

Context: Post-World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969)



Palm Springs City Hall (1952, Clark, Frey & Chambers; HSPB-33). Photographed by Julius Shulman, 1958. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

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CONTEXT: POST-WORLD WAR II PALM SPRINGS (1945-1969)

Overview

This context explores the post-World War II boom and related development that left Palm Springs with what many consider the largest and finest concentration of mid-20th century Modern architecture in the United States. Hollywood film stars and Eastern industrialists were joined in the postwar decades by ever-increasing numbers of tourists. The growing prosperity of the postwar years and the rise of the car culture created a leisured, mobile middle class that sought, in Palm Springs, the “good life” that had previously been available only to the wealthy.⁴³⁴ This surge of visitors and seasonal residents - by 1951 the city’s winter population swelled to almost 30,000 from a permanent population of 7,660 - coincided with the peak of Modernism’s popularity.⁴³⁵

The population growth accelerated in the 1950s, bringing a demand for civic necessities such as schools, libraries, museums, a city hall and police headquarters, as well as offices, stores, and housing. Palm Springs’ growth as a tourist destination brought a demand for inns, resorts, and tourist attractions. Tourism also introduced a demand for affordable second homes for a growing middle class; the construction and financing methods for building such mass-produced housing tracts were already developing in suburban areas of larger cities, including nearby Los Angeles, and found a ready market in Palm Springs. Though Palm Springs was a smaller municipality, this economic climate provided many opportunities for locally-based architects, as well as several Los Angeles architects, to explore and develop a wide range of architectural types and ideas, sometimes influenced by sophisticated global design trends. These conditions and the architects’ talents lead to the development of an exceptional group of Modern buildings which later came to be identified as “Palm Springs Modernism” or “The Palm Springs School.”⁴³⁶

The desert climate and casual lifestyle all but demanded unconventional design, and clients were more accepting of, even sought out, a more adventurous style in the resort atmosphere of Palm Springs than they would have in their primary residences.⁴³⁷ In the two decades after the war, Palm Springs was transformed with new commercial and institutional buildings, custom homes, and a large number of housing tracts.

This context examines influences on the built environment in Palm Springs following the conclusion of World War II. The first section provides an overview of the important developments in architecture

⁴³⁴ Prior to completion of Interstate 10 through the Coachella Valley in the 1960s, the many visitors who traveled to Palm Springs by automobile used U.S. Highways 60, 70, and 99.

⁴³⁵ *Western Resort Publications*, “Yearbook,” 16.

⁴³⁶ Discussion of Modern architectural trends in Palm Springs in the post-World War II era derived from Alan Hess, “Historic Context of Modern Architecture: Residential, Commercial and Civic Architecture,” for Historic Resources Group, January 23, 2015, and updated June 9, 2015.

⁴³⁷ Jeff Book, “Palm Springs Revisited,” *Departures*, October 2000, <https://www.departures.com/travel/travel/palm-springs-revisited> (accessed October 2014).

during this period and a brief discussion of some of the significant architects. Following the introductory section are the themes and sub-themes, divided by property type: single-family residential development, multi-family residential development, commercial development, and civic and institutional development. At the conclusion of each theme are registration requirements for evaluating resources under that theme.

For additional information about the development of neighborhoods associated with the ethnic minority communities in Palm Springs, see the Ethnic Minorities Context that is included as the final chapter of this study.

THEME: POST-WORLD WAR II SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969)

Postwar Residential Architecture in Palm Springs (1945-1969)⁴³⁸

The exuberance and optimism from the war victory, the population explosion, and the creation of automobile-centric suburbia in the building boom that followed meant great changes for the way Americans lived in the post-World War II era. Southern California was at the forefront of this new era, and its tradition of experimentation in architecture placed it in an ideal position to lead the exploration of suburban residential architecture after World War II. This sub-theme explores the important role of architecture in the development of Palm Springs after the war, and discusses buildings that are important as examples of particular architectural styles or as the work of significant architects or designers.⁴³⁹

Following precedents started in the 1930s, the decade of the 1940s further reinforced the prominence of Modern architecture in defining the growth of Palm Springs after World War II. This paralleled the trend throughout California; as prosperity returned with the war, and as the peacetime return of soldiers brought a demand for new development, a young generation of architects exposed to Modernism in their training or travels before and during the war wanted to put those ideas into practice. This new generation of architects combined a concern for landscape and site relationships, the use of natural materials, and innovative building technologies to create a new regional architecture. This was also a period of exuberance and optimism that was directly reflected in the architecture. According to historian Kevin Starr, the theory that domestic architecture would not take up where it had left off before the war was fundamental.⁴⁴⁰

Though many clients still preferred traditional styles, their architects, committed to Modern ideas, championed its cause. In one prominent example, singer Frank Sinatra walked into the offices of Williams, Williams & Williams in May 1947 and asked for a Georgian Revival-style house, to be completed by Christmas, on a lot the singer had just purchased east of the Movie Colony. E. Stewart Williams instead designed a low, sprawling Modern house with shed roofs, clerestory windows, and walls of stone, stucco, and redwood siding (1947, 1148 E. Alejo Road; HSPB-77). A wall of sliding glass panels opens at the push of a button to a central patio with a piano-shaped swimming pool and cabana.⁴⁴¹ A pergola with cutouts in its roof casts noontime shadows resembling piano keys along one edge of the pool – an unintentional effect, according to Williams.⁴⁴² The landscape design is the work of Tommy Tomson.⁴⁴³ The commission helped E. Stewart Williams help launch his long career. The design is an

⁴³⁸ This section includes an overview discussion of the predominant architectural styles from this period. A more detailed description of each style, along with a list of character-defining features, is included in the Architectural Styles section.

⁴³⁹ Many of these same architects produced important commercial and institutional designs in the city as well; those properties are discussed in separate themes.

⁴⁴⁰ Kevin Starr, "The Case Study House Program and the Impending Future: Some Regional Considerations," in Elizabeth Smith, *Blueprints for Modern Living* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), 131.

⁴⁴¹ Colacello, 205, and Adèle Cygelman, *Palm Springs Modern* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1999), 72-82.

⁴⁴² Johns, 182.

⁴⁴³ Steven Keylon, landscape historian, correspondence with project team, April 10, 2015.

early and important step in Williams' evolution as a residential designer. Though he had not been trained in Modernism at Cornell's School of Architecture, his travels in Europe introduced him to many of the varied approaches to Modern design there. The organic forms and natural materials used in Scandinavian Modern design influenced him the most.



Sinatra House (1947, E. Stewart Williams; HSPB-77). Photographed in 1949 by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

Residential designs in the 1940s established the pattern of a wide range of interpretations of Modern architecture. The decade brought Palm Springs the building which was, and remains, the most famous in terms of international recognition: Richard Neutra's Kaufmann House. Following architects like Albert Frey and John Porter Clark, who began working in Palm Springs before the war, more architects who would become central figures in the Palm Springs School settled there in the 1940s. William Cody, a graduate of the USC School of Architecture, moved to Palm Springs in 1946 for health reasons. After serving in the war, E. Stewart Williams joined his father, Harry, and his brother Roger to begin their joint practice.

Albert Frey had worked with Le Corbusier in Paris in 1929 before immigrating to the United States. He worked first in New York, but after visiting Palm Springs in 1934, the Swiss-born architect determined to settle there. Though trained in European Modern ideas, he quickly adapted them to the desert conditions which appealed to him, arriving at a varied and original expression of Modernism. While exploring the potential of new materials such as corrugated steel, trusses made of thin pipe, and concrete block, Frey used them to reflect the desert climate, landscape, vegetation, and colors. He also adapted

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his designs to the casual Palm Springs culture. The size of Palm Springs and the relatively few number of architects gave him opportunities to design a wide range of building types. His own house, Frey I (1941; demolished) was experimental. A small house for a bachelor, it used minimal walls and a flat roof to create living space that opened to a patio and (eventually) a pool. The vacation home Frey designed with (and for) industrial designer Raymond Loewy (600 W. Panorama Road; HSPB-33) celebrated the modern desert lifestyle by bringing the swimming pool into the living room. In contrast, the Markham House (1941) and the Lyons House (1948), two of several Frey built over the decades in Smoke Tree Ranch, had to conform to the design guidelines calling for Ranch style. The simple, low scale roof forms helped blend the houses into the natural landscape, as intended by the Smoke Tree Ranch planning guidelines.



Loewy Residence (1946, Albert Frey; HSPB-33). Photographed in 1947 by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

Another approach to Modern residential design is seen in the work of William Cody. Cody trained in progressive Modernism at the USC School of Architecture and graduated in 1942, but also worked with Cliff May. May's designs were influenced by vernacular historic architecture in California, but incorporated elements of Modern architecture to create houses that were convenient and comfortable, as proven by the widespread popularity of his designs. Cody's own house (1947, 1950 E. Desert Palms Drive) showed both his interest in innovative structure and details, and in developing livable spaces that incorporated openness and views. His house was organized as a series of pavilions and courtyards that brought in light, views, and nature. The thin sections of roof and walls demonstrate his search for clean, elegant structures. At the Perlberg House (1952, 888 N. Avenida Palmas), Cody continued to explore simple forms with flat or gently sloping shed roofs that reduced the dimensions of column and roof structures to a minimum, creating light profiles.

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Kaufmann House (1946, Richard Neutra; HSPB-29B). Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

The 1946 Kaufmann House (470 W. Vista Chino; HSPB-29B) was designed by Richard Neutra as the winter home of Pittsburgh department store owner Edgar Kaufmann. Kauffman was already known for building another world-famous house, Fallingwater by Frank Lloyd Wright (designed 1935; main house constructed 1936-38, followed by the guest house in 1939). The design of his Palm Springs home summarized Neutra's ideas at the time: the flat roof, steel frame, and glass walls embodied one prominent version of Modernism by using sharp, clean, minimalist, machine-made lines contrasting with the beauty of the open, natural site with the rugged slopes of Mt. San Jacinto as backdrop. The use of stone and wood finishes represented an evolution of Neutra's ideas from those seen in the earlier Miller House (1937, 2311 N. Indian Canyon Drive; HSPB-45). When photographed by Julius Shulman and disseminated worldwide, the Kaufmann House became an iconic image of Modern architecture.

In the 1950s, with the town's expansive growth, Palm Springs architects were able to explore a wide range of residential architectural ideas with willing clients interested in Modern design. These respond in various ways to the demands of the location: controlling the sun's heat, respecting the natural landscape, and creating homes of pleasure and recreation. Palm Springs' residential architecture of this period included affordable, mass-produced housing, along with custom homes designed with sizeable budgets. The distinctive solutions of several local architects show a high quality of concept and execution that matches the quality of the more widely publicized Los Angeles Modern architects of the same period.

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Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison formed a partnership in 1952 after meeting at the office of William Cody, where both worked. Wexler, a graduate of the University of Minnesota architecture school, had worked for Richard Neutra in Los Angeles before moving to Palm Springs. Wexler & Harrison's early house designs show the influence of both Neutra and Cody, but also the beginning of a distinctive approach to design. Wexler's interest in engineering led to simple designs expressing their wood post-and-beam and steel frame structure. This is seen in three particular houses: for developer Sam Martin Zalud, Wexler & Harrison designed two houses as part of a small planned neighborhood around a communal park, named Lilliana Gardens. The floor plans of these two houses were the same, featuring a central open atrium next to the living room; the two houses were differentiated by their front walls, one faced in rubble stone, and one with slump block, which William Cody often used. At the same time, Wexler built a house (1955, 1272 E. Verbena Drive) for his family. It is also wood post-and-beam, but smaller and simpler, and designed to be expanded as his family grew.



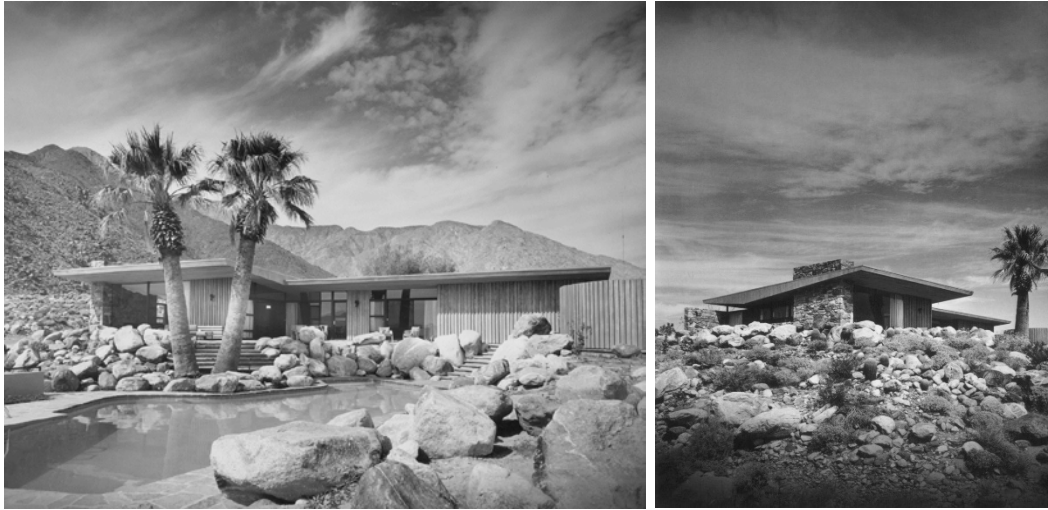
L: Donald Wexler's own home, 1955. Photograph 2010. Source: Palm Springs Art Museum © Juergen Nogai. R: "Glass House" in Lilliana Gardens (1954, Wexler & Harrison). Source: *Palm Springs Life*, "Palm Springs 'Glass House' Was One of Donald Wexler's First Custom Homes."

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L and R: Edris House (1953, E. Stewart Williams). Photographed in 1954 by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

E. Stewart Williams developed an interest in natural materials including stone, which tied his designs visually to the desert site. The Edris House (1953, E. Stewart Williams, 1030 W. Cielo Drive; HSPB-46) is located on a boulder-strewn slope overlooking the Coachella Valley. The house's inverted truss roof rests on pillars of natural stone, with glass infill. Williams' own house (1956) responds to a very different, flat site. A long, gentle butterfly roof is supported on steel columns allowing the walls of the public areas to be mostly glass. This also allows the garden landscaping and stone walls to extend from outside to inside and then outside again to create an especially open and light filled house.



Carey House (1956, Clark, Frey & Chambers; HSPB-33, listed in the National Register). Source: *Albert Frey, Architect*, p. 115.

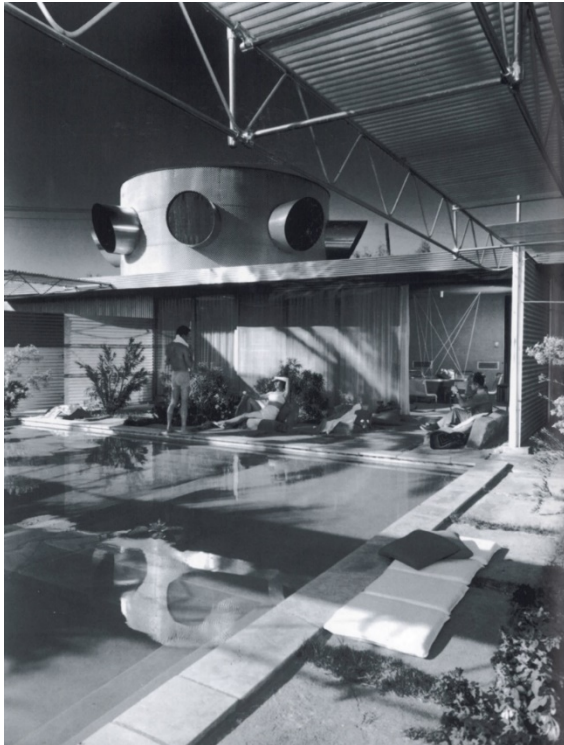
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In the 1950s Clark, Frey & Chambers experimented with new, lightweight building technologies, including composite wall panels (as at the Carey House, 1956, 651 W. Via Escuela; HSPB-33 and listed in the National Register); and corrugated plastic and metal panels (as at Frey House I, 1941; demolished). Frey's exploration of structure and materials included a major expansion of his own house (Frey House I, expanded 1953; demolished), where he added a second story turret with circular windows shaded by tubular metal sun shades. Always responding to the desert climate in shaping his designs, Frey charted the sun's path in order to orient windows, overhangs and sunshades, and frequently "lifted" his houses off the ground to minimize disturbance of the desert landscape (as at the Carey House).



Frey House I (1941 and 1953, Albert Frey; demolished). Photographed in 1957 by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

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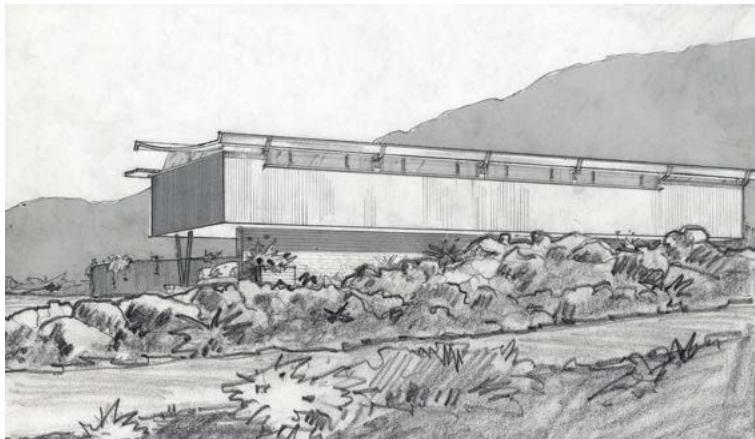
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L: Crockett House (1956, Herbert Burns). Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection. R: Burgess House (1958, Hugh Kaptur). Source: *Palm Springs Life*, "Ready for their Close-ups." Photographer Jay Jorgensen.

Among other locally-based architects and designers, builder Herbert Burns designed Late Moderne houses similar to his inns, which emphasized volumes and streamlined forms rather than structure, as seen in the Crockett House (1956, 457 W. Arenas Road). Hugh Kaptur, trained in Detroit at the Lawrence Technological University, brought the simple frame construction he used in multiple housing tract designs to the William Burgess House (1958, 550 W. Palisades Drive). Walter White's design for the Franz Alexander Residence (1956, 1011 W. Cielo Drive; listed in the National Register) has a dramatic, upswept, curving roof.⁴⁴⁴



Rendering of the Alexander House (1956, Walter S. White) showing the upswept roof design. Source: Walter S. White Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California, Santa Barbara.

⁴⁴⁴ The first building permits for the residence were issued on November 18, 1955; construction was completed in 1956. Barbara Lamprecht, M.Arch, Ph.D, Palm Springs Modernism Week, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Alexander, Dr. Franz, Residence," September 2015.

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Palm Springs architects continued their wide-ranging, eclectic exploration of Modern architecture in the 1960s, with William Krisel's Robert Alexander House (1960, 1350 Ladera Circle); William Cody's collection of pavilions at the Abernathy House (1962, 611 N. Phillips Road; HSPB-86); Frey's minimalist second home (Frey House II, 1963, 686 W. Palisades Drive; HSPB-33, listed in the National Register); Donald Wexler's steel-frame Dinah Shore House (1963, 432 W. Hermosa Place); John Lautner's concrete Elrod House (1968, 2175 Southridge Drive, listed in the National Register); Craig Ellwood's Palevsky House (1968, 1021 W. Cielo Drive); and designer James McNaughton's abstraction of historicist influences seen, for example, at the Kramer House (1963, 800 E. Granvia Valmonte). Other notable Los Angeles architects who built houses in Palm Springs in the post-World War II era include Harold Levitt, Fred Monhoff, and Edward Fickett. Each architect had a distinct interpretation of Modern design to expand the wide range of Modern expressions in Palm Springs. Architects in Palm Springs produced major works in the 1960s that stand out in a period when Southern California residential design in general became internationally recognized.



Sutter House (1960, E. Stewart Williams).
 Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: The J.
 Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.
 Digital Photo Collection.

While continuing to design large commercial and institutional buildings, E. Stewart Williams designed several custom houses, including the Sutter House (1960, 1207 Calle de Maria) using striated concrete block. William Krisel's Robert Alexander House (1960, 1350 Ladera Circle) used a symmetrical plan of three hexagons which were adapted according to the sloping site, and the interior uses for living room, master bedroom, and kitchen. William Cody's residential designs from this period demonstrate his awareness of international trends in Modern architecture, his modernist education at the USC School of Architecture, and his own creativity in interpreting and adapting those concepts to the desert. The range and variety of Cody's custom residential designs is seen in the large Abernathy house (1962, 611 N. Phillips Road; HSPB-86), which uses a more formal plan and pyramid-shaped roofs.



L: Robert Alexander House, “House of Tomorrow,” (1960, Palmer & Krisel). Photograph by Robert Doisneau for *LIFE*. R: Interior view of living room by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

Frey House II (1963, expanded 1967, 686 W. Palisades Drive; HSPB-33 and listed in the National Register), Albert Frey’s second house for himself, was an equally striking design on the mountainside overlooking the central business district. Frey House II was an essay in minimalist steel and glass perched lightly on a mountainside boulder field, bringing together nature and modern technology. As did Lautner at the later Elrod House, Frey left a large, natural rock outcropping in place and used it to divide the main living space from the adjacent bedroom.⁴⁴⁵ A similar treatment is also found in Hugh Kaptur’s nearby Burgess House from 1958.



Frey House II (1963, Albert Frey; HSPB-33, listed in the National Register). Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

⁴⁴⁵ Frey added a 300 square foot guest bedroom to Frey House II in 1967. Source: “Special Collection: Albert Frey House II and Archives,” Palm Springs Art Museum, <https://www.psmuseum.org/palm-springs-art-collection/special-collections/special-collection-albert-frey-house-ii-and-archives>, accessed June 2016.

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L: Shore House (1963, Donald Wexler). Photographed by Julius Shulman, 2007. Source: Palm Springs Art Museum. R: Palevsky House (1968, Craig Ellwood). Source: <http://www.ncmodernist.org/ellwood.htm>.

Donald Wexler's Dinah Shore house (1963, 432 W. Hermosa Place) is representative of several of his custom homes, combining large glass-walled pavilion structures for living and dining areas, and more intimate, enclosed wings for bedrooms. Craig Ellwood designed the Max Palevsky house (1968, 1021 W. Cielo Drive) in the spare rectilinear style for which he was known in the Case Study program houses of Los Angeles.



Kramer House (1963, James McNaughton).
Source: *Architectural Digest*, Summer 1965.

Arthur Elrod remodeled at 350 W. Via Lola. Related design concepts appeared nationally in public and institutional buildings in the same period in the New Formalist designs of Edward Durrell Stone, Minoru Yamasaki, and others.

The Elrod House (1968, 2175 Southridge Drive; listed in the National Register) by Los Angeles architect John Lautner exemplifies the Organic and Expressionist influences in Modern architecture. The chief concept of Organic architecture is the merging of building and nature, so that the design responds to the environment rather than imposing itself upon it. Expressionism repudiated modern rationalism and

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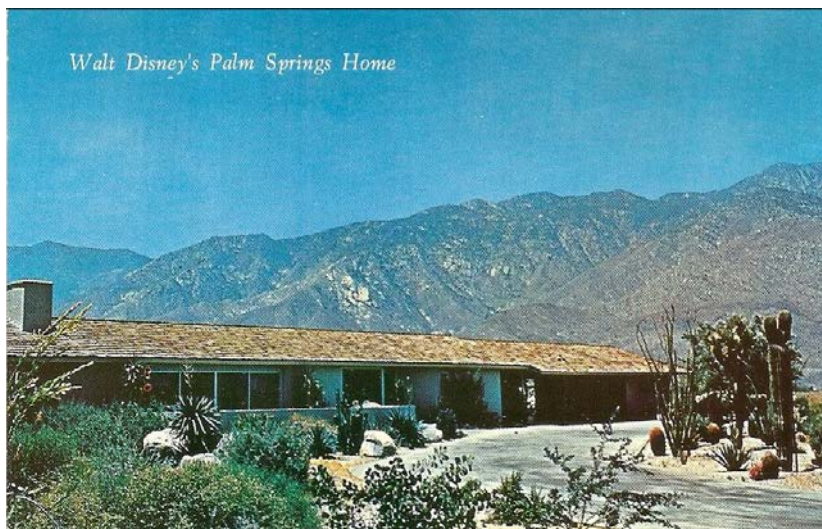
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emphasized abstraction of form to symbolically express subjective interpretation of inner experience. Both employed natural shapes, complex geometries, and new building materials and technologies. Designed for Palm Springs interior designer Arthur Elrod, the house sits on a prominent ridgeline above the city. Lautner used concrete to blend the home into its rocky hillside site. The site was excavated to reveal rock outcroppings which helped to shape and define the main living area, a 60-foot diameter, split-level open space surmounted by a shallow, conical concrete dome with skylights. The dome is supported on a continuous concrete tension ring and concealed steel columns, giving the impression that it is suspended over the space. The original zigzagged, frameless glass walls facing the view were later replaced by Lautner with a curving wall of glass that encompasses part of the swimming pool and, at the press of a button, retracts to the side, leaving the living room open to the vista beyond.

The Ranch house that emerged in the 1930s also became increasingly popular in Palm Springs in the post-World War II era, combining modernist ideas of space and function with traditional elements of working ranches of the American West and Spanish ranchos of the colonial era. The architectural style – characterized by its low horizontal massing, sprawling interior plan, and emphasis on indoor-outdoor living – embodied the mid-20th century ideal of “California living” and was well-suited to the desert climate and casual lifestyle of Palm Springs. The Ranch style enjoyed enormous popularity from the 1940s to the 1970s, especially in Western-themed developments such as Smoke Tree Ranch. It was more conservative than other modern residential architecture of the period, often using decorative elements based on historical forms and capitalizing on the national fascination with the “Old West.” The underlying philosophy of the Ranch house was informality, outdoor living, gracious entertaining, and natural materials. In Palm Springs, Ranch houses used wood clapboard and board-and-batten siding, as well as concrete slump block walls which served to insulate the interiors in the hot desert climate.



Postcard of Walt Disney's 1957 Ranch-style home at Smoke Tree Ranch.

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Sub-theme: Single-Family Residential Development (1945-1969)

The postwar boom, a prosperity beyond imagination, combined with surging population growth and the democratization of privilege, would change Palm Springs forever.⁴⁴⁶

In the immediate post-World War II era, California in general experienced a period of unprecedented growth. Many individuals who came west to participate in the war effort, including former military personnel, decided to settle permanently. Between 1940 and 1950, California's population increased by 53 percent, which was partially accounted for by the 850,000 veterans who took up residence after the war.⁴⁴⁷ As a result, the construction of residential properties became a major focus of development in the post-World War II era. The immediate and widespread need for housing inspired a variety of responses. For communities that were largely built out, land previously considered "unbuildable" became more attractive. For newer communities, large new tracts were developed.

Development in Palm Springs during this period reflected these wider trends. The permanent population of Palm Springs rose 292 percent between 1940 and 1960, from 3,434 to 13,468 people. Charting the local population shows this steep growth lasted in Palm Springs for decades after the war.⁴⁴⁸ Even as full-time residency increased in Palm Springs, the seasonal visitor population outpaced these increases. Whereas seasonal visitation in 1940 was estimated to be 100,000 people, by 1953 it was 250,000, and 500,000 by 1960.⁴⁴⁹

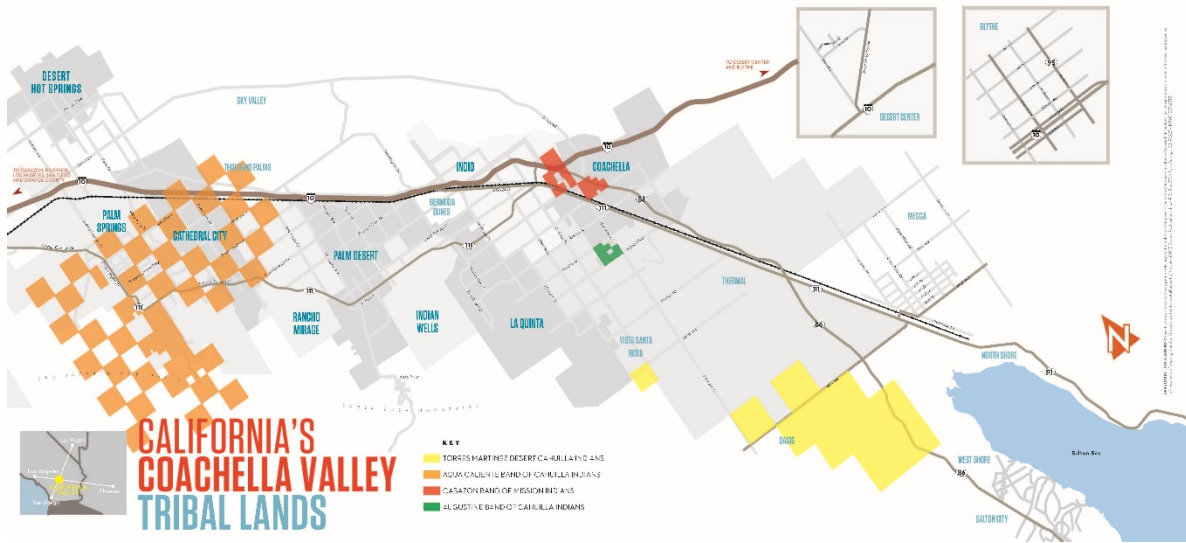
In Palm Springs, postwar single-family residential development followed several patterns. First, expansion/tract development occurred eastward, and then southward into the flat exposed parcels of the desert floor with the creation of homes for middle-class and upper-middle class residents. Second, empty parcels within existing developments were subject to in-fill development. Third, previously "unbuildable" parcels in the foothills were now economically viable for the development of luxury homes. Fourth, after 1959, new laws permitted the lease and development of the checkerboard of open parcels owned by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians. This offered developers a wide variety of opportunities previously denied within the city.

⁴⁴⁶ Peter Wild, *Tipping the Dream: A Brief History of Palm Springs*. (Johannesburg, CA: The Shady Myrick Research Project, 2007), 62.

⁴⁴⁷ Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 193-194.

⁴⁴⁸ Wild, *Tipping the Dream: A Brief History of Palm Springs*, un-numbered page.

⁴⁴⁹ Official Census Population, *Palm Springs Life Annual Pictorial*, 1960.



A map showing the “checkerboard” pattern of land owned by the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians in Palm Springs.
Source: *Palm Springs Life*, “Coachella Valley Maps – Vision 2013/14.”

Immediately after the war, between 1945 and 1949, some 20 new tracts were recorded in and around Palm Springs. The developers involved in these ventures tended to be early citizens of the city who saw potential in Palm Springs. An example of this was the Chino Mesa Estates tract (1945) developed by Ernest Off (1901-1993). Off had been instrumental in pre-war housing development in the city. After leaving Palm Springs in 1937 and moving to Brentwood and Beverly Hills, he returned to purchase and develop the 22 ½ acres north of Las Palmas for the development of high-end homes.⁴⁵⁰ The home sites were marketed as “Exclusive, Restricted, Sheltered” and noted for their proximity to Las Palmas Estates.⁴⁵¹

Prior to World War II, Palm Springs had been a tourist and vacation home destination for the wealthy. Postwar prosperity brought a new group of tourists and second home-owners to the city: the upper-middle and middle classes. This gradual democratization of Palm Springs would irrevocably change the city during the 1950s and 1960s, first with expansive single-family residential development and ultimately through the creation of innovative forms of multi-family residential development and ownership options.⁴⁵² The creation of new tracts and subdivisions also resulted in a less concentrated, more scattered development pattern.

⁴⁵⁰ “Former Villager Returns and Plans New Development,” *Desert Sun*, February 22, 1946, 3.

⁴⁵¹ “Chino Mesa Estates Ad,” *Desert Sun*, March 1, 1946, 11.

⁴⁵² Post-World War II multi-family residential development is discussed in a separate theme.

A more practical, yet important factor in residential development in Palm Springs and the entire southwest was the accessibility of air conditioning. Although individual residential air-conditioning units were available as early as 1939, widespread acquisition and use was delayed by the war. In 1947, British scholar S.F. Markham wrote, “the greatest contribution to civilization in this century may well be air-conditioning – and America leads the way.”⁴⁵³ In the 1950s, residential air conditioning became another way to keep up with the Joneses. More than one million units were sold in 1953 alone.⁴⁵⁴ For communities like Palm Springs, air conditioning meant the “season” could be extended and year-round living was practically viable for the first time.

By the 1950s, demand for quick-to-market, inexpensive houses for returning GIs and their families inspired many architects in Southern California and throughout the country to develop ideas about prefabrication and design. In 1949, industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss and architect Edward Larrabee Barnes created the Vultee, a prefabricated home produced in the Consolidated Aircraft Factory in South Pasadena.⁴⁵⁵ In April of 1950 Reginald Fleet, a former Consolidated Aircraft executive, erected one of the prefabricated aluminum Vultee houses at the corner of Mesquite Avenue and Calle Marcus in the Sun View Estates tract in a single weekend.⁴⁵⁶ The Vultee interior, roof, and garage walls were constructed of “lumicomb,” a lightweight material made of a cardboard-like honeycomb core bonded between sheets of high-strength aluminum, used at the time for airplane bulkheads.⁴⁵⁷

The simple, 1,000-square-foot house enraged neighbors as not conforming to the architectural styles of the homes in the surrounding neighborhood and a threat to property values.⁴⁵⁸ The issue became front-page news in the *Desert Sun* as homeowners filed an injunction suit against Fleet; later Fleet consented not to build any more in the area.⁴⁵⁹ Although the homes had been out of production for two years, many were still in stock by 1951. The site of the house is believed to be either 1000 or 1015 S. Calle Marcus.⁴⁶⁰ Both properties have been significantly altered.

Another player in the prefabrication field was Cliff May, who collaborated with his friend and associate Christian E. Choate on a low-cost panel system for Ranch style houses. The prototype was called Factory Model and the erection of the first one in Pacific Palisades spawned both large orders from developers

⁴⁵³ Amanda Green, “A Brief History of Air Conditioning,” *Popular Mechanics* <http://www.popularmechanics.com/home/improvement/electrical-plumbing/a-brief-history-of-air-conditioning-10720229> (accessed January 15, 2015).

⁴⁵⁴ Green, “A Brief History of Air Conditioning.”

⁴⁵⁵ “South Pasadena Prefab House Still Living,” *Curbed LA*, October 30, 2006.

⁴⁵⁶ “Planners Hear Protest Against New Type House,” *Desert Sun*, April 27, 1951.

⁴⁵⁷ “South Pasadena Prefab House Still Living,” *Curbed LA*, October 30, 2006.

⁴⁵⁸ “Control Over Pre-fab Houses Sought By City,” *Desert Sun*, May 11, 1951.

⁴⁵⁹ “Pre-Fab,” *Desert Sun*, November 8, 1951.

⁴⁶⁰ County records show both houses were constructed in 1951 but identify wood frame and make no mention of aluminum.

and media attention from the professional trade publications and national magazines like *Sunset*, *House Beautiful*, and *Better Homes and Gardens*.

By 1952, May and Choate's Ranch House Supply Corporation standardized the "Cliff May Ranch House" and by 1953, the architects had a growing network of distributors around the country. By the fall of 1953 Palm Springs was added to the list of franchisees when Palm Valley Associates became the exclusive distributors of "Cliff May *Desert Homes*." Palm Valley Associates, a partnership between L.E. Manseau, Norman A. Ostberg, and Tony Burke, promoted the prefabricated homes for building on "Your lot or subdivision" using the standard advertisements provided by the Cliff May Company.⁴⁶¹

CLIFF MAY
Desert Homes

As featured by illustrated cover articles in such magazines as "HOUSE & HOME" "LIVING" "SUNSET" "WESTERN BUILDING" LOS ANGELES TIMES "HOME" etc. and displayed by full scale model on the roofs of W. & J. SLOANE in Beverly Hills and San Francisco, as the "Magic Money House"

Can Now Be Built on Your Lot or Subdivision By

Palm Valley Associates

L. E. MANSEAU - NORMAN A. OSTBERG - TONY BURKE
EXCLUSIVE FRANCHISE DEALERS

DEVELOPERS & BUILDERS IN
PALM SPRINGS, INDO, DESERT HOT SPRINGS, CATHEDRAL CITY,
PALM DESERT, LA QUINTA, PALM VALLEY, THOUSAND PALMS,
THERMAL, TWENTYNINE PALMS, BANNING, BEAUMONT and
contiguous areas

PHONE FOR APPOINTMENT
TO SEE OUR FURNISHED AND LANDSCAPED
MODEL HOME ON THE SLOPES OVERLOOKING
Thunderbird Country Club
Palm Springs: 84677; 84965 or 83481
or write, P.O. Box 1118, Palm Springs

Sunday, April 25, 1954. The REGISTER, Santa Ana, Cal.

**It's FUN to Live
In a**
CLIFF MAY
Magazine Cover Home

The brilliant design of America's foremost
modern home planner... building
recreations that bring you and your
family close to the ideal living space!
Every inch is new, smart... is built
on the very magazines which have
made the Cliff May Home - the Magazine
Cover Home.

