</sup> interest in the legal description. Researching the complex grant deed history for the individual units was deemed superfluous to this nomination.

## Permit History

The Desert Star building permit history is fairly complete (though there is a gap of permits from the 1990s through the early 2000s which is attributed to a computer system crash at the city's building department). The most notable permits are as follows:

- Building Permit #7792 issued on 8-24-55 to Leo Lyons (owner and contractor) for "7 Unit Multiple dwelling, Frame & Stucco, as per plan, \$45,000, 4,860 sq ft"
- Plumbing Permit #7406 issued on 10-20-55 to Leo Lyons (owner) for bathroom fixtures (including 7 showers and 7 lavatories)
- Building Permit #7963 issued on 11-2-55 to Leo Lyons (owner) and Paddock Pools (contractor) for "Swimming pool, 32'x14', Gunite"
- Plumbing Permit #7458 issued on 11-2-55 to Paddock Pools
- Electrical Permit #6562 issued on [illegible date] in 1955 to Paddock Pools
- Electrical Permit #6716 issued on 12-21-55
- Plumbing Permit #7840 issued on 2-8-56
- Plumbing Permit #B288 issued on 6-9-59
- Permit #B2186 issued on 5-16-60 to W. J. Williams (owner) and Paddock's (contractor) to "Construct 18x36 gunite swimming pool."
- Building Permit #B3559 issued on 7-11-61 to "Construct 225 linear feet of 6' high masonry wall" by "Day Labor"
- Permit M3258 issued on 9-27-74 to L. C. Young to "Install 5 ton a/c w/ 125,000 btu"
- Sewer Permit A-3348 issued on 5-6-75 for 90 fixtures (including bathtubs, toilets, showers and sinks)
- Building Permit B1557 issued on 5-18-83 to Desert Star Hotel to "Split elec. service to 8 meters"
- Building Permit B2789 issued on 12-5-83 to K. Paulson (owner-bldr.) for "Gas Re-pipe for 7 co-op APT's. Add one xtra meter for pool htr. & 2 Hot Water HTR's. Total 8 new Gas MTRS and 17 Outlets."
- Building Permit B05784 issued on 2-12-85 to Desert Star Assoc. for "Re-roof"
- Building Permit #2012-810 issued on 4-26-12 to Richard Hover (sic) (owner) for Solterra Builders (contractor) to "Remodel existing building. Was previously listed as

Hotel. Now a single family dwelling, create laundry room, new beam. New A/C, add pocket doors.”

- Building Permit #2013-2011 issued on 7-11-13 to “reroof with urethane foam.”

## **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 predominant architectural style, which was based on well-established Mexican and Spanish Colonial motifs, 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. By 1964, the city had built a reputation for cutting edge architecture as a result of efforts by architects such as John Porter Clark, Albert Frey, E. Stewart Williams, William F. Cody, Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison.

## **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 (1) the gradual rise of the city’s prominence in architectural excellence in midcentury modern architecture, and (2) the growth of small hotel construction in the city, both important patterns of events within this associated context. The Desert Star is an outstanding example of commercial design and construction of buildings within the context of midcentury desert Modernism. The Desert Star is also a fine example of a small hotel. *The Desert Star is associated with these patterns of events for (1) its ability to exemplify the modern period of the national, state and local history, and (2) its ability to represent a building type that slowly gained prominence in*

*the city between 1920 and 1965. The Desert Star qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 1.*

**Criterion 2: Significant Persons.** Criterion 2 recognizes properties associated with the lives of persons who made meaningful contribution to national, state or local history. While Howard Lapham might be considered an individual of local importance, the basis for that qualification was deemed too tenuous for this nomination. *Hence, the Desert Star does not qualify for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry under Criterion 2.*

## **ARCHITECTURE (Criteria 3 – 6)**

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

The Desert Star (1956) was designed by Palm Springs architectural designer Howard Lapham. The stylistic markers of the building place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs' Modern Period. The Desert Star represents a prime and intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is widely known and is also an example of a locally important building type. As such the Desert Star 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. Further, the Desert Star is a fine example of the pattern of construction of small hotels catering to the growing resort tourist industry. *Both of these historic trends exemplify a particular period of the national, state or local history. The Desert Star 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, and 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 Desert Star 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, expansive amounts of glass, use of inexpensive, man-made materials, etc. Additionally, the Desert Star conveys the scale, massing and ambiance of a small hotel. As such, the complex is eligible under this criterion because it represents an important example of building practices in Palm Springs at midcentury and a distinctive building type which slowly gained prominence

between 1920 and 1965. The Desert Star qualifies for listing 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.

Architectural designer Howard Lapham is a well-respected and locally-prominent practitioner of modernist architecture. Lapham's reputation has gained in stature as Palm Springs' architectural richness has achieved national prominence in recent years.

**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. As an example of the maturing modernist movement, the Desert Star articulates the best of resort "lifestyle" 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 Desert Star qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Site on the local registry 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. As such, Criterion 6 does not apply. Hence, the Desert Star does not qualify under Criterion 6.

## ARCHEOLOGY

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

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## 7. Integrity Analysis (using U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards)

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### INTEGRITY

Integrity 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 an 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 Desert Star 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; and the type, amount, and style of ornamental detailing. ***The Desert Star's 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 largely untouched. There is extensive documentation in the form of plans that illustrate the intent of the architectural designer (see "The Architecture" portion of this nomination). Finally, the minor additions that have been made (e.g., fire-pit, lighting fixtures, etc.) have been period-correct and sensitive.***

## 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 Desert Star continues to reflect the architectural designer's original design relationship of site and structure. While it appears that the Desert Star's small parking lot may have been slightly reconfigured and hotel signage moved, these have had a negligible effect on the setting.***

## 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. ***Over the last 60 years the Desert Star's exterior surface materials have been painted and re-painted, some light fixtures have been replaced (with period-appropriate fixtures), and additional doors, gates and framed glass panels have been added (sensitively) to address today's security concerns. These changes do 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. ***The workmanship of the Desert Star is comprised of integral ornamental detailing reflected in concrete block, glass and steel. 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. ***When constructed, the Desert Star was sited to take advantage of panoramic views of the mountains and designed around a large central pool, thus creating an intimate resort-like feel. Accordingly, the Desert Star retains its original 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 previously stated, the Desert Star is a fine example of modernist architecture and an important example of a particular building type in Palm Springs. Accordingly, it continues its association with patterns of events that have made a meaningful contribution to the local history.***

INTEGRITY SUMMARY: The Desert Star appears to be in excellent condition due to the use of construction materials suitable for the harsh desert environment. This integrity analysis confirms that the buildings and site of the Desert Star still possess all seven aspects of integrity. ***During the last 60 years, the Desert Star's small parking lot was reconfigured (to allow for head-in parking), its hotel signage was relocated, and the pool slightly enlarged (in 1960), but this minor re-jiggering has had a negligible effect on the setting (see "Appendix IV: Miscellaneous Historical Photographs & Ephemera" for an image of the original parking lot configuration). Further, while the complex has had metal security gates, solid doors and glass panels added to create security for the residents, and a slumpstone fire-pit added as an amenity, these conditions are reversible and virtually all of the structure and site's character-defining features survive. The Desert Star and its site retain a high degree of integrity sufficient to qualify it for designation as a Class 1 Historic Site.***

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## 8. Bibliography

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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 Record Book. *Motels, Hotels, Restaurants and Bars*. F. W. Dodge Corporation, New York, 1953.

