

McGREW / ARCHITECTURE

May 5, 2009

Ms. Sidney Williams, Chair
PALM SPRINGS HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD
3200 Tahquitz Canyon Drive,
Palm Springs, California 92262

Dear Ms. Williams,

At the last meeting of the HSPB a question arose as to the number of Palm Springs buildings currently listed on the National and/or California Registries. Sadly, the answer is none¹. The California Office of Historic Preservation Website provides a list of California Historical Resources that includes all National Register properties² and State Landmarks, California Register properties² and State Points of Interest. While there are many towns in Riverside County such as Banning, Blythe, Riverside and others have arguably fewer historic properties than Palm Springs, these towns have been very active in securing National and California Register listings as an additional means of protecting their historic resources. Should Palm Springs adopt the National Register-based nomination form utilized in "The Center" nomination that was recently submitted for your May 12 Meeting, a National Register nomination could be prepared simply by applying the information from the Palm Springs form to the National Register form, and National Register Nominations could proceed almost simultaneously.

The nomination for "The Center" utilizes an expanded nominating form prepared by my office. The form is based upon the National Register's Bulletin #15 entitled "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" (of historic structures) and National Register Bulletin 16A entitled "How to Complete the National Register Registration Form". Many municipalities routinely adopt these bulletins as an aid to understanding the process of preparing nominations that can be helpful for both the public and for HSPB members. The adoption of these bulletins as an operating policy by the Board could be effectuated without

¹ Both the Andreas and Tahquitz Canyons are listed on the National Register; the Desert Inn (site) and El Mirador Hotel and Tower are listed as California Points of Interest.

² Properties listed on the National Register are automatically listed on the California Register.

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the necessity of a change in the Municipal Code.

Similarly, the HSPB currently has no guidelines for reviewing changes to Class 1 properties under the Certificates of Application³ process. This problem can be remedied by the adoption of the "Secretary of the Interiors Standards for the Treatment for, Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings". Generally, under California law (CEQA), projects that comply with "the Secretary's Standards" have no negative impacts and are therefore exempt from environmental review. In other words, compliance with "the Secretary's Standards" is the test many municipalities use for determining the appropriateness of proposed changes to historic structures. As is the case with Bulletins #15 and 16A, the use of the "Secretary's Standards" could be adopted by the HSPB as an operating policy without the necessity of a change in the Municipal Code.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Sincerely,

Patrick McGrew

PM:bc

Enclosures (via e-mail): Proposed Revised Nominating Form,
Bulletins 15, 16A,
Secretary's Standards

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Generally, this process is referred to as "The Certificate of Appropriateness" application.

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