This special section is devoted to this year
home... this exciting new way of life.

Indoor - Outdoor Living at It's Best!

L: Advertisement for "Cliff May Desert Homes" from the *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1953. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society. R: Cliff May Homes advertisement from the Orange County Register, Sunday April 25, 1954. Source: *Carefree California: Cliff May and the Romance of the Ranch House*, 185.

⁴⁶¹ "Cliff May Desert Homes," *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1953, 24.

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Palm Valley Associates erected a model home at the Thunderbird Country Club, but the designs were available to anyone throughout the Valley. The location of any prefabricated Cliff May Ranch House in Palm Springs is currently unknown; however, company records located at the UC Santa Barbara archives indicate over a dozen orders were received and shipped. There were two- and three-bedroom plans that evolved over time. It should be noted that some of the distributors around the country modified or added touches to the homes, such as brick detailing in the South, to increase sales.⁴⁶² Ultimately, a lack of uniform building codes across the country undermined the fundamental premise of the business. May and Choate dissolved their partnership in 1955, but continued to receive royalties on houses built until 1961. It is estimated that nationwide, approximately 18,000 Cliff May Ranch Homes were built.⁴⁶³

One of the key features of Palm Springs' postwar homes was the presence of the individual, private swimming pool. In keeping with the resort lifestyle, many home builders and home owners added the backyard attractions to their parcels. Palm Springs resident and sportsman Bob Howard (famed owner of Howard Manor) began marketing Palm Springs as "The Swimming Pool City" and great fanfare was generated for the issuance of the 1,000th swimming pool permit in 1956 for Mrs. Henry Clark at 410 Via Entrada.⁴⁶⁴ The city's fascination with the swimming pool was further evidenced by an appeal to the U.S. Postal Service in 1975 to commemorate the 2000th swimming pool built in Palm Springs with the issuance of a postage stamp.⁴⁶⁵

During the 1950s, residential development in Palm Springs continued to expand eastward and southward. Like other locations in Southern California, it was a period in which large developers dominated the scene; among them were William Grant, Noel B. Clarke, A. R. Simon, George and Robert Alexander, Roy Fey, and Jack Meiselman. However, a series of small developers still flourished. Examples included Roy W. Burton's Burton Tract (1957); auto salesman-turned-real estate developer Sam Janis who subdivided Janis' Hilltop Estates (1958); and David M. Benjamin (1894-1987), who developed the El Mirador Park tract (1946) and Mountain View Estates (1956).

Another trend in development was the investor consortium, such as the one established for El Camino Estates (1956) a large 110-parcel tract development in north Palm Springs that included no fewer than sixteen owners. A smaller consortium of ten owners subdivided Palm Vista Estates (1953). Promoted as "wind free half acre sites" Palm Vista Estates played off the reputation of its neighbors Little Tuscany and Las Palmas Estates.⁴⁶⁶ In 1956 Howard Lapham designed a speculative residence in Palm Vista

⁴⁶² Jocelyn Gibbs and Nicholas Olsberg, *Carefree California: Cliff May and the Romance of the Ranch House* (Santa Barbara, CA: University of California, Santa Barbara and Rizzoli International Publications, 2012), 186-7.

⁴⁶³ Confirm source.

⁴⁶⁴ "Swimming," *Palm Springs Villager*, February 1956, 49.

⁴⁶⁵ "Elusive Stamp of Success," *The Daily Mail*, December 8, 1975, 4.

⁴⁶⁶ "Harold Hicks Ad," *Palm Springs Villager*, April 1954, 11.

Estates at 787 Stevens Road.⁴⁶⁷ At the time, it was the only residence in the development after nearly two years of sales.

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**RESIDENTIAL
SUBDIVISION**



WIND FREE HALF-ACRE SITES

Introducing rugged, dramatic, Palm Vista Estates (adjoining Little Tuscany Estates and extending above world-famous Las Palmas Estates, the finest established residential districts in entire desert area.) The gentle elevation of beautiful Palm Vista gives every estate site a magnificent panoramic view of the entire city and valley beyond. A setting of natural beauty in the foothills of Mt. San Jacinto. Estate sites priced from \$5,000 to \$8,500 for introductory offering only. Maps and details on request.



HAROLD HICKS
AND
ASSOCIATES

Associates: Burnham Bigelow, Mildred Jackson, Ken Herman, Ray Baur
Phone 2736 - 813 No. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, Calif.

Advertisement for Palm Vista Estates (1953) promoted as “wind-free half acre sites” in proximity to tony subdivisions such as Las Palmas Estates and Little Tuscany. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, April 1954, 11.

By the close of the 1950s great changes were afoot for Palm Springs residential development. New communities to the south and east including Palm Desert, Indian Wells, and Rancho Mirage were beginning to encroach on Palm Springs as the chic desert destination for home ownership. Another important factor was the 1959 Equalization Law signed by President Eisenhower that equalized allotted Indian lands, thereby setting the stage for development of Reservation lands within the City of Palm Springs. The Equalization Act was intended to provide for a reasonable degree of equalization of the value of allotments made to tribal members and was enacted in response to litigation in Federal court

⁴⁶⁷ “Your Dream of Perfection,” *Palm Springs Villager*, May 1956, 10.

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in *Segundo et al. v. United States et al.*⁴⁶⁸ The tribe and tribe members (allottees) could now realize profits from their lands and developed the 99-year lease. This allowed for longer agreements, encouraging development that had previously been hindered by short-term leases. For developers, this represented new opportunities for projects throughout the city. From large (Canyon Country Club) to small (Smoke Canyon Estates), residential projects on leased land were often attractive for their location and lower sales prices (made possible because the purchase of land was not involved). With increased demand, economic prosperity, air conditioning, and availability of new land for development, Palm Springs became home to a number of custom and tract home developments by prominent Southern California developers and wealthy speculators. From early on, many of these subdivisions emphasized architecture and/or the glamour associated with Palm Springs.

Residential Subdivisions from the Period

Following is a discussion of select residential subdivisions that were recorded between 1945 and 1969, reflecting the significant amount of residential development in Palm Springs during this period. The narrative discussion is meant to provide an overview of residential developments after World War II, including a discussion of each Alexander tract. The subdivisions are listed chronologically by the date they were initially recorded. The Overview of Tract Development in Appendix B includes a list of the residential subdivisions in Palm Springs that were studied as part of the survey effort, including a description of additional tracts not discussed in the narrative. The information included in the table is intended to provide additional data about residential development in Palm Springs and inform future researchers about this facet of Palm Springs history; a complete history of each tract is outside the scope of this project.

⁴⁶⁸ Court case references found here: <https://www.congress.gov/105/plaws/publ308/PLAW-105publ308.pdf> and <https://law.justia.com/cases/federal/district-courts/FSupp/123/554/1509468/> (accessed November 2018).

FIGURE 7: RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS RECORDED BETWEEN 1945 AND 1969

NAME	DATE	DEVELOPER
Chino Mesa Estates	1945	Ernest Off
Warm Sands Park	1945	None listed
Desert Palms Estates	1946	Paul Belding & Russell Garner
Desert Tract	1946	Desert View Corporation
Sun View	1946	Sun View Estates Co.
El Mirador Park	1946	David M. Benjamin
Luring Sands Park	1946	Luring Development Company
Palm Springs Estates	1946	Spaulding Development Corporation
San Jacinto Estates	1946	Elliot Bank & Harold Licker
Vista Del Cielo	1946	Sunny Dunes Development
Tahquitz River Estates	1947	Paul Trousdale
Val Vista	1947	
Venable Tract	1947	Reginald & Fay Bainter Venable
Lilliana Gardens	1948	Sam Martin & Lillian Zalud
Deep Well Ranch Estates	1951	William Grant
Desert Highland Estates	1951	Mary Jacobs and Lillian Broudy
Palm Vista Estates	1953	Harold Hicks & Associates
Ranch Club Estates	1955	Noel B. Clarke
Sunmor Estates	1955	A.R. Simon & Merrill Brown
Twin Palms Estates	1955	Alexander Construction Company
Crossley Tract	1956	Lawrence Crossley
El Camino Estates	1956	
Karlisa Cove	1956	Jack Meiselman
Mountain View Estates	1956	David M. Benjamin
Palm Lane	1956	Jack Meiselman
Ramon Rise Estates	1956	Alexander Construction Company; Jack Meiselman
Vista Las Palmas	1956	Alexander Construction Company
Burton Tract	1957	Roy W. Burton
Enchanted Homes	1957	Alexander Construction Company
Janis' Hilltop Estates	1957	Sam Janis
Chino Palms Estates	1958	Jack Meiselman
Palm Springs Golf Club	1958	Westview Development Corporation
Racquet Club Road Estates	1958	Alexander Construction Company
Alejo Palms Estates	1959	Jack Meiselman
Caballeros Estates	1959	Roy Fey

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NAME	DATE	DEVELOPER
El Rancho Vista Estates	1960	Roy Fey
Golden Vista Estates	1960	Alexander Construction Company
Canyon Country Club	1961	Golf Club Sales Company
Golf Club Estates	1961	Alexander Construction Company
New Riviera Gardens	1961	Alexander Construction Company
Calcor Prefabricated Homes/Steel Development Houses	1961	Alexander Construction Company
Las Palmas Summit	1962	Alexander Construction Company
Desert Lanai	c. 1963	Alexander Construction Company
Farrell Canyon Estates	1963	Alexander Construction Company
Araby Estates	1964	Alexander Construction Company
Green Fairway Estates	1964	Alexander Construction Company
Seven Lakes Country Club	1964	Johnny Dawson
Smoke Canyon Estates	1964	R.M. Myer & Victor Koozin
Sunrise Estates	1964	Alexander Construction Company
Southridge Estates	1965	E. Allan Petty, Richard E. Rahn, William Anable
Orchid Tree Lane	1966	Howard P. Lapham
Canyon Estates	1969	Roy Fey
Kings Point	1969	Alexander Construction Company

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Tahquitz River Estates (1947)

In response to the need for postwar housing, well-known developer Paul Trousdale teamed up with Pearl McCallum McManus on a Palm Springs development. In a 1948 interview, McManus remembered, “When I built the Oasis Hotel I had dreams of a project like Trousdale’s...Frank Lloyd Wright [Jr.] had drawn plans...very modern.”⁴⁶⁹ As previously discussed, these plans never came to fruition; however, McManus clearly saw in Trousdale a man of similar vision. By this time, Trousdale had already built over 1,700 tract homes in Southern California.



Pearl McCallum McManus and Austin McManus sitting on the earthmover at the beginning of the channel project at Tahquitz River Estates. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

The area that became Tahquitz River Estates was bordered by Sunny Dunes Road on the north, Calle Palo Fierro on the west, Mesquite Avenue on the south, and Sunrise Way on the east. At the time, it was the largest and most ambitious standardized tract housing development that had been attempted in Palm Springs; it was also the first large postwar development of tract homes by a major developer.

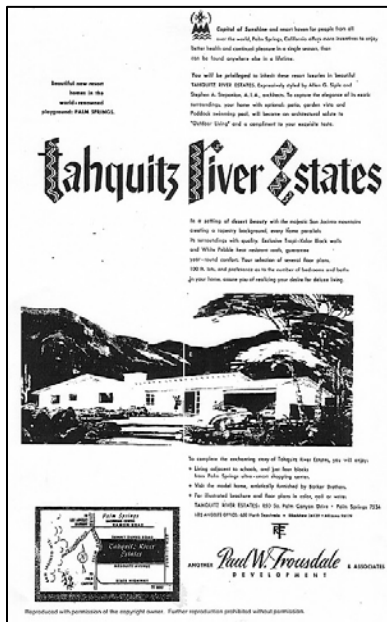
In 1947, Trousdale subdivided the land into 213 one-hundred-foot wide parcels averaging 10,000 square feet each.⁴⁷⁰ In 1948, he added another forty-nine parcels to the far western end of the subdivision in a second unit. “Outdoor living” was promoted by the inclusion of patios with mountain and garden vistas. Another featured amenity was the location adjacent to schools and shopping centers.⁴⁷¹ The fact that the homes were architect-designed also featured prominently in the marketing materials.

⁴⁶⁹ Interview of Pearl McManus To Melba Bennett, April 26, 1948, Clippings Files, Palm Springs Historical Society.

⁴⁷⁰ Trousdale received a blanket variance on setbacks to allow his plans, per Marvin Roos correspondence May 11, 2016.

⁴⁷¹ Display Ad 66, *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1948, F14.

The first part of the project was to construct the Tahquitz Creek Channel storm drain, which divided the development from east to west. On September 22, 1947 the first earthmovers appeared and the \$100,000 flood channel project began. Pearl and Austin McManus were photographed on the earthmover and the picture appeared on the front page of the next day's *Desert Sun*.⁴⁷² At some point, the McManuses sold their interests in the project to Trousdale.⁴⁷³



Ad features model home rendering by architects Allen G. Siple and Stephen A. Stepanian who are mentioned by name in the ad copy. Source: Display Ad 66, *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1948, F14.

Trousdale engaged architects Allen G. Siple and Stephen A. Stepanian to design eight models with two- and three-bedroom floor plans. Edward Huntsman-Trout, a frequent collaborator with Trousdale, was brought on as landscape architect.⁴⁷⁴ Each house was completely landscaped, and owners had the choice of including a pool designed by Huntsman-Trout. According to the *Desert Sun* and the sales brochure, “the models were designed so that each home would be situated on the lot in such a way that it allowed for complete privacy while enjoying the pool.”⁴⁷⁵

⁴⁷² Renee Brown, “Palm Springs History: Homes Bloomed Along Tahquitz Wash,” *Desert Sun*, September 11, 2014.

⁴⁷³ The reason for the McManus selling their interest in the development is unknown.

⁴⁷⁴ “Finding Aid to the Edward Huntsman-Trout papers,” *UCLA Special Collections*, http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=tf1x0nb0cp&developer=local&style=oac4&s=1&query=%22palm+Springs%22&x=16&y=12&ser_viet=view

⁴⁷⁵ Renee Brown, “Palm Springs History: Homes Bloomed Along Tahquitz Wash,” *Desert Sun*, September 11, 2014.

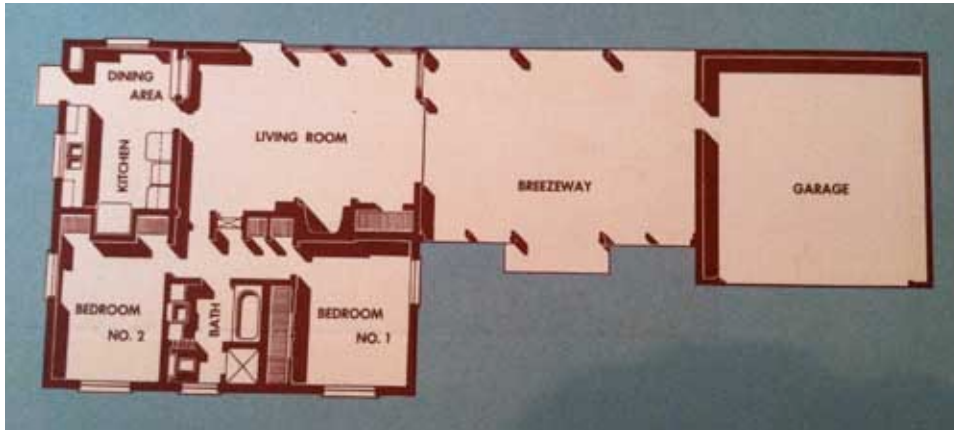
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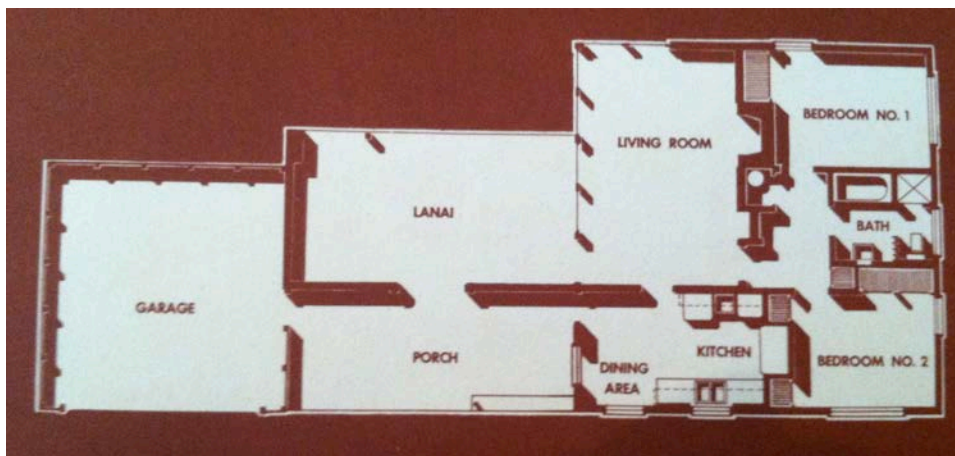
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Eight different floor plans were created for the two-bedroom/one-bathroom models and two floor plans for the three-bedroom/two-bathroom homes. Each plan makes the most of its outdoor space by featuring large lanais and/or porches with large expanses of glass to the backyards and the desert vistas beyond. Breezeways were also common features on these plans, "...a fashionable, convenient addition nearly doubles the size appearance of your home." Each model also featured a large fireplace.



Plan 2, a two-bedroom/one bathroom plan features the generous breezeway and walls of glass along the rear elevation. Source: Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure, Private Collection.



Plan 5, another two-bedroom/one bathroom plan features the generous lanai with walls of glass at the rear and a porch on the front. Source: Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

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As described in the sales brochure, eighteen different exterior designs created “a unique and personalized pattern of deliquescent charm.”⁴⁷⁶ Variety in tract home styles within a subdivision was a reaction to the Levittown model of postwar America that was decried for its relentless cookie-cutter streetscapes. Renderings from the sales brochure for Tahquitz River Estates show the design of the houses to be Modern Ranch style with restrained façades of plaster, Tropic-Kolor cement block, and vertical wood siding. The houses featured steel reinforced concrete slabs and heat reflecting roofs. As described by Allen G. Siple’s sponsor for AIA Fellowship, noted architect A. Quincy Jones, “the houses of masonry and heavy timber in the planned community of Tahquitz River Estates provide[d] comfortable living in the desert with an unusually high degree of protection against the hot, windy days and cold, windy nights.”⁴⁷⁷ The sales brochure went a step further claiming that the houses were designed to be “earthquake proof.”⁴⁷⁸ While the supporting evidence for this claim remains a mystery, Siple’s ongoing interest in building science and seismic protection are consistent with this idea. Lots in Tahquitz River Estates were landscaped with native desert plants including athel, cottonwoods, and palms.⁴⁷⁹

By March of 1948, half of the first unit of 72 homes had been sold.⁴⁸⁰ By August, the first unit was completely sold out. In 1949, two new model homes were added. The subdivision received national acclaim when the March 1950 issue of *House Beautiful* featured a Tahquitz River Estates model home.



Model Plan 1 from 1949 features a Modern Ranch style home by architects Alan G. Siple and Stephen Stepanian. Source: Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure. Private Collection.

⁴⁷⁶ “Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure,” Private Collection.

⁴⁷⁷ “Allen G. Siple, Fellowship Nomination Form,” August 29, 1962.

⁴⁷⁸ “Tahquitz River Estates” Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

⁴⁷⁹ “Tahquitz River Estates” Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

⁴⁸⁰ “Real Estate: Program Costing Nears Completion,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 7, 1948, 23.

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Plan 2, a two-bedroom/one bathroom plan features more traditional Ranch-style materials with vertical wood siding. Source: Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure, Private Collection.



The long low Ranch-style design incorporates vertical wood siding and privacy walls for pool and side yard area. Source: Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure, Private Collection.



Plan 4, a two-bedroom, one bathroom in a pared-down Modern Ranch-style evoking the Palm Springs equestrian lifestyle. Source: Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure, Private Collection.



Plan 6, a Ranch-style exterior and a three-bedroom/three-bathroom plan. Source: Tahquitz River Estates Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

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Mr. and Mrs. Paul Trousdale at the Palm Springs Tennis Club c. 1956. Source: *Look*, September 18, 1956, 27.

Paul Whitney Trousdale (1915-1990) was a second-generation developer. Trousdale was responsible for the development and creation of more than 25,000 homes throughout Southern California.⁴⁸¹ Born near Gallatin, Tennessee, he attended Los Angeles High School and completed one year at USC. A born salesman, he dabbled in advertising, selling gum and other products, then switched to real estate. During World War II, he built large houses for movie stars and executives, as well as 3,000 more modest houses, including seven large housing projects.

A 1949 *Los Angeles Times* ad for Trousdale and Associates featured the Palm Springs development of Tahquitz Canyon Estates with a valuation at \$1,500,000, which was the second smallest of the organization's holdings. Trousdale would later embark on two of his best-known developments: Baldwin Hills Estates in Los Angeles and Trousdale Estates in Beverly Hills. By the end of 1949, Trousdale's involvement with the subdivision appears to have waned. In November of 1949, Henry S. Reid, Russell Wade, and Walter

Morrison formed a company to construct FHA qualifying residences for returning GIs on the north side of the channel in Tahquitz River Estates.⁴⁸² Morrison, a seasoned San Fernando Valley contractor, partnered with local doctor Reid on the project. Another developer, Carl Bohne, completely took over the project from Trousdale by April of 1950.⁴⁸³

Deep Well Ranch Estates (1951)



Deep Well Guest Ranch. Source: *Palm Springs Life*, May 2013.

Deep Well Ranch Estates (also known as Deep Well Estates, Deep Well Colony Estates, or Deepwell Ranch Estates) is bordered by Mesquite Avenue to the north, the east side of Sagebrush Road to the east, Primavera Drive to the west, and the south side of Deep Well Road to the south with an extension at Palm Tree Drive on the southern end of the development. Deep Well Ranch Estates had its origins in the Deep Well Ranch and guest ranch in the 1920s. The early development of Deep Well as a dude and guest ranch is discussed in the theme "Commercial Development between the Wars (1919-1941)" in the "Palm Springs between the Wars" context.

⁴⁸¹ "Paul Trousdale, Developer and Innovator, Dies," *Los Angeles Times*, April 12, 1990.

⁴⁸² "New Company Organizes for Building Campaign Here," *Desert Sun*, November 11, 1949.

⁴⁸³ "Bohne Request Again Denied," *Desert Sun*, April 14, 1950.



Aerial view of Deep Well Estates circa 1955. Looking westward from Calle De Maria. The major east-west street is Mesquite Avenue; the development to the right of Mesquite Avenue is Tahquitz River Estates by Paul Trousdale. Source: *Palm Springs Life*.

By 1951, residential subdivisions were beginning to encroach on the land around the Deep Well Guest Ranch and it became clear that there was money to be made in real estate development. William Grant, a local builder for the Rancho Royale, Sun View Estates (immediately adjacent to Deep Well Ranch estates just east of Sagebrush Road), and Thunderbird Ranch and Country Club developments, purchased a significant portion of Deep Well Ranch and subdivided it for a custom home development that became Deep Well Ranch Estates.

The 231-parcel development was subdivided in ten units between 1951 and 1955. The earliest unit was developed by Grant; however, the subsequent units were developed in conjunction with Harry A. Dart and his wife Gladys M. Dart of Dart Properties. Properties south of Mesquite Avenue were subdivided in 1952, and the majority of the area was subdivided by 1953. In June of 1963, the remaining 22-acre Deep Well Guest Ranch was sold to a Los Angeles syndicate with the intent to make

it “an exclusive sportsman’s club.”⁴⁸⁴ In 1969, the former guest ranch property was transformed into condominiums by another developer.

According to an article in the *Villager*, “One enters from the Palm Springs-Indio Highway over a beautiful new divided roadway, landscaped and decorated at the attractive entrance.”⁴⁸⁵ Grant formed an architectural review committee for Deep Well Ranch Estates that included architects Cliff May and Phil Boyd. The ensuing long, low, one-story houses were a mixture of Spanish Colonial Revival, Ranch, and Mid-century Modern styles.

Deep Well Ranch Estates attracted its share of prominent residents and significant architecture. Architect Hugh Kaptur remembers designing several homes in the Deep Well Ranch Estates prior to becoming a licensed architect.⁴⁸⁶ Deep Well homes by E. Stewart Williams include the 1958 Theodore Sutter House at 1207 S. Calle De Maria (with interiors by Arthur Elrod); and the Leo Koerner Residence (1955) at 1275 S. Calle Maria.⁴⁸⁷ Wexler & Harrison built a residence at 1344 S. Calle De Maria, and the William Bogess House at 1366 S. Calle de Maria (with interiors by Arthur Elrod). Designer and builder A. Belden Crist built his home at 1366 S. Paseo de Marcia (1958), and Michael Black designed a residence at 1430 S. Calle De Maria (1967). Stan Sackley designed several residences in Deep Well, including 1131 S. Driftwood Drive (1955); 1475 S. Paseo De Marcia (1955); and the James M. Hollowell Residence at 1325 Sagebrush Road (1965), which was featured in *Playboy* magazine as a “Playboy Pad.”

Deep Well Ranch Estates tended to attract postwar professionals and newly retired industrialists. Examples include the residences of retired Innes Shoe Corporation executive Nat Burkett, who lived at 1346 S. Paseo de Marcia in 1958; Edward Kadlac, a retired executive from Du Pont Corporation, at 1411 S. Paseo De Marcia; and Abe L. Levin, a retired food executive, who lived at 1076 Deepwell Road in the 1960s. A significant number of local developers, realtors, and contractors lived in the neighborhood as well, including Leo Baker, Paul Keil, Herman C. Newman, and W.G. Hercules. Mr. and Mrs. Roy Fey lived at 1120 S. Calle de Maria. A large number of local hoteliers also resided at Deep Well. Deep Well residences were the focal point of an active social scene in the postwar period – the frequent sites of parties and charity events hosted by the socially prominent wives of Deep Well residents.

During the mid-1960s, film comedian Jerry Lewis lived at 1349 Sagebrush Road. In 1967 Oscar-winning actor William Holden established his permanent residence at 1323 S. Driftwood Drive. Two homes in Deep Well Ranch Estates are associated with the pianist Liberace. The first at 1516 Manzanita Avenue

⁴⁸⁴ “Palm Springs Ranch Sold,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 16, 1963, N7.

⁴⁸⁵ Bennett, “Story of Deepwell (sic).”

⁴⁸⁶ ModernismWeek.com, <http://www.modernismweek.com/hugh-kaptur-from-mid-century-to-our-century-part-one/> (accessed January 2015).

⁴⁸⁷ “Farewell Party Honors Koerners,” *Desert Sun*, April 7, 1955.

is where the performer lived circa 1957. The second, at 1106 Driftwood Drive was built for his beloved mother, Frances. Noted television actor/producer Jack Webb lived at 1255 S. Manzanita Avenue next door to his first wife, actress Julie London at 1297 S. Manzanita Avenue.⁴⁸⁸

Ranch Club Estates/Desert Park Estates (1955)

In 1955, developer Noel B. Clarke (1896-1964) embarked on the most ambitious postwar tract development undertaken in Palm Springs: Ranch Club Estates (also known as Desert Park Estates). The 500-acre development was in the flats of northeast Palm Springs bordered by Joyce Drive on the north, Vista Chino on the south, the golf course and Whitewater Club Drive on the east, and Sunrise Way on the west. Developed in twelve phases between February of 1955 and November of 1958, the southwest portion of the development was bordered by Racquet Club Drive to the north and N. Farrell Drive to the east, and employed a street pattern evocative of the earlier Prescott T. Stevens developments like Las Palmas Estates and Merito Vista in which gently curving streets were favored over a rigorous grid pattern. The final five phases (seven through twelve) abandoned curving streets in favor of a more efficient grid pattern.

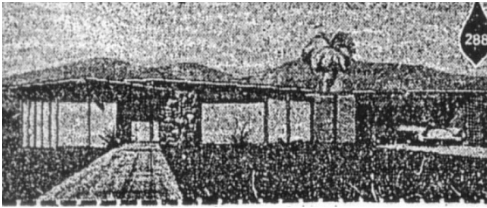
Noel Clarke was a hospitality man turned developer. Having owned clubs in southern Orange County during the 1920s, he invested in Walnut Estates, which was located near Encino and was one of the first San Fernando Valley suburban housing developments. Clarke and his wife Joyce then turned their talents to the desert playground and took over the Ranch Club in 1955. By 1961, they turned the basic nine-room hotel-club operation⁴⁸⁹ into Ranch Club enterprises: the Ranch Club Hotel of more than 250 rooms, the Ranch Country Club (the 18-hole golf course designed by Joe Caldwell in the north east section of the city),⁴⁹⁰ and Ranch Club Estates, the homes near the golf course built by Clarke's Ranch Construction Company.⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁸ Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential* (Barridade Books, Fort Lee, NJ, 2004), 213-216. Other famous residents reportedly include Michael Todd and Elizabeth Taylor at 1315 Manzanita.

⁴⁸⁹ Located at Paseo El Mirador and Sunrise Way.

⁴⁹⁰ The Ranch Country Club Board of Directors also included Bob Kelley, broadcaster for the Los Angeles Rams; Raymond Parkhurst, a Hughes Aircraft executive; movie producer Bob Waterfield; local attorney Arthur Crowley; Gerald Sanborn, mayor of Palm Springs; and Joe Kirkwood, golf professional.

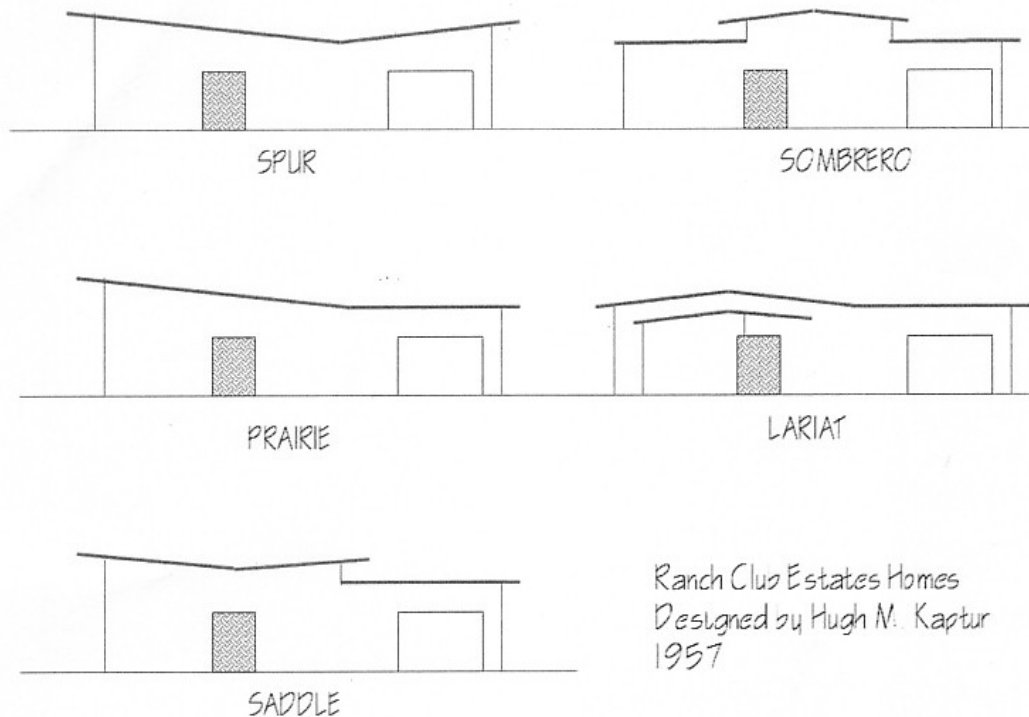
⁴⁹¹ Joan Winchell, "Real Whingdinger at Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, February 3, 1961, A7.



This rendering for the "Lariat" model was featured in advertising for Ranch Club Estates in November of 1959. Source: Display Ad133, *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 1959, G14.

In 1957, Ranch Construction Company foreman Tom Sills approached a young Hugh Kaptur to design the home plans. In the documentary *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh Kaptur*, Kaptur remembers, "I filled the void for builders who didn't want to spend thousands of dollars for plans. They were using draftsmen or building designers. I started doing work for contractors...that's how I came to do houses out at Ranch Club Estates." Five designs were created: the "Spur," "Lariat," "Saddle," "Prairie," and "Sombrero." The Mid-century Modern designs abstracted features of adobe and indigenous

architecture to create solid expressionistic forms with a variety of rooflines. The homes were noted for masonry elements at the center of the façade designed to, in Kaptur's own words, "anchor the designs to the earth."⁴⁹²



Elevations of the five Hugh Kaptur designs from 1957 for Ranch Club Estates show the variety of rooflines. Each elevation is anchored by a strong masonry element in the center of the design. Source: <http://www.desertdreaming.com/ranch-club-estates.html>.

⁴⁹² John C. Brown, *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh Kaptur*, CD-ROM (This N' That Films, 2014).

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The development was envisioned to include between 800 and 1,000 homes. But sales were slow, and by 1961 only 250 homes had been built. Instead of building the homes in clusters and creating neighborhoods, the homes were built “scattershot” around the development in hopes that it would increase the value of the land between.⁴⁹³ Unfortunately, this was not a successful strategy. In February of 1964, Clarke died of a heart attack after a year of illness.⁴⁹⁴ In 1967, Clarke’s widow Joyce sold the Ranch Club proper and it was ultimately razed. The Ranch Construction Company went bankrupt and the undeveloped properties were sold to other developers who built more tract homes in the 1970s and 1980s.



L-shaped tract in foreground is Ranch Club Estates (a.k.a., the Desert Park Estates Tract). Note how homes were constructed scattershot around the 500 acres, as opposed to clustered in sequential units like most developments. Homes visible in the photo are likely Hugh Kaptur designs from 1957 or “knock-offs” of those designs. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

Sunmor Estates (1955)

During WWII, the area now occupied by Sunmor Estates was part of the Palm Springs Army Airfield as a site for several “Tie Down” or hardstand stations for aircraft.⁴⁹⁵ In 1955 the local Sands Realty and Development Corporation consisting of Abram Robert (A.R.) Simon and Merrill Brown subdivided the

⁴⁹³ Brown, *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh Kaptur*.

⁴⁹⁴ “Clarke Services,” *Redlands Daily Facts*, February 17, 1964, 6.

⁴⁹⁵ Historic Site Preservation Board #40 Plaque.

first phase of Sunmor Estates, a 55-parcel tract including the eastern portion of Plaimor Avenue and Livmor Avenue, Morsun Circle, and Arline Drive.⁴⁹⁶ Simon was a realtor in the city and Brown was a Judge in the Indio Superior Court.⁴⁹⁷

The vision for Sunmor Estates appears to have been much larger than the reality. *The Los Angeles Times* reports the venture as a “\$50 million project.”⁴⁹⁸ The July-August issue of the *Villager* describes the development as 213 acres, and the tract map refers to the area as “Sunmor Estates No. 1;” however, no subsequent tracts were ever registered. A 1955 *Villager* advertisement identifies areas of planned future construction north of Tahquitz Canyon (formerly McCallum Way) almost as far west as Sunrise Way; and south of Tahquitz Canyon as far south as Ramon Road. Yet only the initial twenty acres were built out, and Simon’s plan to follow the initial 55 homes with 100 more was never realized.⁴⁹⁹ Sunmor Estates was notable for its paved streets and rolled curbs, which were not standard in Palm Springs developments subdivided before the war.

SUNMOR ESTATES
DESIGNED For Luxurious Living

* EACH HOME INDIVIDUALLY DESIGNED AND DECORATED

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• Long Covered Entry • White Stone Front • Continental Style Kitchens •
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Additional Information
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ONLY IN SUNMOR ESTATES WILL YOU FIND:-

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- HOME UP 1000 SQUARE FOOT LOTS WITH 100 FEET WIDE SIDEWALKS
- BEACH CAFE VIEW OF THE SANTA MONTE MOUNTAINS, SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAIN VIEW
- BEACH CAFE VIEW OF THE SANTA MONTE MOUNTAINS, SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAIN VIEW
- BEACH CAFE VIEW OF THE SANTA MONTE MOUNTAINS, SAN JUAN MOUNTAINS and MOUNTAIN VIEW

Select Your Home or Lot in . . .

PALM SPRINGS NEWEST SUBDIVISION

Sunmor Estates Ad from October 1955 *Palm Springs Villager* shows where homes are being developed and expansive plans for additional development. The Mid-century Modern home designs by Wexler & Harrison emphasized horizontality and took advantage of the 100-foot frontage on these lots. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

Sunmor Estates was envisioned by A.R. Simon as part of a combination residential and commercial development with a modern, \$10,000,000, 22-acre landscaped pedestrian mall and shopping center at Tahquitz Canyon and Farrell Drive.⁵⁰⁰

⁴⁹⁶ Although Sunmor Estates is often colloquially referred to as including The Alexander Company houses developed as the Enchanted Homes tract, this discussion refers only to the original Sunmor Estates homes.