Architectural Record Book. *Motels, Hotels, Restaurants and Bars* (Second Edition). F. W. Dodge Corporation, New York, 1960.

Baker, Geoffrey and Bruno Funaro. *Motels*. Reinhold Publishing Corporation, New York, 1955

Hugh Best. *Thunderbird Country Club*. Privately printed, 1988.



## Other Documentary Sources

Architectural Resources Group. *City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey*. San Francisco, 2004.

"California Hide-Away, Motel Style." *Architectural Record*, Vol. 103, No. 5, May 1948: 96-101.

Christopher Georgesco. "Haralamb H. Georgescu: Architect 1908-1977." Web. 26 Jan. 2016. <<http://www.georgescoart.com/cgs6/harlan.htm>>.

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

Powers, Jim. "Couple's Love of Mid-Century Look Began in Palm Springs." *Palm Springs Life* Feb. 2013. Online.

"Residence of Mr. Hyatt Robert Von Dehn." *Architectural Digest*, Volume XVII, Number 3, Fall 1960.

"Residence of Mr. & Mrs. Bill Morrow." *Architectural Digest*, Volume XVIII, Number 3, Fall 1961: 142-145, 261.

"Residence of Mr. & Mrs. Peter Kiewit." *Architectural Digest*, Volume XX, Number 3, Fall 1963.

"Residence of Mrs. W. Clarke Swanson." *Architectural Digest*, Volume XIX, Number 3, Fall 1962: 49-54.

Rus, Mayer. "Mod Mecca." *Architectural Digest* Feb. 2015: 46-47. Print.

Tyrnauer, Matt. "Saving Grace." *Architectural Digest* Apr. 2015: 160-171. Print.

*The Desert Sun*. May 23, 1955 (Lapham's Model Plumbing project); November 15, 1955 (mention of Leo Lyons' pool permit for Desert Star); March 16, 1956 (Lapham's expansion of Skylark Hotel); March 30, 1956 (Lapham's Professional Men's Center); April 26, 1956 (Sky Vue Hotel); May 11, 1956 (Lapham's Kelley's Home Furnishings project); May 17, 1956 (Lapham on city's sign ordinance advisory committee); July 16, 1956 (Tony Sennes reference); September 3, 1956 (Tony Sennes reference); November 30, 1956 (Lapham's Tranquilla Village project); December 8, 1956 (reference to "guests" at Desert Star); February 23, 1957 (Lapham's Palm Vista Estates project); March 21, 1958 (Lapham's 1074 North Palm Canyon project); June 24, 1958 (Lapham legal notice); July 12, 1958 (Lapham help wanted advertisement for draftsman); December 20, 1958 (Desert Star part of hotel group); August 28, 1959 (Lapham's Greyhound Bus Depot project); May 2, 1960 (advertisement for Desert Star); May 27, 1960 (mention of building permit for Desert Star pool); June 15, 1960

(Lapham's North Shore Club project at Lake Tahoe); July 25, 1961 (Lapham commercial building at 577 Sunny Dunes Road); April 25, 1962 (groundbreaking at Lapham commercial project on East Ramon Road); July 27, 1962 (East Ramon Road project); August 24, 1962 (Lapham's 64-unit apartment building project on Avenue 44 and Arabia Street in Indio); May 16, 1963 (Lapham service station project near Smoke Tree); December 6, 1963 (Lapham's Palm Springs National Bank project at 441 South Palm Canyon); January 17, 1964 (National Bank project); February 29, 1964 (National Bank project); March 2, 1964 (National Bank project); April 6, 1964 (Desert Star for sale at \$89,950); April 7, 1964 (Desert Star for sale); April 8, 1964 (Desert Star for sale); May 5, 1964 (Lapham's Smoke Tree Village project); June 23, 1964 (Lapham appointed to city's downtown redevelopment committee); February 13, 1965 (Lapham mentioned in conjunction with Thunderbird Heights home tour); February 25, 1965 (Smoke Tree Village project); March 5, 1965 (Thunderbird Heights home tour); June 4, 1965 (Lapham's 666 Building project); July 2, 1965 (Smoke Tree Village project); September 16, 1965 (Smoke Tree Village project); September 17, 1965 (Smoke Tree Village); February 4, 1966 (Lapham's business complex with Press Construction at Sunny Dunes and South Palm Canyon); April 15, 1966 (Lapham buys art for Orchid Tree Lane Estates model home); May 7, 1966 (Lapham's Lord Fletcher Inn project); May 13, 1966 (Lord Fletcher Inn); June 3, 1966 (Lapham's 10-unit business and warehouse complex at Sunny Dunes Road with Press Construction); June 25, 1966 (Lapham's Orchid Tree Lane Estates project); November 18, 1966 (Orchid Tree Lane Estates project); November 25, 1966 (Orchid Tree Lane Estates project); November 26, 1966 (Orchid Tree Lane Estates project); December 2, 1966 (Orchid Tree Lane Estates project); June 17, 1967 (Lapham's Crocker-Citizens National Bank project); December 7, 1967 (Crocker-Citizens National Bank project); January 3, 1969 (Lapham's medical office building project at 140 Luring Drive); September 18, 1970 (medical office building project at Luring); December 19, 1975 (Lapham's Bank of America project at Smoke Tree Village); March 24, 1976 (Bank of America project); April 13, 1976 (Bank of America project); April 22, 2008 (Lapham's obituary) and February 20, 2015 (Desert Star article, "The Desert Star, a Shining Gem of Modernism").

"Thunderbird Country Club." *Architectural Digest*, Volume XVIII, Number 3, Fall 1961: 165-167.

