



HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE: December 12, 2017

NEW BUSINESS

SUBJECT: CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL REQUEST BY THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS FOR LANDSCAPE REPLACEMENT AT THE FRANCES STEVENS SCHOOL, LOCATED AT 538 – 550 NORTH PALM CANYON DRIVE, ZONE O (OPEN LAND), CASE HSPB 7. (FF)

FROM: Department of Planning Services

SUMMARY

The Department of Maintenance and Facilities is in the process of a landscape replacement project at the Frances Stevens School property. Pursuant to Resolution #15308, which designated the school property as a Class 1 historic site, landscape improvements must receive a certificate of approval from the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB). Staff is requesting that the board review the landscape replacement and provide input; staff will prepare an updated landscape plan incorporating the input of the board and present the updated plan for a certificate of approval at the January 2018 meeting.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Review the landscape modifications and provide input to staff; and
2. Continue the item to the January 2018 HSPB meeting agenda.

BACKGROUND AND SETTING:

<i>Related Relevant City Actions</i>	
11/07/84	The City Council voted to designate the Frances Stevens School and Palm Canyon Theater as a Class 7 (later Class 1) historic site.
06/12/12	The HSPB voted to issue a certificate of approval for landscape revisions at the Frances Stevens School.

The property at 538-550 North Palm Canyon Drive was designated as a Class 7 (later classified as Class 1) historic site by the City Council in November 1984. The resolution identifies that the school and its surrounding park were both included in the designation, and therefore any modifications to the structures or grounds require a certificate of approval from the HSPB.

A certificate of approval for landscape revisions at the property was granted by the HSPB in June 2012. The application included requests for the trimming of trees, shrubs and hedges; replacement of any damaged plant materials with similar plant types; and the repair/replacement of damaged curbs, sidewalks, and parking lot surfacing.

The 2015 drought restrictions mandated by the State of California and the accompanying changes to the City's Water Efficient Landscape ordinance required modifications to the existing irrigation system for the property. Perimeter landscape areas, which were dependent upon overspray for irrigation, were no longer receiving regular watering. Consequently, landscape materials in those areas were no longer receiving adequate irrigation.

The Department of Maintenance and Facilities received direction from City Council earlier this year to replace the dead turf and plant materials at the site, based on complaints from citizens. Utilizing a budget of approximately \$2,500 for materials, Maintenance staff members have replaced the perimeter turf areas on the west and north sides of the property. Staff has halted work on the east perimeter landscape areas, pending the outcome of this certificate of approval application.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

The proposed landscape replacement project involves the perimeter landscape buffer areas on the west, north, and east sides of the property. Turf in those areas has been removed (or is in the process of being removed), and will be replaced with inert groundcover and drought-tolerant plant materials. All mature trees in those areas will be retained and pruned or shaped as necessary. New drip irrigation lines will be installed in the perimeter landscape areas to support the new plant materials. No changes are proposed to the existing turf areas at the center of the school site, nor are any changes proposed to the landscape materials in the park area.

The palette of plant materials that have been installed to date include the following:

- Elephant Bush
- Mexican Bird of Paradise
- Red Hibiscus
- Red Yucca
- Soft Agave
- Tecoma "Bells of Fire"
- Tecoma "Sparky"
- Texas Sage

All of the selected plant materials are listed in the *Lush & Efficient* manual published by the Coachella Valley Water District as being appropriate to the Coachella Valley, and are generally in conformance to the City's Water Efficient Landscape ordinance. The hibiscus variety is listed as requiring moderate watering; it is recommended that the use of this

plant be limited, and only low-water varieties be utilized.

The flowering plants generally have red or yellow flowers, which provides a consistent color palette and is in harmony with the color of the inert groundcover. The quantity and spacing of the plants does not adequately cover the landscape buffer areas; it is recommended that the plant materials at maturity cover at least 50% of the landscape buffer area so as to provide a balanced ratio of plant materials to inert groundcover materials.

The inert material used in the perimeter areas is a reddish-colored crushed rock that varies in size, but is generally 3/8" in diameter and under. While more neutral inert groundcovers are generally encouraged (such as the Brimstone or Mojave Gold varieties), the color is complementary to the clay tile roof on the buildings.

FINDINGS:

Although there are not findings necessary for granting a certificate of approval, pursuant to Municipal Code section 8.05.190, the Board shall consider the following factors in evaluating the application:

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

The proposed landscape revisions are generally compatible with the school and theater buildings, and do not impact the integrity of the structures.