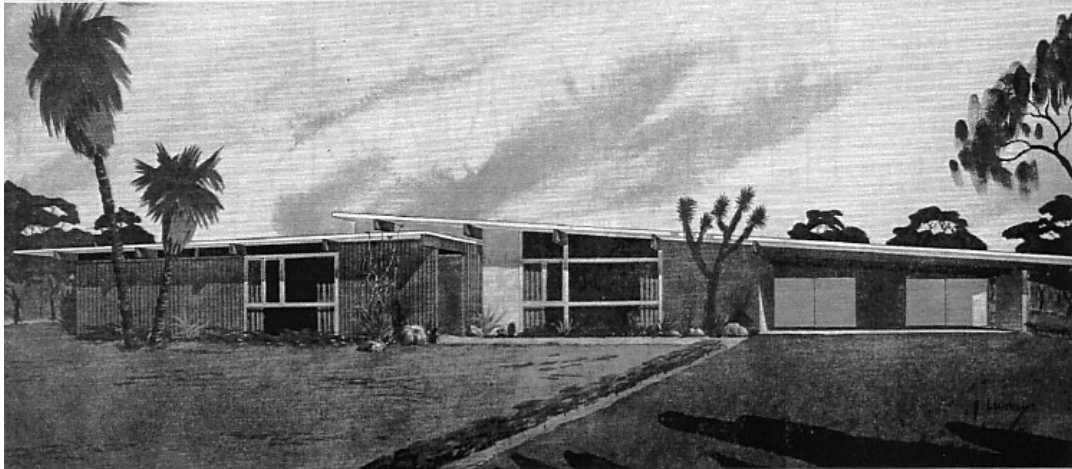
⁴⁹⁷ Judge Merrill Brown would later be one of three judges criticized for the handling of Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Reservation in the late 1960s, “Equal Rights for Agua Caliente Indians Asked,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 1968, B1.

⁴⁹⁸ “Palm Springs Home Project,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1955, F15.

⁴⁹⁹ “Palm Springs Home Project,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 25, 1955, F15.

⁵⁰⁰ “Center Planned at Resort City,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1958, F12.

Local builder Robert “Bob” Higgins was engaged to build “a neighborhood of affordable modernist tract homes.”⁵⁰¹ Sunmor Estates included two-, three-, and four-bedroom plans.⁵⁰² According to the *Palm Springs Villager*, Wexler & Harrison designed the Mid-century Modern-style homes.⁵⁰³ The post-and beam homes featured colored rock roofs, extra-wide overhangs, large expanses of glass and sliding glass doors, and large covered patios.⁵⁰⁴



Rendering for Sunmor Estates (1955, Wexler & Harrison) featuring a Mid-century Modern-style home of post-and-beam construction. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, September 1955, 9.

Although Sunmor Estates was clearly envisioned as a series of tract homes, ads tout the houses as “individually designed and decorated.”⁵⁰⁵ Ads also suggest that the developers were willing to sell unimproved property in the subdivision. In 1957, the Sunmor Estates property was sold to fellow developers George and Robert Alexander of the Alexander Construction Company; the property became part of the Alexander’s adjacent Enchanted Homes development (subdivided in 1957).⁵⁰⁶

⁵⁰¹ Sunmor Neighborhood, www.sunmorestates.com/#!about/cjn9 (accessed December 5, 2014).

⁵⁰² Additional research is needed to confirm the number of models, plans, and layout of the development.

⁵⁰³ *Palm Springs Villager*, July-August, 1955.

⁵⁰⁴ “Sunmor Estates Advertisement,” *Palm Springs Villager*, October, 1955, 4.

⁵⁰⁵ “Sunmor Estates Advertisement,” *Palm Springs Villager*, September, 1955, 9.

⁵⁰⁶ In his book *The Alexanders*, James R. Harlan refers to the Alexander development here as Sunmor Estates, rather than its official tract name, Enchanted Homes. There is currently no evidence that the Alexanders ever marketed them under the Sunmor name. The reason for the sale is currently unknown. Simon may have decided that he preferred commercial instead of residential development, or he may have needed the cash to fund new projects. Simon expanded the nearby commercial shopping center in 1964, creating the first air-conditioned mall with an ice skating rink in Southern California. “Shopping Centers Showing Surge,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 1964, K1.



Aerial photograph looking west c. 1960 with Plaimor and Livmor Avenues clearly identifiable in Sunmor Estates. The Alexander's adjacent Enchanted Homes (on the south and west of the original tract) has already been completed. The major east west road visible is present-day Tahquitz Canyon Way. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

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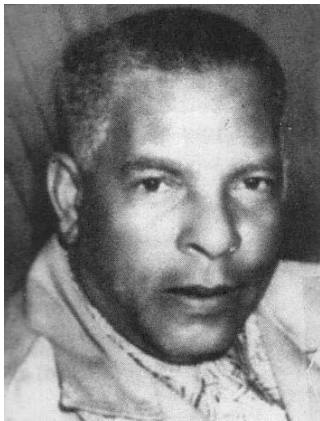
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The Crossley Tract (1956)⁵⁰⁷

This twenty-acre tract was subdivided by Palm Springs' first African-American resident, Lawrence Crossley (1899-1962). It was located in an area that was east of the city limits at the time of its subdivision. It was bordered by 34th Avenue to the north, Martha Street to the south, the west side of Lawrence Street to the west, and the east side of Marguerite Street on the east. The 77-parcel development was composed of a series of modest Minimal Traditional-style homes.



African American
developer Lawrence
Crossley. Source: Palm
Springs Historical Society.

Crossley intended the subdivision to be for African-American families who were largely barred by racial restrictions from living in other Palm Springs developments. African Americans had migrated to Palm Springs in earnest during the mid-1940s when the oil fields of Texas offered little promise. Those who came primarily found work as domestic servants.⁵⁰⁸

As a result of racial restrictions, prior to the subdivision of the Crossley tract, African Americans and Mexican Americans all lived on Section 14 of the Agua Caliente Indian Reservation "...in a cluster of unpaved streets, jumbled shacks, no street lights and outside toilets."⁵⁰⁹ When non-permitted structures on "the reservation" were demolished by the city and county health department in the early 1960s, African-Americans in Palm Springs migrated to outlying areas such as the Desert Highland Estates Tract (1951) north of the city where homes were relatively inexpensive and the Federal Housing Authority (FHA) offered low-interest loans.⁵¹⁰ The area was not annexed into Palm Springs until the mid-1960s.

⁵⁰⁷ Additional information about the Crossley Tract is included in the Ethnic Minorities chapter included at the end of this study.

⁵⁰⁸ "Palm Springs: North End is a Black Enclave Amidst Resort Town's Opulence," *Press Enterprise*, May 27, 1979, B1.

⁵⁰⁹ Wendell Green, "Plan Negro Eviction from Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, October 5, 1961, A1.

⁵¹⁰ "The Other Side of Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 1984, F1.

By 1984, Desert Highland Estates and nearby Gateway Estates (1960)⁵¹¹ had become the heart of the African-American residential community in Palm Springs.⁵¹²

Crossley came to Palm Springs in 1925 and went to work for Prescott T. Stevens as a chauffeur and handyman. Crossley eventually became Steven's right hand man, designing and building the El Mirador Golf Course and managing the Whitewater Mutual Water Company.⁵¹³ He also became owner of the Tramview Water Company. He built and lived in the Crossley Court at 1543 Ramon Road.⁵¹⁴

Crossley also befriended the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and was welcomed into tribal circles. From a recipe provided by his Native American associates, he created the Palm Springs Desert Tea Company. Crossley was instrumental as a liaison between the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians and Judge McCabe's efforts to restore land promised to them by the federal government.⁵¹⁵

Meiselman Developments (1955-1959)

An important postwar developer in Palm Springs was Jack I. Meiselman (1899-1994). In the mid-to-late 1950s, Meiselman developed hundreds of Mid-century Modern style tract homes in the city. Meiselman was born in New York City to Jewish parents who had immigrated to the United States in 1891.⁵¹⁶ One of six children, Jack was involved in the family business of linen manufacturing and sales, specifically handkerchiefs.⁵¹⁷ During the 1920s Meiselman relocated to Chicago and continued in the handkerchief manufacturing business but broadened his interests into construction.⁵¹⁸ He did well financially as evidenced by his ownership of homes in an affluent neighborhood in north Chicago. In Chicago, Meiselman also met and married his wife Berne "Babe" Meiselman (1903-1991). Meiselman and his wife were always listed as co-owners/sub-dividers of Meiselman tracts.⁵¹⁹ In 1944, the Meiselms moved to California.⁵²⁰ They appear in the Palm Springs City Directory in 1946 at 1276 Indian Avenue.⁵²¹ By 1948, the Meiselms had moved to 1240 Monte Vista Avenue.

⁵¹¹ Gateway Estates is noted as "another community Southland Development Company" in a 1961 advertisement in *The Desert Sun*. According to *The Desert Sun*, Donald E. Hill was a partner in the Southland Development Company, as well as part owner of South Shores Management in 1961. The *Los Angeles Times* indicates that a Donald E. Hill was an executive at the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company in the 1960s, though it is unconfirmed if this is the same Donald Hill referenced in *The Desert Sun*. The *Los Angeles Times* also notes that the Southland Development Company was based in Van Nuys by 1964, and built homes in Simi Valley that same year that were designed by the architectural firm Duncan and Conroy.

⁵¹² "The Other Side of Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, November 5, 1984, F1.

⁵¹³ Greg Niemann, *Palm Springs Legends* (San Diego, CA: Sunbelt Publications, Inc., 2011), 184.

⁵¹⁴ Pending additional research on the type of court development.

⁵¹⁵ "Well Known Palm Springs Realty Developer Dies," *Los Angeles Sentinel*, March 15, 1962, A10.

⁵¹⁶ U.S. Census, 1920.

⁵¹⁷ U.S. Census, 1920.

⁵¹⁸ "\$3 million Gift for Casa Colina," *Progress Bulletin*, February 16, 1976, 11.

⁵¹⁹ Some online sources have erroneously identified Meiselman's wife "Berne" as "Bernie," a brother to Meiselman. Meiselman family 1920 census records show no Bernard Meiselman in the family at that time. It is more likely a misattribution of Berne's name.

⁵²⁰ "\$3 million Gift for Casa Colina," *Progress Bulletin*, February 16, 1976, 11.

⁵²¹ *Palm Springs Season 1946-7 Directory*, 50.

By 1960, the Meiselmans had a home in Beverly Hills at 509 N. Beverly Drive. In their later years, they were known for their philanthropic efforts in expanding services for low-income elderly populations – specifically the donation to Casa Colina Hospital of a \$3 million, 240-unit apartment complex on forty acres in Cathedral City, to be used for elder care.⁵²²

Some accounts indicate that Meiselman may have originally worked with developers George and Robert Alexander, but there may have been a falling out between the men.⁵²³ Regardless, documentation shows Meiselman began building in the desert as early as 1951.⁵²⁴ The first documented action of Meiselman as a developer on his own was recounted by local Palm Springs real estate agent George Gannon in the November 1956 issue of the *Palm Springs Villager*:

In 1953 Jack Meiselman came into my office and wanted to invest in Palm Springs real estate. I suggested that homes were needed within the reach of the average working man. At the time, I couldn't have shown you anything less than \$15,000 and you would have had to have a minimum of \$6,000 to \$7,000 down. That very afternoon, I sold him 10 lots in the Val Vista tract. He handled his own financing. By the time the 10 homes were up I had them sold. They were two-bedroom, one bath homes and sold for \$7,975, \$975 down and \$75 per month.⁵²⁵

In 1954 alone, Meiselman sold more than \$1 million of real estate in Palm Springs.⁵²⁶ By December 1956, Gannon and Meiselman had completed construction on their 250th new home.⁵²⁷

Meiselman was a builder as well as a developer; therefore, he also constructed homes (presumably primarily on speculation) in tracts that he did not develop.⁵²⁸ In 1953, the firm completed the construction of the Carl Schroder Residence designed by Walter White (1917-2002) in the Luring Sands Park tract.⁵²⁹ Other tracts where Meiselman constructed homes included: Vista Del Cielo, Desert Tract, Deep Well, Ramon Rise Estates, Winterhaven Manor, Palm Springs Addition No. 1, and Desert Palm Estates. By November of 1956, Meiselman had built and sold 198 homes in Palm Springs ranging in

⁵²² "Casa Colina Hospital," *San Bernardino County Sun*, February 21, 1976, 28.

⁵²³ "Palm Springs Meiselman Reborn," www.paulkaplanrealtor.com/Meiselman.php (accessed December 7, 2014). This information is pending confirmation from additional sources.

⁵²⁴ "Gannon Realty Company Ad," *Palm Springs Villager*, c. 1956.

⁵²⁵ "Interviewing Our Realtors: George Gannon," *Palm Springs Villager*, November 1956, 40.

⁵²⁶ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, December 27, 1954, 4A.

⁵²⁷ Untitled, *The Desert Sun*, December 20, 1956, 12.

⁵²⁸ Meiselman was also known for his talent as a painter. In March of 1967, his painting of entertainer Sammy Davis Jr. was featured in the *Desert Sun* as a "work rich in color and sweeping strokes, and one of many Meiselman impression of the stars." Image, *The Desert Sun*, March 10, 1967.

⁵²⁹ "William F. Cody Papers, 1918-1980," Special Collections Department, Robert E. Kennedy Library, California Poly Technic State University, San Luis Obispo.

cost from \$8,000 to \$30,000.⁵³⁰ George Gannon was the exclusive buying and selling agent for Meiselman.



George Gannon, realtor and Jack Meiselman, developer, review plans for a subdivision. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, November 1956, 40.

Around 1950, Meiselman approached architect William F. Cody to design a series of three-bedroom/two-bathroom houses for a cluster of parcels within the Desert Palms Estates tract. Surviving drawings indicate what appear to have been two plans and three elevations for each plan, for a total of six designs. They appear to be bordered by Park Drive to the north, McManus Drive to the south, Sunset Way to the east, and other tract parcels to the west.⁵³¹ Based upon a comparison of Cody plot plans and elevations with extant structures, these houses are located at 2284 E. Desert Palms Drive, 2285 E. Desert Palms Drive, 2296 E. Desert Palms Drive, 369 Sunset Way, 2191 E. Park Drive, 2223 E. Park Drive, 2285 E. Park Drive, and 2295 E. Park Drive. Building permits for E. Desert Palms Drive were issued to Cody in 1951 according to the *Desert Sun*.⁵³² Existing archival documentation for this tract is incomplete.⁵³³ The large number of plans and elevations suggest that additional parcels beyond the documented eight may have been included.

Designs in other Meiselman tracts are typically a simplified Mid-century Modern style that was less expressive and refined than their Alexander counterparts. Common elements of Meiselman homes are tongue-and-groove ceilings, clerestory windows, scored plaster, concrete block, and walls of glass at the

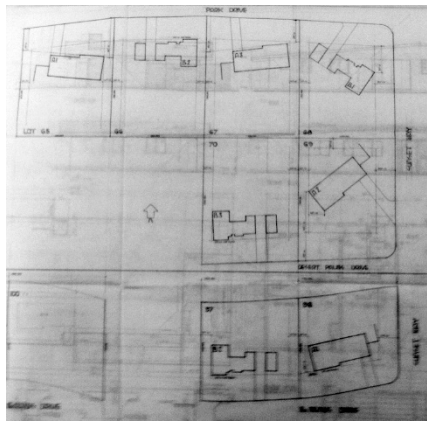
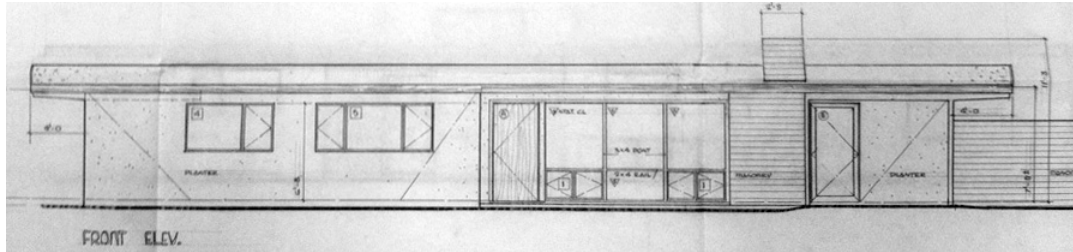
⁵³⁰ "Interviewing our Realtors: George Gannon," *Palm Springs Villager*, November 1956, 40.

⁵³¹ "William F. Cody Papers, 1918-1980," Special Collections Department, Robert E. Kennedy Library, California Poly Technic State University, San Luis Obispo.

⁵³² "Building Still Maintaining Brisk Pace," *The Desert Sun*, February 16, 1951.

⁵³³ "William F. Cody Papers, 1918-1980," Special Collections Department, Robert E. Kennedy Library, California Poly Technic State University, San Luis Obispo.

rear. There is some evidence that, in plan, Meiselman homes often diverged from the Alexander designs in kitchen placement and separation between the master and other bedrooms.⁵³⁴



T: Front elevation of Model E3 for the Cody-designed houses in Meiselman's Desert Palms Estates tract. L: Plot plan for Desert Palms Estates. Source: William Cody Archive, California Polytechnic Institute, San Luis Obispo.

El Mirador Park (1946/1955)

One of the earliest Meiselman developments began with the purchase of 26 lots from Rose Benjamin within the El Mirador Park tract. The El Mirador Park tract was originally subdivided in 1946. Meiselman purchased lots on Paseo El Mirador, Linda Vista Drive and Pasatiempo Road in April of 1955.⁵³⁵ The original tract was subdivided into 49 parcels, so the Meiselman-built homes represent more than half of this tract. The model home for the development, also known as the "Jack Meiselman Home for 1957," was located at 1252 Pasatiempo Road.⁵³⁶

Karlisa Cove and Palm Lane (1956)

In June of 1956 Meiselman subdivided two tracts in Palm Springs. The first, Karlisa Cove, was a small seven-parcel tract of homes in the Karlisa Cove cul-de-sac off Paseo de Caroleta in the area popularly known as the Veterans Tract. These irregularly-shaped parcels are unique among Meiselman

⁵³⁴ J. Williams, "Know Your Meiselman," *Curbed*, July 20, 2014. <http://la.curbed.com/2014/7/20/10070656/know-your-meiselman-midcentury-with-enviable-outdoor-space>. Accessed June 2016.

⁵³⁵ "Meiselman Plans Big Development," *The Desert Sun*, April 14, 1955.

⁵³⁶ "New Presentation of Home Selling Announced by Gannon Realty Co.," *The Desert Sun*, October 19, 1956.

developments. The second, Palm Lane, was a 49-parcel subdivision bordered by Amado Road on the north, the parcels fronting the south side of Andreas Road on the south, Sunset Way on the east, and the parcels fronting the west side of Michelle Road on the west. These houses were three- or four-bedroom/two-bathroom plans with “spacious living rooms with fireplace, glass sliding doors leading to patio and pool areas, and Youngstown engineered kitchens...” priced at \$23,200.⁵³⁷ Meiselman also allowed Palm Lane buyers to customize their homes in terms of plans and colors. The model home, located at 2247 East Amado Road, was lauded by the *Desert Sun* for its “desert contemporary design...refreshing in that it favors quiet and comfortable elegance instead of flashy gimmicks.”⁵³⁸ A second model home was opened at 227 Sunset Way⁵³⁹ in June of 1957.⁵⁴⁰ By 1959, 217 Michelle Road was the model home on display.⁵⁴¹

Although it is currently unknown which designer may have been associated with the first phase of Palm Lane, phase two of the tract was designed by John P. Moyer. These designs eschewed wood fascias in favor of rust-proof metal. Other model homes were opened in 1958 at 2281 E. Andreas Road and 225 Sunset Way.⁵⁴²

Chino Palms Estates (1958)

In 1958-59 Meiselman embarked on the largest of his developments, Chino Palms Estates. This eighty-five-parcel development consists of two tangential property areas. The first, developed in 1958, is south of Via Escuela. The second, developed in 1959, consisted of the east side of Via Miraleste, all of Berne Street, and all of Jacques Street.⁵⁴³ The second phase is comprised of smaller parcels than the first (100 x 100 feet vs. 125 x 150 feet in phase one). In February of 1959, Meiselman purchased from Julian Smith a 10-acre parcel adjacent to phase two of Chino Palms Estates; 30 additional homes were built on this parcel.⁵⁴⁴



Detail of a house in Chino Palms Estates, developed by Jack Meiselman in 1958.

Source:

<http://www.racquetclubestates.com>.

⁵³⁷ “Gannon Realty Company Ad,” *Palm Springs Villager*, c. 1956.

⁵³⁸ “Meiselman Offers Customized Homes in New Palm Lane Estates,” *The Desert Sun*, March 9, 1957.

⁵³⁹ The *Desert Sun* article for this reference cites “227 Sunset Way” although this address could not be confirmed in the field.

⁵⁴⁰ “Customized Homes in Palm Lane Estates Now Offered,” *The Desert Sun*, June 7, 1957.

⁵⁴¹ Ad, *The Desert Sun*, February 13, 1959.

⁵⁴² Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, May 17, 1958.

⁵⁴³ The residences on Jacques and Berne north of Via Escuela were designed by Palmer & Krisel for the Alexanders; the houses on Jacques and Berne between Via Escuela and Louise are part of Chino Palms Estates developed by Meiselman.

⁵⁴⁴ “Meiselman Plan 30 New Homes,” *The Desert Sun*, February 12, 1959.

Chino Palms Estates houses were available in two-bedroom plus den or three-bedroom/two-bathroom plans. The Deluxe Youngstown kitchen and air conditioning were also featured as key selling points. Model homes for the development included houses at 1820 N. Via Miraleste, 1830 N. Via Miraleste, and 2295 N. Via Miraleste.

Alejo Palms Estates (1959)

In August of 1959 Meiselman purchased 20 acres in Section 14 from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and developed the area known as Alejo Palms Estates, with designs by John P. "Jack" Moyer. Alejo Palms Estates is a 57-parcel development boarded by Tamarisk Road on the north, Alejo Road on the south, Juanita Drive on the east, and the properties fronting the west side of Monterey Road on the west. These three-bedroom, two-bath plus family room designs were modeled on the successful Chino Palms Estates plans and were marketed for their quality construction, for being "worry-free," and as the only Palm Springs housing development with concrete driveways.⁵⁴⁵ Model homes for the development were located at 505 Monterey Road, 506 Monterey Road, and 584 Farrell Drive.⁵⁴⁶ 506 Monterey Road contained a series of murals by John Morris⁵⁴⁷ that were advertised to the public to increase viewing.⁵⁴⁸

ASK THE MAN WHO OWNS ONE!

ALEJO PALMS
Estates

Jack Meiselman Enterprises
Have Constantly Offered Quality Homes
and Now Are Offering the Best Home Value Obtainable in
Palm Springs for the 1960 Dollar with the Lowest Interest Rates.

WE WELCOME COMPETITION
THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTE FOR QUALITY

WHEN YOU MOVE INTO A JACK MEISELMAN HOME YOUR
WORRIES ARE OVER. THESE WORRIES ARE BUILT "WORRY FREE"
BY LOCAL CRAFTSMEN WITH ONLY QUALITY IN MIND
SUCH AS:

- American Standard Quality Plumbing
- Youngstown Steel Kitchen Cabinets
- Genuine Lath and Plaster Throughout
- Electrical Silent Light Switches
- Entire Size Lots in the Heart of Palm Springs
- Modern Sky Dome in Kitchen for Indirect Light
- More Than Adequately Equipped with Appliances to
Do the Necessary Jobs and Engineered for Economy
- 6 1/2% Interest on First and Second with
No Balloon Payments
- The Only Palm Springs Home Development with
Concrete Driveways

**3 BEDROOM
FAMILY ROOM
2 BATHS**
from
\$19,500
\$950
down

COMPARE BEFORE YOU BUY
Both Developer and Designer Have Lived in the Desert for Over 17 Years
and the Entire Home Has Been Designed and
Built for Quality Living.

FURNISHED MODELS
505 MONTEREY

GANNON REALTY, exclusive agent
Eva McCubbin, sales director

Alejo Palms advertisement stresses the quality of a Jack Meiselman home.

⁵⁴⁵ Advertisement, "Ask the Man Who Owns One," *Palm Springs Life*, Pictorial Issue, 1960.

⁵⁴⁶ Advertisement, "Ask the Man Who Owns One," *Palm Springs Life*, Pictorial Issue, 1960.

⁵⁴⁷ John Morris (1920-1991) was a Palm Springs-based painter in the Impressionist style who was known as "The Picasso of Palm Springs." He was an official combat artist during WWII. In 1957 he established an art center in Palm Springs. In 1967, he gave up teaching to devote his time to painting.

⁵⁴⁸ "Alejo Palms Estates Ad," *The Desert Sun*, February 18, 1960.

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El Rancho Vista Estates (1960)

In 1960 Roy Fey, one of Palm Springs' most prolific developers and builders, looked eastward from the village and established the tract that would become El Rancho Vista Estates (1960-61, Wexler & Harrison). The "Barbara Tract" as it is officially known on the maps, was developed in three quick, successive phases from north to south and included a street named after the developer himself, Avenida Fey. The development consisted of 92 parcels bordered by Vista Chino on the north, Chia Road on the south, North Gene Autry Trail on the east, and Avenida Fey on the west.⁵⁴⁹ El Rancho Vista Estates sat virtually isolated in the northeastern part of Palm Springs.

Seeing the potential of the Alexander Construction Company's use of modern architecture in housing tracts, Fey engaged the local architecture firm Wexler & Harrison to design homes in El Rancho Vista Estates; the subdivision was the first single-family tract residential development by Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison in Palm Springs.⁵⁵⁰ Similar to the Alexander developments, the architects used a variety of rooflines throughout the curved streets of El Rancho Vista Estates, including gable, butterfly, and flat to give the neighborhood a dynamic architectural cadence. Variations in concrete block patterns were also used to give each house an individual look.



PALM SPRINGS. - EL RANCHO VISTA ESTATES
 Selective site location, proper insulation, & white rock reflective roofs help give built-in comfort to these modern homes with 2 & 3 bdrms., 2 baths, large living rm., laundry rm.; air conditioning, wall-to-wall carpets, built-in Hardwick gas ranges, disposers. From \$16,795, with \$895 down; FHA. Open 9-5 at 3200 E. Vista Chino. Builders: Roy Fey & Joe Koch. Sales Office phone: 324-3381.

Advertisement for El Rancho Vista Estates (1960-1961, Wexler & Harrison) featuring a Mid-century Modern home in the shadow of the mountains. Source: "Display Ad 312," *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1962, P15.

Three basic floor plans included three-bedroom/two-bath and two-bedroom/two-bath versions plus family rooms that were priced at \$16,995.⁵⁵¹ Buyers also received a "golfing membership in the nearby

⁵⁴⁹ The adjacent parcels in the tract (780 along Chia Road and the southern cul-de-sac of Avenida Fey North) were subdivided in 1979 by Canadian-based Fairport Corporation and were not part of the original El Rancho Vista Estates.

⁵⁵⁰ Fey, Wexler, and Harrison would continue to collaborate on projects over the years, including five speculative houses for Fey in the Caballeros Estates tract (1960) at 615, 681 and 755 Avenida Caballeros and 620 and 641 N. Camino Real. Fey also engaged the architects to design the clubhouse at Canyon Country Club (1961).

⁵⁵¹ "Classified Ad 15," *Los Angeles Times*, April 27, 1962, D14.

Ranch Club at no additional cost.”⁵⁵² A furnished model home was located at 3200 East Vista Chino—likely the present-day parcel located at the southwest corner of Vista Chino and Via Roberto Miguel. These homes were marketed to Los Angeles residents as part of the “Balanced Power Homes” program by the Southern California Gas Company that positioned the combined use of gas and electric power as less expensive than “All Electric Homes” that were popular in Southern California during the period.⁵⁵³



Developer Roy Fey and his son, Robert. Source: *Palm Springs Life*, May 1980.

Roy Fey (1915-2000) was one of Palm Springs’ most important developers. By some estimates he built over 1,200 homes in the Palms Springs area.⁵⁵⁴ Born to Ukrainian Jewish immigrants, Fey grew up in Chicago and became an accountant. In 1940, at age 25, he formed his own accountancy group, and then moved into residential housing development after World War II. He built at least 3,000 houses in Chicago prior to moving to Palm Springs in 1955 with his wife Ethel who suffered from asthma.⁵⁵⁵ Upon arrival, Fey founded a real estate company, Fey’s Canyon Realtors, and a construction company, Fey Construction Company. Immediately he began developing residential property. Fey developed Canyon View Estates (1961-68),

Canyon Estates (1969-72), Canyon Vista Estates (1976), Mesquite Canyon Estates (1978), Canyon West (1979), and many others. He was also instrumental in the city’s early co-operative apartment and condominium development. Taking a page from the Alexanders’ book, Fey brought his son Robert M. Fey into the business and together they created a family legacy in real estate, banking, and philanthropy.⁵⁵⁶ Roy Fey was also a founder of the Bank of Palm Springs in the early 1980s.

Southridge Estates (1965)⁵⁵⁷

During the 1960s Southern California residential development turned to the hillsides. As flat, convenient parcels became scarcer and engineering advances made hillside development more feasible and economical, developers increasingly looked to the hills for property. The views associated with hillside properties also made these sites more desirable for homebuilders and buyers. Southridge Estates capitalized on these trends to create an exclusive neighborhood for an elite group of Palm Springs

⁵⁵² “Advertisement,” *The Desert Sun*, May 7, 1960.

⁵⁵³ Display Ad 312, *Los Angeles Times*, March 11, 1962, P15.

⁵⁵⁴ “The History of Desert Skies,” www.desertskies.com/history.htm (accessed November 18, 2014).

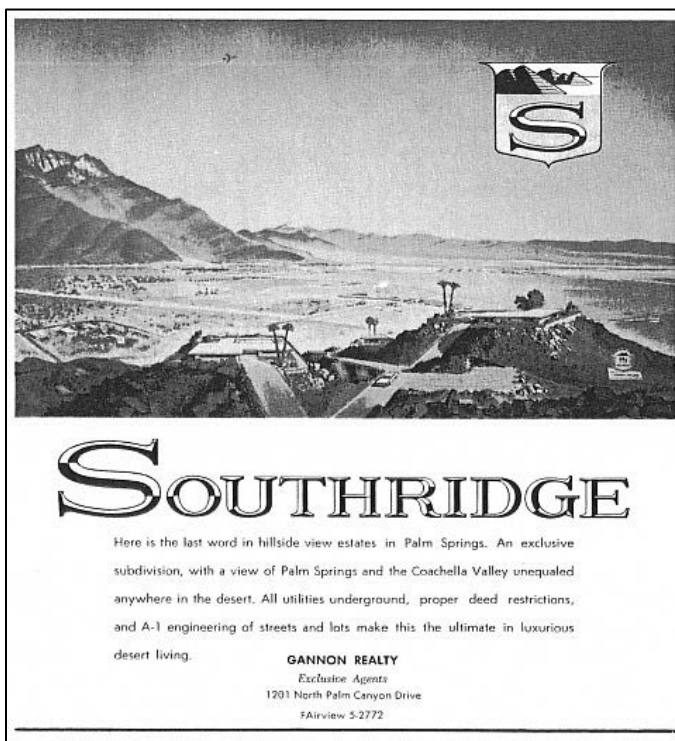
⁵⁵⁵ “The History of Desert Skies,” www.desertskies.com/history.htm (accessed November 18, 2014).

⁵⁵⁶ The Alexanders are discussed in detail below.

⁵⁵⁷ According to correspondence from Marvin Roos and John Sanborn March 23, 2015, Southridge Estates was developed by Jack Rauber (sic). Reportedly, the developer could not get approval from the city to build a subdivision in this location, due to the steep hillside site. The developer went to the site and graded the road and most of the lots first, at which point the city decided to let them proceed.

residences. On land sold to them by realtor Russell Wade, developers E. Allan Petty, Richard E. Rahn, and William Anable subdivided the twenty-two parcel tract (Tract 2928) in January of 1965.

Advertisements for the community, which appeared exclusively in local media like the *Palm Springs Villager*, touted the “view of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley unequalled anywhere in the desert...underground utilities, A-1 engineering of the streets and lots and proper deed restrictions.”⁵⁵⁸ The first home constructed in what would become Southridge was the Max Stoffel Residence (1961-62, Ross Patton and Duke Wild). According to the *Desert Sun*, Patton and Wild, general contractors, were “appointed by owners Richard Rahm, Alan Petty and William Anable to design and build Southridge Homes.”⁵⁵⁹



Advertisement features an artist's rendering of Mid-century Modern-style homes on commanding lots with mountain and "city" views.
 Source: *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960.

⁵⁵⁸ Ad for Southridge, *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960.

⁵⁵⁹ "Untitled," *The Desert Sun*, November 3, 1961, no page.

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A burgeoning Palm Springs population had made it harder to maintain the privacy that had traditionally been afforded the wealthy and famous residents of Palm Springs. As a result, the gated and guarded Southridge Estates appealed to those residents seeking maximum privacy. Southridge is home to several celebrity residences and numerous architecturally significant homes.

In the documentary *Quiet Elegance: The Architecture of Hugh Kaptur*, architect Hugh Kaptur remembers “courting the developers up at Southridge.” These efforts resulted in the Edwin H. Morris Residence (1964, Hugh Kaptur) at 2203 Southridge Drive. The Morris Residence was eventually purchased by the film actor Steve McQueen shortly after the release of his film *Bullitt* in 1969.



The post-and-beam Morris House (1964, Hugh Kaptur) under construction on a hillside site in Southridge Estates. Source: *Palm Springs Life Archives*.

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George and Robert Alexander Developments (1955-1965)

George's vision for his construction company changed in 1956 when his health took a turn for the worse and, under his doctor's advice to seek a warmer, drier climate, he decided to relocate his George Alexander Company base of operations to Palm Springs. The Alexanders had already been enamored of the desert where they had been spending many weekends each winter. The timing couldn't have been better for the firm as the popularity of the desert resort was ready to explode. It would be there where he and his son Bob, and Bill Krisel would form the desert team that would go down in Palm Springs Modernism history.⁵⁶⁰

Through the Alexander Construction Company, George Alexander (1898-1965) and his son Robert "Bob" W. Alexander (1925-1965) were prolific Southern California developers of tract homes. Their company was responsible for thousands of homes in the San Fernando Valley and over 1,200 homes in Palm Springs. Before becoming a developer, George Alexander was an accountant who saw firsthand the profits made by his construction company clients.⁵⁶¹ Over time, the Alexanders earned a reputation for building quality homes of architectural merit, engaging licensed professional architects to produce the designs. George actually began investing in Palm Springs in 1930, as one of the original developers of the Smoke Tree Guest Ranch along with L. Mac Blankenhorn, C.F. Doyle, Nicholas Harrison, and architect Garrett Van Pelt, Jr.⁵⁶² The Alexanders were also active in Palm Springs society, civically engaged and known for their philanthropic work. Tragically, their lives were cut short by a plane crash that killed George, Robert, and their wives in 1965.

Since the days of Prescott T. Stevens and El Mirador, and Pearl McManus and the Oasis Hotel and Smoke Tree Ranch, the Palm Springs recipe for real estate and housing development focused on the building of a resort where people could experience the Palm Springs lifestyle before making the transition to home ownership. Recognizing this, George and Robert Alexander applied the same formula to the south end of the city and built the Ocotillo Lodge (1957-58, Palmer & Krisel).⁵⁶³ The main building or "clubhouse" featured recreational and fine dining amenities for the more remote south end of Palm Springs, surrounded by the "individual villas" that were stepping stones to home ownership. As described in the *Los Angeles Times*, "the Boy Wonder Builders from Los Angeles," George Alexander and Joseph C. Dunas, rented half the villas as hotel rooms and leased half to executives for entertainment purposes.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁶⁰ John Crosse, *Southern California Architectural History Blog*, January 13, 2011 (accessed January 2015).

⁵⁶¹ James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 8.

⁵⁶² "Company Buys Property for Development," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1930, D2.

⁵⁶³ In a *Desert Sun* article from July 1957, it notes that "Mr. and Mrs. Robert Alexander will spend the summer months here while construction of their Ocotillo Lodge is underway." It is announced as recently opened in a January 1958 *Desert Sun* article.

⁵⁶⁴ "Joan Winchell: Co-Ops Catch On in Palm Springs," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1958, D8.

