



HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD STAFF REPORT

DATE: September 1, 2020

NEW BUSINESS

SUBJECT: THE ALUMINAIRE HOUSE FOUNDATION ON BEHALF OF THE PALM SPRINGS ART MUSEUM REQUESTING APPROVAL FOR ALTERATIONS TO THE PALM SPRINGS ART MUSEUM LOCATED AT 101 MUSEUM DRIVE (CASE HSPB #35 / 3.330 MAA). (KL)

FROM: Department of Planning Services

SUMMARY:

The Aluminaire House Foundation (“the Foundation”) has secured a location in the south parking lot of the Palm Springs Art Museum (“PSAM”) for relocation and re-construction of the Aluminaire House. PSAM is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness to modify the museum site to accommodate the permanent installation of the structure.

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant the certificate of appropriateness.

BACKGROUND:

The Palm Springs Art Museum was founded in 1938. The museum moved several times before building its first permanent structure in 1958 at the southwest corner of Tahquitz Canyon Way and Indian Canyon Drive. In 1974 architect E. Stewart Williams was commissioned to design the current building for the museum which was completed in 1976. Later the Doris and Walter Marks Administration Building was constructed and in 1996 the Steve Chase wing and education center were completed.¹ The museum received Class 1 designation from the City Council on December 2, 1998.

¹ Excerpted from the Palm Springs Art Museum’s website, psmuseum.org.

BELOW: AERIAL PHOTO OF THE EXISTING MUSEUM.



BELOW: VIEW LOOKING NORTHWEST OF THE SOUTH PARKING LOT AT THE MUSEUM.



Character-defining features of the Palm Springs Art Museum.

The City Council resolution (#19410) did not delineate the character-defining features of the PSAM. Staff has identified the following as character-defining features of the site for the Board's consideration:

1. The building's symmetrical east facade.
2. The flat unadorned lava rock veneer exterior walls.

3. The vertically-grooved poured-in-place concrete walls, guard rails and fascia.
4. The corner windows.
5. The sunken sculpture garden.
6. The expansive cantilevered volumes of the upper floors over the sculpture garden.
7. The concrete “waffle-slab” roof structure.
8. The double set of entry stairs.
9. The low level sidewalk light fixtures cast into the sculpture garden walls.
10. The “gum drop” exterior aluminum lighting fixtures in the parking lots.
11. The Marks Administrative Building.

Non-character-defining features:

1. The parking lots.
2. The landscaping.
3. The exterior sculpture (both in the subterranean sculpture garden and at the building’s front entry).
4. The exhibit signage along the sidewalk fronting the museum.
5. The poured-in-place concrete screen wall along the south side of the southern parking lot.

<i>Related Relevant City Actions by Planning, Fire, Building, etc...</i>	
1976	Building constructed.
12/2/98	City Council designated the Desert Museum (now the Palm Springs Art Museum) as a Class 1 Historic Site.
6/4/99	Ticket booth for Annenberg Theater added.
1/8/13	The HSPB approved a request by the PSAM for removal of an entry way fountain for installation of a large outdoor sculpture and revised building signage.
7/10/18	The HSPB voted 5-1-1 to reject an application by the PSAM for a large internally illuminated sign proposed across the upper fascia of the building.

<i>Neighborhood Meeting/Notification</i>	
8-27-20	Electronic notice sent to neighborhood organizations within a mile of the subject property.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The proposed alteration to the Palm Springs Art Museum encompasses the placement of the 1931 A. Lawrence Kocher and Albert Frey-designed Aluminaire House at the Palm Springs Art Museum’s south parking lot. It is conceived as a multi-phased project. The first phase is the actual placement of the building on the site and subsequent phases will be the re-development of the existing surface parking lot as a landscaped sculpture garden. The sculpture garden and site re-design will be submitted to the HSPB as a Certificate of Appropriateness application at a later date.

ANALYSIS

Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 8.05.110 (“Alteration of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources – Certificate of Appropriateness”), in considering a Certificate of Appropriateness request, the HSPB shall evaluate the application and make findings for conformance with the following criteria:

1. That the proposed alteration does not significantly impact or materially impair the character-defining features of the historic resource as listed in the resolution for historic designation, or, where a character-defining feature may be impacted, the proposed alteration minimizes that impact as much as possible;

The proposed placement of the Aluminaire House in the area currently developed as a parking lot for the museum will not negatively impact or materially impair the character-defining features of the PSAM. The house will be placed a considerable distance from the existing museum building such that the two structures can exist harmoniously on the site and not encroach upon one another visually. This finding can be affirmatively met.