#### Other Sources Consulted

- City of Palm Springs (Planning and Building Departments)
- Palm Springs Historical Society
- Palm Springs Public Library
- Riverside County Assessor's Office

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**9. Geographical Data**

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Acreage of Property: Estimated at 0.413 acres (18,000 square feet)  
Property Boundary Description: Lot 34 MB 014/652 Palm Valley Colony Lands (See Appendix II for detailed legal description)

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**10. Prepared By**

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Name/title: Ronald W. & Barbara A. Marshall  
Organization: Submitted on behalf of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation  
Street address: 1775 East Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 110-195  
City: Palm Springs State: CA Zip: 92264  
Telephone: (760) 837-7117  
e-mail address: info@pspreservationfoundation.org

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**11. Required Documentation**

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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

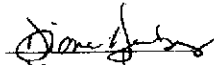
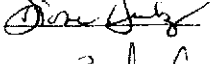
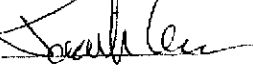
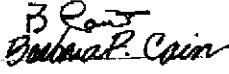
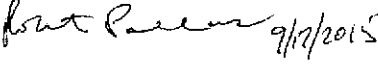

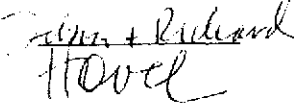
for the Agua Caliente Indian Tribe or individual allottee, copies of notices with postage paid envelopes will be submitted to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to notify the individual Indian land owners of the public hearings.

**Appendix I: Owners' Letter of Owner Support**

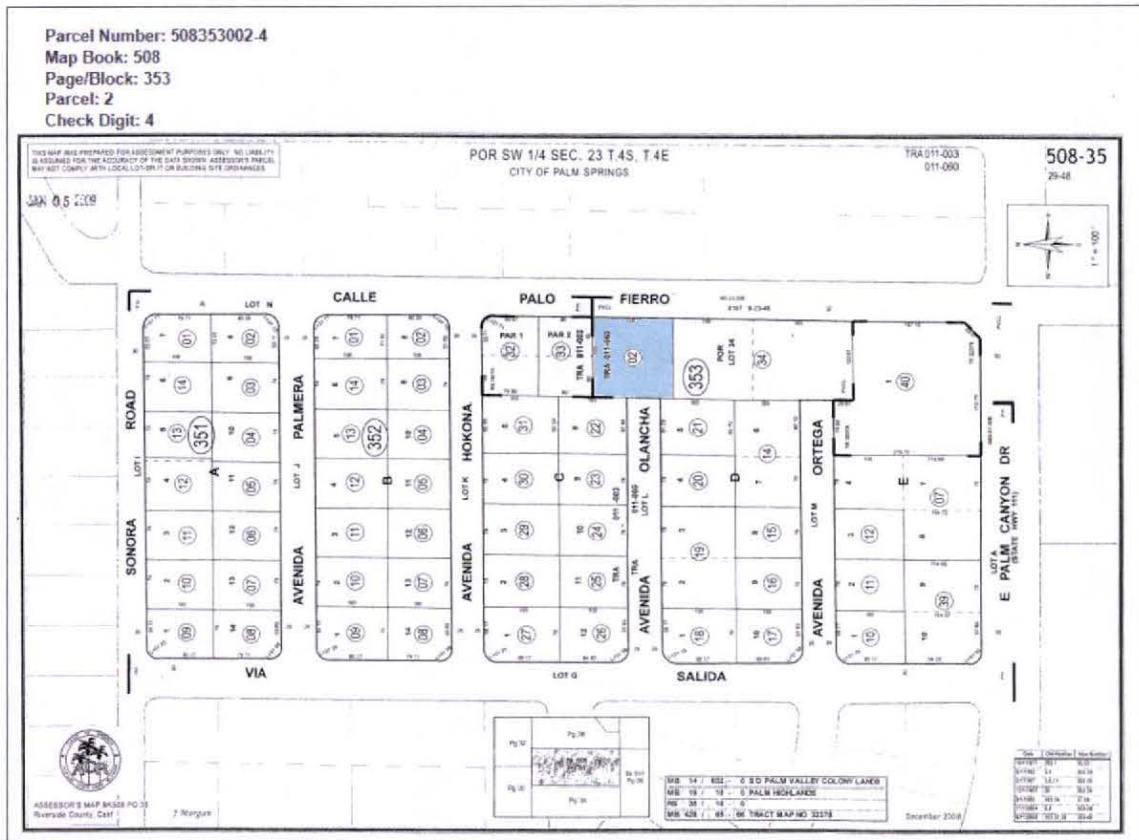
Document of Owner Support  
Regarding

**DESERT STAR**  
Class 1 Historic Site

Previously, as a matter of policy, the City of Palm Springs' Director of Planning Services has required a "document of owner support" before processing historic applications. Accordingly, the below property owners in the Desert Star support the pursuit of Class 1 Historic Site status as described in Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code.

	<u>Owner Name</u>	<u>Address/Unit</u>	<u>Signature</u>
1.	Dewbrey	Unit 1	
2.	Dewbrey	Unit 2	
3.	Jonathan Carpenter	Desert Star #3	
4.	BERNIE & BARBARA CAIN	#4	B Ron 
5.	Pallas	Unit 5	 9/12/2015
6.	Dewbrey	Unit 6	
7.	Hovel	Unit 7	

**Appendix II: Assessor's Map, Assessor's Parcel Numbers and Legal Description**



**Desert Star Assessor's Parcel Number highlighted in blue.  
 (Riverside County Assessor's Office, Property Information Center)**

<u>Parcel Number</u>	<u>Assessment Number</u>	<u>Address</u>
508353002-4	009000489-2	1611 Calle Palo Fierro 1
508353002-4	009000490-2	1611 Calle Palo Fierro 2
508353002-4	009000491-3	1611 Calle Palo Fierro 3
508353002-4	009000492-4	1611 Calle Palo Fierro 4
508353002-4	009000493-5	1611 Calle Palo Fierro 5
508353002-4	009000494-6	1611 Calle Palo Fierro 6
508353002-4	009000495-7	1611 Calle Palo Fierro 7

**Differentiation of Units by Assessment Numbers  
 (Riverside County Assessor's Office, Property Information Center)**

# Grant Deed

As Ex I. R. S. § 79.20.....