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

There are no physical changes proposed to the structures themselves. The landscape areas that are being rehabilitated are generally not adjacent to the school or theater structures, with the exception of a portion of the north perimeter buffer area. Plant materials are generally low-scaled so as to not impact views of the school and theater buildings; existing trees adjacent to the buildings may be pruned so as to avoid damaging the structures.

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

The color of the inert groundcover material was selected to harmonize with the color of the clay tile roof; while the color choice is not typically recommended, it is complementary to the roofing material. The plant materials provide variety of texture and color, but there is an inadequate quantity and the spacing between plants should be reduced. The plant materials as proposed are generally appropriate to the Coachella Valley, but it is

recommended that further use of the hibiscus plants be limited due to their moderate water usage.

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

No known archaeological or ecological significance is associated with the project site.

CONCLUSION

The landscape materials are generally appropriate for the site and do not impact the integrity of the historic structures; however, it is recommended that the quantity of plant materials be increased.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

In accordance with Section 15331 (alterations to Historic Resources in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Structures) of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the proposed landscape improvements are categorically exempt from further environmental review. The proposed project does not materially impair or adversely affect any of the contributing elements of the site and does not impair the historic integrity of the site or any of the contributing elements therein.

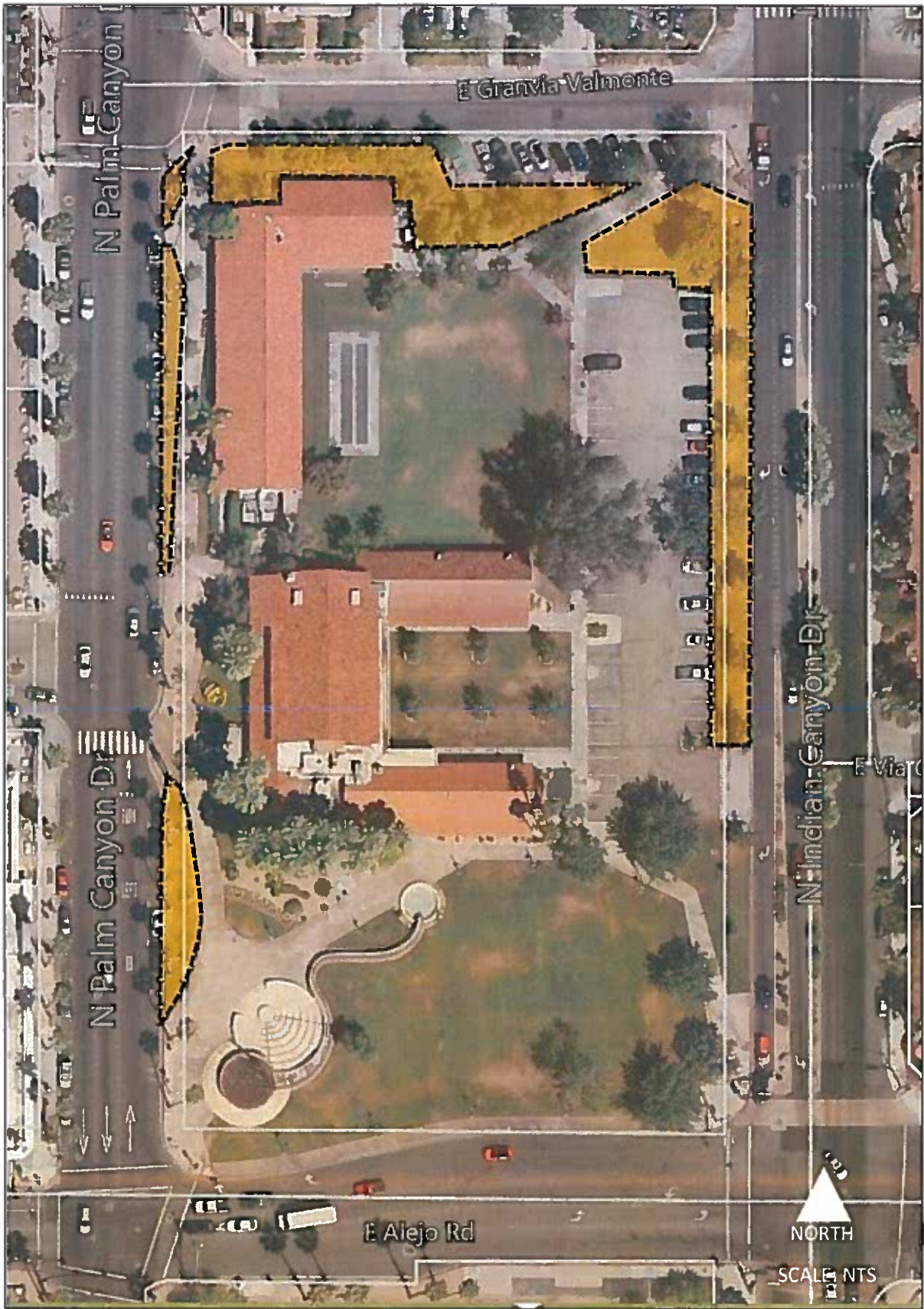
NOTIFICATION

No notification is required for HSPB review of certificates of approval, however the agenda for today's meeting has been provided to the City's Office of Neighborhood Involvement and distributed to designated neighborhood organizations pursuant to PSZC 94.04.00.


Flinn Fagg, AICP
Director of Planning Services

Attachments:

1. Vicinity Map
2. Resolution #15308
3. Photos – before/after conditions
4. Site plan, plant palette



FRANCES STEVENS SCHOOL
HSPB #7

 Modified Landscaped Area

Recorded 8/6/89
#26605

RESOLUTION NO. 15308

OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS,
CALIFORNIA, DESIGNATING FRANCES STEVENS SCHOOL
AND PARK AS A CLASS 7 HISTORIC SITE.

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WHEREAS Frances Stevens School and its associated personages and past events have contributed substantially to the history of the City of Palm Springs; and