Twin Palms Estates (1955)



Street view of Twin Palms Estates, showing the variety of rooflines. Photograph: Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

The first Alexander Construction Company residential development in Palm Springs was Twin Palms Estates (a.k.a. Smoke Tree Valley Estates, El Camino Estates, and Royal Desert Estates). Twin Palms Estates was subdivided in 1955; the homes were constructed between 1957 and 1958 and designed by Palmer & Krisel. Krisel also served as the landscape architect for the development.⁵⁶⁵ Sited on 10,000-square-foot lots and assembled on 40 x 40 foot concrete pads, the tract of more than ninety homes was built in three phases: the first two in the Twin Palms Estates I and II tracts and the third comprised 19 houses in the middle of the adjacent El Camino Tract in 1957.⁵⁶⁶ Two variations (plans A and B) were offered of essentially one square floor plan with a utility core at the center; exterior options included several Mid-century Modern designs with different rooflines (butterfly, gable, and flat). This provided construction efficiency, the appearance of individuality for the buyer, and an engaging visual cadence for the streetscape.⁵⁶⁷

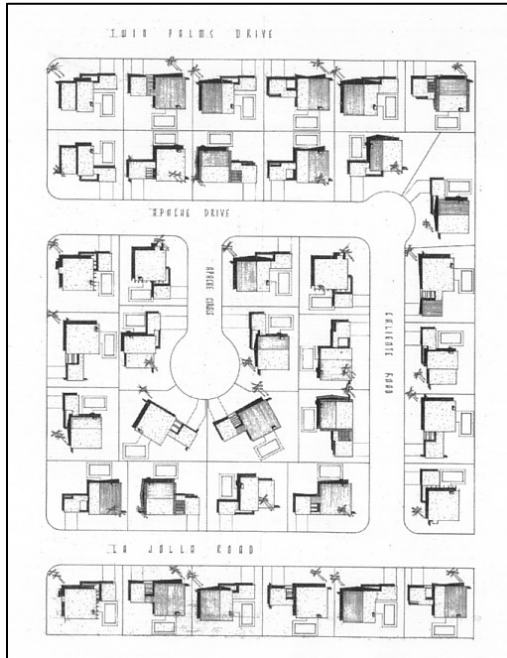
⁵⁶⁵ Krisel studied landscape architecture under Garrett Eckbo and became a licensed landscape architect in 1954.

⁵⁶⁶ This number comes from the Harlan book and appears to include a branch of another tract.

⁵⁶⁷ Sian Winship, "Quality and Quantity: Architects Working for Developers in Southern California, 1960-1973 (MHP Thesis, University of Southern California, 2011), 192. This technique was a classic feature of Palmer & Krisel-designed developments, including Midland La Mirada (1955) in Fullerton, California that won the National Association of Home Builders Award (NAHB) of Merit in January 1956, as well as awards from the Home Building Institute and *American Builder* magazine.



Aerial photo of Twin Palms Estates (1957-58, Palmer & Krisel) shows the proximity to the Ocotillo Lodge in upper right of photograph. The horizontal street dividing the upper third of the photo is Twin Palms Drive. Source: *The Alexanders*, 53.



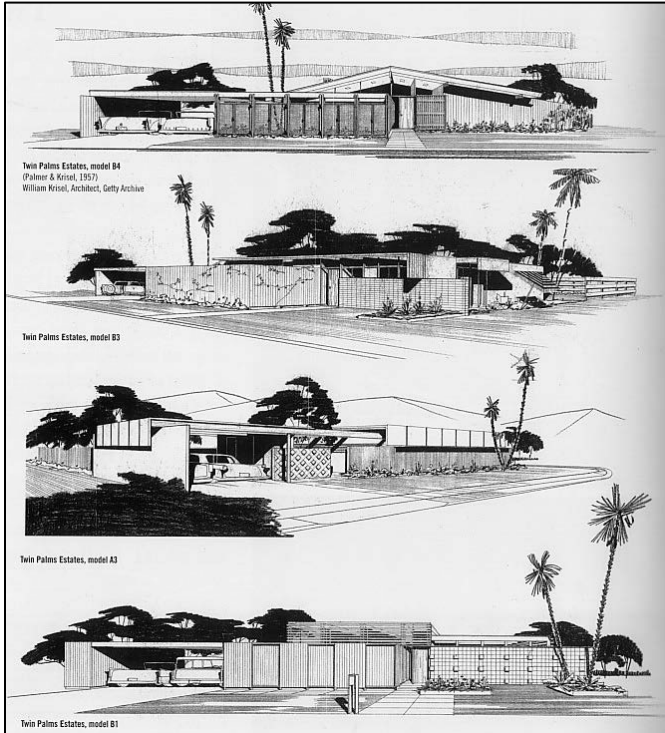
A portion of the plot plan for Twin Palms Estates (1957-58, Palmer & Krisel) that shows how the architects rotated and placed different combinations of plan and elevation to provide a distinctive visual cadence to the development. Source: *The Alexanders*, 27.

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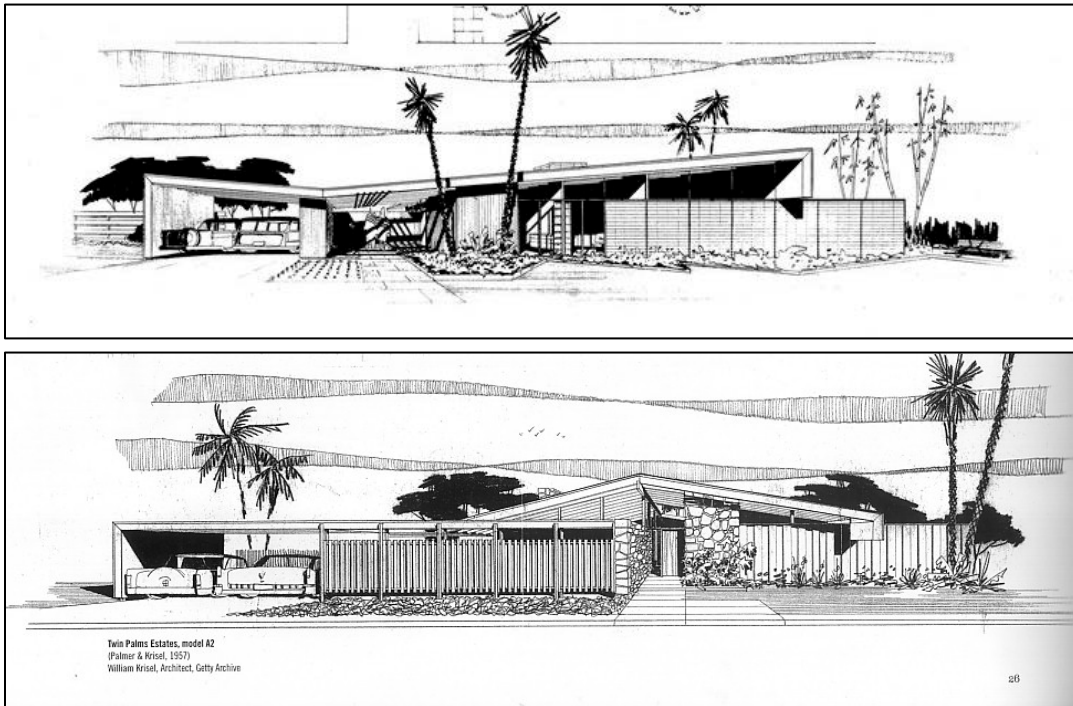
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Six of the many combinations of elevations created by rotating the plans and combining with different rooflines.
Source: William Kiesel Archive, Getty Research Institute.



George and Robert Alexander's first project with Palmer & Krisel had been in the San Fernando Valley when George had provided Robert some land (which would become Corbin Palms, developed in 1954-55) on which he could experiment with tract housing design. Robert engaged William Krisel (b. 1924) and Dan Saxon Palmer (1920-2007) to design the homes. To the elder Alexander's surprise, the houses were both aesthetically successful and made a better profit than previous Alexander developments. A significant factor in the tracts created by the Alexanders was that the developers did not seek FHA loan approval⁵⁶⁸ and therefore, the designs did not have to conform to limiting Minimal Property Standards.⁵⁶⁹

As author James R. Harlan notes, "The techniques that the Alexanders used to build their projects set the Alexander Construction Company apart from other Palm Springs builders."⁵⁷⁰ Materials for Alexander homes were all standardized, pre-cut, labeled, and transported to the site as a kit, not to be customized. This enabled quick assembly by the Alexanders' crew of tradesmen. Standardization and efficiency were as much a part of the Palmer & Krisel design as was the artistry. As William Krisel remembered, "...every line I drew cost money."⁵⁷¹ Yet the designer's philosophy was that "the good tract house is not assembly line living, it improves both the physical shelter and the way of life of the people."⁵⁷²

The square floor plan was also key to Palmer & Krisel's economical work for the Alexanders in Palm Springs. After visiting a concrete tradesman, Krisel learned that a flat slab with only four corners would be the least expensive to construct. Although his Los Angeles designs were rectangles, Krisel remembers, "When I went to Palm Springs they became squares. Square was more efficient than a rectangle because it encompassed more square footage with the least amount of perimeter with four corners."⁵⁷³

⁵⁶⁸ FHA and VA-insured loans were not the only types of loans available. Lenders offered buyers "conventional financing" with less favorable terms on down payment, interest rate, and fee waivers. Conventional financing also typically required borrowers to have excellent credit, job stability with sufficient income, a sizable down payment, and low debt to income ratios. Some developers (including the Alexanders) kept their own loans for deferred profits. As such they were not beholden to FHA Minimum Property Standards that also favored construction methods that added to the construction cost of single-family residences.

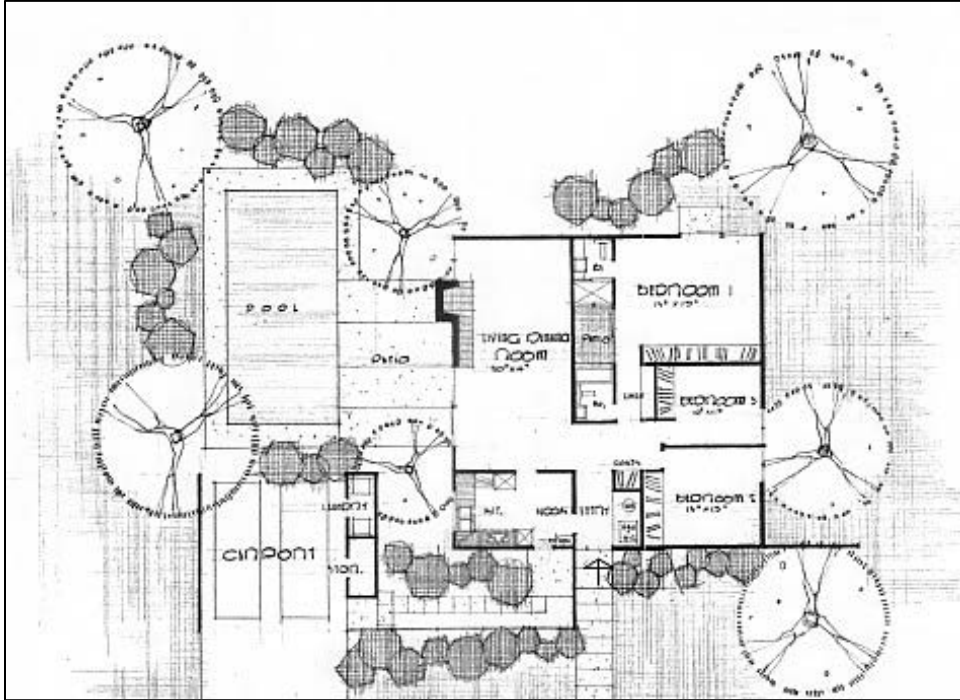
⁵⁶⁹ These standards prohibited houses with a flat roof, a butterfly roof, or slab on grade construction without a double slab pour and a waterproof membrane between the pours. The latter requirement eased over the years, partially through the lobbying efforts of builders' organizations such as the NAHB.

⁵⁷⁰ James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 14.

⁵⁷¹ Sian Winship, "Quality and Quantity: Architects Working for Developers in Southern California, 1960-1973 (MHP Thesis, University of Southern California, 2011), 193.

⁵⁷² Esther McCoy, "What I Believe," *Los Angeles Times*, May 20, 1956, Q4, <http://proquest.com> (accessed May 24, 2011).

⁵⁷³ "William Krisel Oral History, Interview and Transcription by John Crosse," 2009, 69.



Floor plan for a residence in Twin Palms Estates (1957-58, Palmer & Krisel) shows efficient square plan for a three-bedroom unit with walls of glass to the patio. Source: *The Alexanders*, 26.

Twin Palms received national recognition in the architectural trade press. It was lauded by *Progressive Architecture* in March of 1958 for artfully addressing the profession's issues with much postwar tract home design by flipping the plans, and using variations in orientation and fenestration to "...consciously minimize the tract look."⁵⁷⁴

⁵⁷⁴ "Speculative Builders Houses: Palm Springs, California," *Progressive Architecture*, March 1958, 146.

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Twin Palms Estates (1957-58, Palmer & Krisel). Starting Top Left: Model A1, Model B4, Butterfly Model, Model B1. Photographs: Julius Shulman.
Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

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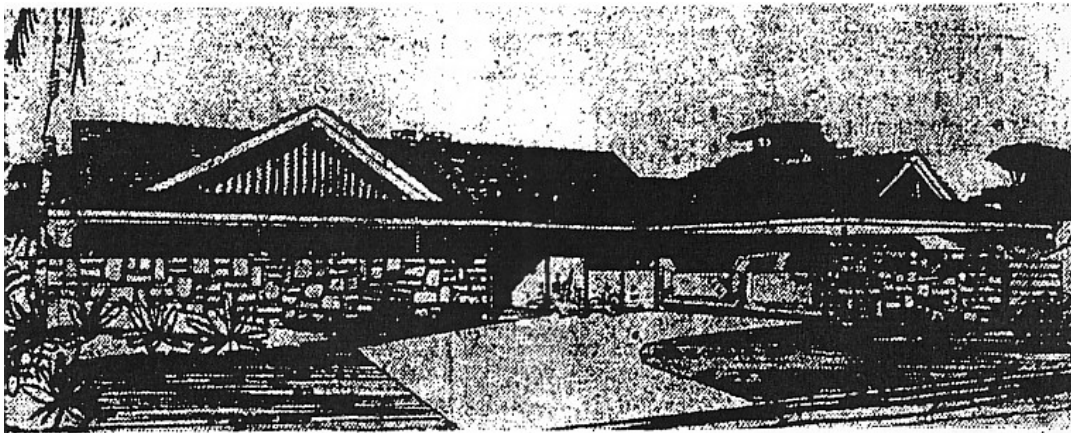
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Vista Las Palmas (1956)

In December of 1956, the Alexanders subdivided the first phase of Vista Las Palmas (1956-59). This included the area bordered by properties fronting the north side of Via Las Palmas to the north, properties fronting the south side of Regal Drive to the south, Via Monte Vista to the east, and Rose Avenue to the West. Because of its central location and adjacency to Las Palmas Estates, this development was targeted to a more upscale clientele than Twin Palms.

Vista Las Palmas was developed in three phases and these phases appear to be loosely tied to their architectural heritage. The first phase, in 1956, is the northern portion of the development from the north side of Via Las Palmas to the south side of Camino del Sur. Many of these designs are attributed to architect Charles E. DuBois. Phase II includes Rose Avenue and the southwestern bend of Abrigo Road with houses all attributed to Palmer & Krisel. Phase III was subdivided in 1959 and included Fairview, Tuxedo, and Cornet Circles along with Regal Drive; these houses are also attributed to Palmer & Krisel.⁵⁷⁵



Vista Las Palmas (1956-59, Palmer & Krisel) model home located at the corner of Via Las Palmas and Via Monte Vista. Source: "Article 19," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, F9.

The three-bedroom plus maid's room designs for the Palmer & Krisel-designed homes in Vista Las Palmas included three rectangular floor plans and three versions of each plan.⁵⁷⁶ One design included "...a striking porte-cochere option."⁵⁷⁷ Placement of the carport on these designs varied from street-

⁵⁷⁵ Inexplicably, the tract map for Las Palmas Number 3 predates the map for Las Palmas Number 2.

⁵⁷⁶ The rectangular floor plans for Vista Las Palmas did not accommodate the rotation of the plans as Palmer & Krisel did in their designs for Twin Palms.

⁵⁷⁷ James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 32.

facing to set at a right angle to the residence – contributing to a distinctive visual architectural cadence for this neighborhood. The designs feature long, low Mid-century Modern lines with varying rooflines of the butterfly, low-pitch, and folded plate. The model home was located at the corner of Via Las Palmas and Via Monte Vista. A second model home was located at 1215 Via Paraiso.⁵⁷⁸

The DuBois-designed homes in Vista Las Palmas featured “...floorplans with the living rooms angled at forty-five degrees and complementary stone walls likewise extended at that angle.”⁵⁷⁹ DuBois is credited with the design of the “Swiss-Miss” houses that are dotted throughout Vista Las Palmas. These designs feature a distinctive A-frame roofline that projects above the rooflines of the surrounding houses. Based on the marketing materials, the steeply pitched A-frame elements which some have interpreted as alpine, may in fact draw more inspiration from Tiki or Polynesian architecture.



“Swiss Miss” home in Vista Las Palmas (c. 1956, Charles DuBois). Source: *Palm Springs Mid-Century Modern*, 22.

⁵⁷⁸ A handwritten note by William Krisel in the Vista Las Palmas files at the Getty Research Institute indicates that “the Las Palmas Model Home was moved to Twin Palms.” Another letter from William Krisel to Paul and Michael dated October 17, 2006 indicates the new address was 922 E. Anza Road. Source: Flatfile 86.

⁵⁷⁹ Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, 34.

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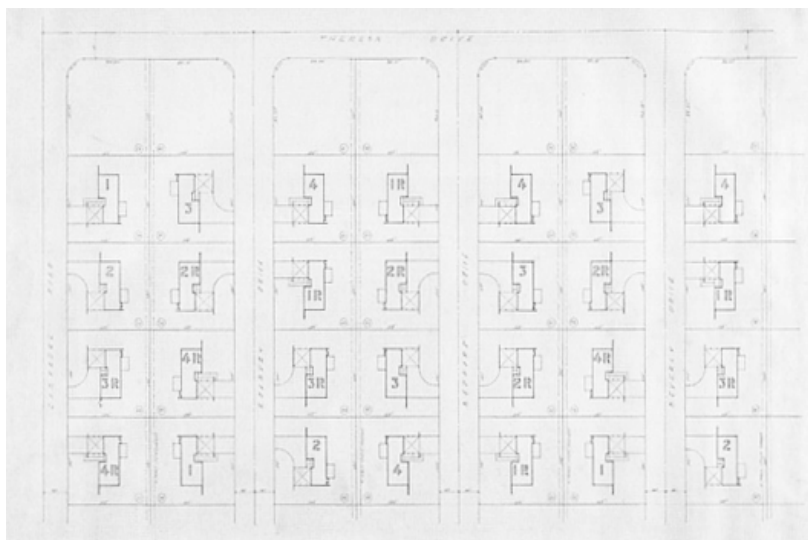
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Ramon Rise Estates (1956)

Ramon Rise Estates (1956-58, Palmer & Krisel) consisted of a 106-parcel development bordered by Ramon Road to the north, Sunny Dunes Road to the south, Cielo Road to the east, and Compadre Drive to the west. The tract was subdivided by George R. Goldberg and Maurice Horner, Jr.⁵⁸⁰ Goldberg, a Los Angeles-based real estate man, appears to have sold some of the parcels to the Alexander Construction Company. This includes 16 parcels at the north end of Roxbury, Bedford, Beverly, and Canon Drives, Compadre Road, and Cielo Road. Company partner Joe C. Dunas handled the project, and turned initially to Palmer & Krisel for designs. After the preparation of floor plans, plot plans, and elevations, Dunas engaged other designers to prepare the working drawings.⁵⁸¹

According to the *Desert Sun*, the original developer of Ramon Rise, George E. Goldberg, partnered with Jack Meiselman in 1956 to construct a number of homes in the subdivision which were marketed as "Ramon Rise Estates."⁵⁸² Included among these were homes at 602, 630, 654, 676, and 688 Canon Drive, and 603, 631, 655, 677, 689, and 695 El Cielo Road.⁵⁸³



Plot plan for Ramon Rise Estates (1956-58, Palmer & Krisel) shows the alternating orientation for each house combined with the alpha-numeric variation of designs. Source: *The Alexanders*, 45.

⁵⁸⁰ Tract map for this subdivision is illegible. The name may be Maurice Homer, Jr.

⁵⁸¹ Email from William Krisel, June 8, 2016.

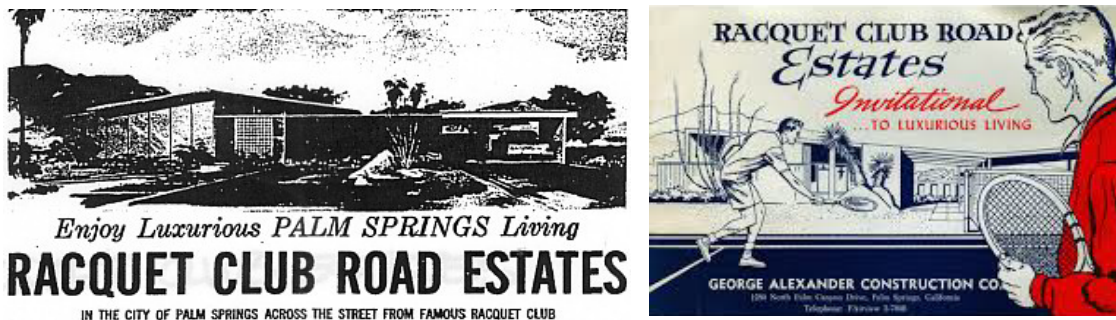
⁵⁸² "Ramon Rise Groundbreaking Held," *The Desert Sun*, October 12, 1956.

⁵⁸³ "Week's City Building Permits," *The Desert Sun*, November 30, 1956.

Enchanted Homes (1957-1958)

The Enchanted Homes tract is located within the former Sunmor Estates which the Alexanders purchased from Sunmor developer A.R. Simon. It included three phases of Alexander development between December 1957 and February 1958. Although sources have attributed these homes to Palmer and Krisel,⁵⁸⁴ the *Desert Sun* attributes phases two and three of this development to Richard R. Leitch (1922-2008).⁵⁸⁵ Krisel recalls designing the preliminary drawings for the homes, but Alexander Company executive Joe Dunas later removed him from the project.⁵⁸⁶ According to Krisel, the project was turned over to architect Anton Dalu, who was working in the Palm Springs area at the time as documented by the *Los Angeles Times*. Dalu's involvement cannot be verified at this time. A model home for the development was located at 2866 Livmor Avenue.

Phase one included the parcels along Andres Road and the four cul-de-sacs plus parcels to the east of Easmor Circle and along Farrell Drive north of Andreas Road. Phase two is bordered by Amado Road on the north, Andreas Road to the south, Farrell Drive to the east and Orchid Tree Lane to the West. Phase three is bordered by Amado Road on the north, Andreas Road on the South, Orchid Tree Lane on the east and Sunset Way on the west.



Advertisements for Racquet Club Road Estates (1958, Palmer & Krisel) touted the tract's proximity to the famous Racquet Club. L: Source: "Display AD 28," *Los Angeles Times*, November 26, 1961. R: Source: Racquet Club Road Estates Brochure, Private Collection of Donna Sherwood.

Racquet Club Road Estates (1958)

Racquet Club Road Estates (1958-61, Palmer & Krisel) was by far the largest Palm Springs development by the Alexanders. It was developed in six phases and was bordered by Francis Drive to the north, the properties fronting the south side of Glen Circle and Via Escuela to the south, Avenida Caballeros south of Racquet Club Road, and Aurora Drive north of Racquet Club Road; the western boundary extends

⁵⁸⁴ James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 44.

⁵⁸⁵ "Hold Open House for New Enchanted Homes Grouping," *The Desert Sun*, May 22, 1958, 7.

⁵⁸⁶ Email from William Krisel to Chris Menrad, January 2016.

almost to Indian Canyon Drive. At the outset of the project, the Alexanders constructed a storage warehouse on West San Rafael Drive at North Puerta del Sol (designed by Palmer & Krisel). The warehouse was a key factor in the success of the Alexanders' operation, as to avoid delays subcontractors were required to store all construction materials there before construction began.

The irregularly-shaped development (punctuated by Victoria Park and a school) was first developed at the northwest end, then the southeast, then the southwest, and finishing in the summer of 1960 to the northeast – just in time for the beginning of the 1960-61 season. In May of 1958, the Alexanders purchased a forty-acre site from the Bureau of Indian Affairs “near the Racquet Club” which may have been the portion of the development east of Victoria Park School.⁵⁸⁷ The design employed a series of streets and cul-de-sacs of 100-foot wide lots. Once again, the Alexanders turned to Palmer & Krisel for Mid-century Modern post-and-beam designs. In the sales brochure, they were billed as the “nationally famous architectural firm of Palmer & Krisel.”⁵⁸⁸ Of course, proximity to the legendary Racquet Club and views of the mountains were also key selling points.



Looking westward from Racquet Club Road Estates (1958-61, Palmer & Krisel), the largest of the Mid-century Modern-style Alexander tracts developed in Palm Springs. Breezeway and carport extension on the western side along with the butterfly roofline elongates the façade and gives the illusion of a larger house. Photo: Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

⁵⁸⁷ “Indian Land Bids Total \$794,963 for 82 Acres,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 1958, B6.

⁵⁸⁸ Racquet Club Estates Sales Brochure, www.racquetclubestates.com (accessed January 2015).

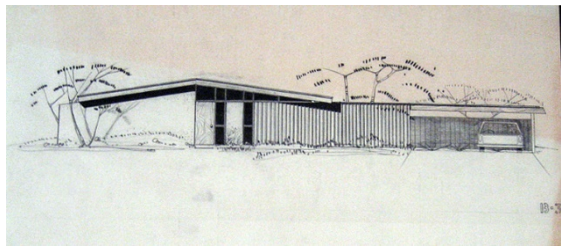
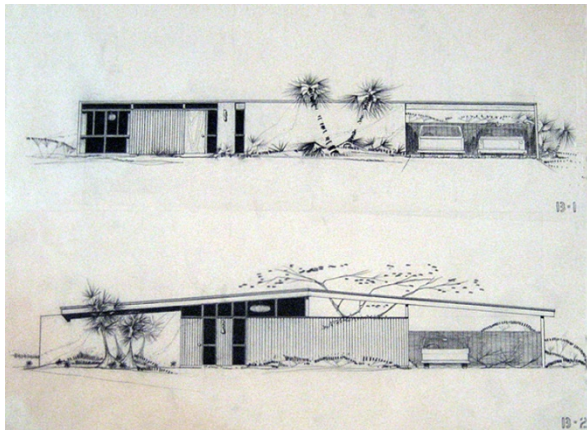
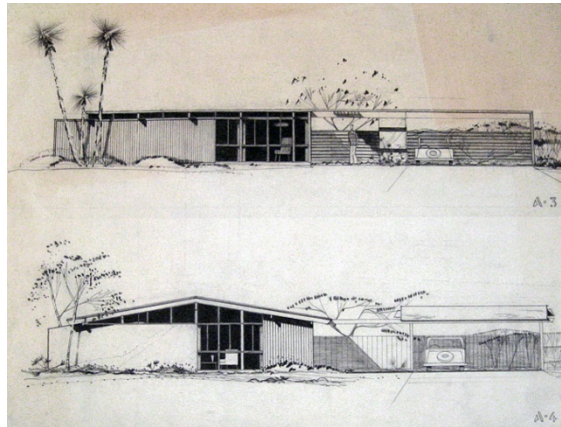
Using the super-efficient square plan, Krisel devoted the full expanse of the rear of the plan to living and dining space and moved the kitchen to the center of the plan. According to author James Harlan, two basic floor plans were used at the development and two additional plans were experimented with and abandoned.⁵⁸⁹ A later marketing brochure for the development shows a plan with a kitchen now integrated into the living-dining space at the rear of the plan.



Interior of unit at Racquet Club Road Estates (1958-61, Palmer & Krisel). Floor to ceiling glass on the rear façades of these Mid-century Modern homes integrated exterior patio/pool areas and allowed dramatic views of the neighboring mountains. Photo: Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

Five different rooflines (butterfly, gable, low-pitch gable, side-gable, and flat) incorporated a carport and breezeway, creating a series of long, low horizontal façades along the street. Clerestory windows captured mountain views to the west. Palmer & Krisel laid out the specific combinations of floor plan and roofline on each parcel to maximize privacy and views, and to maintain an engaging visual architectural cadence.

⁵⁸⁹ James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 38.



Elevations for Racquet Club Road Estates (1958-61, Palmer & Krisel) show five different rooflines employed in the tract: butterfly, flat, side gable, front gable, low-pitch front gable. Source: William Krisel Archive, Getty Research Institute.

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Model homes for the development included 325 Francis Drive and 289 Racquet Club Road (Palmer & Krisel architects, interiors by Arthur Elrod, landscape design by Don Crabtree). Sales were brisk and a marketing brochure for later phases of the development read, “Here your neighbors will number among them world famous personalities in the entertainment, business and professional world – people who have complete freedom of choice.”⁵⁹⁰

Racquet Club Road Estates received national attention in the architectural trade press with a feature in the June 1961 issue of *House and Home*. The development also earned several awards, including the National Home Builders Association Award of Merit in 1961.

ALEXANDER CONSTRUCTION COMPANY
 "Palm Springs' Largest Builders"

DIRECTIONAL MAP TO
Racquet Club Road Estates

These national award-winning homes offer beauty, comfort and value for the most discriminating buyer

TOTAL PRICE \$19,900 ONLY \$950 DOWN

Here are today's greatest home values in Palm Springs. We cordially invite you to visit our model homes and judge for yourself!

The Alexander Construction Company's 35 years of experience of constructing quality homes results in maximum savings to the buyer.

That they meet the requirements of the most fastidious home buyers is evidenced by the fact that many world-famous personalities in the entertainment business and professional world have bought Racquet Club Road Estates.

● DESIGNED BY ARCHITECTS
 ● BUILT BY MASTER BUILDERS
 ● FOR PERMANENT VALUE

Luxury Homes without the Luxury Price Tag!

Map labels: RACQUET CLUB ROAD MODEL HOME, RACQUET CLUB Road Estates, BIRIERA HOTEL, VISTA CRINOID, NORTH PALM CANYON DRIVE, INDIAN AVENUE, DESERT INN MODEL HOME, EARLY TANGUITE DRIVE, PALM SPRINGS AREA.

Advertisement for Racquet Club Road Estates promoting “national award-winning homes [with] beauty, comfort and value for the most discriminating buyer.”

⁵⁹⁰ Racquet Club Road Estates Brochure, Private Collection of Donna Sherwood, www.racquetclubestates.com (accessed January 10, 2015).

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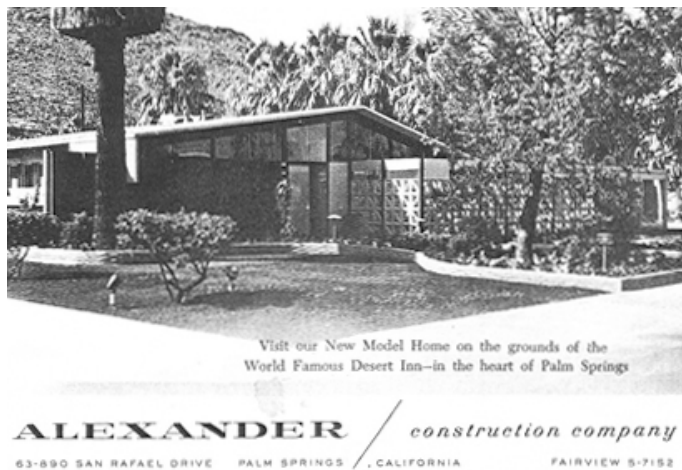
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Golden Vista Estates (1960)

In a new variant on the “resort stay to home sales” recipe, the Alexanders purchased the Desert Inn in 1950. In 1960, to promote their new residential venture, Golden Vista Estates, they erected a model home on the grounds of the Desert Inn.⁵⁹¹ Golden Vista Estates (1960, Palmer & Krisel) expanded the Vista Las Palmas offerings to the south; the tract is bounded by Via Monte Vista on the east, Leisure Way on the south, N. Rose Avenue on the west, and the properties on the south side of W. Regal Drive on the north. Here the developers offered three floor plans: two modified versions of the square Twin Palms plan and a larger four-bedroom/three bath plan that included a courtyard at the entryway.⁵⁹² A second model home for the tract was constructed at 963 Via Monte Vista.



Ad showing new model home on the grounds of the Desert Inn after the hotel was purchased by the Alexanders. Source: *Palm Springs Villager*, December 14, 1960, 18.

⁵⁹¹ According to James R. Harlan, the model home was moved in 1961 to the corner of Anza Drive and Joshua Tree Place.

⁵⁹² James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 32.

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Calcor Prefabricated Homes/Steel Development Houses (1961-1962)

The advantages of prefabricated steel homes in the desert climate had been on developers' radar in Palm Springs since the 1930s. Now experiments in steel home construction on a mass scale were born out of an ethos of factory-based production which developed as part of the war effort and which continued into the postwar years. As described in *Architectural Forum* in 1951:

Today these three features: industrialization, flexibility and modular order are found only in a handful of custom-designed houses. Years from now they may well be found in half the houses in the United States – and the home-building industry will be able to point to higher quality, lower cost and better living as a result.⁵⁹³

Despite ambitious predictions, the building industry was slow to embrace the steel house for tract housing development. In 1955, noted developer and proponent of modern architecture, Joseph Eichler, commissioned the architectural firm Jones and Emmons (A. Quincy Jones and Frederick E. Emmons) to design an experimental exhibition house, the X-100, to explore the potential of residential steel frame construction for middle-class housing developments. While Eichler did not intend to put the X-100 into production, it garnered national media attention.⁵⁹⁴



This drawing shows the three rooflines: flat, clerestory, and folded plate giving the neighborhood an interesting visual appearance. Source: "AD Classics: Steel Pre-Fab Houses / Donald Wexler," *ArchDaily*, August 20, 2011.

In 1962, the Alexanders made a foray into steel housing development. Donald Wexler approached the Alexanders with the idea for using the Calcor steel wall system to which he had been introduced by Bernard Perlin, a Calcor engineer. The Alexanders decided to work with Wexler to develop steel tract housing in their 1961 tract north of the Racquet Club subdivision. As a result, the Steel Development Houses project, also known as Calcor Prefabricated Homes and Alexander Steel Homes, was born in

⁵⁹³ "Preview of the Future," *Architectural Forum*, November 1951, 214-215.

⁵⁹⁴ Brooke Hodge, ed., *A. Quincy Jones: Building for a Better Future* (Los Angeles, CA: Hammer Museum), 2013, 164.

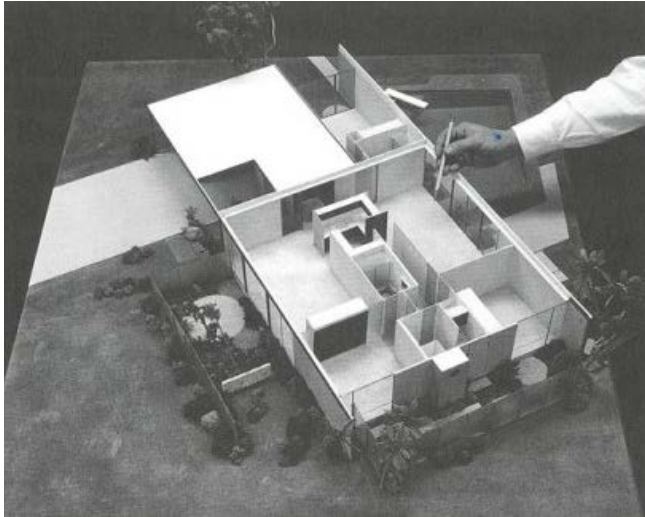
partnership with the Columbia-Geneva Division of U.S. Steel and Calcor (a.k.a., Rheem Manufacturing Company) of Huntington Park, California. The 1,400 square foot homes were priced at \$13,000-\$17,000 plus the cost of the land.⁵⁹⁵ The landscape design was by local landscape architect David Hamilton.



Rear façade of the steel house with folded plate roofline (1961-62, Donald Wexler or Wexler & Harrison). Source: *Steel and Shadow: The Architecture of Donald Wexler*, 23.

Architecturally, the use of a steel frame freed the interior of load bearing walls and enabled an open plan. A nine-by-thirty-six foot central core contained the kitchen and bathrooms, and the rest of the plan was flexible. Composed primarily of steel and glass, the houses feature eight-foot high glass sliding doors and stationary panels and the designs are quintessentially Mid-century Modern in style. The houses were designed with three different rooflines (flat roof, raised with clerestory, and folded plate) to give the identical pre-fabricated house development an interesting visual architectural cadence from the street.

⁵⁹⁵ Adele Cygelman, *Palm Springs Modern* (New York: NY: Rizzoli), 1999, 142.