20 11.33

THIS FORM FURNISHED BY TITLE INSURANCE AND TRUST COMPANY

FOR A VALUABLE CONSIDERATION, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, **ARTHUR P. YORDON and FRANCIS J. YORDON, husband and wife, LEO N. LYONS and AUDREY LYONS, husband and wife and LEO P. MICHAELIDES and FAYE MICHAELIDES, husband and wife.**

hereby GRANT(s) to **ANTHONY J. SERNES and LOUISE SERNES, husband and wife as joint tenants**

The following described real property in the State of California, County of Riverside  
That portion of Lot 34 in Section 23, Township 4 South, Range 4 East, San Bernardino Base and Meridian, as shown by Map of Palm Valley Colony Lands, on file in Book 14 page 652 of Maps, records of San Diego County, California, particularly described as follows:

Commencing at the Southeast corner of said Lot 34;  
Thence Westerly along the Southerly line of said Lot, 150 feet to its intersection with the Southerly extension of the Easterly line of Lot 6 in Block 48<sup>th</sup> of Palm Highland as shown by Map on file in Book 19 page 10 of Maps, records of Riverside County, California;  
Thence Northerly along said Southerly extension of Lot 6 and the Easterly line of Blocks 48<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> of said Palm Highlands, 509.98 feet to the point of beginning.  
Thence continuing Northerly along the Easterly line of Blocks D and C of said Palm Highlands, 120 feet to the Southeast corner of Lot 6 in said Block O;  
Thence North 89° 37' 30" East along the Southerly line of Lots 6 and 7 in Block C and Lot 8 of said Palm Highlands, 150 feet to the Easterly line of said Lot 34;  
Thence South 0° 23' 30" West along the Easterly line of said Lot 34, 120 feet to a point 509.98 feet North of the Southeast corner of said Lot 34;  
Thence South 89° 37' 30" West, 150 feet to the point of beginning.

- SUBJECT TO:  
(1) Special half General and Special Taxes for the fiscal year 1955-1956  
(2) Conditions, restrictions, reservations, covenants, easements, rights and rights of way of record, if any  
(3) Deed of Trust of record dated April 11, 1956 (4) Deed of Trust to file concurrently herewith.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA )  
COUNTY OF )  
  
Riverside )  
  
On April 11, 1956  
before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for said County and State, personally appeared **Faye Michaelides, Leo P. Michaelides, Arthur P. Yordon, Francis J. Yordon, Leo N. Lyons, Audrey Lyons**  
I, **William George**, Notary Public in and for said County and State,  
WITNESS my hand and official seal.

*Leo P. Michaelides*  
Leo P. Michaelides  
by *Leo P. Michaelides*  
Leo P. Michaelides  
by *Francis J. Yordon*  
Francis J. Yordon  
by *Audrey Lyons*  
Audrey Lyons

SPACE BELOW FOR RECORDER'S USE ONLY

WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO  
**PEARSON, SCOTT AND COMPANY**  
BOX 3078 PALM CANYON  
PALM SPRINGS, CALIF.

31924

RECEIVED FOR RECORD  
MAY 4 1956  
TITLE INSURANCE AND TRUST COMPANY  
BOOK 1307 PAGE 149  
FEE \$ 2.50

Title Order No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Escrow or Loan No. 2-92

Grant Deed dated April 11, 1956 which includes  
Legal Description of Real Property at 1611 South Calle Palo Fierro.  
(Courtesy Orange Coast Title Company)

**Appendix III: Architectural Details**



**Detail of mortared concrete slumpstone block, a building material ideally suited to the harsh desert environment.**



**A triangular planter (about 2-feet high) constructed of concrete slumpstone block extends outward from the front façade to create visual interest and emphasize the overall horizontality of the structure. The planter's triangular shape cleverly mimics the shed roof (seen far left).**





**Here the shed roof portion of the structure overhangs the flat roof portion thus accentuating its horizontality. While pleasing visually, this configuration is also functional as it allows the clerestory windows in the owner's unit to face the preferred north.**



**In Lapham's design, the flat roof cleverly pierces the volume of the owner's unit and transitions into a functional soffit.**



The east-west axis of the Desert Star complex is bore-sighted on the mountain views to the west.



Small slumpstone planters are alternately either stand-alone or integrated into the structure. While these two planters are of roughly the same length and width, they are of different heights to create visual interest. Installed plantings serve as a counterpoint to, and soften, the rectilinear modernist architecture. This photograph also shows modernist architecture's expansive use of glass intended to blur the transition between the indoors and outdoors.



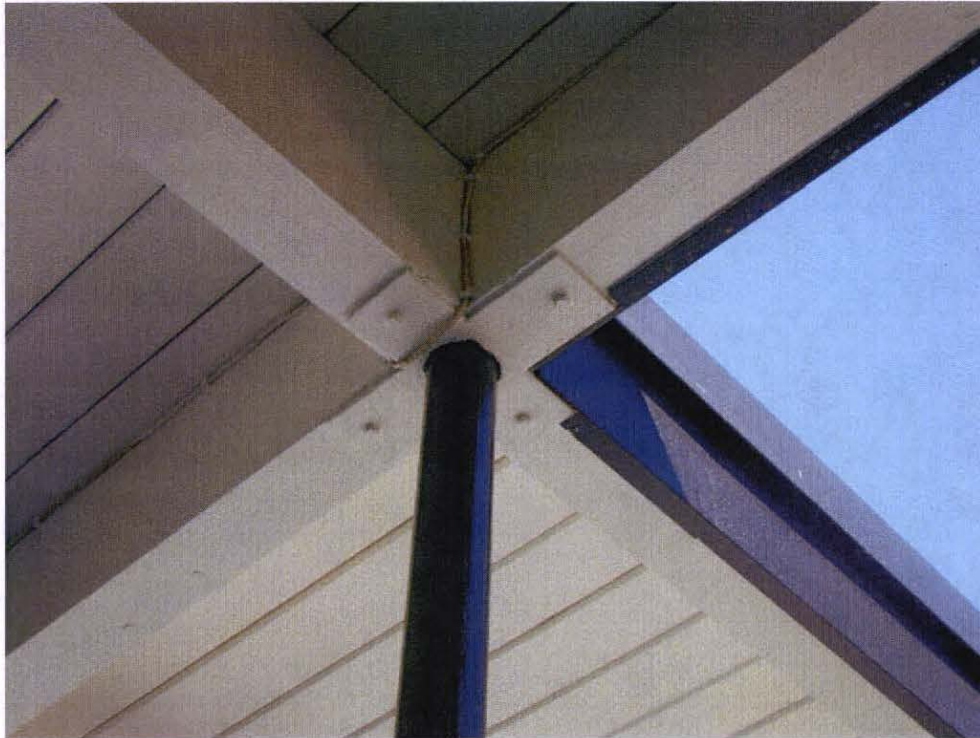
Shown here are multiple architectural details: (1) deep eave with wood tongue-in-groove and horizontal structural wood support beams, (2) vertically raked concrete stucco walls, (3) casement windows, (4) planter flush with the concrete flatwork, and (5) a custom-designed "floating" vertical lighting fixture of wood and pegboard.