WHEREAS Ordinance 1140 of the City of Palm Springs allows for the designation of historic sites; and

WHEREAS on August 13, 1984, the Historic Site Preservation Board initiated proceedings to designate Frances Stevens School and its surrounding Park as an historic site; and

WHEREAS on October 8, 1984, the Historic Site Preservation Board held a public hearing on said designation and unanimously recommended to the City Council designation of said property as a Class 7 Historic Site; and

WHEREAS the City Council concurs in the recommendation of the Historic Site Preservation Board regarding the historic value of Frances Stevens School; and

WHEREAS the designation of Frances Stevens School shall further the purposes and intent of Ordinance 1140; and

WHEREAS the designation of Frances Stevens School shall promote the sensitive preservation of said site.

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

Section 1. Frances Stevens School and its surrounding Park as shown on Exhibit "A" shall be designated a Class 7 Historic Site pursuant to City Ordinance No. 1140.

Section 2. No permit for the exterior alteration to Frances Stevens School shall be granted without the prior approval of the City Council.

ADOPTED this 7th day of November, 1984.

AYES: Councilmembers Birrer, Foster, Maryanov, Smith and Mayor Bogert
NOES: None
ABSENT: None

ATTEST: CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

By [Signature] City Clerk [Signature] City/Manager

REVIEWED & APPROVED: [Signature]

Frances Stevens School: Before Photos



Frances Stevens School: Before Photos



Frances Stevens School: After Photos



Frances Stevens School: After Photos



Tecoma Sparky

Height: 3 to 5 feet

Spread 2 to 4 feet

Maintenance: Low

Low water needs



Tecoma Bells of Fire

Height: 3 to 5 feet

Spread 2 to 4 feet

Maintenance: Low

Low water needs



Caesalpinia (Mexican) Bird of Paradise

Height: up to 6 feet

Spread: 3 to 8 feet

Drought tolerant



Texas Sage

Height: 2 to 4 feet

Spread: 3 feet

Low Maintenance

Drought tolerant



Red Yucca

Height: up to 3 feet

Spread: up to 3 feet

Low Water



Soft Agave

Height: (flowers) 6 to 8 feet

Spread: up to 3 feet

Drought Tolerant



Red Hibiscus

Height: 3 to 6 feet

Spread: 2 to 3 feet



Elephant Bush

Height: 4 to 6 feet

Spread: 3 to 4 feet

Drought Tolerant





Section 1:

Two Red Yuccas

Four Tecomas (two-sparky; two-bells of fire)

Two Birds of Paradise

Two Texas Sage

Section 2:

Four Texas Sage

Four Tecomas (two-sparky; two-bells of fire)

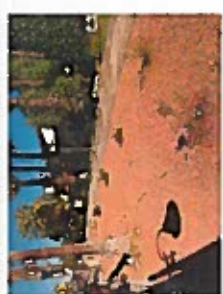
Two Birds of Paradise

Section 3:

Six Soft Agave

Two Hibiscus

Four Elephant Bushes



SITE AERIAL

FRANCES STEVENS

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS



DAVID YODA LINDSAY
Landscape Architects and Plant Planners

DECEMBER 2017