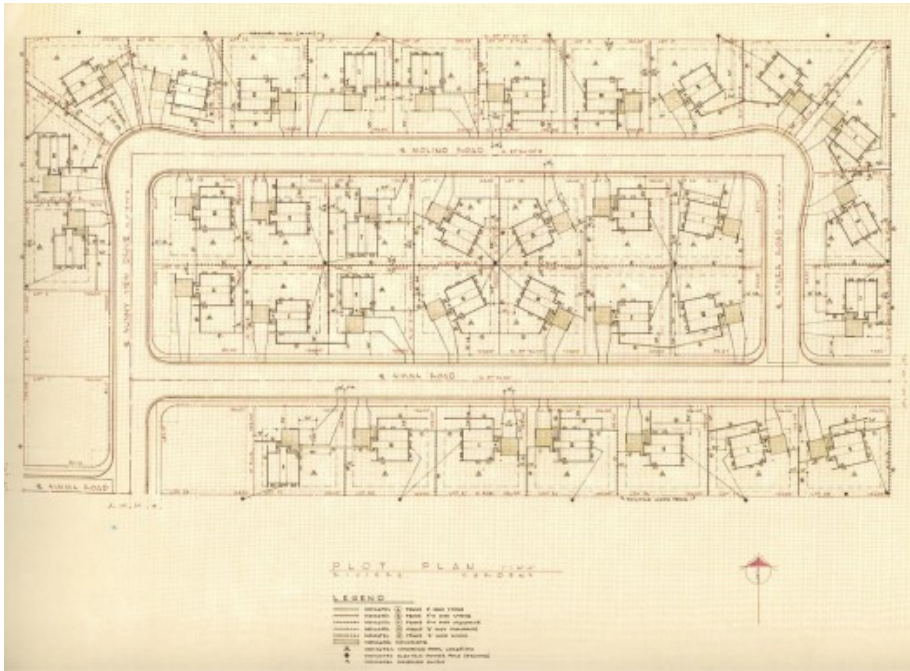


L: Architect Donald Wexler showing the design for one of the model houses. Note the central utility core and how interior partition walls are freed from being load bearing by the steel frame. Large expanses of glass through stationary and sliding doors integrate interior and exterior spaces in the classic Mid-century Modern style. R: The prefabricated steel houses were erected on their lots in three days. Here a crane lowers the basic frame of a model house on its concrete pad. Source: <http://www.racquetclubestates.com/Steel%20History.html>



With the use of the Calcor system, the homes utilized a unique combination of factory prefabrication and on-site assembly or “a factory in the field.”⁵⁹⁶ The cores were prefabricated in the factory at the same time that concrete slabs were poured to a steel template. Non-load bearing walls came in large sections and were bolted into the concrete slab foundation. The result was a practical construction process that required only three days to complete.

⁵⁹⁶ *Journeyman Architect: The Life and Work of Donald Wexler*, director by Jake Gorst (Palm Springs, CA: Jonamac Productions, 2009).



The thirty five-home steel house subdivision as originally envisioned for Tract 2085. Only seven homes were ultimately constructed due to a hike in steel prices. Source: "AD Classics: Steel Pre-Fab Houses / Donald Wexler," *ArchDaily*, August 20, 2011.

The Alexanders planned to develop 35 of the lots with steel housing.⁵⁹⁷ The first three of the seven model homes were started in late 1961 and opened to the public in March of 1962;⁵⁹⁸ the remaining four houses were constructed in phase two.⁵⁹⁹ During the construction of the second phase, Calcor was purchased by a larger firm and the price of steel was raised. According to Donald Wexler, "The Alexanders wouldn't have any of it – they refused to pay more... someone had to be the pioneer. They were very powerful and all the other developers were watching them to see what would happen."⁶⁰⁰ Ultimately, the higher cost of steel priced them out of the market and the plans for the tract were derailed.⁶⁰¹ The Steel Development Houses were published in *Architectural Record* and named Record House of 1963.

In 2001, the City of Palm Springs made the seven Steel Development Houses a Class 1 Historic Site. In 2012, Steel Development House No. 2 (3125 North Sunny View Drive) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

⁵⁹⁷ Oscar Lopez, "AD Classics: Steel Pre-Fab Houses / Donald Wexler," *ArchDaily*, August 20, 2011, <http://www.archdaily.com/?p=155411> (accessed December 8, 2014).

⁵⁹⁸ Racquet Club Estates, <http://www.racquetclubestates.com/Steel%20History.html> (accessed January 2015).

⁵⁹⁹ The seven houses were constructed at 290 E. Simms Road; 300 and 330 E. Molino Road; and 3100, 3125, 3133, and 3165 N. Sunny View Drive.

⁶⁰⁰ Adele Cygelman, *Palm Springs Modern* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1999), 142.

⁶⁰¹ On the remaining lots in the tract, the Alexanders built Riviera Gardens (1963-64). These were more traditional wood-frame Ranch-style houses. The model home was located at 370 Simms Road. James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 42.

New Riviera Gardens (1961-62)

When further development of the steel houses was abandoned due to increased cost, the Alexanders turned to selling off the rest of the subdivision with more traditional designs. This development was known as New Riviera Gardens (a.k.a., Riviera Gardens and Riviera Gardens Estates). Although the tract had been subdivided in 1961, the steel house project delayed construction in New Riviera Gardens until 1963-64.

Referred to as “Sunshine Homes” in advertising, the homes were conventional Ranch style in design and the model was located at 370 Simms Road.⁶⁰² New Riviera Gardens was unique among Alexander developments in that it offered a common pool and recreation area – the Riviera Gardens Recreation Club. Usage of the pool and cabana area were limited to residents of Riviera Gardens and ownership was held by all “owner members.”⁶⁰³ It featured “the nation’s first prefabricated pool house,” manufactured by Anthony Pools, Inc., South Gate.⁶⁰⁴ The cabana, with roof sections constructed of colored fiberglass, contained a dressing room. The new amenity proved popular as New Riviera Gardens was sold out by July of 1965.⁶⁰⁵

Las Palmas Summit (1962)

In October of 1962, Las Palmas Summit⁶⁰⁶ (1962, Charles E. DuBois), a tract of twenty homes including the north end of Los Robles Drive, Friar Court, and Capistrano Court, was developed by Alexander partner Joseph C. Dunas (1900-1987). Advertisements for the homes differentiated them from other Palm Springs offerings by evoking popular culture’s increasing interest in Hawaii as a vacation destination: “Where island living meets desert living, the ‘all seasons’ home designed for year round living.” Sales agent, “Aloha-Bob Paine” was on hand to provide “Hawaiian Hospitality.”⁶⁰⁷ According to author James R. Harlan, 1211 Los Robles was likely the model home for the development.⁶⁰⁸

Farrell Canyon Estates (1963)

By February 1963 the Alexander Construction Company had built over \$50 million worth of homes.⁶⁰⁹ In December 1963, following the continued eastern movement of residential development in Palm Springs, the Alexanders subdivided Farrell Canyon Estates (1963), which included San Joaquin and San

⁶⁰² Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, April 3, 1964, 20.

⁶⁰³ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, July 4, 1964, 12.

⁶⁰⁴ Untitled Article, *The Desert Sun*, June 19, 1964, no page. It is unknown if the pool is extant.

⁶⁰⁵ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, July 23, 1965, 14.

⁶⁰⁶ Also known as Tract 2421.

⁶⁰⁷ “Aloha Las Palmas Summit Ad,” *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 32.

⁶⁰⁸ James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 34.

⁶⁰⁹ “Display Ad 11,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 1963, 13.

Mateo Drives North of Sonora Road and San Mateo Circle northwest of Farrell Drive. The 57-parcel development featured six elevation designs that evoked the exotic and international including Parisian, Mediterranean, Granada, and Tiki.⁶¹⁰ The Parisian featured a distinctive mansard roof. The model home, the “Spanish Ranchero” model was located at 1350 S. Farrell Drive.⁶¹¹

Farrell Canyon Estates was frequently cross-promoted with other Alexander developments in Palm Springs including Araby Estates and Sunrise Estates, both subdivided in 1964. Ads for the subdivisions reveal the pressure on residential developments within city limits from encroaching developments in other desert communities, and the higher cost of the land ownership model in comparison to the less expensive developments on leased Agua Caliente Indian Reservation lands.

In 1965, the Alexanders once again approached Palmer & Krisel with the intention of expanding Farrell Canyon Estates to the parcels south of Sonora Road. Plans were drawn and a plot plan developed for a new kind of Alexander development: 48 single family residences located around a common recreation area with swimming pool.⁶¹² This project was cut short, however, by the death of the Alexanders in a plane crash on November 15, 1965. The family was on their way to Los Angeles to celebrate the opening of a luxury high-rise building by Robert Alexander’s brother-in-law, Sheldon Appel.⁶¹³

Desert Lanai (c. 1963)

The Alexanders also decided to try their hand at the co-op apartment market. This project, Desert Lanai, was developed in at least three phases. Models included a two-bedroom/two deluxe baths and a one-bedroom-plus-den configuration.⁶¹⁴ Like other co-op communities, Desert Lanai offered buyers a property that would be “maintained to perfection, whether you are here or not.”⁶¹⁵ The model apartment was located at 1707 E. Tachevah Road, at Sunrise Way.

Araby Estates (1964)

Araby Estates, a small 40-parcel tract bordered by Sonora Road on the north, Avery Drive on the south, Beverly Drive on the east, and the properties fronting the west side of La Brea Road on the west, featured a wide range of exterior designs similar to Farrell Canyon Estates. The three-bedroom/two-bath plans featured lanais and enclosed, detached garages. Two model homes were located at 2996 Avery

⁶¹⁰ “Farrell Canyon Draws Visitors from Far Away,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 1965, 120.

⁶¹¹ Advertisement, *The Desert Sun*, May 14, 1964, 13.

⁶¹² Flatfiles 369-370, William Krisel Papers, Getty Research Institute.

⁶¹³ *Next*, September 1999, 28.

⁶¹⁴ “Display Ad,” *The Desert Sun*, May 31, 1963.

⁶¹⁵ “Display Ad,” *The Desert Sun*, April 21, 1964

Drive (1965) and 2988 Avery Drive (1965).⁶¹⁶ Later, another model home was located at 2955 Sonora Road.⁶¹⁷

Ads in the *Desert Sun* for Araby Estates tout “The address is Palm Springs...The architecture is international.” Six elevations were featured: the Polynesian inspired “Bali Hai” and “Tiki” models, the mansard-roofed “Parisian,” the Ranch style “Casa Grande,” the Spanish arched façade of the “Granada,” and the columned “Mediterranean.” Featured amenities included a “circulating floor-plan,” open living rooms with sliding glass doors in every direction, luxurious master suites with Roman tubs, underground utilities, and air conditioning.”⁶¹⁸

Your own luxurious
3-Bedroom, 2-Bath Home
in the City of Palm Springs
(land included!) Complete from
\$29,450
ONLY \$1950 DOWN

The “PARISIAN”

Choose From Six Different Attractive Exterior... This is the way to live in Palm Springs! You live within the city limits—close in and enjoy all municipal services and advantages. Your home has 3 bedrooms; 2 baths, lanai, a big double closed garage. And it's your home and your land—easy to buy, easy to finance and you gain by future value increases. These are luxury homes with refrigerated air-conditioning; gas forced-air heat; wall to wall carpeting; built-in range and oven; disposal and dishwasher. Your large view lot is fenced, the driveways are cement, the streets and sidewalks are paved and utilities are underground. Visit Palm Springs this weekend. See these Alexander-built homes. They are real values and you'll want one.

Other Alexander-built values:
In Palm Springs also see the few remaining homes at Farrell Canyon Estates (\$1950 down.) The Alexander man will give you directions when you visit fabulous Araby Estates.

Araby Estates Close to Everything in Palm Springs
San Bernardino Freeway to Palm Springs Off-Ramp. Follow Palm Canyon Drive then North at Araby Drive.
Furnished Model by Noel P. Birns • 2996 Avery Drive • Telephone (714) 327-5177

Always a Trick of Palm Springs' Famous Home Owners Have Bought Alexander-Built Homes. There's a reason—VALUE!

Ad for Araby Estates (1964-66) shows the Parisian-themed model.
Source: “Display Ad 41,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1965, B9.

⁶¹⁶ “Display Ad 28,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 29, 1965, B3.

⁶¹⁷ “Araby Estates Classified Ad,” *The Desert Sun*, October 7, 1965, 15.

⁶¹⁸ “Araby Estates Classified Ad,” *The Desert Sun*, October 7, 1965, 15.

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Sunrise Estates (1964)

In 1964 the Alexanders developed Sunrise Estates, a 21-parcel development that included the cul-de-sacs at Buttonwillow Circle and Cibola Circle, with six homes on Biskra Road and three on Cerritos (Tract 2809). At \$19,900, homes in Sunrise Estates were at a lower price point than other Alexander Homes available during this period. The designs are based on the same floor plans as the Golf Club Estates homes.⁶¹⁹

After the plane crash that killed the father and son development team, the brother of Robert Alexander's wife Helene, Sheldon L. Appel (1931-1999) oversaw the company's projects in progress. Appel was a major Los Angeles developer in his own right – with millions of dollars in residential and commercial projects to his credit. Appel oversaw the sales of projects under construction but curtailed any new design and development.⁶²⁰ Appel, however, ultimately acquired the parcels adjacent to the Farrell Canyon Estates development and subdivided them himself as Tract No. 3620 (a.k.a. La Reina Estates) in 1970 and Tract 8789 in 1978.

Had the lives of the Alexanders not been tragically cut short, additional residential projects would have been realized by the Alexander Construction Company in Palm Springs. Projects on the boards at the time of their deaths included the redevelopment of the twelve-acre Desert Inn property into a combination hotel/residential development, and a restoration of the Racquet Club facility and the construction of condominiums.⁶²¹

⁶¹⁹ James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 52.

⁶²⁰ William Krisel email to the author, February 16, 2015.

⁶²¹ James R. Harlan, *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 52.

Sub-theme: Golf Course Residential Development (1960-1969)

While Palm Springs had long been known as a spot for “fun in the sun” and active outdoor recreation, in the years following World War II the desert became synonymous with the sport of golf.⁶²² Prior to 1950, the city of Palm Springs was home to only two golf courses: the small nine-hole course that had been laid out behind the Desert Inn in 1926 by Thomas O'Donnell; and Cochran Ranch, a nine-hole course opened in 1944.⁶²³ The scarcity and high cost of water made golf courses an expensive proposition.⁶²⁴

That changed in 1951 when Thunderbird Ranch in Rancho Mirage was transformed into a golf community. Thunderbird quickly became the premier postwar housing development in the Coachella Valley.⁶²⁵ It was distinctive in that residential parcels were integrated into course design. In addition to fairway vistas, the homes came with private country club membership. This innovative business model was enabled by the simultaneous development of golf carts, air conditioning, jet-age travel, and increased media exposure. The golfing habits of President Dwight D. Eisenhower and, ultimately, the creation of the Palm Springs Desert Classic tournament in 1960 popularized the sport across the nation.⁶²⁶ By 1967, *Golf Digest* magazine reported that “communities that have been purposely planned and developed with a golf course as the focal point of neighborhood life have taken hold in this country with 125 locations in over twenty states.”⁶²⁷ As of 1967, 400,000 people were living in these communities.⁶²⁸

By 1965, golf was “the major attraction in the Palm Springs area.”⁶²⁹ Golf lured thousands of visitors to Palm Springs. Once there, they soon “started thinking of owning a home or a condominium.”⁶³⁰ While some of the communities were planned for the very wealthy, many were created for people with middle-class incomes. The advent of golf carts meant that the elderly could easily play the sport. Carts also led to faster rounds with more foursomes able to play. By 1972, the *Los Angeles Times* had proclaimed the area the “Golf Capital of the World.”⁶³¹

⁶²² Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 189.

⁶²³ The failed golf course associated with the El Mirador resort was replaced by housing starting in the mid-1930s.

⁶²⁴ The discovery of a vast underground reservoir beneath the Whitewater River channel also enabled the development of golf course communities in Palm Springs.

⁶²⁵ Although Thunderbird Ranch is not located within the City of Palm Springs, it is discussed here because of the impact it had on golf course development in the Coachella Valley during this period.

⁶²⁶ The tournament was held at five clubs: Thunderbird, Bermuda Dunes, Indian Wells, Eldorado, and Tamarisk.

⁶²⁷ *Golf Digest*, November 1967.

⁶²⁸ *Golf Digest*, November 1967.

⁶²⁹ George Lundgren, “In Palm Springs Fun Comes First,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 12, 1965, I2.

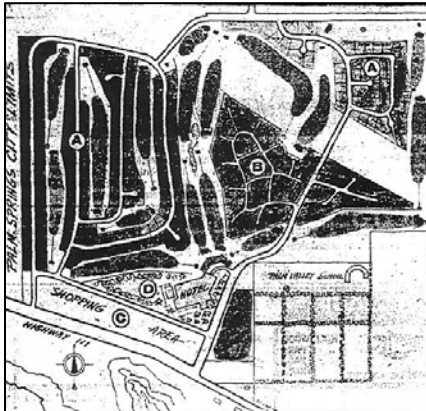
⁶³⁰ Shav Glick, “A Dream Come True: Golf is Not Just a Game, It’s a Way of Life in the Desert,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 1972, H1.

⁶³¹ Shav Glick, “A Dream Come True: Golf is Not Just a Game, It’s a Way of Life in the Desert,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 28, 1972, H1.

Palm Springs Golf Club (1958)

One of the early residential golf communities in Palm Springs, the Palm Springs Golf Club (a.k.a. Palm Springs Municipal Golf Course and the Tahquitz Creek Golf Resort), dates back to 1958 (although it was not fully realized until the 1970s). The vision for the \$15,000,000 project included residential areas bordering the fairways of the golf course, a hotel and a shopping center. The 332-acre parcel along Highway 111 had been purchased in 1956 from Pearl McManus by the Palm Springs Capital Company (a holding company for the Palm Springs Turf Club) as a site for a horse-racing track.⁶³² At the time it was east of the Palm Springs city limits. When the California Horse Racing Board refused to grant the Turf Club a license in 1957, the holding company changed plans and partnered with Morton B. Zuckerman, President of the Westview Development Corporation, to turn it into a residential golf community. Zuckerman was a noted residential and commercial developer from Chicago. Frank Bogert was executive vice president of the Westview Development Corporation. For the housing development, Westview turned initially to architect William M. Bray (1905-1998) for the design of 350 units. Between 1961 and 1965,⁶³³ Westview constructed the houses along Broadmoor Drive, Brentwood Drive, Bob O Link Drive and Cherry Hills Drive, Menlo Circle, and Oswego Circle.⁶³⁴

The vision for the development included the eighteen-hole championship golf course (1958-59, Lawrence Hughes), 240 single-family residences, plus 300 “garden cottages” that would feature swimming pools, and recreation and sports facilities. Owners were to automatically become members in the private country club.⁶³⁵ Ads in the *Palm Springs Villager* not only touted these amenities, they featured a green map of the course and integrated home sites. Increasingly, however, the development began to face financial difficulties and on July 1, 1959 Westview turned over control of the course to the City of Palm Springs and it became a public course.⁶³⁶



The overall plan for the Palm Springs Golf Club included single-family homes along the fairways, a hotel, commercial shopping center, and garden cottages. Note how development lies just outside the city limits to the west. “Huge Development Set for Palm Springs Area,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1958, F8.

⁶³² “Land Sold for Race Track,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 1956, 25.

⁶³³ Pending confirmation of dates.

⁶³⁴ The project team is in contact with the architect’s son, Roger Bray, to locate historic material on the plans for these houses.

⁶³⁵ “Huge Development Set for Palm Springs Area,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 1958, F8.

⁶³⁶ “In Black and White,” *Corona Daily Independent*, April 21, 1959, 6.

Canyon Country Club (1961)

The 368-parcel subdivision Canyon Country Club (1961-1965)⁶³⁷ was developed by the Golf Club Sales Company. The clubhouse (designed by Wexler & Harrison) opened on New Year's Eve 1961. It is located on Agua Caliente reservation land and cost \$50 million. The Canyon Country Club was the culmination of efforts by Andrew Catapano and Harold M. Simon of the Palm Canyon Country Club, Inc. after years of complicated negotiations with the tribe. Ultimately, it became the largest Indian land lease in American history.⁶³⁸



View of Canyon Country Club (1961, Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison) from Murray Canyon Road looking northwest shows integrated homes and fairways. Source: Agua Caliente Cultural Museum.

The Golf Club Sales Company was a subsidiary of the New York-based First National Realty & Construction Corporation owned by Robert Grundt. Grundt started out building residential developments on Long Island shortly after the war; he built the business to a publicly-held corporation and by 1963 had developed more than 4,000 apartments in fourteen buildings in Manhattan.⁶³⁹ Grundt was a long-time winter resident of Palm Springs. In 1963, Grundt established a West Coast office in Los Angeles and began developing high rise apartment buildings along the Wilshire corridor in the Westwood neighborhood, and in Phoenix, Arizona. Grundt described the process for Canyon Country Club:

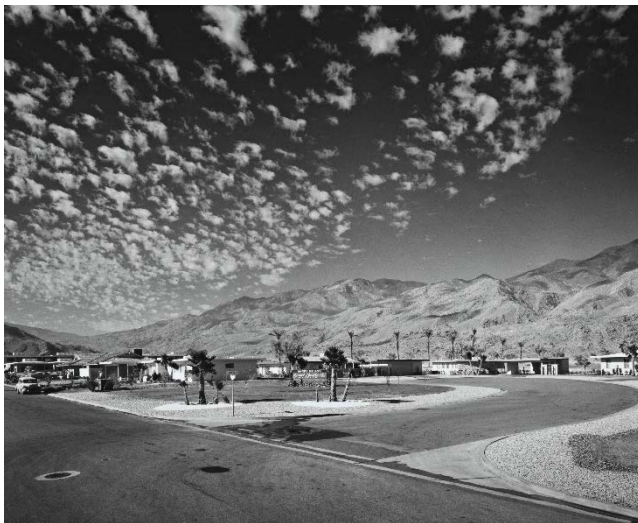
⁶³⁷ The original name of the club was "Wind Free" but it was quickly changed to Canyon Country Club.

⁶³⁸ "Canyon Country Club," Clipping File, Palm Springs Historical Society.

⁶³⁹ "Reach for the Sky," *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1963, 11.

Our introduction to Southern California in Palm Springs was one of the most fascinating and challenging experiences in my career. We were finally successful in arranging the first utilized lease on property owned by the Agua Caliente Indians...it was owned by no less than twenty five families and it took more than a year of negotiations before we finally concluded all the details of the master lease—which was about three inches thick...⁶⁴⁰

The custom home development was built in four phases: after the initial 168 parcels within the golf course were subdivided, parcels along the perimeter streets were subdivided annually in 1963, 1964, and 1965. To create interest in the subdivision, a “Plaza of Model Homes” was built—the eight residences on Bonita Circle.⁶⁴¹ Homes in the subdivision (along Caliente Road) were designed by Stan Sackley; designs for the 1963 homes along Yosemite Drive are attributed to contractor A. Belden Crist.⁶⁴²



Canyon Country Club “Plaza of Model Homes” on Bonita Circle (1961, Wexler & Harrison). Photographed by Julius Shulman, 1963. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

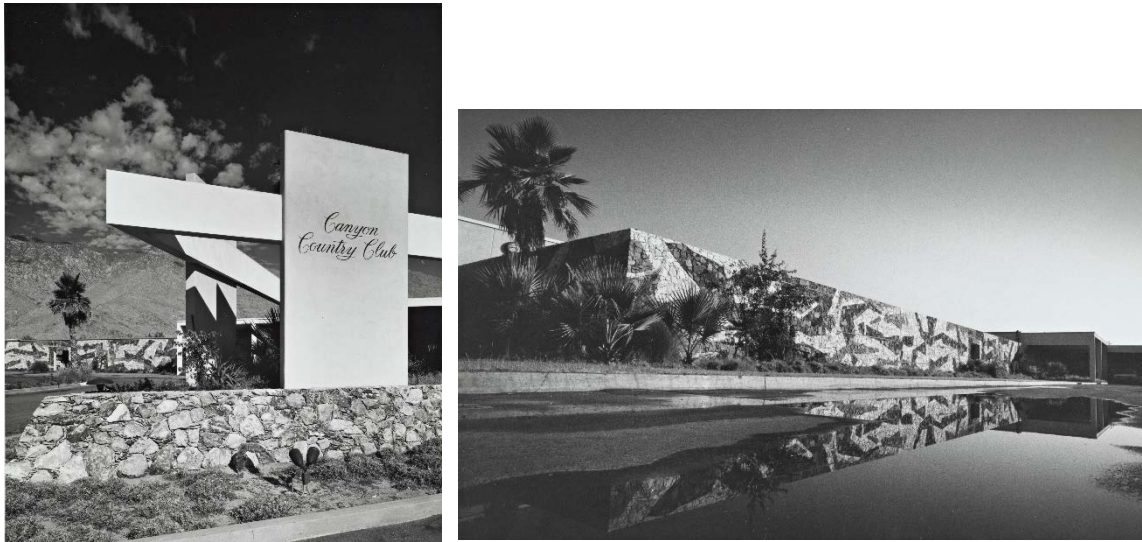
Originally completed in 1961, the Mid-century Modern style Clubhouse located at 1100 E. Murray Canyon Drive was V-shaped in plan with an expressive triangle-shaped porte-cochère at its center. The design was a precursor to the similar Palm Springs Airport Terminal. The building also featured large, abstract stone murals crafted by a local stonemason.⁶⁴³ Large expanses of glass took advantage of the golf course and mountain vistas.

⁶⁴⁰ Reach for the Sky,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 1963, 11.

⁶⁴¹ Canyon Country Club Estates Ad, *Palm Springs Life*, April 30, 1970, 14.

⁶⁴² “Canyon Country Club,” <http://www.architecturalproperties.net/neighborhoods/canyon.html> (accessed November 17, 2014).

⁶⁴³ Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sidney Williams, *Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler* (Palm Springs, CA; Palm Springs Art Museum, 2013), 81.



Canyon Country Club Clubhouse (1961, Wexler & Harrison). Photographed by Julius Shulman, 1963. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

Initially, due to its remote location, Canyon Country Club had a difficult time attracting members. However, a partnership with the Palm Springs Racquet Club helped boost its popularity and draw celebrities and politicians. Famous people associated with the club include Walt Disney, who purchased properties along the second hole of the course and donated a copper fountain to the club, erected between the ninth and eighteenth holes. In 1963, the course became the location of the annual Frank Sinatra Invitational golf tournament.⁶⁴⁴ That same year the public south course was opened.

Golf Club Estates (1961)

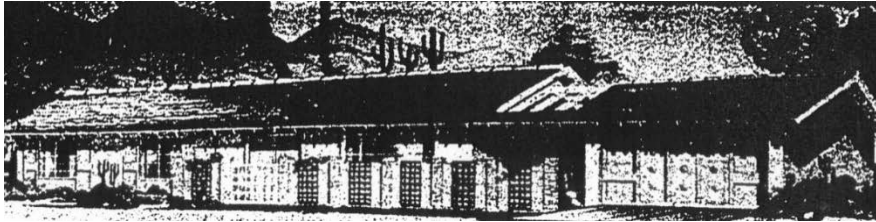
In the early 1960s the Alexanders embraced the new trend of golf course-based residential development. To capitalize on general proximity to the Palm Springs Golf Club (a.k.a. Palm Springs Municipal Golf Course and the site of present-day Tahquitz Creek Golf Resort), in April of 1961 the Alexanders subdivided Golf Club Estates (1963-64, L.C. Major and Associates). Marketed as “accessible to the greens by golf cart,” ads for the development also refer to Palm Springs as “the nation’s winter golf capital.”⁶⁴⁵

This group of 52 homes is bounded by the properties fronting the north side of Par Drive to the north, the properties fronting the south side of Eagle Way to the south, the properties fronting the east side of Birdie Way to the east, and Bogie Road to the west. Construction followed the familiar pattern of one, three-bedroom floor plan and seven different designs for the exterior. Photographs indicate the plan

⁶⁴⁴ “Remember When,” *The Desert Sun*, November 7, 1973, no page. “Golf Classic Renamed,” *The Desert Sun*, August 10, 1964.

⁶⁴⁵ “50 Dwellings at Spa Planned,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1963, O11.

may be the same as that used for Araby Estates. Designs for Golf Club Estates were a modest, Modern Ranch style, often with decorative concrete block screen walls.⁶⁴⁶



Design for Golf Club Estates (1963-64, L.C. Major) matching a unit currently located at 1965 Divot Lane. Source: "50 Dwellings at Spa Planned," *The Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1963, O11.

Green Fairway Estates (1964)

In early 1964 Robert and George Alexander subdivided the easternmost streets of the Palm Springs Golf Club subdivision: Pebble Beach Drive and Lakeside Drive.⁶⁴⁷ Their development consisted of 55 parcels that they named "Green Fairway Estates." In marketing materials and advertising, the Alexanders turned the lack of exclusivity associated with being on a public (versus a private) golf course into a selling point: "because it is a municipal course, there are no membership charges – only low green fees when you play."⁶⁴⁸ Other selling points included "golf-course living...with a golf course as your backyard," a "bi-functional floor plan" with "quiet areas separated from active living area," and oversized garages to accommodate an electric golf cart.⁶⁴⁹

For the design of these homes the Alexanders worked with Wexler & Harrison, who designed a three-bedroom and a four-bedroom plan along with nine different exterior designs. In plan, the designs are identical and divided into two distinct pavilions: one public and one private linked by a central entry. The four-bedroom plan includes the simple addition of another bedroom and bathroom completing the square of the public pavilion. Six of the nine exterior designs reflect a simple Mid-century Modern style (Gleneagles, St. Cloud, Wentworth, Hague, Maracaibo, and St. Andrews plans); there were three more "exotic" designs that evoke resort destinations (e.g. the Royal Singapore and Southwestern/Tunisian style Capilano models). With such a high ratio of designs to developed units (6:1), the streets of Green Fairway Estates resembled a custom home development instead of a standardized tract. According to Wexler, it was his architectural partner Richard Harrison who "provided the tropical touch."⁶⁵⁰ The designs also feature prominent masonry accents.

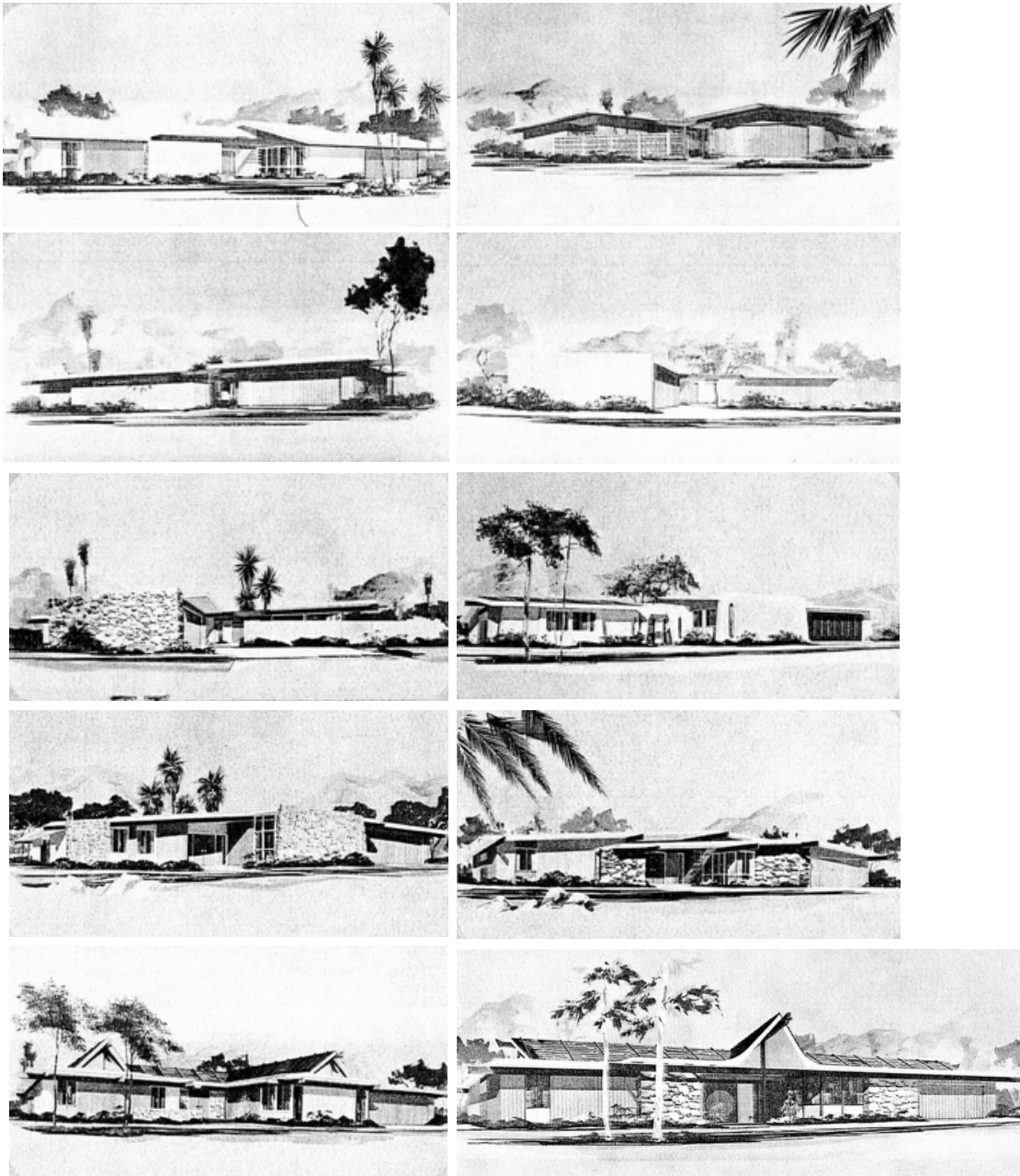
⁶⁴⁶ "50 Dwellings at Spa Planned," *Los Angeles Times*, May 26, 1963, O11.

⁶⁴⁷ Green Fairway Estates was one of the last subdivisions built by the Alexanders before their tragic death in a plane crash in November of 1965.

⁶⁴⁸ "Display Ad 18," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1965, 19.

⁶⁴⁹ "Green Fairways Estates Sales Brochure," Private Collection.

⁶⁵⁰ Jack Levitan, "Green Fairway Estates," <https://www.eichlernetwork.com/article/green-fairway-estates-palm-springs> (accessed November 19, 2014).



The ten different elevations for Green Fairway Estates, designed by Donald Wexler with his partner Richard Harrison. Source: Green Fairway Estates sales brochure, <https://www.eichlernetz.com/article/green-fairway-estates-palm-springs>. Starting Top Left: Elevation A, St. Andrews; Elevation B, The Hague; Elevation C, Gleneagles; Elevation D, St. Cloud; Elevation E, Maracaibo; Elevation F, Capilano; Elevation G, Wentworth; Elevation H, Royal Melbourne; Elevation I, Belhi; Elevation J, Royal Singapore.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

POST-WORLD WAR II SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969): ELIGIBILITY

Property Type: Single-family residence

The post-World War II population boom coincided with the peak of Modern architecture’s popularity in Southern California, and Palm Springs has a vast number of architecturally significant single-family residences from this period designed by prominent local and regional architects of the period. Individually significant examples are custom-designed homes located throughout the city. Examples include the Kaufmann House, 470 W. Vista Chino (HSPB-29B); the Loewy House, 600 W. Panorama Road (HSPB-33); Frey House II, 686 W. Palisades Drive (HSPB-33); the Carey House, 651 W. Via Escuale (HSPB-33); the Grace Miller House, 2311 N. Indian Canyon Drive (HSPB-45); and the Edris House, 1030 W. Cielo Drive (HSPB-46).

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

An individual single-family residence may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
B/2/2 (Person) ⁶⁵¹	For its association with a significant person. Significant persons within this theme include members of the community who may have been influential in the development of Palm Springs, or who gained significance within their profession. Homes associated with people in the entertainment industry are evaluated under a separate context. Properties eligible under this criterion are those associated with a person’s productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent example of an architectural style or method of construction from the period, or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.

⁶⁵¹ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

Property Type: Historic District

To accommodate the growing population in Southern California following World War II, there was a great deal of single-family residential development in Palm Springs. This included large and small tract development, infill construction in existing neighborhoods, construction on previously unbuildable lots, and the lease and development of Agua Caliente reservation lands. Subdivisions and neighborhoods from the postwar era retain a strong sense of time and place.

Due to the number of postwar developments in California and their characteristics – particularly the proliferation of large tracts by merchant-builders using tract designs and prefabricated components that were meant to be repeated – specific guidelines were developed by the California Department of Transportation for their evaluation.⁶⁵² It is recommended that these guidelines be considered in the evaluation of post-World War II residential subdivisions in Palm Springs, which share characteristics with statewide trends. The key components are excerpted for reference:

A key characteristic of postwar houses by merchant builders is that they were built in multiples. Unlike prewar tracts by subdividers, all of the houses within a postwar housing tract are often the work of a single builder and constructed in a short period of time using mass-production methods. Even in “custom home” tracts, which may include the work of more than one builder, all of the houses are likely to have been built within a short time period and will be similar in their size, quality, and degree of architectural elaboration. The fundamental unit for postwar housing is not the individual house, but the tract, or a single construction phase within a larger tract or new community. A single residence would generally not meet Criterion A for association with the postwar housing boom or suburban growth. While a subdivision or tract might be significant in that context, an individual residence would not be adequate to convey that association.