**This decorative pegboard insert above the door serves to emphasize the verticality of the door and echoes the use of the material in the light sconce.**



**Clerestory window under deep eave (east side of Unit #1).**



**Exposed three-inch diameter steel pipe column expresses the structure of the building.**



**Enclosed patio showing later door and wood-framed glass panels added for privacy and security. Not shown are original plywood doors which separate the individual patios.**



**Original sign frame and structure (the glass has been replaced).  
The sign was moved sometime after about 1965 to a protected isle in the center  
of the parking lot when the parking lot was reconfigured for more convenient head-in parking.**

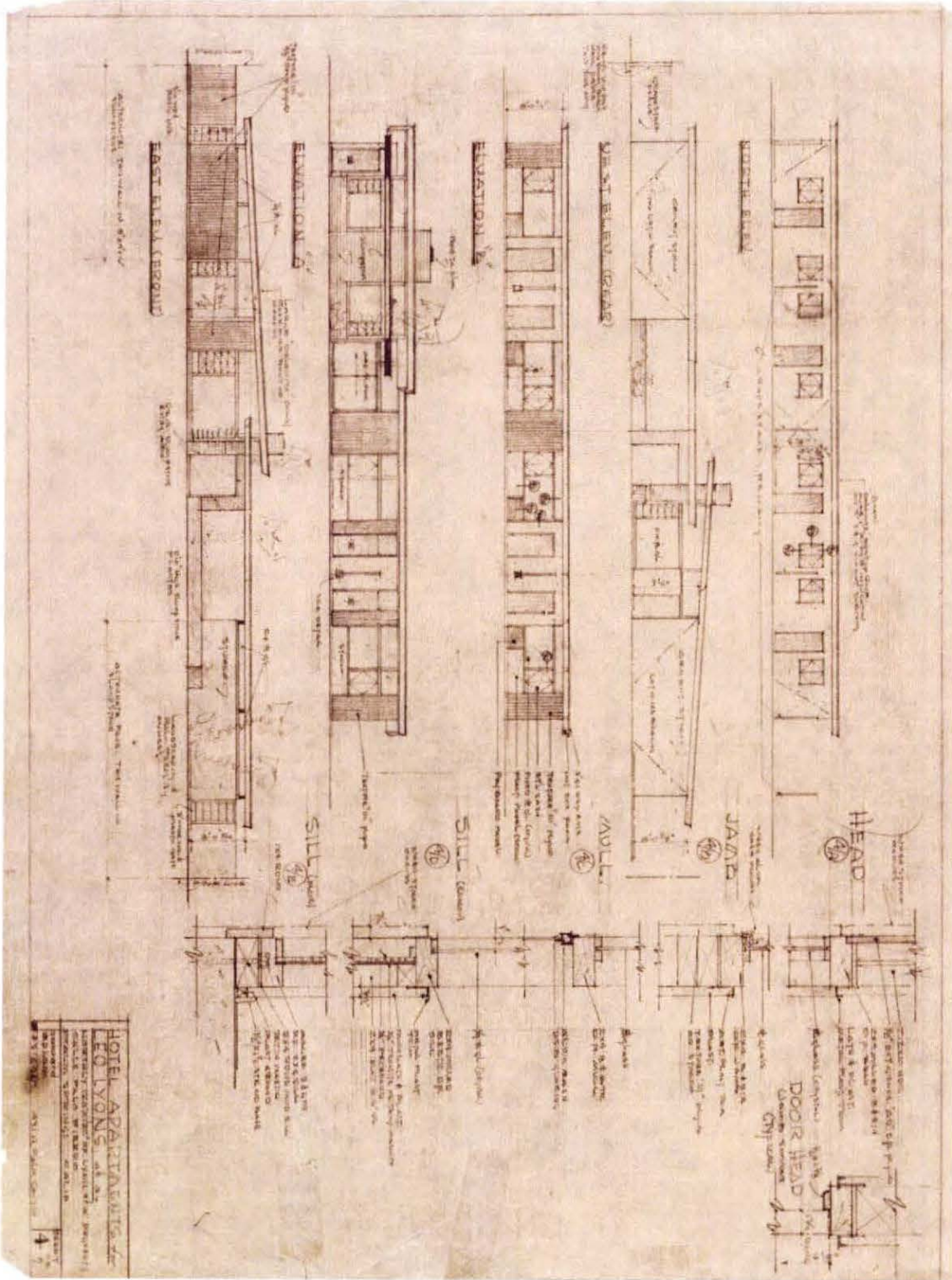


**Casement window, vertically raked concrete stucco, flush planter,  
horizontal support beams and tongue-in-groove ceiling in deep eave.**



Recently added slumpstone fire-pit.

Appendix IV: Miscellaneous Historical Photographs & Ephemera



Undated blueprint of the Desert Star circa 1955  
 (Courtesy Desert Star)





A color postcard of the Desert Star circa 1965 showing original parking lot configuration and original signage placement.

**DESERT STAR**  
1611 CALLE PALO FIERRO  
Attractive small hotel in prime  
location, with good income, and  
deluxe living quarters. Further  
information to interested parties.  
Adjoining lot available. Owner.

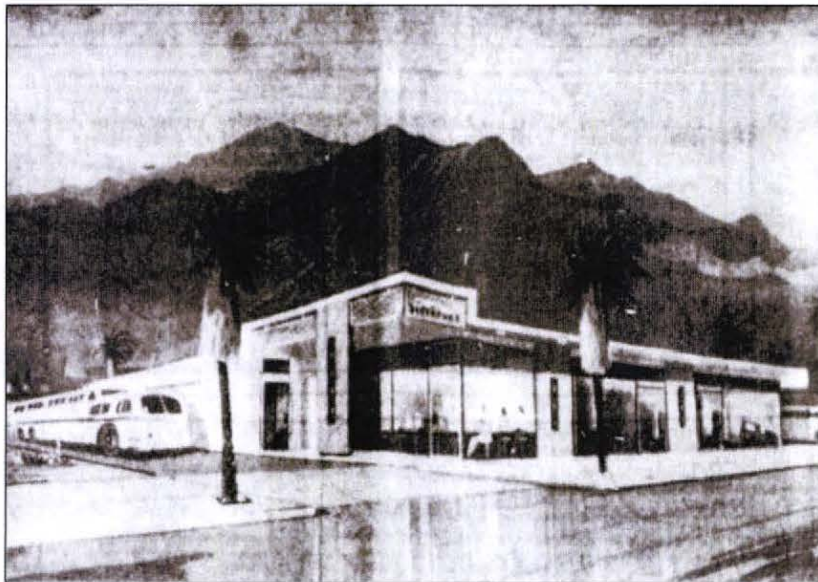
A May 2, 1960 advertisement in the *Desert Sun* newspaper.