2. That the proposed alteration will assist in restoring the historic resource to its original appearance where applicable, or will substantially aid its preservation or enhancement as a historic resource;

The placement of the Aluminaire House in the south parking lot adjacent to the Palm Springs Art Museum will contribute to, and strengthen the PSAM’s architectural collection and expand the programming opportunities of the museum. As such it will enhance the museum as a historic site.

3. That any additions to the historic resource are consistent with the massing, proportions, materials, and finishes of the existing historic resource, and: (i) can be distinguished from the existing historic resource as may be appropriate; or (ii) are indistinguishable from the historic resource as may be appropriate, and where such alterations are clearly documented in the City’s archival file for the historic resource as being non-original to the historic resource;

Placement of the Aluminaire House adjacent to the Palm Springs Art Museum will be in contrast to the massing, proportions, materials and finishes of the existing museum building. The purpose of the placement of the house is to exhibit the house as a special part of the museum’s art and architecture collection. It will be placed well away from the museum building so as not to encroach or diminish the architectural presence of the historic museum building. Open space around the house will allow the house to be experienced from all sides while also preserving the views of the museum itself. This finding can be affirmatively met.

4. That, in cases where Federal funds are to be utilized in financing the proposed alterations, the alterations are consistent with the Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties, as put forth by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior.

No federal funds are involved in the proposed project.

CONCLUSION:

The proposed project will provide a permanent home for the Aluminaire House. The proposed siting of the Aluminaire House in the location of the museum's current south parking lot will provide adequate space for viewing the house. It is proposed at a distance so as not to compete or obscure the view of the existing historic museum building.

Staff recommends approval of a certificate of appropriateness for the proposed project.



Ken Lyon, RA
Associate Planner
Historic Preservation Officer

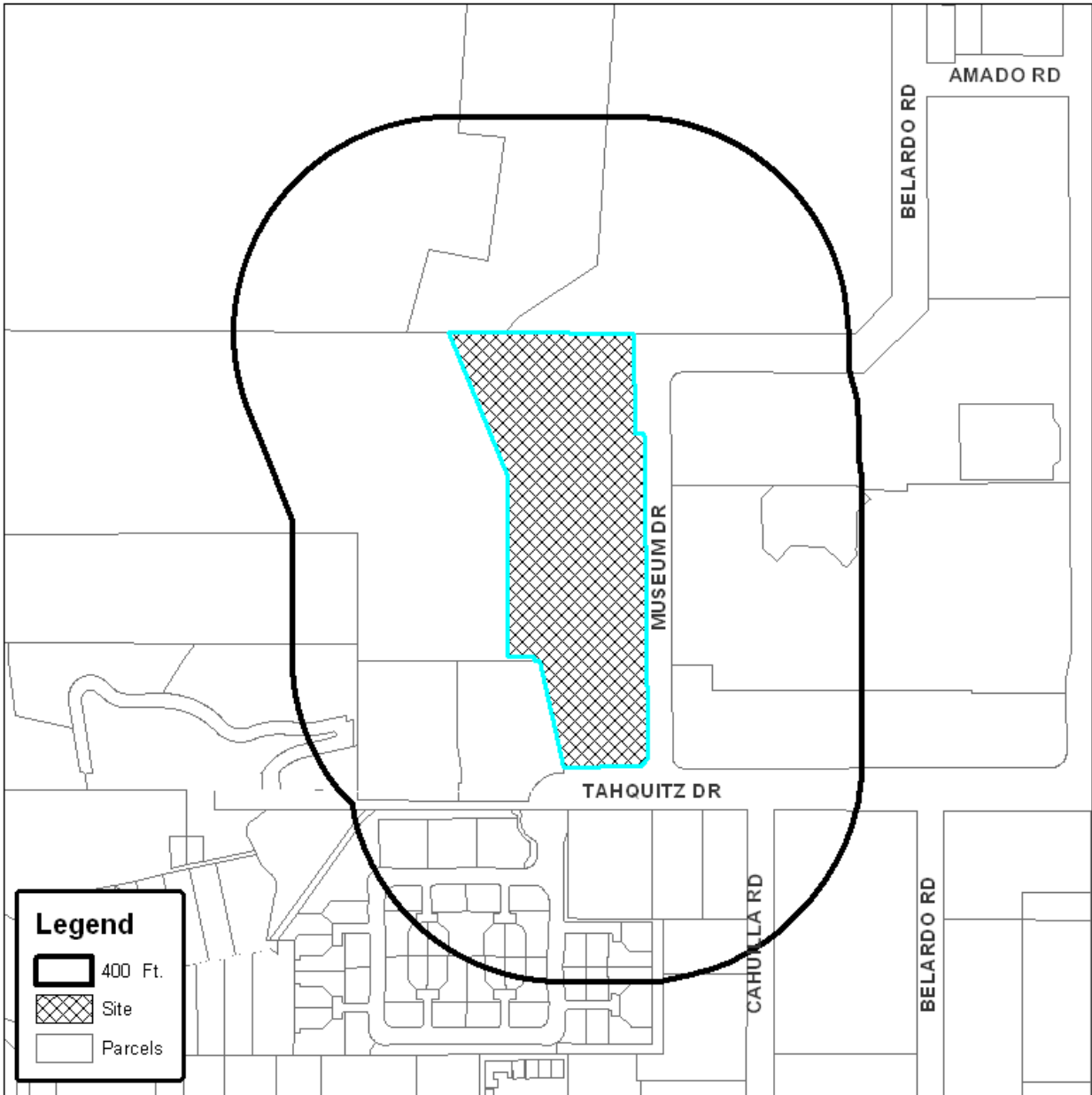
Flinn Fagg, AICP
Director of Planning Services