To meet National Register Criterion C, an individual residence must possess the distinctive characteristics of a type, style, period, or method of construction, or be the work of a master designer or craftsman, or exhibit high artistic value. Only in rare cases will a tract house by a merchant builder meet Criterion C as an individual property. Postwar tract houses by merchant builders generally will possess the distinctive characteristics of their type, style, and period. However, since these houses were built in multiples, it will not be possible to identify a single residence within a tract as being an important example relative to its neighbors. The tract as a whole, evaluated as a district, may be an important example of postwar housing within its context. When establishing significance at the local level, the context must be a city, town, or rural political division rather than merely a single tract, neighborhood, or district within a city.

⁶⁵² California Department of Transportation, *Tract Housing in California, 1945-1973: A Context for National Register Evaluation*, Sacramento, CA, 2011.

The work of a recognized master architect or architectural firm can be eligible for National Register listing under Criterion C. Several prominent California architects designed tract housing for merchant builders. Most of these architects also designed one-of-a-kind houses for property owners as individual commissions. These unique, high-style designs will need to be considered for National Register listing when they are present in historic property surveys. The tract house designs by these architects, on the other hand, were intended to be built in multiples. Variations within a tract are usually minor, and it will not be possible to single out one house as distinctive relative to others in the same tract. Tracts of houses designed by master architects should therefore be evaluated as districts rather than as individual properties.

While an individual residence of unique design may possess high artistic value, a tract house by a merchant builder will inevitably be similar to others within the same tract. A tract house will usually be similar to houses built in other tracts by the same builder, and may even closely resemble those by different builders. It is unlikely that any individual house within a tract will be distinguishable from its neighbors with respect to artistic value. An individual house may be an important example within its context, and therefore meet Criterion C, if it is distinctive relative to other houses of the same period. In many cases, these will be unique, architect-designed houses built for individual clients.

Assessing Integrity: Integrity of design, setting, and feeling are particularly relevant when evaluating a postwar housing tract or a portion of a tract as an historic district. In addition to considering alterations to the individual houses, a tract possesses integrity of design if it retains its original planning features and characteristics. These include the street layout, the pattern curb, sidewalk, and planting strip, and the type of curbing. There is no established rule concerning the proportion of contributing versus non-contributing properties that a district must possess to be eligible for National Register listing. However, a good rule of thumb is that an eligible district should have at least twice as many contributors as non-contributors. A district in which less than two-thirds of the properties are contributors is unlikely to adequately convey a sense of its time or historic significance. The integrity threshold for contributor status within a district is generally lower than the threshold for an individual property. Therefore, a residence may contribute to a district even if it does not possess sufficient integrity to be individually eligible for National Register listing. A house exhibiting some alterations may contribute to the historic character of a district if it retains its original form and enough integrity of design and materials to be seen as an integral part of the district.⁶⁵³

⁶⁵³ Excerpted from California Department of Transportation, Chapter 11: Survey and Evaluation, 121-135.

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

Using these guidelines, a post-World War II tract in Palm Springs may be eligible for historic designation as a historic district under the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1 and/or C/3/6 (District) ⁶⁵⁴	A collection of residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. District boundaries may represent original tract boundaries, or they may comprise a portion of a tract or neighborhood. The district must be unified aesthetically by plan, physical development, and architectural quality. Historic districts representing post-World War II housing tracts will be eligible if they are excellent and intact examples of residential development representing the growth of the city during this period; or for an association with an innovative type of housing development or method of construction; or for an association with an important merchant builder; or as a collection of excellent Mid-century Modern architecture. Residences from this period eligible under Criterion A/1/3 will be eligible as contributors to historic districts. Typically individual tract homes are not eligible for individual designation; however, excellent and intact examples that are within subdivisions that are not eligible (e.g. that lack sufficient integrity for historic designation), may be eligible for locally for individual designation.

Post-World War II Single-Family Residential Development (1945-1969): Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme. Palm Springs has numerous residential tracts and individual single-family residences from this period; therefore, integrity of these resources should be considered carefully in their evaluation.

⁶⁵⁴ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/6 (District)	<p>In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district’s historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. Integrity of design, setting, and feeling must be strongly present in the district overall. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. The district overall should convey a strong sense of time and place. Common alterations in postwar subdivisions in Palm Springs include conversion of the original carport to a garage; enclosure of the original “entry courtyard” and/or breezeway between the main volume of the house and the carport (particularly in Palmer & Krisel-designed tracts); rear additions; replacement of windows and doors; and replacement of original exterior wall cladding. In general, minor or reversible alterations or in-kind replacement of original features and finishes are acceptable within historic districts. Significant alterations that change the roofline, alter the original design intent, or that are not reversible may result in non-contributing status for an individual property. Because conversion of carports to garages is common throughout nearly all of the postwar tracts, a property with a converted carport can still be eligible as a contributor to a historic district. The conversion of an “entry courtyard” into permanent, fully enclosed living space is an unacceptable alteration.</p>
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	<p>A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique.⁶⁵⁵ A residential property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.</p>

⁶⁵⁵ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

Post-World War II Single-Family Residential Development (1945-1969): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- represent an excellent example of an architectural style or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

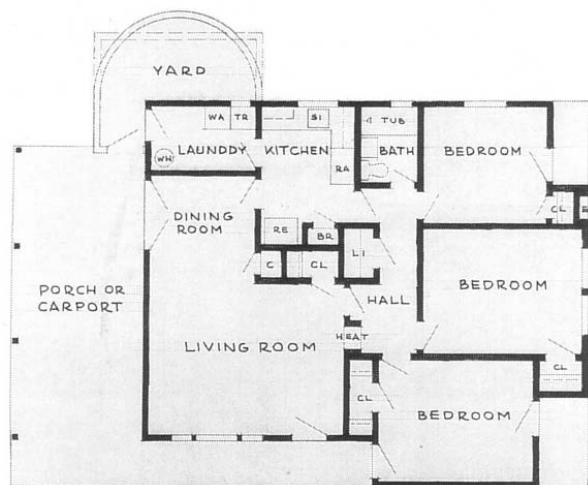
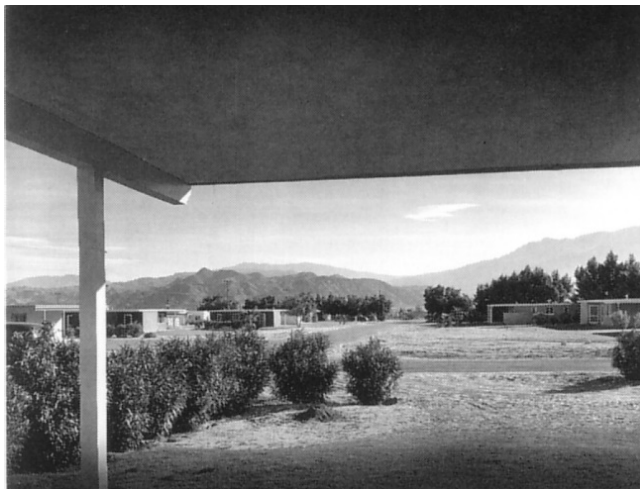
To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance; a neighborhood with a lower percentage of contributors (e.g. approximately 50%) may be locally eligible if it maintains a strong sense of time and place with little to infill development or visual intrusion; and
- reflect planning and design principles from the period; and
- display most of the character-defining features of a residential subdivision, including the original layout, street plan, and other planning features; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

THEME: POST-WORLD WAR II MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969)

This theme explores the design and construction of mid-20th century multi-family residences in Palm Springs, from the immediate postwar period through 1969. While the emphasis in residential construction in Palm Springs following the war was decidedly in favor of single-family homes, a number of apartment buildings were constructed in the immediate postwar period. Apartments were typically found on Palm Canyon Drive, Indian Canyon Drive, Arenas Road, and Tamarisk Road. Significant architects and designers associated with multi-family residential development from this period include Clark & Frey, A. Quincy Jones, Wexler & Harrison, William Krisel, H.W. Burns, and many others. Developers include Phillip Short and Associates, William Bone, and Jack and Richard Weiss. As a result of increased demand for housing, post-World War II multi-family residential development in Palm Springs took a variety of forms including garden apartments, large low-rise multi-building communities (including early condominium projects), split-level attached townhomes, and attached and semi-attached residences in clusters as small as two and as many as eight. In virtually every configuration, the focus of the design was around the pool (or pools as the scale of the developments increased).

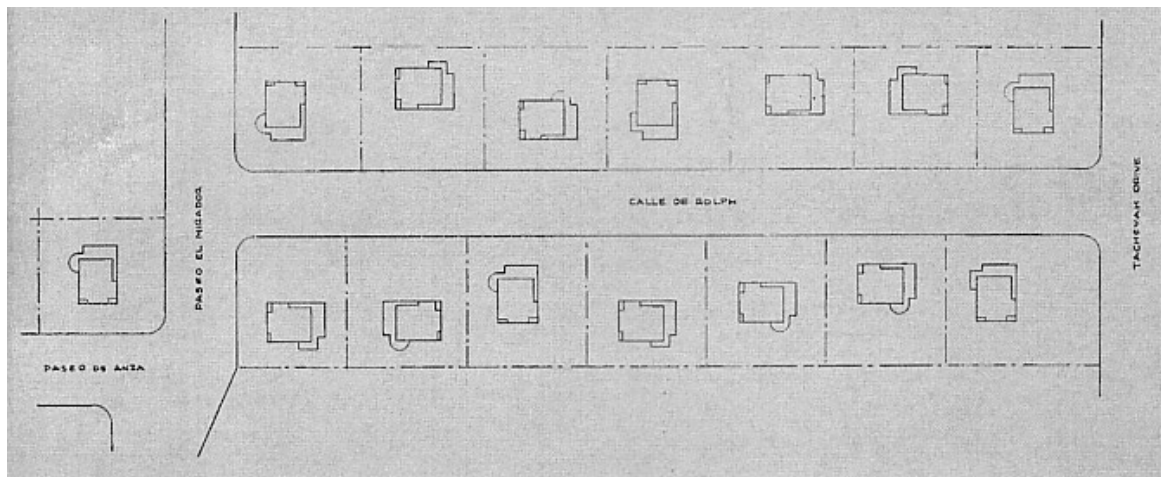
A rare example of wartime multi-family housing in Palm Springs is Bel Vista (1945-47, Clark & Frey; 1164 Calle Rolph is designated HSPB-100). Throughout the country, wartime housing projects were invariably the only building projects not stalled by the onset of World War II. Bordered by E. Chia Road on the north, Sunrise Way on the east, Tachevah Drive on the south, and N. Paseo De Anza on the west, the tract was first subdivided into multi-family residential housing units in 1945 by Sallie Stevens Nichols and her husband Culver Nichols.⁶⁵⁶



L: View of Bel Vista (1945-47, Clark & Frey). Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: *Albert Frey: Architect*, 74. R: Plan for a unit at Bel Vista (1945-7, Clark & Frey) Source: *Albert Frey: Architect*, 74.

⁶⁵⁶ Sallie Stevens Nichols was the daughter of early Palm Springs landholder and developer Prescott T. Stevens.

Bel Vista was designed as war workers' housing and its construction was subsidized by the government. As such, it had to meet specific design guidelines. Fifteen wood frame, plaster-veneered units all conformed to the same floor plan. To prevent the development from having a repetitive visual presence, the lead architect, Albert Frey, flipped the plan on each lot and varied the setbacks, creating an inviting architectural rhythm on the street. Each building also had a "distinct and individual color scheme."⁶⁵⁷ The commission was an ideal project for Frey who was interested in economical and pre-fabricated housing.⁶⁵⁸



The identical floor plan for each unit is rotated and setbacks are staggered to create a unique architectural cadence for the street. Note how groupings of units face one another to enhance the sense of community. Source: *Architect and Engineer*, April 1951, 11.

Villa Hermosa (1945, Clark & Frey), located at 155 Hermosa Place, was designed not as wartime housing but as a collection of postwar apartment units with a pool and recreational facilities. For Villa Hermosa, Clark & Frey designed three separate unit types. According to author Joseph Rosa, the design is an "assembly of stacked and terraced apartments that forms a partial enclosure around a garden and a pool that is oriented to a mountain view...with access to all apartments through the garden."⁶⁵⁹ Villa Hermosa was featured twice in *Architectural Record*.⁶⁶⁰

⁶⁵⁷ "Residential Bel Vista," *Architect and Engineer*, April 1951, 11.

⁶⁵⁸ Joseph Rosa, *Albert Frey: Architect* (New York, NY: Rizzoli, 1990), 75.

⁶⁵⁹ Rosa, *Albert Frey: Architect*, 75.

⁶⁶⁰ Per Marvin Roos, architect James Cioffi was hired to convert Villa Hermosa to condominiums in the early 2000s.



L: Villa Hermosa (1945, Clark & Frey). R: Interior courtyard view of Villa Hermosa shows how the stacked and terraced apartments form a partial enclosure. Photographs: Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

As before the war, combined retail and multi-family usages were common along Palm Canyon Drive. The upper story of the Potter Clinic (1947, Williams, Williams & Williams; HSPB-58, demolished) at 1020 N. Palm Canyon Drive housed an apartment unit in which the architect E. Stewart Williams lived during 1949. This urban design did not come at the expense of the Palm Springs indoor-outdoor lifestyle: the floor plan included an outdoor dining terrace accessible from the kitchen.⁶⁶¹



L: Potter Clinic (1947, Williams, Williams & Williams; HSPB-58) located at 1020 N. Palm Canyon Drive. The combination retail and residential apartment building was, according to Julius Shulman, where architect E. Stewart Williams lived in 1949. R: The apartment featured a dining patio that was accessible from the kitchen. The redwood trellis protected the glassed in dining area from the late afternoon sun in the southwest. Photographs: Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

⁶⁶¹ Julius Shulman, "Palm Springs Penthouse," *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 1949, G6.

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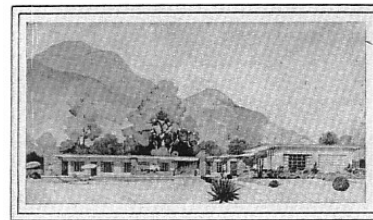
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A character-defining feature of postwar apartment construction in Palm Spring is the placement of the swimming pool as a central, unifying element in the design. In addition to being a social gathering place, a pool firmly cemented the Palm Springs lifestyle as one of leisure and outdoor recreational activities. An early example of this is the Town & Desert Apartments (1948, Herbert W. Burns, HSPB-90) at 360 W. Arenas Road. These apartments were featured in national trade publications including the May 1948 issue of *Architectural Record*. Another example of the purposeful orientation of the apartment complex around the swimming pool was the Premiere Apartments (1957-58, Frey and Chambers; demolished). The L-shaped plan of this building wrapped around the pool and each unit was recessed into the overall volume creating exterior corridors on the outer façade and private balconies facing the pool and mountains. The elegant Mid-century Modern design also featured Frey's signature round windows, suspended stairways, and use of corrugated metal planes.



L: The one-story Town & Desert Apartments (c.1948, H.W. Burns; HSPB-90) at 370 W. Arenas Road features an L-shaped Mid-century Modern design oriented toward the swimming pool. Photograph: Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection. R: Ad for Town & Desert Apartments indicates the designer and his wife were also managing owners of the project. The architecture and the location were the clear stars of this ad. Source: *Villager*, November 1952, 8.



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Offers delightful, luxurious living with spacious grounds, offering every convenience and comfort for a discriminating clientele during the coming season.

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The managing owners, Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Burns, give their personal attention to the comforts and preferences of guests. Inquiries concerning reservations should be made as early as possible for the mid-season period. Such communications may be made by letter, telephone or telegraph to TOWN & DESERT at 370 West Arenas (two blocks toward San Jacinto foothills from Bullock's). The phone is 9001.



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\$15 TO \$17.50 DAILY (FRI. PERSONS)

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Advertisement for the Royal Hawaiian Estates (1960, Wexler & Harrison) shows site plan for clustering of units around recreational amenities and relegation of parking to the perimeter of the site to preserve the garden feeling of each unit. Source: *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960.

The tropical destinations of Hawaii and Polynesia may seem incongruous as inspiration for a vacation home in the desert environment of Palm Springs; however, exotic tropical destinations, and their food, culture, and architecture were popular with Americans in the age of jet travel. Beginning in the 1930s with themed restaurants like Don the Beachcomber and Trader Vic's, the Tiki fad was fueled in the post-World War II years by returning GIs, explorer Thor Heyerdahl's voyage to Polynesia, and James Michener's Pulitzer Prize-winning *Tales of the South Pacific*. In 1959, the U.S. admitted Hawaii as the 50th state in union. As a result, Polynesian bar-restaurants like Don the Beachcomber and Tiki-inspired architecture were all the rage into the 1960s.⁶⁶² To capitalize on this trend, local realtor Philip Short created Royal Hawaiian Estates (1960, Wexler & Harrison; HSPB-73). It blended "the enchantment of the islands with the magic of sun drenched desert life."⁶⁶³ Just as Joe Dunas had leveraged the concept at Las Palmas Summit for the Alexander Construction Company, an island theme was applied here to a multi-family residential development. The island theme in the desert proved popular; by February of 1962, the development was 60 percent sold.⁶⁶⁴ In 2009, Royal Hawaiian Estates was designated a historic district by the City of Palm Springs.

⁶⁶² Don the Beachcomber, 1950, 140 Via Lola. Opened by Ernest Raymond Beaumont Gantt. Some original Polynesian-themed elements remain, including the original tikis that were recently restored.

⁶⁶³ "Luxury Homes Selling Fast," *Los Angeles Times*, January 12, 1962.

⁶⁶⁴ "Desert Development Employs Unique Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 1962, M23.

Clearly targeted to seasonal residents, as described in the *Los Angeles Times*, “among the many advantages of the co-operative plan is the services of a resident manager who administers the property maintenance program to which the homeowners subscribe. In addition to relieving owners of maintenance problems, the program also provides several tax benefits.”⁶⁶⁵

Bordered by Twin Palms Drive on the north, an alley to the east, and S. Palm Canyon Drive to the west, Royal Hawaiian Estates positioned 40 attached single-family residences in a complex symmetrical plan on one parcel. A total of twelve buildings are clustered together in groups of three or four units, with three different two- and three-bedroom floor plans of 1,500 square feet each. The combination of rectangular and L-shaped plans in these clusters creates both a varied visual appearance for the buildings and privacy for the occupants. From a planning standpoint, parking was relegated to the perimeter of the development both to acknowledge the importance of the automobile in postwar culture, but also to leave the interior gardens free for the recreational activities central to the Palm Springs lifestyle. The units overlooked “sunken recreational areas with pool and game courts.”⁶⁶⁶

Architects Wexler & Harrison used Tiki-style outriggers or “Flying sevens” (the angled beams that connect the patios and roofline), and Tiki-inspired “apexes” and clerestory windows to provide occupants with light and shade. These design elements create an expressive form of the Mid-century Modern style. Materials used by the architects include stained wood siding, concrete block, and natural rock walls in a palette of desert colors.⁶⁶⁷

In 1965 the City passed zoning changes that allowed for greater density. As a result, multi-family residential development, for either rental or sale, ran rampant in Palm Springs in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In 1969, 309 units were constructed. In 1970, 2,413 units were constructed and in 1972 another 2,000 units.⁶⁶⁸ As a result, the City imposed a 120-day moratorium on building permits in December of 1972.

Condominium Development

Multi-family residential development played an important role in transforming Palm Springs from a resort town to a residential community. That transformation occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, but its roots can be seen as early as 1955 when the Los Angeles Home Show featured a full-scale model unit exhibit for an “own-your-own’ cooperative apartment planned for the Palm Springs area.”⁶⁶⁹ Although the 100-unit garden apartment complex designed by John C. Lindsay was outside the city

⁶⁶⁵ “Desert Development Employs Unique Plan,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 1962, M23.

⁶⁶⁶ “Photo Stand Alone,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 1962.

⁶⁶⁷ Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sydney Williams, *Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler*, Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011, 81.

⁶⁶⁸ Kenneth Reich, “Palm Springs Voters Approve Plan to Contain City Growth,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 4, 1972, 3.

⁶⁶⁹ “A Desert Apartment,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 1955, 118.

limits (between Tamarisk and Thunderbird Country Clubs), it set the stage for a new type of development that would become synonymous with Palm Springs in the coming decades. The apartments were presented as suitable for full time living or as vacation residences that could be leased when not in use. This clearly positioned Palm Springs as a second home/vacation home paradise. Between June and December of 1960 alone, six new co-op “apartment” or “home” ventures were developed in Palm Springs with another half dozen new projects just outside the city limits.⁶⁷⁰ The first co-operative in the area, Desert Braemar, was built in 1955 near Tamarisk Country Club.⁶⁷¹

By the late 1960s the vacation home trend was in full swing – especially for Angelenos. The 1969 *Los Angeles Times* article “How to Turn a Playing House into a Paying House” emphasized strategies for defraying expenses by renting out a vacation home. According to the article, “the vacation-house-for-rent concept is one of the most important developments in our recreational habits since the American family took to the road.”⁶⁷² Another key factor in increased demand for second homes/vacation homes in Palm Springs was the establishment of direct airline service to Palm Springs by transcontinental air carriers in December of 1967. This made the resort community more directly accessible to residents of the east coast and Midwest than ever before. And indeed, by 1967, Palm Springs was growing from a population of 20,000 in the off-season to 50,000 during the winter tourist season.⁶⁷³

The City of Palm Springs was the first in the state and one of the first resort communities in the nation to legalize condominiums as a new form of vacation housing.⁶⁷⁴ Condominiums diverged from co-op apartment arrangements in that residences were not technically owned collectively: each unit was owned individually but common areas were subject to collective ownership. Typically homeowners’ associations were established and monthly ownership dues funded maintenance of the common areas.

The popularity of the condominium in Palm Springs hinged on an aging population of empty nesters and retirees who liberated themselves from single-family residences in the suburbs. They vacationed or took up residency in condos where upkeep and maintenance were low and amenities were built-in. Amenities included tennis courts, pools, and/or country club membership. The rise in popularity of timeshare arrangements (where a property could be shared across a consortium of “owners” lowering costs even more) contributed to the growth of condominiums in Palm Springs. As described by author and historian Lawrence Culver, “the ‘condo-ization’ of Palm Springs was quickly followed by the popularity of condominiums at new ski resorts such as Vail and Aspen.”⁶⁷⁵

⁶⁷⁰ “Co-Op Living- The New Trend in the Desert,” *Palm Springs Life*, December 1960, 11-17.

⁶⁷¹ “Co-Op Living- The New Trend in the Desert,” *Palm Springs Life*, December 1960, 16.

⁶⁷² Dan MacMasters, “How to Turn a Playing House into a Paying House,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 1969, T16.

⁶⁷³ “Palm Springs Ponders Plan to Revitalize Desert Resort,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 24, 1967, E7.

⁶⁷⁴ Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193.

⁶⁷⁵ Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure*, 194.

A lack of financing for the new ownership concept, however, suppressed development until 1964. In 1961, the FHA was authorized to insure mortgages on condos for 85 percent of the appraised value. Yet it wasn't until September 1963 that tax appraisal methods for condominiums were settled and developers began building condominiums in force.⁶⁷⁶

As noted by architectural historian David Gebhard, many of the condominium developments were built on the eastern side of town.⁶⁷⁷ Opening the floodgates to multi-family residential housing resulted in the construction of various new building typologies: multi-story/multi-unit low- and mid-rise developments, attached homes, semi-attached homes, split-level townhomes and even the conversion of existing apartment buildings to condominium ownership.

An early condominium project in Palm Springs was an apartment conversion at the hands of local developer Roy Fey: Fey's Palm Springs Desertaire Apartments, also known as the Desert Skies Apartment Hotel (1956, Claude A. Powell) at 2290 S. Palm Canyon Drive. In 1963 Fey decided to convert the apartment building into co-operative apartments. When sales began in the summer of 1963 the price for one-bedroom units was \$14,495.⁶⁷⁸ In a 1980 interview, Roy Fey claimed he was "...the first person to introduce the concept of condominium building to the area by converting Desert Skies."⁶⁷⁹ This is a bit of an exaggeration as several other projects were built in 1960 specifically as condominiums, including the Royal Hawaiian Estates (1960, Wexler & Harrison; HSPB-73) at 1774 S. Palm Canyon Drive.⁶⁸⁰

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Complete kitchen with all built-ins . . . Front & Rear Patios . . . Piped-in music . . . Cooled by Carrier Refrigeration . . . Carports . . . Maid Service available . . . Tremendous closet, cupboard and storage space.



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Advertisement for the two-story Royal Air Apartments (1958, Wexler & Harrison; demolished) for real estate mogul Joseph Drown shows the simple, elegant lines of the design and the seamless integration with the outdoors via glass window walls .
Source: *Palm Springs Life*, December 14,

⁶⁷⁶ Dan Mac Masters, "Condominiums—The Most Exciting Housing Development in 15 Years," *Los Angeles Times*, July 26, 1964, 44, <http://proquest.com> (accessed March 14, 2011).

⁶⁷⁷ David Gebhard and Robert Winter, *A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California* (Salt Lake City, UT: Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1982), 387.

⁶⁷⁸ "The History of Desert Skies," <http://desertskies.com/history.htm> (accessed January 2015).

⁶⁷⁹ "Roy and Bob Fey: When it Began," *Palm Springs Life*, May 1980, 55.

⁶⁸⁰ Other earlier co-ops or condos include Villa de las Palmas Co-operative Apartments at 1201 N. Indian Canyon Drive, Desert Holly Co-operative Apartments (1957) at 2244 E. Tahquitz Way, The Desert Lanai (1962) at North Sunrise Way and East Tachevah Drive, and the Sandcliff Condominiums (1963; HSPB-93) in the 1800 block of South Barona Road.

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The Royal Air Condominiums⁶⁸¹ (1958, Wexler & Harrison) at 389 W. Tahquitz Drive (demolished) for real estate mogul and later philanthropist Joseph Drown was another early example of the type. These elegant, two-story Mid-century Modern garden apartments featured steel-frame construction that resulted in thin wall and roof planes with walls of glass on the ground floor that opened to the outdoors. Innovative finishes included ceramic tile exterior wall panels.⁶⁸² The building was to be part of a larger complex on the old Mashie Golf Course property that would include swimming pools, putting greens, tennis courts, badminton, and croquet courts.



Rendering of the Mid-century Modern-style Racquet Club Garden Villas West (1959-60, William F. Cody, FAIA). The attached and stand-alone units were developed by noted developer Paul W. Trousdale. Source: *The Architecture of William F. Cody: a Desert Retrospective*.

Paul W. Trousdale, one of Southern California's most prolific developers and an early postwar developer of Palm Springs, was not to be left behind during Palm Springs' apartment-hotel-condominium boom. In the late 1950s Trousdale built the Racquet Club Cottages West (1959-60, William F. Cody; HSPB-88) as a series of attached and stand-alone units designed for "people who wish to visit Palm Springs regularly for the weekend or those who wish to make Palm Springs their permanent winter home."⁶⁸³ The Cottages were originally designed as the final expansion of the Racquet Club and provided annually-leased accommodations for either permanent or winter residents. Cody designed 57 Mid-century Modern units on an eight-foot module utilizing four plans: "The Bachelor," "The Bedroom Suite," "The Living Room Suite," and the "Full Cottage."⁶⁸⁴ All offered maintenance-free living and Racquet Club privileges. In 2014, the City of Palm Springs designated the development now known as "Racquet Club Garden Villas" as a historic district.

In 1961 Chicago-based developer Henry F. Chaddick paid Pearl McManus \$1 million for her beloved Palm Springs Tennis Club, and Chaddick's own Carnegie Construction Company was assigned to finish

⁶⁸¹ The authors of the monograph on Donald Wexler, Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sydney Williams, list the project as Royal Air Condominiums; however, ads in the *Villager* call it the "Royal Air Apartments."

⁶⁸² Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sydney Williams, *Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler* (Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011), 79.

⁶⁸³ City of Palm Springs, "City Council Staff Report," November 20, 2013, 2.

⁶⁸⁴ City of Palm Springs, "City Council Staff Report," November 20, 2013, 3.

projects started by McManus. Although the developer's initial vision for the property included a hotel, a modified version of that plan was not fully realized until the 1970s. However, in the early 1960s, Chaddick oversaw the addition of more bungalows, modifications to the clubhouse and the development of 39 condominium units, Tennis Club Estates (a.k.a., Tennis Club Condominiums; 1964-69, William F. Cody).⁶⁸⁵ The latter project (built in several phases) was located south of Belardo Road and west of Patencio Road.⁶⁸⁶ These changes increased the club's capacity from twenty units in McManus' day to 110 units.⁶⁸⁷ All units were designed in "Mediterranean Style" and featured three-bedroom units, two-bedroom units, and fireplaces.⁶⁸⁸

Another important condominium developer in Palm Springs was William Bone (b.1943). In 1963, the twenty-year old Bone founded Sunrise Company. Seven years later the *Los Angeles Times* called him "...a highly successful Century City Entrepreneur in real estate investments and development involving subdivisions,⁶⁸⁹ shopping centers and motels."⁶⁹⁰ Bone's first Palm Springs project was the \$10 million, 111-unit Deep Well Ranch Condominiums (1969-72, B. A. Berkus and Associates), located on the property of the former Deep Well Guest Ranch. The development, a joint venture with Tennessee-based ALODEX Corporation, included five detached home plans and one- and two-story condominium units. All units opened onto a central park and recreation area. Berkus' designs for the project, including the Cabrillo and Riviera models, were contemporary Californian/Spanish ranch with slump-stone masonry walls, red clay tile roofs, open beam ceilings, and Spanish-inspired wooden details such as large articulated carved front doors and garage doors.⁶⁹¹

Kings Point (1969)

In 1969 Robert Grundt, Canyon Country Club developer and chairman of the Board of First National Realty, along with Club Manager John B. Quigley, subdivided Kings Point, a relatively small forty-five-parcel development with forty-four units located at 1000 Murray Canyon Drive.⁶⁹² William Krisel was commissioned with the design. Marketing brochures for the development promote "an unsurpassed way of life; dominated by a rich climate and impressive recreational facilities."⁶⁹³ Amenities such as the modern tennis clubhouse and private swimming pool were stressed along with Canyon Country Club membership. "A Kings Point Key," as the brochure describes, "goes a vast step further and locks out the burdensome maintenance problems such as gardening and pool care; leaving you free to enjoy the unparalleled freedom and charm unique to California's most celebrated resort, Palm Springs." The V-

⁶⁸⁵ More information on this development pending further research.

⁶⁸⁶ "Tennis Club Building Agreement Reached," *The Desert Sun*, April 28, 1964.

⁶⁸⁷ Harry F. Chaddick. *Chaddick: Success Against All Odds*, (Chicago, IL: Harry F. Chaddick Associates, 1990), 126.

⁶⁸⁸ "New Condominiums Planned at Resort," *Los Angeles Times*, March 16, 1969, K13.

⁶⁸⁹ Bone was also the developer of Benedict Hills (1972), a 348-single family home development near Beverly Hills; Sunrise Villas, a condominium project in Scottsdale, AZ; and Sunrise Villas in Las Vegas.

⁶⁹⁰ "Retreat for Stars in New Role," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1979, J1.

⁶⁹¹ "Retreat for Stars in New Role," *Los Angeles Times*, February 8, 1979, J1.

⁶⁹² Kings Point is sold as condominiums today.

⁶⁹³ Kings Point Sales Brochure, Private Collection.

shaped design of the property enabled homes along the outside of the “V” to face the fairways of the golf course while the houses along the inside of the “V” faced the common greenbelt with pool and tennis court.

One of the architectural features of this development was the relatively low number of units and how they were allocated across two floor plans, six exterior elevation designs, and the “flipping” or reversal of those designs as laid out on the plot plan. Most of the numeric unit designations (e.g., B2R) appeared an average of just three times throughout the complex—with the net effect that each home seems unique and different and a stimulating visual cadence is created along the streetscape.



Kings Point (1964-66, William Krisel). Source: *Palm Springs Life*, “Masters of Modernism – The Butterfly Effect.”

The architectural language for Kings Point is a distinctive Mid-century Modern, post-and-beam construction with a synergistic combination of designs in concrete block, plaster, and glass. Each unit was designed to be viewed from all sides and carefully placed on the lushly landscaped tract, with rear elevations denoted as “fairway” views. Each of the six different elevation designs features a roof monitor with clerestories at the center of the building, extending back in an umbrella-like structure over the public space. Concrete block veneer is combined with expressed post-and-beam construction to make six distinctive, yet harmonious, exterior designs. Carports were integrated to emphasize the horizontality of the design down the street.

Two efficient square floor plans were available, both three-bedroom/two bath designs. Kings Point floor plans are unique for their central “garden rooms” which sit under the roof monitors, and their combination living/dining rooms open to private patios, pools and the landscaped common areas. Ceiling height is eight feet—except for the clerestory at which the height is twelve feet. A freestanding tennis club house and pool cabana are designed as Mid-century Modern pavilions using an architectural language consistent with the design of the residences.

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POST-WORLD WAR II MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969): ELIGIBILITY**Property types: Multi-family residence, including apartment house, courtyard apartment, condominium, garden apartment; Historic District**

Palm Springs has a large collection of multi-family residences and multi-family residential developments from the post-World War II era. Many of these properties are the work of significant architects, including the Rimcrest Condominiums (1967, Rose & Carlson) at 2000 Southridge Drive, Villa Hermosa (1945, Clark & Frey) at 155 Hermosa Place, and the Town & Desert Apartments (1948, Herbert W. Burns, HSPB-90) at 360 W. Arenas Road.

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

A multi-family residential property from this period may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period) ⁶⁹⁴	As an excellent example of multi-family residential development reflecting the growth of Palm Springs during the post-World War II era, and as an excellent, rare, or early example of new trends and patterns of multi-family residential development from the period; most examples identified as eligible under this criterion are larger developments, not individual apartment buildings. A multi-family property eligible under this theme must reflect a pattern of development; it cannot simply have been constructed during the period of significance. Multi-family residential properties eligible under Criterion A/1/3 may also be eligible under Criterion C/3/4.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period; as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect; or as an excellent, rare, or threatened multi-family residential property type. Because there are many architecturally significant multi-family residences from this period, examples that are eligible for their architectural merit must be good or excellent examples of their style, or the work of a noted architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.

⁶⁹⁴ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of multi-family residences from this period that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. Multi-family residential developments, including condominiums, which comprise multiple buildings on a single or multiple properties are also recorded as districts. In these cases, individual contributors and non-contributors are not recorded, as it is the collection of the whole that makes a multi-family property significant. Landscape and hardscape features and other amenities should also be considered when evaluating a multi-family historic district.

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property’s significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). ⁶⁹⁵ A multi-family residential property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/3 should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city’s residential development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. ⁶⁹⁶

⁶⁹⁵ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

⁶⁹⁶ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. ⁶⁹⁷ A residential property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a multi-family historic district to be eligible for historic designation, the development as a whole must retain a strong sense of time and place, and it must retain the majority of its original design and materials, and significant landscape, hardscape, and other planning features.

Post-World War II Multi-Family Residential Development (1945-1969): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a multi-family residential property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- represent important patterns and trends in multi-family residential development from this period; or represent an excellent or rare example of an architectural style or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer; or
- represent an important or rare multi-family residential property type; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- reflect planning and design principles from the period; and
- retain significant character-defining features of the style or type, including important landscape or hardscape features; and
- retain the original layout, reflecting planning and design principles from the period; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

⁶⁹⁷ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

THEME: TRAILER PARK/MOBILE HOME COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969)

The dire need for postwar housing in many communities changed the perceptions of trailer living after World War II. By the mid-1940s, the use of manufactured trailers for year-round living shifted from 10 percent of annual production to 90 percent.⁶⁹⁸ During World War II, trailers became a popular housing solution for wartime workers at industrial plants. The industry responded quickly to the need and designed the first true house trailer: a 22-foot long, eight-foot wide trailer with a canvas top that included a kitchen and a bathroom. The U.S. Government purchased 35,000 of these units and constructed 8,500 trailer parks to hold them.

As the demand for postwar housing increased and people began to migrate to the west to live, demand increased for house trailers that could be towed by the family car and used for year-round living. Once the industry was freed from wartime materials restrictions, it responded with a number of new models using metal siding and larger bathrooms and kitchens. The development of the “Tenwide” by manufacturer Marshfield Homes was uniquely 10 feet in width and helped mark the transition from “travel trailer” to “mobile home.” As described by author Allan D. Wallis in his book “Wheel Estate,” “manufacturers no longer made trailers that could also serve as dwellings, but dwellings that happened to be mobile.”⁶⁹⁹

As described by author Lawrence Culver, “Though perhaps tainted by negative connotations elsewhere, in Palm Springs a trailer park was simply an extension of the resort’s vacation atmosphere.”⁷⁰⁰ For the 1946-47 season, the *Palm Springs City Directory* listed four options: Desert Trailer Haven at 601 E. Andreas Road, Desert Trailer Village at 432 E. Andreas Road, Orchard Trailer Villa at 1862 S. Palm Canyon Drive, and the Rancho Trailer Park at 1563 S. Palm Canyon Drive.