THE **DESERT STAR**  
MUST GO  
NEW PRICE \$89,950

8 Deluxe Units Including  
Most luxurious owner's  
apt. in the Springs.  
Sheltered south end.

Hi Gross      Hi Net  
See your Broker or  
call owner Ph. 324-9439

This advertisement appeared in the April 8, 1964 edition of the *Desert Sun* newspaper (it also appeared on April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>). The "8 Deluxe Units" was a bit of poetic license as it included both the owner's unit and maid's quarters.



This Lapham rendering of the "new" Greyhound Bus Terminal (311 North Indian Avenue) appeared in the August 28, 1959 *Desert Sun* newspaper. According to the accompanying article, "plans for the modern, new depot building won tacit approval of the City Council," after Greyhound had been, "long criticized for its failure to modernize its old depot in keeping with downtown Village architecture." The terminal is still remarkably intact and operates as Woody's Burgers.



The North Shore Club Hotel in Crystal Bay (Lake Tahoe), Nevada was “rebuilt” in a modernist design by Howard Lapham in 1960.

**GRAND** *Opening*  
 Nov. 26, 27  
**ORCHID TREE LANE  
 ESTATES GROUP II**

**You will see the most surprising  
 house ever designed for  
 desert living.**

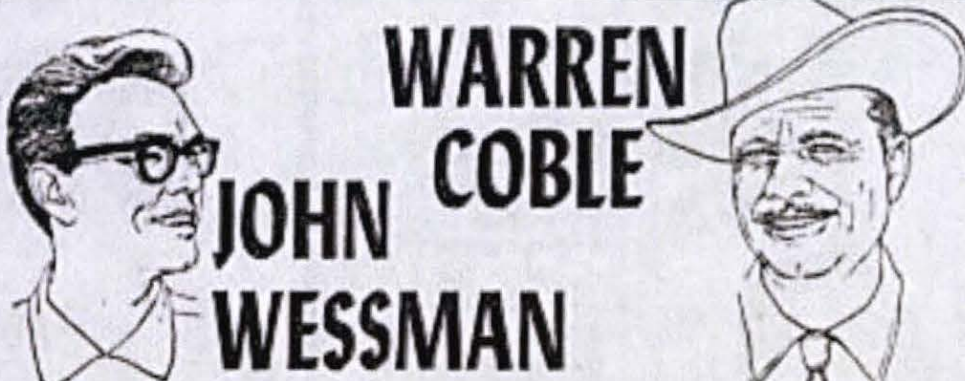
**MODEL: 314 Orchid Tree Lane  
 Palm Springs, California 92262  
 327-0542**

**Howard Lapham**  
 designer-  
 developer

Block image

Custom built by **Coble &  
 Wessman Construction  
 Company, Inc.**

This November 1966 advertisement in the *Desert Sun* newspaper describes Lapham as the “designer-developer” of the Orchid Tree Lane Estates tract and locates the model at 314 Orchid Tree Lane.




**WARREN  
COBLE**

**JOHN  
WESSMAN**

**PRESS CONSTRUCTION CO.  
BUILT THIS BUILDING**

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666 Building, Palm Springs—Designed by **Howard Lapham**

**25 Years Experience In  
Riverside County Construction**

**INDUSTRIAL ■ COMMERCIAL  
RESIDENTIAL ■ REMODELING**

*For additional information contact:*

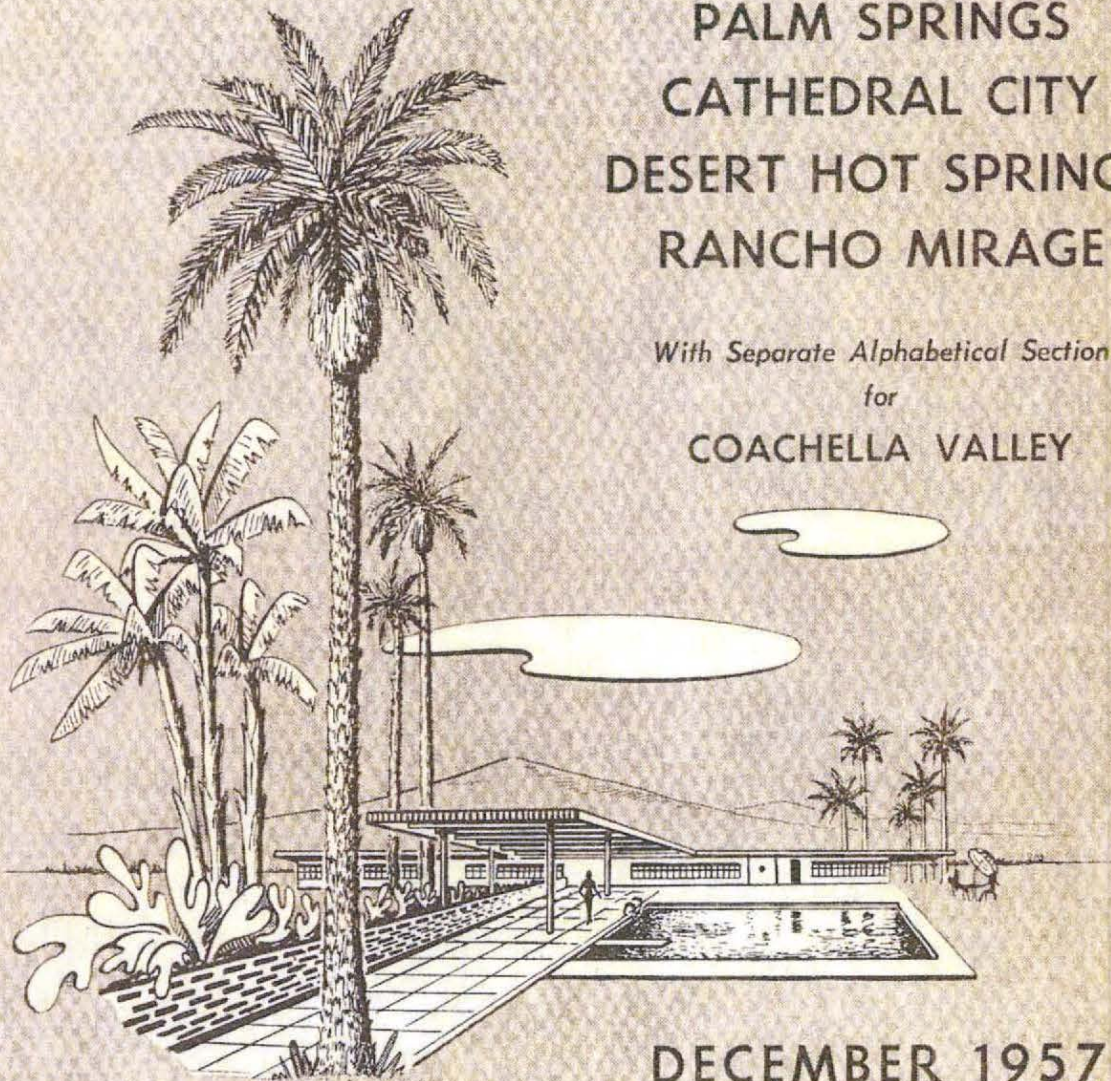
**PRESS CONSTRUCTION CO., INC.**  
**67-625 HIGHWAY 111, PALM SPRINGS PHONE 328-3195**

A June 4, 1965 advertisement in the *Desert Sun* newspaper features the "666 Building" as "Designed by Howard Lapham." Located at 666 North Palm Canyon Drive, the building remains in excellent condition.

# TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

PALM SPRINGS  
CATHEDRAL CITY  
DESERT HOT SPRINGS  
RANCHO MIRAGE

*With Separate Alphabetical Section  
for*  
COACHELLA VALLEY



DECEMBER 1957

Whatever you need

Find It Fast  
In The  
'Yellow Pages'

a "where to buy it" guide

CALIFORNIA WATER & TELEPHONE COMPANY

This rendering of what appears to be a small modernist hotel on the cover of the December 1957 edition of the local telephone book, attests to both the importance of the building type and the area's acceptance of modernist architecture.

## EXCERPTS OF MINUTES

At the Historic Site Preservation Board meeting of the City of Palm Springs, held September 13, 2016, the Historic Site Preservation Board took the following action:

### ITEM:

**2.A. AN APPLICATION BY THE PALM SPRINGS PRESERVATION FOUNDATION (PSPF) ON BEHALF OF THE DESERT STAR APARTMENTS HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, (OWNERS), FOR CLASS 1 HISTORIC DESIGNATION OF 1611 SOUTH CALLE PALO FIERRO, "THE DESERT STAR APARTMENTS," ZONE R-2 (HSPB 102) (MASTER APN 508-353-002) (KL).**

### DISCUSSION:

Staff member Lyon summarized the staff report.

Chair Johns opened the public hearing.

RICHARD HOLWELL, resident and president of the DSA HOA spoke in support of the nomination.

Seeing no other speakers, Chair Johns closed the public hearing.

Member Dixon noted her support of the proposed designation.

Member Burkett noted his support for the designation.

Chair Johns expressed support of the designation and asked whether non-contributing elements could be removed or modified without HSPB approval (Staff Lyon replied no, "all" significant alterations need HSPB review and approval).

Member La Voie noted the HOA should be urged to modify their CC&R's to acknowledge the potential historic site status and the importance that residents understand that exterior changes require HSPB approval.

Member Dixon suggested requiring modification of CC&R's be part of the Board's motion. (Lyon noted it could be a recommendation but the City does not control HOA's rules or CC&R's.)

Member Marsh further suggested the HOA president send an informational letter to current homeowners explaining the process for HSPB review of exterior alterations, opportunities for Mills Act contracts, etc.

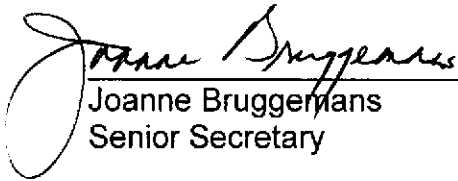
Member Burkett asked if any future designation could include a standard condition requesting that CC&R's be revised to acknowledge historic site status and processing. (Lyon: yes staff can add that as a routine condition of the board's recommendations).

**ACTION;**

M/S/C (La Voie / Dixon) (6-0-1) (Hays absent) to recommend the City Council designate the Desert Start Apartments as a Class 1 historic site with condition that the restrictions of a Class 1 site outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05 be incorporated into the HOA's governing documents.

I, JOANNE BRUGGEMANS, Senior Secretary for the City of Palm Springs, hereby certify that the above action was taken by Historic Site Preservation Board of the City of Palm Springs on the 13<sup>th</sup> day of September, 2016, by the following vote:

**AYES:** Johns, Burkett, Dixon, La Voie, Marsh, Kiser  
**NOES:** (none)  
**ABSENT:** Hays

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joanne Bruggemans  
Senior Secretary

**CITY OF PALM SPRINGS  
PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**



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Date: October 5, 2016  
Subject: Desert Star Apartments

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**AFFIDAVIT OF PUBLICATION**

I, Kathie Hart, MMC, Chief Deputy City Clerk, of the City of Palm Springs, California, do hereby certify that a copy of the attached Notice of Public Hearing was published in the Desert Sun on September 24, 2016.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathie Hart, MMC  
Chief Deputy City Clerk

**AFFIDAVIT OF POSTING**

I, Kathie Hart, MMC, Chief Deputy City Clerk, of the City of Palm Springs, California, do hereby certify that a copy of the attached Notice of Public Hearing was posted at City Hall, 3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Drive, on the exterior legal notice posting board, and in the Office of the City Clerk on September 22, 2016.

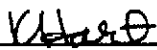
I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathie Hart, MMC  
Chief Deputy City Clerk

**AFFIDAVIT OF MAILING**

I, Kathie Hart, MMC, Chief Deputy City Clerk, of the City of Palm Springs, California, do hereby certify that a copy of the attached Notice of Public Hearing was mailed to each and every person on the attached list on September 22, 2016, in a sealed envelope, with postage prepaid, and depositing same in the U.S. Mail at Palm Springs, California.  
(104 notices)

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Kathie Hart, MMC  
Chief Deputy City Clerk



NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING  
CITY COUNCIL  
CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

PROPOSED DESIGNATION OF 1611 SOUTH CALLE PALO FIERRO,  
"THE DESERT STAR APARTMENTS" AS A CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITE  
CASE HSPB 102

**NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN** that the City Council of the City of Palm Springs, California, will hold a Public Hearing at its meeting of October 5, 2016. The City Council meeting begins at 6:00 p.m. in City Council Chamber at City Hall, 3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs.

The purpose of the hearing is to consider a recommendation by the Historic Site Preservation Board to designate 1611 South Calle Palo Fierro "The Desert Star Apartments", a Class 1 historic site.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:** This request is not subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Sections 15060(c)(2) (the activity will not result in a direct or reasonably foreseeable indirect physical change in the environment) and 15060(c)(3) (the activity is not a project as defined in Section 15378) of the CEQA Guidelines, California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, because it has no potential for resulting in physical changes to the environment directly or indirectly.