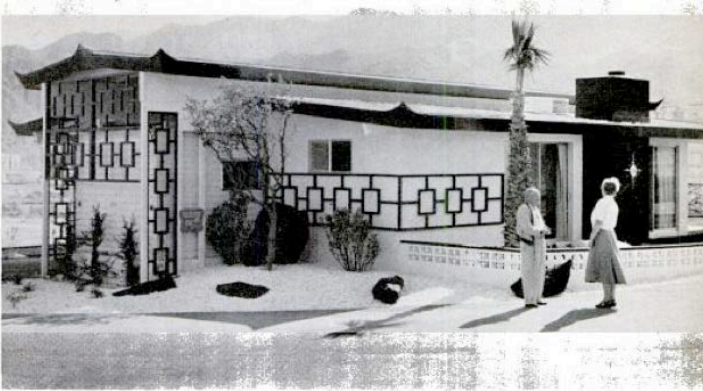
In 1950, Palm Springs became home to the Annual Trailer Rally, organized by the director of the Palm Springs Circus, Jimmy Cooper. By 1954, the event drew over 500 trailers and 1,000 “trailerites” from Arizona, Oregon, Nevada, Florida, and California.⁷⁰¹ The weekend event included a parade of new-model trailers along Palm Canyon Drive, chuck wagon breakfasts, dinners, and other western-style parties.

⁶⁹⁸ Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 87.

⁶⁹⁹ Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 133.

⁷⁰⁰ Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193.

⁷⁰¹ “100 Trailer Fans Meet in Palm Springs,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 1954, A20.



Another view of this month's cover "home." Trailer sits on concrete foundation which doubles as storage space

A unit at Bing Crosby's upscale Blue Skies Village as featured in *Popular Mechanics*, July 1960, 94.

One of the most upscale trailer parks in the Coachella Valley, the 1952 Blue Skies Village (1952, William F. Cody), was developed by Bing Crosby and contained streets named for film stars. Blue Skies offered "...a bit of Hollywood aura at a decidedly downscale price."⁷⁰² It was also marketed as "America's most luxurious trailer park."⁷⁰³ Blue Skies adopted the Country Club approach to trailer transportation-based accommodations with exclusive resort amenities such as clubhouse facilities and swimming pools.⁷⁰⁴ Blue Skies even had maid service available.

Although Blue Skies was located in the nearby community of Cathedral City, it played a major role in the national awareness of luxury trailer parks generally and trailer living in the desert communities specifically. The travel trailer phenomenon was even immortalized on film by two seasonal Palm Springs residents, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz who were depicted as a honeymooning couple seeing America by trailer in 1954's *The Long, Long Trailer*. So popular was the idea, the *Los Angeles Times* had their own "Times Trailing" column and beat reporter, Jean Jacques. By 1950, the *Desert Sun* also had an ongoing column "What's Going On in the Trailer Parks" featuring events and the social comings and goings of visitors.

Realizing that the sales of travel trailers depended upon quality places to park, manufacturers formed a trade organization that provided developers with trailer park designs and issued an annual ratings guide for customers. These sites had sewer connections and utility hook-ups. Despite these regulations, some communities successfully lobbied for additional zoning restrictions to eliminate trailer developments altogether, sometimes classifying trailers as buildings that inherently did not meet local building codes.

⁷⁰² Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 193.

⁷⁰³ Peter Moruzzi, *Palm Springs Holiday* (Salt Lake City, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2009), 134.

⁷⁰⁴ Thomas E. Stinson, "Trailers Join the Country Club," *Popular Mechanics*, 94.

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Other cities declared trailer parks commercial businesses and relegated them to non-residential zones, industrial areas, and along highway corridors.⁷⁰⁵ In contrast, the Palm Springs area embraced the trailer as part of its culture that celebrated outdoor living and modern modes of transportation.

In opposition to the image of slum encampments projected by opponents of mobile home parks in other parts of the country, the *Villager* called Palm Springs “the jeweled showcase of mobile living.”⁷⁰⁶ By 1947, the greater Palm Springs area was home to thirty-two trailer parks. Space rentals varied from a low of \$25 per month to \$100 per month. The larger parks had their own stores, cafes, barber shops, and beauty parlors. Shuffleboard courts were also popular amenities, as were horseshoe courts and even hot mineral water bathing. By the late 1940s, a seasonal population of 6,000 people was estimated to occupy the desert communities’ trailer parks.⁷⁰⁷ By 1948 the largest and most merited local trailer parks by the Trailer Coach Manufacturers Association included McKinney’s (40 spaces), Orchard Trailer Park (140 spaces), Ramon Trailer Park (185 spaces), and Rancho Trailer Park (250 spaces).⁷⁰⁸



Postcard for Horizon Trailer Village at 3575 E. Palm Canyon Drive.

In 1952, the 182-unit⁷⁰⁹ Horizon Trailer Village opened at 3575 E. Palm Canyon Drive.⁷¹⁰ It was featured in the *Los Angeles Times* as a model of upscale mobile home living. Horizon included a clubhouse, swimming pool, shuffleboard courts, and other amenities. The original owners were Al Olsen and Jack

⁷⁰⁵ John Grissim, *The Complete Buyer's Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land* (Sequim, Washington: Rainshadow Publications, 2003), 18.

⁷⁰⁶ Vollie Tripp, “Jewelled Showcases,” *Palm Springs Villager*, no date or page.

⁷⁰⁷ Tripp, “Jewelled Showcases.”

⁷⁰⁸ “TCMA Approval,” *The Desert Sun*, July 3, 1948.

⁷⁰⁹ The number of units represents current spaces, not historical spaces that may have been combined over the years to accommodate larger homes.

⁷¹⁰ The Horizon Mobile Home Village website dates the founding of the park to 1958; however, *Los Angeles Times* articles reflect that it was already open by April 1954.

Colt. Significant personages known to have lived at Horizon Trailer Village included singer and actress Lillian Roth.⁷¹¹ In 1957, Horizon Trailer Village was awarded a “Gold Star” by the Mobile Home Manufacturing Association, based on superior appearance and facilities, making it one of the top-rated parks in the nation.⁷¹²

Another notable Palm Springs mobile home park from this period is the Sahara Trailer Park at 1955 Camino Real Drive. Opened in 1954, Sahara set a new standard for the upscale mobile home park in Palm Springs. The \$450,000, 30-acre project was built by Duke Belzard and Roy E. Smith on a parcel purchased from Lee Arenas, marking the first time that Indian land in Section 26 was developed by non-Agua Caliente members.⁷¹³ Amenities of the Sahara design included wide paved streets; a plaza with grocery store, television viewing room, shuffleboard courts, card room, dance hall, and beauty shop; and a large swimming pool. The architectural design of the common buildings was based on the architecture of the nearby Biltmore Hotel.⁷¹⁴ Sahara’s upscale status was in evidence when it was one of the venues, along with Deep Well Ranch, for the 1956 Square Dance Jamboree.⁷¹⁵

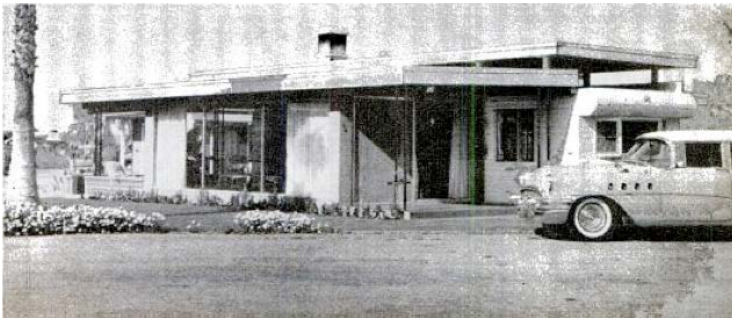


Image of a ramada in the Sahara Trailer Park. Source: *Popular Mechanics*, July, 1960, 99.

The Sahara Trailer Park was featured nationally in *Popular Mechanics* and *National Geographic* for its distinctive new features such as the cabanas and annexes. For many of the area’s mobile homes, the ramada morphed over time into more permanent structure.⁷¹⁶ The ramada was “a kind of three-way roof, one over the patio, a higher roof over the trailer, and another to make a carport.”⁷¹⁷ The Sahara

⁷¹¹ Howard Johns, *Palm Springs Confidential* (Fort Lee, NJ: Barricade Books, Inc., 2008), 276.

⁷¹² “Horizon Trailer Village Given ‘Gold Star’ Rating,” *The Desert Sun*, February 14, 1957.

⁷¹³ “Large Trailer Park Planned for Village,” *The Desert Sun*, July 22, 1954.

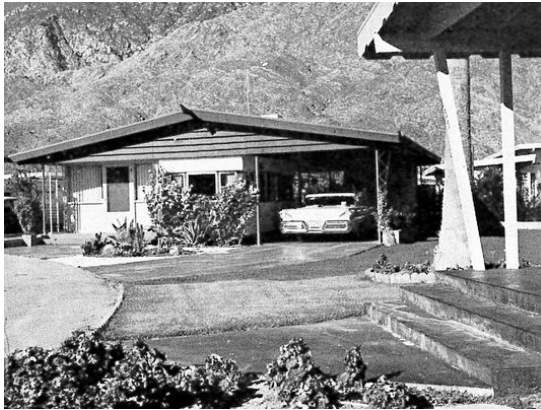
⁷¹⁴ “Large Trailer Park Planned for Village,” *The Desert Sun*, July 22, 1954.

⁷¹⁵ “Untitled,” *The Desert Sun*, April 24, 1956.

⁷¹⁶ An example of this is the Adobe House home at 215 Stone Terrace in Parkview Mobile Estates. Parkview Mobile Estates was established in 1954-55 and located at 393 Mesquite Avenue.

⁷¹⁷ “Trailer Fans Lead Blissful Relaxed Life,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 16, 1954, B1.

Trailer Park also featured in the *Palm Springs Villager* as one of the showcase communities. As at the Ramon Trailer Park, diagonal (instead of rectilinear) spaces created a more attractive community, an efficient use of land, and a more pleasant visual cadence for the streetscape. Mobile home parks were also apparently good businesses. In 1963, Roy Smith sold his one-half interest in the Sahara Trailer Park, which by then was worth over \$500,000, to Jud and Lorna Sessions, owners of the 35-acre Rancho Trailer Park.⁷¹⁸



The home of Harlie and Helen Kugler at Sahara Park. Source: Palm Springs Historical Society.

A 1957 syndicated article in the *New York Herald Tribune* cemented Palm Springs' place in the pantheon of mobile home culture. "In the world's jazziest trailer park on the fringe of this upholstered oasis the one word you may not use," wrote the author Horace Sutton, "is 'trailer.' They are not trailers, they are 'mobile homes,' see?"⁷¹⁹ The article goes on to discuss trailers with color coordinated cars, lawns, golf carts, and evening activities.

Palm Springs trailer parks of the mid-1950s numbered 19 and included Smoke Tree Trailer Park at 151 N. El Segundo (demolished); the Prairie Schooner Trailer Lodge (a.k.a. Desert Trailer Haven) at 601 E. Andreas Road (demolished); the Springs Trailer Court at 174 N. Indian Avenue; and Fairway Mobile Estates (a.k.a. Fairways Trailer Park) at 1900 San Rafael Drive, billed as "the only trailer park in the world surrounded by a golf course."⁷²⁰ Trailers and supplies were purveyed by "Al Rose the Trailer King" located at the Horizon Trailer Village, Murray's Trailer Sales at 68-100 Highway III, and the prewar standby, Pavny's Butane and Trailer Supply Store at 1001 S. Palm Canyon Drive.⁷²¹

⁷¹⁸ "Sahara Park Interest Sold," *Los Angeles Times*, July 7, 1963, O22.

⁷¹⁹ Horace Sutton, "A Traveler's Diary," *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1957, F12.

⁷²⁰ "Welcome Trailerites to the Palm Springs Desert Area Trailer Rally," *The Desert Sun*, October 22, 1959.

⁷²¹ *Palm Springs City Directory*, 1955, 97.

During the 1950s and 1960s, “mobile homes,” as they had become known, were growing longer and wider. During the 1950s the length grew from 38 feet, to 40 feet, then 50 feet and finally upwards to 55 feet. Then Wisconsin manufacturer Elmer Frye broke the mold with the first ten-foot wide trailer that now required special transport permits; by 1960, the “ten wide” had over 90% market share.⁷²² By 1963, the industry split into mobile homes and recreational travel trailers (later to be known as RVs).⁷²³ In a 1965 national study of mobile home parks for the Trailer Coach Association, two types of parks were identified: housing-oriented parks and service-oriented parks. In housing-oriented parks, residents chose to live in a mobile home primarily because of the cost of housing, whereas in service-oriented communities, residents were more concerned with ease of upkeep and amenities such as recreational facilities and clubhouses.⁷²⁴ Service-oriented parks, in general, appealed to more affluent retirees who could afford a second home. In keeping with its resort status, Palm Springs boasted several service-oriented communities.

A number of mobile home parks were constructed on Section 14 land, in proximity to downtown. These included Prairie Schooner, located near the current site of the Convention Center, Plaza Trailer Park across from the Plaza, Mineral Trailer Park near the mineral springs and several others.⁷²⁵ In 1956, under fire department supervision, structures associated with the Mineral Trailer Park were burned to rid the community of “substandard structures” and make way for new development.⁷²⁶

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, rising Palm Springs land values and their proximity to downtown made mobile home parks targets for redevelopment. The first of the mobile home parks to be razed for commercial development was Plaza Trailer Village. In 1987, Prairie Schooner was purchased by the city and razed for commercial development. By this time, many of the residents of the parks were service workers or elderly retirees on fixed incomes. Fewer than ten mobile home parks remain in the City of Palm Springs.

⁷²² John Grissim, *The Complete Buyer's Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land* (Sequim, Washington: Rainshadow Publications, 2003), 18.

⁷²³ Grissim, *The Complete Buyer's Guide to Manufactured Homes and Land*, 19.

⁷²⁴ Wallis, *Wheel Estate*, 188.

⁷²⁵ Eventually these properties were acquired as part of city development efforts; those trailer owners who desired to be relocated were assisted in relocating to a new “park” (Sunrise Village) located on the north side of San Rafael Road. Most owners chose not to relocate and as a result several interesting post WWII trailers were demolished. Source: Marvin Roos, correspondence with project team, March 25, 2015.

⁷²⁶ “10 Buildings Destroyed on Reservation,” *The Desert Sun*, December 5, 1965.

TRAILER PARK/MOBILE HOME COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969): ELIGIBILITY

Property type: Historic District

A trailer park or mobile home park is a residential community where occupants rent a space on which to site a trailer or mobile home, oriented onto a system of interior roadways. Common features typically include a community or recreation building, playground, swimming pool, sales office/manager’s residence, mature landscaping, perimeter wall or fencing, and community signage. As more people took up residency in trailers, they began to be associated more with housing than as vacation vehicles towed by cars.⁷²⁷ As a result, the design of trailers began to shift to reflect their use as permanent residences. By the mid-1950s, trailers had begun to resemble conventional homes and included features and spatial planning not previously found in earlier travel trailers. This demand gave rise to the development of “resort parks,” which were often located near vacation destinations like Palm Springs and were frequently utilized by retirees as vacation homes. In Palm Springs, the trailer park/mobile home park continued to be embraced in the postwar era, continuing the tradition started in the early 20th century. Fewer than 10 parks remain in the city; of these, the Sahara Trailer Park (1955 S. Camino Real) appears potentially eligible for designation under this theme.

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

The Sahara Trailer Park appears eligible for historic designation as a historic district:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/6 (District) ⁷²⁸	As an excellent example of a trailer park/mobile home community in Palm Springs from the postwar era. Eligible trailer parks must represent an excellent example of the type, display unique or innovative design or planning characteristics, and have distinctive and cohesive design details.

Integrity Considerations

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a trailer park/mobile home community to be eligible for designation as a historic district, it should retain its original layout, general street pattern, and planning characteristics. Original accessory buildings and amenities, including manager’s office, pool, clubhouse, recreational, and other facilities should be present. An eligible trailer park/mobile home community will retain integrity of location, design, setting, materials, feeling, and association.

⁷²⁷ “Trailers: Yoked to the Car.”

⁷²⁸ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local.

Trailer Park/Mobile Home Community Development (1945-1969): Registration Requirements

The Sahara Trailer Park is eligible:

- as an excellent example of a trailer park/mobile home community in Palm Springs from the postwar period; and
- for reflecting unique or innovative design or planning characteristics; and
- displaying distinctive and cohesive design details; and
- displaying most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retaining the essential aspects of historic integrity.

THEME: POST-WORLD WAR II COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969)

Aerial view of Tahquitz at Palm Canyon/Indian Canyon, 1964.
Source: Lost Palm Springs.

Peace returned to Palm Springs just in time for the winter season of 1945-46, and so did the Hollywood movie stars and Eastern industrialists. Along with them, in ever-increasing numbers, came ordinary tourists; the growing prosperity of the postwar years and the rise of the car culture created a leisured, mobile middle class that sought, in Palm Springs, a resort lifestyle that had previously been available primarily to the very rich. This surge of visitors and seasonal residents coincided with Modernism's rise in popularity. As a result, commercial architecture in Palm Springs from this period reflected this acceptance of Modernism and expressed a wide range of Modern interpretations as it increasingly served two purposes: the need for tourist-oriented buildings for seasonal residents and visitors, and the need for practical daily services, such as banks, shops, and gas stations, for the growing population of permanent residents. Commercial development during this period consisted of both infill development in the original commercial core, and the continued northward and southward expansion of the commercial district along Palm Canyon and Indian Canyon Drives. A number of motels and other commercial services were constructed to the south of the original downtown, with a cluster of postwar commercial development along S. Palm Canyon Drive.

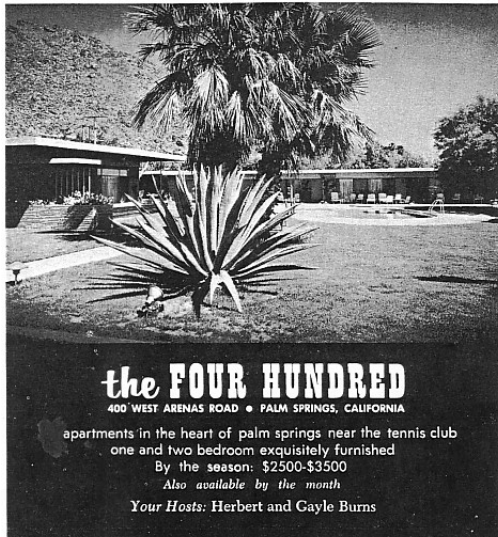
Sub-Theme: Hotel and Resort Development (1945-1969)

The post-war tourism boom prompted the development of a number of hotels, motels, apartment hotels, and inns to accommodate the growing demand. Most lodgings for visitors remained relatively small in scale; outdoor spaces to enjoy the sun, air, and scenery were key elements shaping these designs. Several of the local architects designed these for both short term and longer term occupancy. While the program for these was similar, the designs reflected the individuality and innovations of each architect.



The one-story Mid-century Modern Four Hundred apartments (1954, H.W. Burns) at 400 W. Arenas Road feature an L-shaped design oriented toward the swimming pool. Photo: Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute. Digital photograph collection.

The Hotel Del Marcos (1946-47, 220 W. Baristo Road; HSPB-78) by William Cody was an early building that demonstrates Cody's exploration of form suited to the desert. While he was later known for his own personal interpretation of Modernism emphasizing the minimal structure allowed by materials such as steel, the Del Marcos drew from Frank Lloyd Wright's "organic" architecture by using natural stone as a major feature in walls whose angled profiles seemed to grow out of the ground. The stone was combined with wood structures.⁷²⁹ Another local designer, Herbert Burns, was active building small vacation inns like the Town & Desert Apartments at 370 W. Arenas Road (1947; HSPB-90; now the Hideaway), a Late Moderne vacation residence with small efficiency apartments, including kitchens, for stays of several weeks or months. The units were arranged in a rough "L" shape around a central swimming pool.



Ads for the Four Hundred apartments (1954, H.W. Burns) at 400 W. Arenas Road features the proximity to the Palm Springs Tennis Club. Source: *Palm Springs Life*, December 14, 1960, 19.

Similar properties developed by Burns include the Four Hundred (1954, 400 W. Arenas Road), the Desert Hills (1955, 601 W. Arenas Road), and the Village Manor (1957, 562 W. Arenas Road; now the Orbit In; HSPB-95), all located on W. Arenas Road.⁷³⁰ The units of the Four Hundred by Herbert Burns were also contained in a single L-shaped structure wrapped around a landscaped pool terrace, and reflected Burns' Late Moderne designs which emphasized the unity of the volume with a continuous eave canopy. Like Cody at L'Horizon, Hugh Kaptur at the Impala Lodge (1957, 555 E. San Lorenzo Road; now the Triangle Inn) used an unusual structural geometry. Steel I-beam doglegs created battered walls with glass infill.

⁷²⁹ Hess and Danish, *Palm Springs Weekend*, 92-94.

⁷³⁰ Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, "Town & Desert Apartments, Nomination Application for City of Palm Springs Class 1 Historic Site," March 2014, 12.

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Among the many small inns and lodges built in the 1950s, several stand out for their architectural designs. L'Horizon (1952, 1050 E. Palm Canyon Drive) was designed by William Cody for film and television producer Jack Wrather and his wife, actress/producer Bonita Granville.⁷³¹ It was organized as a collection of duplex and triplex one-story modern bungalows around a broad landscaped greenspace and swimming pool. The Bisonte Lodge at 260 W. Vista Chino (demolished) by E. Stewart Williams was a single structure with the units set back like a sawtooth to provide each with privacy and mountain views.



L and R: L'Horizon Hotel (1952, William Cody). Photographed by Julius Shulman, 1954. Source: The J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Research Institute. Digital photograph collection.

The late 1940s and 1950s also saw the construction of new large hotels in Palm Springs, reflecting the city's growing prominence as a vacation destination. San Francisco theater owner Samuel Levin built the glamorous 50-room Palm Springs Biltmore (1948, Fred Monhoff; demolished) in the south end of town.⁷³² The Ocotillo Lodge at 1111 E. Palm Canyon Drive (1957-58) was designed by Palmer & Krisel and built by developers George and Robert Alexander as part of their prominent entry into the Palm Springs residential market. Sensing a demand for second homes, they planned the Twin Palms housing tract (also by Palmer & Krisel), and built Ocotillo next to it to provide convenient lodging for potential homebuyers, a marketing strategy used by Palm Springs developers at least since the El Mirador was constructed in the 1920s. Besides the lobby and restaurants, the lodge included two-story motel room wings, and one-story bungalow units for longer stays. The landscaping was by noted Los Angeles

⁷³¹ "History-The Horizon Hotel," *The Horizon Hotel*, <https://lhorizonpalmsprings.com/about-lhorizon-resort-palmsprings#2952> (accessed March 20, 2015).

⁷³² Hess and Danish, 141.

landscape architect Garrett Eckbo.⁷³³ In 1959, Irwin Schuman (who also owned the popular Chi Chi nightclub) opened the huge Riviera Hotel (1600 N. Indian Canyon Drive) at the northeast corner of N. Indian Canyon Drive and E. Vista Chino. It was the largest hotel in Palm Springs at the time, with more than 400 guest rooms arranged in multiple wings in a radial pattern around a central swimming pool.⁷³⁴



L: Rendering for the Ocotillo Lodge (1957-58, Palmer & Krisel). Source: *The Alexanders: A Desert Legacy*. R: Pool at the Ocotillo Lodge. Photograph by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

Continuing the trend to larger hotels, the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians decided to develop its small, rustic mineral hot springs near the center of Palm Springs into a large bath house and hotel development. The Spa Hotel and Bath House (1959-1963; demolished) was designed by William Cody, Donald Wexler, Richard Harrison, and Philip Koenig. It was an exceptional example of Modern design and planning; a long arcade of prefabricated concrete rose from a blue ceramic tile decorative pool to connect the town center to the lobby of the bath house. Several larger motels were constructed in the 1960s, including the Tropics Motor Lodge (1964, 411 E. Palm Canyon Drive; now the Caliente Tropics), which used the popular Tiki style. A large A-frame entry reminiscent of South Pacific lodge houses served as the *porte-cochère* to the two-story motel wings around a pool terrace landscaped with tropical planting and tiki statues.

⁷³³ Hess and Danish, 137-140.

⁷³⁴ Moruzzi, 91-93, and Niemann, 242-243.



Spa Bathhouse (1959; demolished),
 Photograph by Julius Shulman, 1960. Source:
 The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los
 Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

Some of the older hostelries invested in extensive improvements to keep up with the postwar demand. Charlie Farrell was elected mayor in 1948 and soon after hired Albert Frey to expand his Racquet Club with new Modern bungalows.⁷³⁵ The Hotel El Mirador returned to civilian operation after serving as a military hospital during the war, and in 1952 underwent a major retrofit designed by Paul R. Williams and the firm of Williams, Williams & Williams.⁷³⁶ In 1952 Western Hotels, the owners of the Oasis Hotel, began an extensive expansion. The McCallum adobe was relocated, the original Wright-designed dining room and kitchen were dismantled,⁷³⁷ and the Oasis Commercial Building (1953, 101-121 S. Palm Canyon; HSPB-55), designed by Williams, Williams & Williams, was constructed in their place. The hotel expanded to the west, across South Belardo Road, with a new restaurant, apartments, and bungalows, and later a multi-story guestroom building also designed by E. Stewart Williams, which now comprise the Palm Mountain Resort and Spa.⁷³⁸

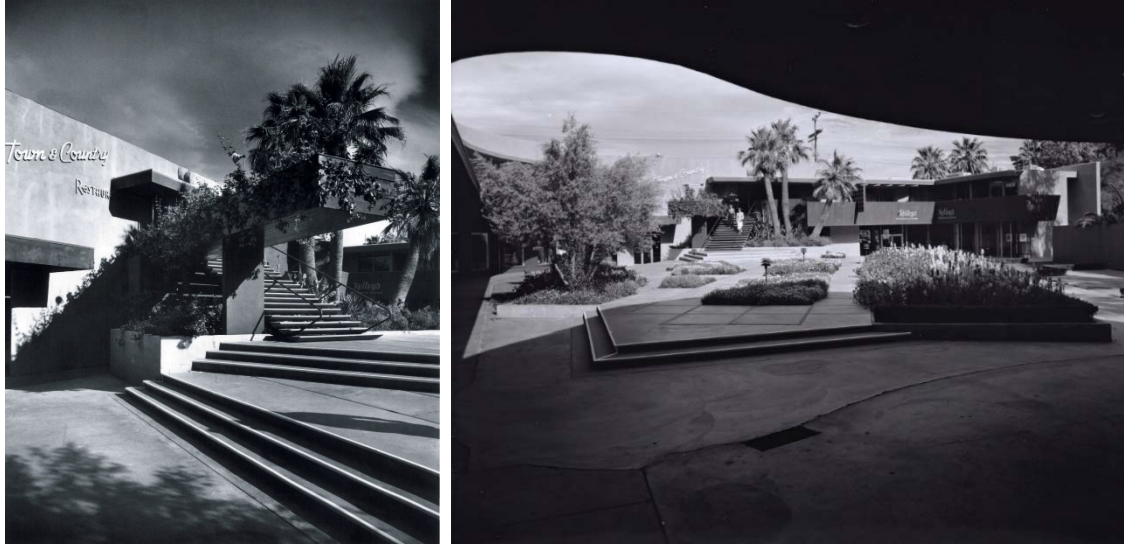
⁷³⁵ Colacello, "Palm Springs Weekends," 206.

⁷³⁶ Moruzzi, 60; Williams, 195.

⁷³⁷ Several interior features were relocated to the ACBCI Cultural museum and the Ice Cream shop at the Village Green Park. These features were not evaluated as part of the survey, as interiors are outside the scope of the project; however, the City could consider local designation.

⁷³⁸ Nicolette Wenzell, "Palm Springs History: The Garlicks built up Oasis Hotel," *The Desert Sun*, May 1, 2014, <https://www.desertsun.com/story/life/2014/05/01/palm-springs-history-oasis-hotel/8589979/> (accessed March 12, 2015). See also 1962 Sanborn map.

Sub-Theme: Retail and Entertainment Development, 1945-1969



Town & Country Center (1948, Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones; HSPB-51, listed in the National Register). Photographed in 1949 by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

Several significant retail buildings were constructed in the years immediately after the war. The city's wealthy leisure class had always attracted exclusive shops. In 1947 Bullock's, one of Los Angeles' fashionable department stores, moved out of its boutique at the Desert Inn and into a new building by Los Angeles architects Walter Wurdeman and Welton Becket, with landscape design by Ruth Shellhorn (demolished).⁷³⁹ It reflected the Late Moderne style the pair used the same year at Bullock's Pasadena to attract a stylish, suburban clientele. In the late 1950s Becket designed the Saks Fifth Avenue branch at 490 S. Palm Canyon Drive (altered) with highly textured walls of stone and molded concrete block.

Two other notable Los Angeles architects, Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones, were hired by Pearl McCallum McManus to update her Tennis Club and design a new restaurant for the facility. Williams and Jones also collaborated on The Center (1948, 146 N. Palm Canyon Drive; listed in the National Register), also known as the Town & Country center, a two-story, Late Moderne-style collection of shops, offices, and a fashionable restaurant in the center of the block off the main retail area on Palm Canyon Dr.⁷⁴⁰ The complex fronts onto both Palm Canyon and Indian Canyon Drives, and was

⁷³⁹ Kelly Comras, *Ruth Shellhorn* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2016), 33, 42.

⁷⁴⁰ Palm Springs Modern Committee, "Town & Country Center," *PS MODCOM*, <http://www.psmodcom.org/index.php/town-country-center-architecture/> (accessed October 29, 2012).

configured around a central landscaped courtyard, accessed from the streets by pedestrian passages. It is a rare example of a modern adaptation of the courtyard type more typically associated with Spanish and Mediterranean Revival styles.⁷⁴¹



Robinson's (1958, Pereira and Luckman). Photograph by Julius Shulman.
Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

Other commercial buildings serving tourists and local residents included shops along Palm Canyon and Indian Canyon Drives. While Spanish style buildings were sometimes still built in the immediate post-war years, Modern design was featured in numerous commercial buildings throughout the center of town, many of which were designed by prominent local and regional architects. These ranged from small single- and multi-tenant retail and office buildings, such as the commercial building by William Cody at 120 W. Arenas Road, to large, free-standing department stores and mixed-use commercial buildings. There are several commercial buildings from this period designed by Wexler & Harrison, including the Welmas Building (1960, 201-267 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way); other notable examples include the Robinson's department store (1958, 333-343 S. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-84) by the Los Angeles firm of Pereira and Luckman. Robinson's is a pavilion structure, with a high roof made up of connected diamond-shaped trusses that appear to float above slender pipe columns strengthened by tapered stiffening fins. This structure allowed for a large column-free interior span, and a large expanse of floor to ceiling glass to reveal the store's interior to passing motorists.

⁷⁴¹ Susan Secoy Jensen, Architect, AIA, M.Arch., Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Town & Country Center," April 2015, Section 8, 14.



The Huddle Springs restaurant (1956, William Cody; demolished). Source: Lost Palm Springs.

Numerous restaurants were added to the commercial corridors during this period as well. Mirroring the trend in suburban, car-oriented districts of Los Angeles, restaurants along Highway 111 entering and leaving the center of Palm Springs were designed in the Googie style, a Modern style using boldly expressed structural elements and signs reflecting the scale of the automobile and meant to be noticeable through the windshield of passing cars. The Huddle Springs restaurant (1956; demolished) by William Cody was one of the most sophisticated examples in the nation of this Modernist type.⁷⁴² Another Googie example is the Denny's coffee shop by Los Angeles architects Armét and Davis (1965, 701 E. Palm Canyon Drive), which used an extended version of the Denny's prototype design as part of a motel complex.

Another commercial type which furnished notable examples of Modern architecture in Palm Springs was the bank. Bank architecture across the nation adopted Modern design (including drive-through service) to attract customers in the economic expansion after 1945. Palm Springs boasts an extraordinary collection of custom designs by noted architects which were also, by their size, position, and design, *de facto* civic landmarks celebrating the town's wealth. Notable examples in the 1950s were the first Coachella Valley Savings & Loan (1956, 383 S. Palm Canyon Drive) and Santa Fe Federal Savings & Loan (1960, 300 S. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-54), both by Williams, Williams & Williams; and City National Bank (1959, 588 S. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-52) by the Los Angeles firm Victor Gruen Associates.



Coachella Valley Savings and Loan #2 (1961, Williams, Williams & Williams). Photographed by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

⁷⁴² Alan Hess, *Googie Redux: Ultramodern Roadside Architecture* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2004), 98-101.

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The design of the first Coachella Valley Savings & Loan reflects the influence of the International Style. Santa Fe Federal demonstrated Stewart Williams' design evolution; where Coachella Valley emphasized its box-like volume, the Santa Fe design gives the appearance of an open pavilion. The inset walls are almost entirely glass, set between two strong planes of roof and floor. The roof extends far beyond the glass walls to provide shade, enhanced by movable aluminum screen walls on the west façade. The floor plate cantilevers beyond the foundation to make this pavilion structure appear to float. City National Bank (1959), designed by Gruen associate Rudi Baumfeld, was an exuberant expressionistic design inspired by the chapel of Notre Dame du Haut in Ronchamps, France (1954) by Le Corbusier. A large curving roof with upswept eaves was set on three solid ovoid shapes; Baumfeld adapted the Ronchamp model by opening the west side of the building with a wall of glass to provide mountain views. To his two earlier banks, E. Stewart Williams added another major and distinctive bank design for the second Coachella Valley Savings & Loan at 499 S. Palm Canyon Drive (1961; HSPB-53). The iconic design recalls Oscar Niemeyer's 1956 Alvorada Palace in Brasilia and demonstrates Williams' move beyond traditional post-and-beam construction to explore the possibilities of structural concrete.⁷⁴³



L: City National Bank (1959, Victor Gruen Associates). Source: Bill Anderson/Courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society via *Palm Springs Life* Archives. R: The Oasis Building (1952, Williams, Williams & Williams; HSPB-55). Source: Palm Springs Historical Society as published in *Palm Springs Life*, "Modern, Naturally."

Many office buildings were also designed by prominent local architects (often for real estate, builder, or developer clients) in the postwar era. Collectively, they demonstrate the wide use and acceptance of modern design in Palm Springs. The Oasis Building (1952, 101-121 S. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-55) by Williams, Williams & Williams incorporated a shaded, inset ground floor patio on Palm Canyon Drive as an entry to several small retail stores, including a Kreis Drugstore with the original interior designed by Paul R. Williams (since remodeled). The second story was a large rectangular block which seemed to

⁷⁴³ Elizabeth Edwards Harris, Ph.D., "Dignity and Delight: Modern Banks," in Sidney Williams, ed., *An Eloquent Modernist: E. Stewart Williams, Architect* (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Art Museum, 2014), 102.

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float above the ground floor, and contained office space (including the Williams, Williams & Williams offices).

Other examples of Modern offices in the central commercial district include 577 Sunny Dunes by Howard Lapham; the Harold Hicks Real Estate office (1958, 1345 N. Palm Canyon) by Williams, Williams & Williams; and the Welmas Building (1959, 100 S. Indian Canyon Drive) by Wexler & Harrison. These designs often featured outdoor corridors or courtyards and open stairs in response to the climate, and decorative elements such as colorful ceramic tile. As with other building types, these Modern designs reflected a range of interpretations, from the International Style influences in the Oasis Building to the brutalist influences seen in Robert Ricciardi's Gas Company building (1969, 211 N. Sunrise Way), with its tall, concrete walls finished in a rugged hammered texture.



Esso Station (Albert Frey, 1963-65; HSPB-33). Source: Palm Springs Visitors Center, via Flickr.

With the growing car culture in the postwar era, the construction of gas and service stations – particularly along major thoroughfares – became increasingly important. Palm Springs has a collection of postwar stations that were designed by prominent local architects: Albert Frey, William Cody, and Donald Wexler each designed a gas station in the city between 1963 and 1966. The box station type that had developed in the early 1930s, with its glossy glass and porcelain enamel exterior and carefully designed lighting, was meant to attract attention and reflected the increasing importance petroleum companies placed on standardization. In the postwar years owners and architects began to vary this basic form to distinguish their establishments, incorporating contemporary design trends such as canted display windows, raked or folded plate canopies, and boomerang-shaped supports that reflected the popular interest in

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aeronautics and space travel and attracted the eye of passing motorists.⁷⁴⁴ Frey's Esso station (1963-65, now the Palm Springs Visitors' Center, 2901 N. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-33 and HSPB-37) at the north end of the city features canted concrete block walls supporting a hyperbolic paraboloid steel roof which created a wide canopy over the pump area. Situated at the corner of the main highway into town and the turnoff to the new Palm Springs Tramway, it served as a landmark to this new tourist attraction. The design of a nearby Shell station has been attributed to William Cody (1964, 2796 N. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-99),⁷⁴⁵ which featured a high canopy of thin, tapered concrete slabs. Donald Wexler's gas station at the corner of Tahquitz Canyon Way and El Cielo Road (1966, demolished) used post-and-beam concrete construction.

Tourism, Palm Springs' main industry, spawned the development of attractions, golf courses, and more motels in the 1960s. The premier attraction was the opening of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, a major engineering feat. Pylons were constructed on the side of rugged and steep Mt. San Jacinto to support cable cars transporting tourists 8,500 feet from the valley floor to the alpine mountain top. Frey & Chambers designed the tramway's lower Valley Station (1963, 1 Tramway Road; HSPB-33), and Williams, Clark & Williams designed the mountain station. Both included restaurants and viewing platforms. Frey and Chambers' design reflected their technological approach by incorporating a large triangulated truss to span a natural wash; the structure's triangular shapes were expressed on the exterior of the building. In the mountaintop environment, which has snow in winter, Williams, Clark, and Williams used heavy timber post-and-beam construction, allowing for tall windows to frame the panoramic views of the valley floor.⁷⁴⁶

In October 1967 the Palm Springs Planning Collaborative, an association of many local architects including John Porter Clark, William Cody, Albert Frey, Richard Harrison, and Roger Williams under the leadership of E. Stewart Williams, presented to the City Council a master plan for the Palm Springs central business district. The tourist-oriented plan included a two-block pedestrian promenade along Palm Canyon Drive, a convention center, a performing arts center, shops, offices, restaurants, hotels, plazas, and parking, covering the area from Ramon Road in the south to Alejo Road in the north. The plan's vast scope, long-range vision, and estimated \$65,000,000 cost proved overwhelming for the city council and the plan was quickly shelved.⁷⁴⁷ Although the ambitious project was abandoned, it is

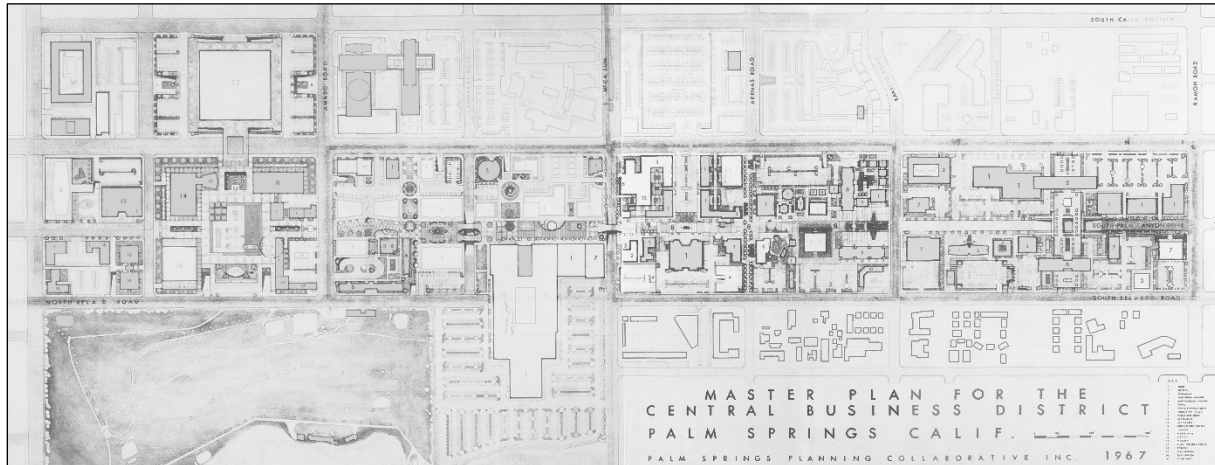
⁷⁴⁴ Chad Randl, *Preservation Brief 46: The Preservation and Reuse of Historic Gas Stations* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, 2008), 3-4.

⁷⁴⁵ This property has been attributed to architect William F. Cody. However, following consultation with the William F. Cody Papers, housed in the Special Collections Department of the Kennedy Library at California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo, this attribution has not been substantiated. The property is currently undergoing a detailed historic assessment as part of a potential project review.

⁷⁴⁶ The mountain station is located outside the Palm Springs city limit.

⁷⁴⁷ Sidney Williams, "The Spirit of Collegiality, The Power of Eloquence," in *An Eloquent Modernist: E. Stewart Williams, Architect*, ed. Sidney Williams (Palm Springs, CA: Palm Springs Art Museum, 2014), 45-51.

noteworthy for its collaborative design by an impressive number of prominent local architects, and as a reflection of the importance of tourism in Palm Springs.⁷⁴⁸



Unrealized master plan for the central business district, 1967. Source: E. Stewart Williams Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum, as published in *An Eloquent Modernist: E. Stewart Williams, Architect*, p. 47-49.

⁷⁴⁸ Per Marvin Roos correspondence May 11, 2016, though the plan was never adopted, the architects convinced several financial institutions to relocate in the south downtown area between Baristo and Ramon Roads. Several of those buildings are still used by financial institutions, while others are now serve as office space.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

Sub-theme: Las Palmas Business Historic District (1945-1969)⁷⁴⁹

In the post-World War II era, the area that is now the Las Palmas Business Historic District continued the northward expansion of the main commercial center that started in the 1930s; however, development during this period consisted primarily of infill construction on undeveloped lots. Some simplified Spanish Colonial Revival buildings were constructed during this period, but the predominant architectural style in the district in the postwar years, as throughout Palm Springs, was Modern. The city's post-war boom of tourists and seasonal residents coincided with the rise in popularity of Modernism across the United States. This created, in Palm Springs, a perfect storm – an unusually high proportion of young architects, trained in the tenets of Modernism, who settled and practiced in Palm Springs after the war, combined with clients and developers willing to experiment with adventurous, unconventional designs. Architecture in Palm Springs from this period reflected this fortuitous convergence and expressed a wide range of Modern interpretations in the designs of residential, commercial, and institutional buildings, leaving the city with an unusually large and fine concentration of mid-20th century Modern design.



Clark & Frey Office Building (1947).
Photographed by Julius Shulman.
Source: The J. Paul Getty Research
Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo
Collection.

Commercial architecture in Palm Springs from this period increasingly served two purposes: the need for tourist-oriented buildings for seasonal residents and visitors, and the need for practical daily services, such as offices, banks, shops, and gas stations, for the growing population of permanent residents. In the Las Palmas Business Historic District, as throughout the city, buildings continued to be low in scale, predominantly one but occasionally two stories in height. Setbacks along N. Palm Canyon Drive are relatively consistent, with most buildings having only a minimal setback from the sidewalk. Setbacks are more varied along N. Indian Canyon Drive.

Clark & Frey designed a number of commercial buildings in the district in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These include their own office building (1947) at 875-879 N. Palm Canyon Drive, a two-story mixed-use building with retail on the ground floor and the architects' offices above; the Late Moderne-style Dollard Building (1947) at 687 N. Palm Canyon Drive; the Turonnet Building (1949) at 707-749 N. Indian Canyon Drive; and the one-story, minimalist Nichols Building (1953) at 891-895 N. Palm Canyon Drive.

⁷⁴⁹ This sub-theme continues the discussion of the Las Palmas Business Historic District from the pre-World War II commercial development section. The Las Palmas Business Historic District was designated by the City in 1986. It is bounded by Alejo Road to the south, El Alameda to the north, and includes most properties fronting N. Palm Canyon and N. Indian Canyon Drives on both sides.

FINAL DRAFT – FOR CITY COUNCIL APPROVAL

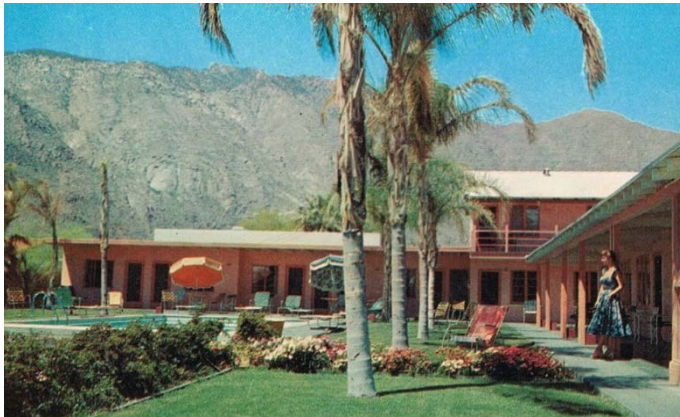
City of Palm Springs

Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings

HISTORIC RESOURCES GROUP

A noteworthy medical office building from this period is the Backstrom-Reid Building at 666 N. Palm Canyon Drive. Local developer and designer Howard Lapham constructed the two-story medical office building for Dr. Henry Reid and his business partner, Robert G. Backstrom.⁷⁵⁰ The building is framed by its flat roof and end wall panels that form a continuous folded plane over the building and a *porte-cochère* that leads to the parking lot at the rear. The façade is articulated with stone veneer, decorative metal screens, and an exterior staircase leading to the second story.

The postwar tourism boom prompted the development of a number of hotels, motels, apartment hotels, and inns to accommodate the growing demand. Most lodgings for visitors remained relatively small in scale and were often oriented around a central landscaped area or pool; outdoor spaces to enjoy the sun, air, and scenery were key elements shaping these designs. Examples within the district include the Crawford Apartments, an early motor court at 855 N. Indian Canyon Drive (1945; currently the Village Inn);⁷⁵¹ and the Del Hai Mo Lodge at 641 N. Palm Canyon Drive (1952; altered).



Postcard of the Crawford Apartments.

⁷⁵⁰ Historic Site Preservation Board, "Las Palmas Business Historic District Building Histories," (undated), 19. Although some sources attribute the design of this building to Haralamb Georgescu, with whom Lapham was associated, Georgescu's biographical information indicates that he did not begin working with Lapham until 1959, after the Backstrom-Reid building was constructed.

⁷⁵¹ Historic Site Preservation Board, "Las Palmas Business Historic District Building Histories," undated, 11.

POST-WORLD WAR II COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969): ELIGIBILITY**Property Types: Commercial Building; Historic District**

Examples of commercial buildings from this period may include hotels, motels, retail stores, banks, restaurants, commercial storefront buildings, and automobile-related resources including auto dealerships and drive-ins. There was a great deal of commercial development in Palm Springs in the immediate postwar period, and continuing into the 1960s. Commercial properties in Palm Springs associated with this period include the Hotel Del Marcos (1946-47, HSPB-78), the Town and Desert Apartments (1947; now the Hideaway; HSPB-90), the Town & Country Center (1948; HSPB-51), the Oasis Commercial Building (1953, HSPB-55), and the Esso station (1963-65, HSPB-33 and HSPB-37; now the Visitors Center).

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

A commercial property from this period may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period) ⁷⁵²	As an excellent example of commercial development in Palm Springs, reflecting the City's growth in the postwar era, including the continued importance of tourism. Commercial buildings eligible under this criterion must represent a trend or pattern of development, they cannot simply have been constructed during the post-World War II era.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction from the period; or as the work of a noted architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles chapter.
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of commercial buildings that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. Potential commercial districts in Palm Springs will likely span several periods of development.

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an

⁷⁵² Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

understanding of the property’s significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, properties and districts must retain sufficient integrity to convey their historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). ⁷⁵³ A commercial property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/3 should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city’s commercial development during this period. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. ⁷⁵⁴ Replacement of original storefronts is a common and acceptable alteration.
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. ⁷⁵⁵ A commercial property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style. Replacement of original storefronts is a common and acceptable alteration.

⁷⁵³ National Register Bulletin 15.

⁷⁵⁴ National Register Bulletin 15.

⁷⁵⁵ National Register Bulletin 15.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Some alteration to individual buildings, such as replacement of storefronts is acceptable. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development; at this time, the only commercial historic district that has been identified in Palm Springs is the Las Palmas Business Historic District.

Post-World War II Commercial Development (1945-1969): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- represent important patterns and trends in commercial development from this period; or
- represent an excellent or rare example of an architectural style, property type, or method of construction; or be associated with a significant architect or designer; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance; and
- display the original planning features of a commercial enclave or corridor, including use, setbacks, and other planning features; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

THEME: POST-WORLD WAR II CIVIC AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969)

This theme explores the development of civic buildings, schools, churches, and other institutions in the decades after World War II. As Palm Springs' population grew, so did the need for civic buildings. Usually designed by local architects, they reflected the progressive symbolism of Modernism in schools, churches, fire stations, and especially in a new City Hall.

For the first few months after incorporation, the City Council met on the second floor of old Fire Station No. 1 (377 N. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished). From 1939 to 1944 Council meetings were held in the Guatiello Building (482 N. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished), and from 1944 to 1948 in the El Paseo Theater in the El Paseo Building (800 N. Palm Canyon Drive; HSPB-27). From 1938 to 1948 municipal offices were located in the Chamber of Commerce building (363 N. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished), a small bungalow built in 1919 by Dr. J.J. Kocher. In 1948 the administrative offices and City Council meetings were relocated to three buildings on the Palm Springs Air Base property that had recently been vacated by the Army Air Corps. In 1949 a 100-acre parcel of the property was deeded to the City.⁷⁵⁶ The City subleased the remainder of the air base property to the Palm Springs Airport Corporation and later, in 1952, to Aero-Palm Springs, Inc. under the leadership of "Great-Grandmother Pilot" Zaddie Bunker, and the property became the new municipal airport.⁷⁵⁷

In 1952 the firm of Clark, Frey & Chambers was selected to design a new City Hall building to accommodate the growing city's administrative needs (3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way; HSPB-33). Various sites were considered, including Tamarisk Park and Torney General Hospital (El Mirador), before the city selected a ten-acre site within the vacated Federal land, avoiding the costs of land acquisition. On December 15, 1953 the city transferred \$300,000 from the Capital Outlay Fund to a dedicated City Hall Construction Fund to begin the process. The entire cost of the building, which totaled \$408,318, was financed through sales tax revenues, without resorting to bond issues or increased property taxes. Final working drawings were submitted on January 18, 1956 and the bid was awarded to Kretz and Wilson of Indio on February 21. Construction began on March 6, and the new City Hall was dedicated on November 8, 1957. By that time the city's permanent population was 12,225, with a seasonal increase to 45,000.⁷⁵⁸

For the design of City Hall, Clark, Frey & Chambers collaborated with Williams, Williams & Williams. The building used a Modern vocabulary to convey the symbolic role of a city hall; the main entrance to the administrative offices was defined by a large square canopy with a circular opening to the sky, while the city council chamber was given definition in a separate, attached wing marked by a freestanding *aedicula*. The windows of the office wing were shaded by deep eaves and a screen of deep tubular sections that allowed views out, but shut out direct sunlight. The City Council wing was constructed of

⁷⁵⁶ "Your City Hall."

⁷⁵⁷ Greer.

⁷⁵⁸ "Your City Hall."

concrete block integrally tinted a rose color; the blocks were slightly offset to create a distinctive geometric pattern on the flat walls, especially when raked by sunlight.

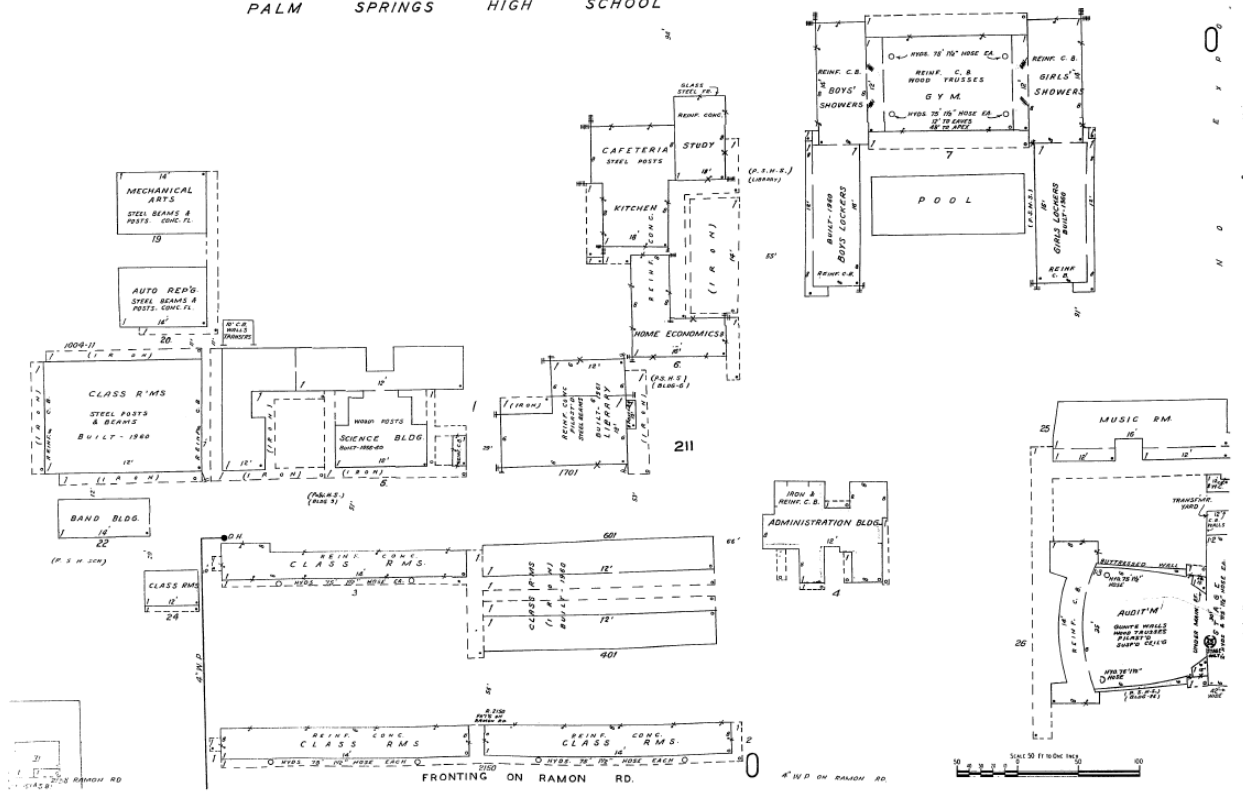
In the 1960s a civic center was developed around the City Hall with the addition of several other civic facilities. A special election in 1961 approved the city's purchase of and improvements to the airport property. The location at the west end of Tahquitz Canyon Way created a central axis with the airport as its terminus, while Modern architecture and uniform setbacks unified the area as a civic center. The anchor and largest addition to the civic center was Donald Wexler's Palm Springs Airport (1966; front façade HSPB-70) at the end of Tahquitz Canyon Way. A major project for a local architect, the modern airport evoked the swept lines of a jet plane. Outdoor waiting rooms for the gates celebrated the weather that awaited arriving passengers. The landscape design, including the fountains, was completed by local landscape architect David Hamilton.⁷⁵⁹ Also included in the civic center was the Palm Springs Police Building (1962, 3111 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way) by John Porter Clark, and the Riverside County Courthouse (1962, 3255 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way) by Williams, Clark and Williams.

Other civic facilities constructed in the postwar era to accommodate the growing population and increased need for municipal services include several fire stations: Fire Station No. 1 (1957, 277 N. Indian Canyon Drive; HSPB-39) by Frey & Chambers, and Fire Station No. 3 (1964, 590 E. Racquet Club Road) by Hugh Kaptur. Additionally, a new post office (1970, 333 E. Amado Road) was constructed as an alternative to the 1930s post office located in La Plaza.

Palm Springs also needed new school facilities in the postwar era. In the late 1950s, Palm Springs High School (2248 E. Ramon Road) added several new buildings to the campus, which was originally constructed in the Spanish style in the 1930s. These included a new auditorium (1956) and library (1958), both designed by Williams, Williams & Williams (extant). For a major expansion of the school commissioned in 1958, Wexler & Harrison, working with engineer Bernard Perlin, utilized a prefabricated steel construction system to reduce costs; the simple rectilinear shapes reinforced their Modern style. The system proved successful, and Wexler & Harrison used it in many schools. Other school facilities built to accommodate Palm Springs' growing population during the postwar era include Raymond Cree Middle School (1966, 1011 E. Vista Chino) by Donald Wexler; 1953 and 1958 additions to the Cahuilla Elementary School (833 E. Mesquite Avenue; demolished) by Wexler & Harrison (originally constructed in 1941 and designed Clark & Frey); and the Palm Springs Unified School Administration Building (1963, 333 S. Farrell Drive) by E. Stewart Williams.

⁷⁵⁹ Per landscape historian Steven Keylon.

PALM SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL



1962 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Palm Springs depicting Palm Springs High School. Source: Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970 via Los Angeles Public Library.

Several churches and other institutional buildings were constructed in the city during this period. Temple Isaiah (commissioned in 1949, 332 W. Alejo Road; altered) by Williams, Williams & Williams accommodated a growing congregation. Clark & Frey's American Legion Post #519 (1948, 400 N. Belardo Road; HSPB-36) was a small building, but was as carefully designed using simple Modern forms as any of their work. The Palm Springs First Church of Christ Scientist (1957, 605 S. Riverside Drive) by Frey & Chambers used a collection of simple rose-tinted concrete block forms topped with gentle shed roofs. This interpretation of Modernism used simplicity and modern technological materials composed not on a strict grid, but with oblique angles. For the desert climate, direct sunlight was moderated in the main auditorium with small garden courts to filter the light. The design of St. Theresa Catholic Church (1968, 2800 E. Ramon Road) by William Cody demonstrated an expressionistic facet of his design ability. Here, Cody used thick concrete walls with a curved section to create a protected precinct; in the middle of it sat the sanctuary enclosed with glass walls, and topped by a sweeping pyramid echoing the curved section of the surrounding walls. Though modern in form and structure, the design leads the eye upward in a symbolic gesture in the same manner as traditional Gothic churches.

Other important institutions established during this period include the Moorten Botanical Gardens, which was founded in 1957 at the former Stephen H. Willard estate on South Palm Canyon Drive. Chester "Cactus Slim" Moorten, one of the original "Keystone Kops" in the Max Sennett film series, had settled in Palm Springs after contracting tuberculosis. He established a landscape sales, design, and contracting business, specializing in desert plants, in 1938. Two years later Moorten married Patricia Haliday, who had studied botany and horticulture at USC and UCLA. Together they designed and installed desert gardens for some of Palm Springs' most famous residents including Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby, and Walt Disney. Disney also hired the Moortens to install cactus gardens in the Frontierland area of his new Anaheim amusement park. In the mid-1950s the Moortens purchased the Willard estate and in 1957 opened their botanical garden, with over 3,000 varieties of desert plants, a palm grove, and the world's first *Cactarium*.⁷⁶⁰

In 1958 the Palm Springs Desert Museum moved into its first permanent home, a new 10,000-square-foot building designed by E. Stewart Williams, and for the first time included galleries dedicated to fine arts.⁷⁶¹ The new museum was located on Tahquitz Canyon Way, just east of the Welwood Murray Memorial Library, on a parcel donated by Cornelia White in 1947. The museum building in fact wrapped around White's "Little House" of railroad ties, which had been relocated to the southwest corner of Tahquitz Canyon Way and Indian Canyon Drive in 1944.⁷⁶²

⁷⁶⁰ Niemann, 149-150; and "Patricia Moorten Obituary," *The Desert Sun*, July 16-21, 2010, <https://obituaries.desertsun.com/obituaries/thedesertsun/obituary.aspx?n=patricia-moorten&pid=144092145> (accessed August 17, 2015).

⁷⁶¹ Palm Springs Art Museum, "About Us," <http://www.psmuseum.org/about-us/> (accessed August 2015). The museum, now the Palm Springs Art Museum, relocated to its current facility, also designed by Williams, in 1976. The old building was replaced with a commercial building.

⁷⁶² Niemann, 80, and Sanborn fire insurance maps, 1962.

POST-WORLD WAR II CIVIC AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT (1945-1969): ELIGIBILITY**Property Types: Civic or institutional building**

Civic property types include city halls or other offices for public agencies, post offices, fire and police stations, schools, and libraries. Non-governmental institutional property types include churches, meeting halls, and buildings associated with social organizations. Example civic and institutional buildings in Palm Springs associated with this period include City Hall (1957, HSPB-33), Palm Springs International Airport (1966; front façade HSPB-70), American Legion Post #519 (1948, HSPB-36), and St. Theresa Catholic Church (1968).

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

A civic or institutional property from this period may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period) ⁷⁶³	<p>As an excellent example of civic or institutional development from this period, representing the significant growth in Palm Springs following World War II.</p> <p><i>National Register Criteria Consideration A: Religious Properties</i></p> <p>Note that a religious property is eligible for listing in the National Register if it derives its primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.</p> <p>“A religious property requires justification on architectural, artistic, or historic grounds to avoid any appearance of judgment by government about the validity of any religion or belief. Historic significance for a religious property cannot be established on the merits of a religious doctrine, but rather, for architectural or artistic values or for important historic or cultural forces that the property represents. A religious property's significance under Criterion A, B, C, or D must be judged in purely secular terms. A religious group may, in some cases, be considered a cultural group whose activities are significant in areas broader than religious history.”⁷⁶⁴</p>

⁷⁶³ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

⁷⁶⁴ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REASON
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	As an excellent or rare example of an architectural style from the period, or as the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect. Additional information about architectural styles from each period and their associated character-defining features are outlined in the Architectural Styles section.

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property’s significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/3 (Pattern of Development/Period)	A property that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that made up its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event, historical pattern, or person(s). ⁷⁶⁵ A civic or institutional property from this period eligible under Criteria A/1/3 should retain integrity of location, design, materials, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to reflect the important association with the city’s civic and institutional development during this period.

⁷⁶⁵ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
C/3/4,5 (Architecture)	A property important for illustrating a particular property type, architectural style or construction technique; or that represents the work of a master must retain most of the physical features that constitute that type, style, or technique. ⁷⁶⁶ A civic or institutional property significant under Criterion C/3/4,5 (Architecture) should retain integrity of design, workmanship, materials, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. The property is not eligible, however, if it retains some basic features conveying massing but has lost the majority of the features that once characterized its style.

Post-World War II Civic & Institutional Development (1945-1969): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- reflect important civic or institutional development from the period; or
- represent an excellent example of an architectural style or property type; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

⁷⁶⁶ *National Register Bulletin 15.*

THEME: THE INFLUENCE OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY (1945-1969)



Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra, and Dean Martin outside the Canyon Country Club. Photograph, 1963. Source: Los Angeles Public Library, Herald-Examiner Collection.

Palm Springs' popularity as a favorite destination for the entertainment industry continued after World War II and through the 1960s. A number of celebrities became intimately associated with the town and helped to promote its popularity and growth during this period. Among these the most prominent were Bob Hope, the town's first honorary mayor, and patron of the annual Bob Hope Golf Classic tournament (now the Humana Challenge) that has donated more than \$50 million for local nonprofits since its inception in 1960;⁷⁶⁷ Frank Sinatra, whose "Rat Pack" image personified the city's post-war swank; and Dinah Shore, patron of the Colgate Dinah Shore Championship (now known as the ANA Inspiration Championship), the premier women's golf tournament and one of the Coachella Valley's biggest annual events.⁷⁶⁸

The Doll House (1032 N. Palm Canyon Drive; demolished) was an industry favorite for dinner, drinks, and dancing. It was opened in 1945 by Ethel and George L. Strebe, the brother of local theater owner Earle C. Strebe. Among the regulars who enjoyed the restaurant's famous steaks, icebox cake, and entertainment by the Guadalajara Boys were Marlene Dietrich, Doris Day, Ava Gardner and Frank Sinatra, Dick Haynes, Ida Lupino, Howard Hughes, Rosalind Russell, Elizabeth Taylor and Eddie Fisher, Jack Warner, and Daryl Zanuck. Joan Crawford once traded places with a look-alike waitress at the Doll

⁷⁶⁷ Humana Challenge, "Quick Facts," *Humana Challenge*, <http://www.humanachallenge.com/Quick-Facts> (accessed January 23, 2015).

⁷⁶⁸ Niemann, 166.

House, and singer Peggy Lee was allegedly “discovered” there.⁷⁶⁹ The Doll House closed in 1959. In 1966 it was converted to an Italian restaurant, Sorrentino’s (a favorite of Frank Sinatra and Kirk Douglas) which closed in 2002.⁷⁷⁰



The Doll House. Source: *Palm Springs Life*, “Explore Palm Springs: Nightclubs Spruce up for 1950-51 Season.”

Several celebrities invested in Palm Springs businesses during this period. After purchasing his Old Las Palmas house in 1955 actor Alan Ladd opened a hardware store in partnership with local contractor Robert Higgins, a high school friend. The store was originally called HigginsLadd and was located at 533 South Palm Canyon Drive (demolished). Ladd himself frequently waited on customers there until his death in 1964. Ladd’s family maintained the store, later known as Alan Ladd Hardware, and in 1968 moved it to a purpose-built two-story building, the Alan Ladd Building (Kaptur-Lapham & Associates), at 500 S. Palm Canyon Drive.⁷⁷¹ The store closed in 2002 and the building, now called The 500, was remodeled in 2013.⁷⁷²

In 1961 Gene Autry, the “Singing Cowboy,” who had recently purchased the California Angels baseball team, bought the Holiday Inn at 4200 E. Palm Canyon Drive (altered) to house his players during spring training. Autry enlarged the hotel and changed its name first to Melody Ranch and then to the Gene Autry Hotel. Autry sold the hotel in 1992 and it was transformed into the Versailles-inspired Givenchy Spa Hotel. The Givenchy was purchased by talk show host Merv Griffin in 1998 and became the Merv Griffin Hotel and Givenchy Spa. Griffin sold the property in 2002 and in 2004 it reopened as the Parker Palm Springs.⁷⁷³

⁷⁶⁹ Niemann, 252. See also Peter Moruzzi, *Palm Springs Holiday* (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2009), 106. There is a discrepancy in the accounts of Peggy Lee’s “discovery;” sources claim this occurred about 1941, yet current research indicates that the Doll House was opened in 1945.

⁷⁷⁰ Niemann, 253.

⁷⁷¹ Morris Newman, “Modern Master: Architect Hugh Kaptur’s Designs Were among the Most Creative and Innovative of the Era,” *Palm Springs Life*, February 2014, <http://www.palmspringslife.com/Palm-Springs-Life/February-2014/Modern-Master/> (accessed January 27, 2015). The text does not mention the Alan Ladd building but it is included in accompanying photographs of Kaptur’s work. Sources disagree on whether the architect of the Ladd building was Kaptur or Lawrence Lapham.

⁷⁷² “The 500 Comes to Downtown Palm Springs,” *Coachella Valley News.com*, <http://www.coachellavalleynews.com/news-desk/the-500-comes-to-downtown-palm-springs> (accessed January 26, 2015).

⁷⁷³ Niemann, 239-240. Architect John Grist designed the Parker Palm Springs remodel.



L and R: Palm Springs Tennis Club (1947, A. Quincy Jones and Paul R. Williams). Photographed by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

In the postwar era, both Pearl McManus and Charlie Farrell expanded their respective tennis clubs. In 1947, Pearl McManus hired Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones to remodel the Tennis Club (originally opened in 1938 at 701 W. Baristo Road), and design a new clubhouse and restaurant. The new buildings followed the irregular contours of the site, with angled glass walls looking over the rocky hillside and the swimming pool.⁷⁷⁴ The original stone terraces were considered such an integral part of the club that Jones and Williams employed stacked-stone walls to continue the look inside the club. In 1948, soon after he was elected mayor of Palm Springs, Farrell hired Albert Frey to enlarge the Racquet Club with new bungalows.⁷⁷⁵ Farrell became known as “Mr. Palm Springs” for his decades of work as a local businessman, city promoter, councilman, and mayor.⁷⁷⁶



Racquet Club bungalows designed by Clark & Frey in 1948. Photographed by Julius Shulman. Source: The J. Paul Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles. Digital Photo Collection.

⁷⁷⁴ Hess and Danish, 116-118.

⁷⁷⁵ Colacello, 206.

⁷⁷⁶ Niemann, 135.

As in the years before the Second World War, a number of celebrities built or purchased seasonal homes in Palm Springs in the post-war decades. While the established centrally-located neighborhoods of the Movie Colony and Old Las Palmas remained popular with the entertainment industry, in the late 1950s Vista Las Palmas, a tract of Mid-century Modern houses developed by the Alexander Construction Company immediately west of Old Las Palmas (Las Palmas Estates), began to attract celebrity residents. Other Palm Springs neighborhoods with celebrity residents included Deep Well Ranch Estates, the secluded Mesa neighborhood, Little Tuscany, and Smoke Tree Ranch. Walt Disney owned two homes at Smoke Tree Ranch (1800 South Sunrise Way), purchasing the first in 1948 and building the second in 1957. The ranch's multi-purpose room is named in his honor.⁷⁷⁷ Among the most renowned celebrity homes in Palm Springs is Twin Palms (originally 1148 E. Alejo Road; now 1145 E. Via Colusa; HSPB-77), the estate of singer and actor Frank Sinatra.

⁷⁷⁷ Johns, 250-251.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY (1945-1969): ELIGIBILITY

Property Types: Single-family Residence, Multi-family Residence, Commercial Building, Film Location, Historic District

Starting in the early 20th century, Palm Springs was a get-away for members of the entertainment industry; this was a trend that continued after the war. Properties significant under this theme include residents and commercial establishments with specific associations with the entertainment community.

Applicable Eligibility Criteria

A property or district may be eligible for historic designation under one or more of the following criteria:

CRITERIA	REASON
A/1/1,3 (Pattern of Development/Event/Period) ⁷⁷⁸	Commercial properties may be eligible under this theme for representing a known association with the Hollywood social scene. Film locations may be eligible as the site of an iconic motion picture or television production (Criterion A/1/1).
B/2/2 (Person)	<p>For its association with an important person(s) in the entertainment industry. Properties eligible under this criterion are typically those associated with a person’s productive life, reflecting the time period when he or she achieved significance. Properties associated with living persons are usually not eligible for landmark designation. Sufficient time must have elapsed to assess both the person’s field of endeavor and his or her contribution to that field. Note that many residences in Palm Springs significant for an association with a person in the entertainment industry are likely second homes.</p> <p>Eligibility under Criterion B for listing in the National Register of Historic Places requires that:</p> <p>“Each property associated with an important individual should be compared to other associated properties to identify those that best represent the person’s historic contributions. The best representatives usually are properties associated with the person's adult or productive life. Properties associated with an individual's formative or later years may also qualify if it can be demonstrated</p>

⁷⁷⁸ Note that eligibility criteria are listed in the standard format National Register/California Register/Local. Note that National Register/California Register Criterion A/1 can be applied to a single event important in history, or to an overall trend or pattern of development. The City of Palm Springs local ordinance distinguishes these into separate criteria – Criterion 1 applies to properties that are associated with a singular event; Criterion 3 applies to properties that “reflect or exemplify a particular period” in history.

CRITERIA	REASON
	<p>that the person's activities during this period were historically significant or if no properties from the person's productive years survives. Length of association is an important factor when assessing several properties with similar associations. A community or State may contain several properties eligible for associations with the same important person, if each represents a different aspect of the person's productive life."⁷⁷⁹</p> <p>Note that many of these properties may not be visible from the public right-of-way. For survey purposes, these properties have been flagged and assigned a status code indicating that additional evaluation is needed due to lack of visibility.</p>
A/1/6 (District)	A collection of residences associated with members of the entertainment industry that are linked geographically may be eligible as a historic district. Residences eligible under this theme will likely contribute to historic districts that are significant under other contexts and themes; an association with members of the entertainment industry represents one layer of an area's history.

Integrity Considerations

Each type of property depends on certain aspects of integrity to express its historic significance. Determining which of the aspects is most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of the property's significance and its essential physical features. The rarity of the property type should also be considered when assessing its physical integrity. In order to be eligible for listing at the federal, state, or local levels, a property must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance under this theme.

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
A/1/1,3 (Pattern of Development/Event/Period)	A property under this theme eligible under Criteria A/1/1,3 should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association.

⁷⁷⁹ *National Register Bulletin 15*, Section VI: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation."

CRITERIA	REQUIRED ASPECTS OF HISTORIC INTEGRITY
B/2/2 (Person)	A residential property significant under Criterion B/2/2 (Person) should retain integrity of location, design, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to convey the historic association with a significant person.
A/1/6 (District)	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority of the components that add to the district's historic character must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. A contributing property must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. Eligible historic districts may span several periods of development.

The Influence of the Entertainment Industry (1945-1969): Registration Requirements

To be eligible under this theme, a property must:

- date from the period of significance; and
- represent a known association with an important person or persons in the entertainment industry; for commercial properties, represent a known association with the Hollywood social scene in Palm Springs; a film location must represent an iconic location; and
- display most of the character-defining features of the property type or style; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

To be eligible under this theme, a historic district must:

- retain a majority of the contributors dating from the period of significance; and
- retain a majority of the contributors with a known association with members of the entertainment industry; and
- retain the essential aspects of historic integrity.