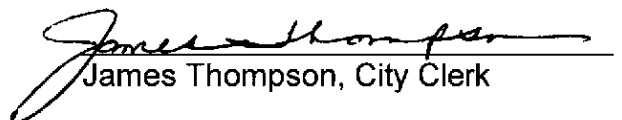
**REVIEW OF PROJECT INFORMATION:** The staff report and other supporting documents regarding this project are available for public review at City Hall between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Monday through Thursday. Please contact the Office of the City Clerk at (760) 323-8204 if you would like to schedule an appointment to review these documents.

**COMMENT ON THIS APPLICATION:** Response to this notice may be made verbally at the Public Hearing and/or in writing before the hearing. Written comments may be made to the City Council by email at [cityclerk@palm Springs-ca.gov](mailto:cityclerk@palm Springs-ca.gov), or letter (for mail or hand delivery) to:

James Thompson, City Clerk  
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way  
Palm Springs, CA 92262

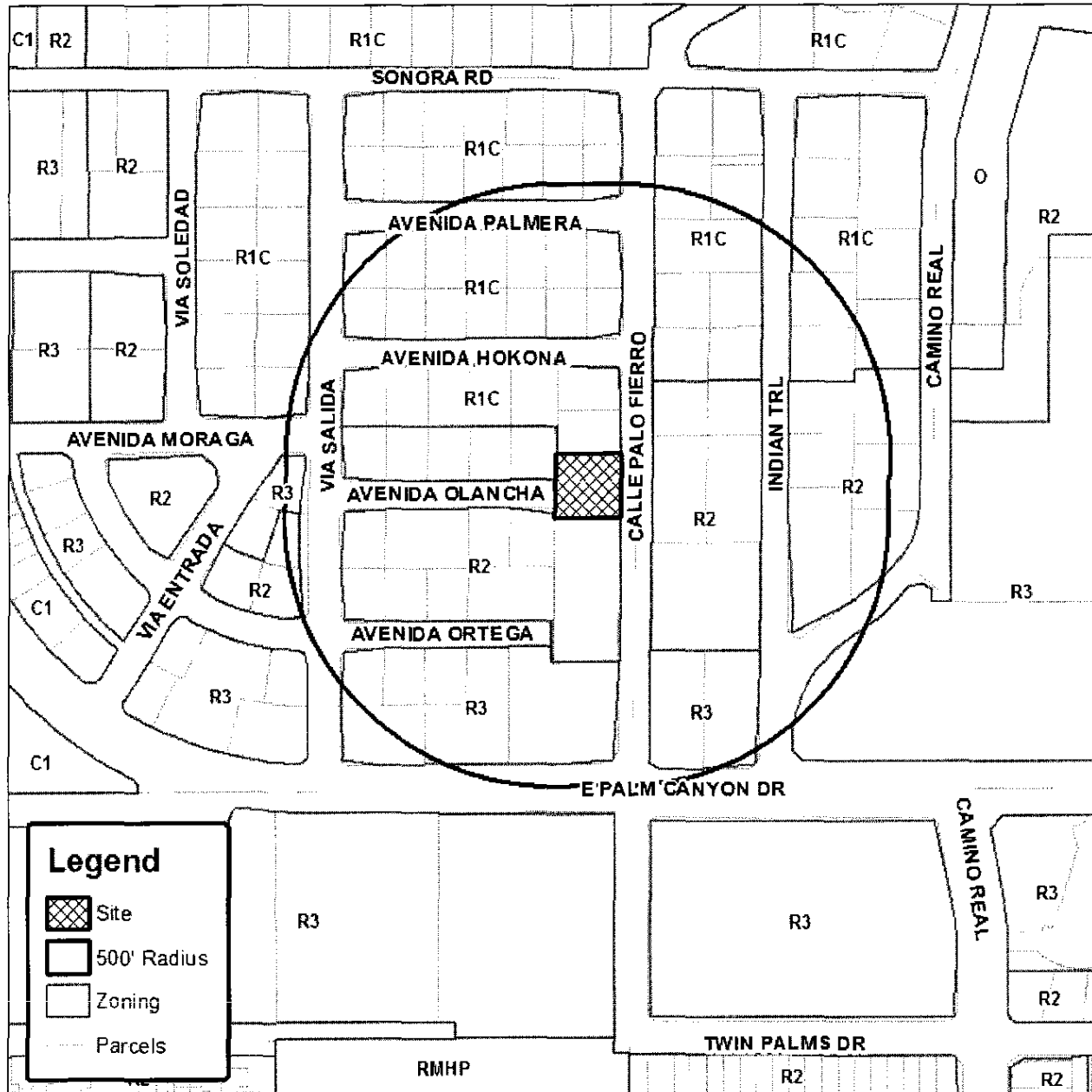
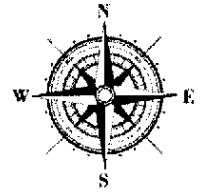
Any challenge of the proposed project in court may be limited to raising only those issues raised at the Public Hearing described in this Notice or in written correspondence delivered to the City Clerk at, or prior to, the City Council hearing. (Government Code Section 65009[b][2]). An opportunity will be given at said hearing for all interested persons to be heard. Questions regarding this case may be directed to Ken Lyon, RA, Associate Planner, at (760) 323-8245.

Si necesita ayuda con esta carta, porfavor llame a la Ciudad de Palm Springs y puede hablar con Felipe Primera telefono (760) 323-8253.

  
James Thompson, City Clerk



# Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map



## CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

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**RONALD D. CHILDERS &  
RICHARD M. PROCTOR**

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455 East Avenida Hokona  
Palm Springs, CA 92264-8437

RONALD  
760-296-2699  
chilpro22@gmail.com

RICHARD  
760-296-2314  
ricmacpro@gmail.com

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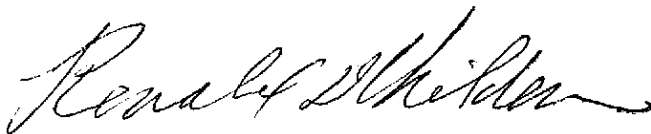
JAMES THOMPSON  
CITY CLERK

**MEMO TO Palm Springs City Council, and  
James Thompson, City Clerk**

**Subject: Desert Star Historic Site Designation**

**As neighbors and property owners at above address we  
approve and support the Class 1 Historic Site Designation  
for 1611 S Palo Fierro**

Thank you,



**Ronald D Childers**



**Richard M Proctor**

09/25/16