ATTACHMENTS:

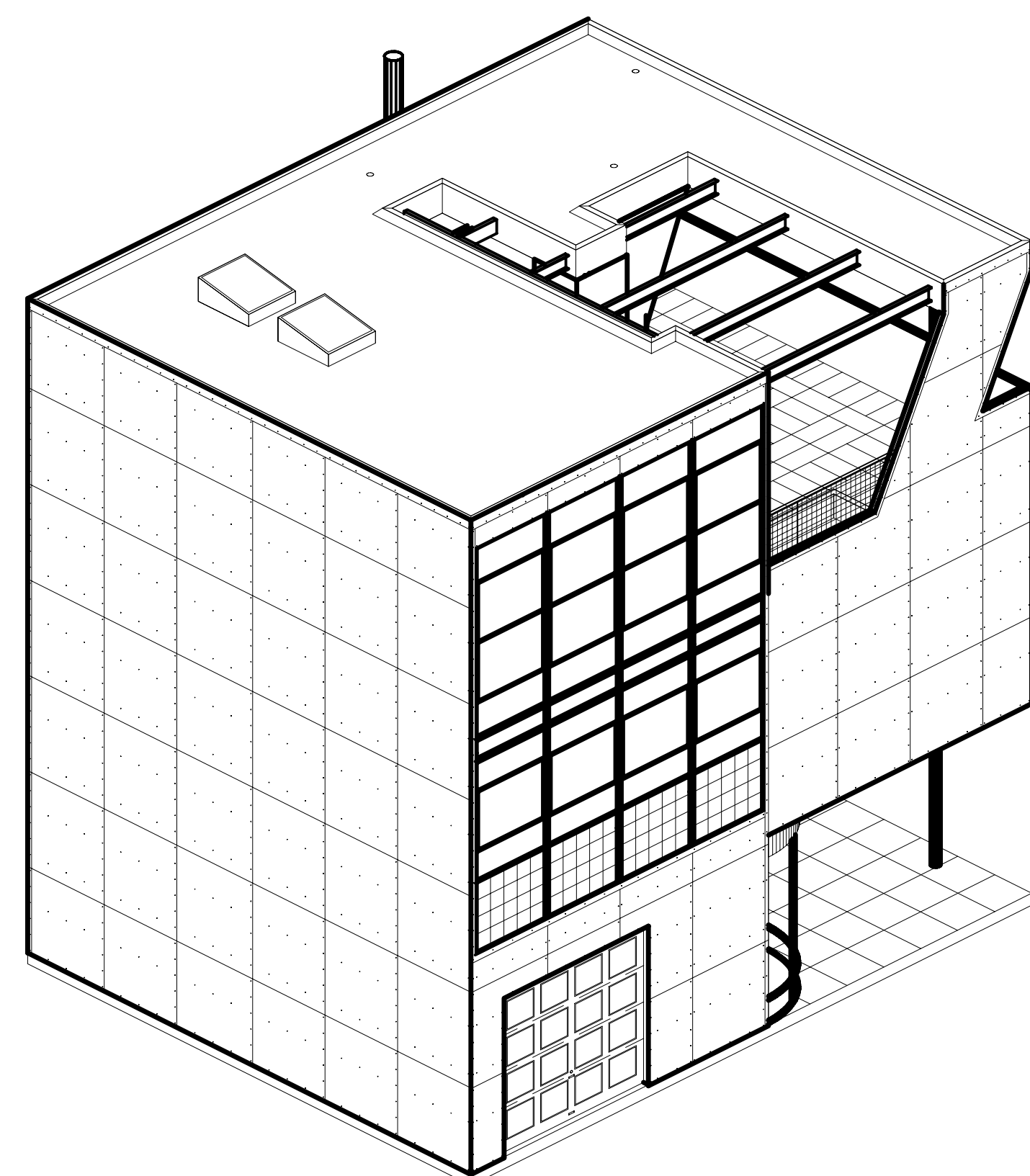
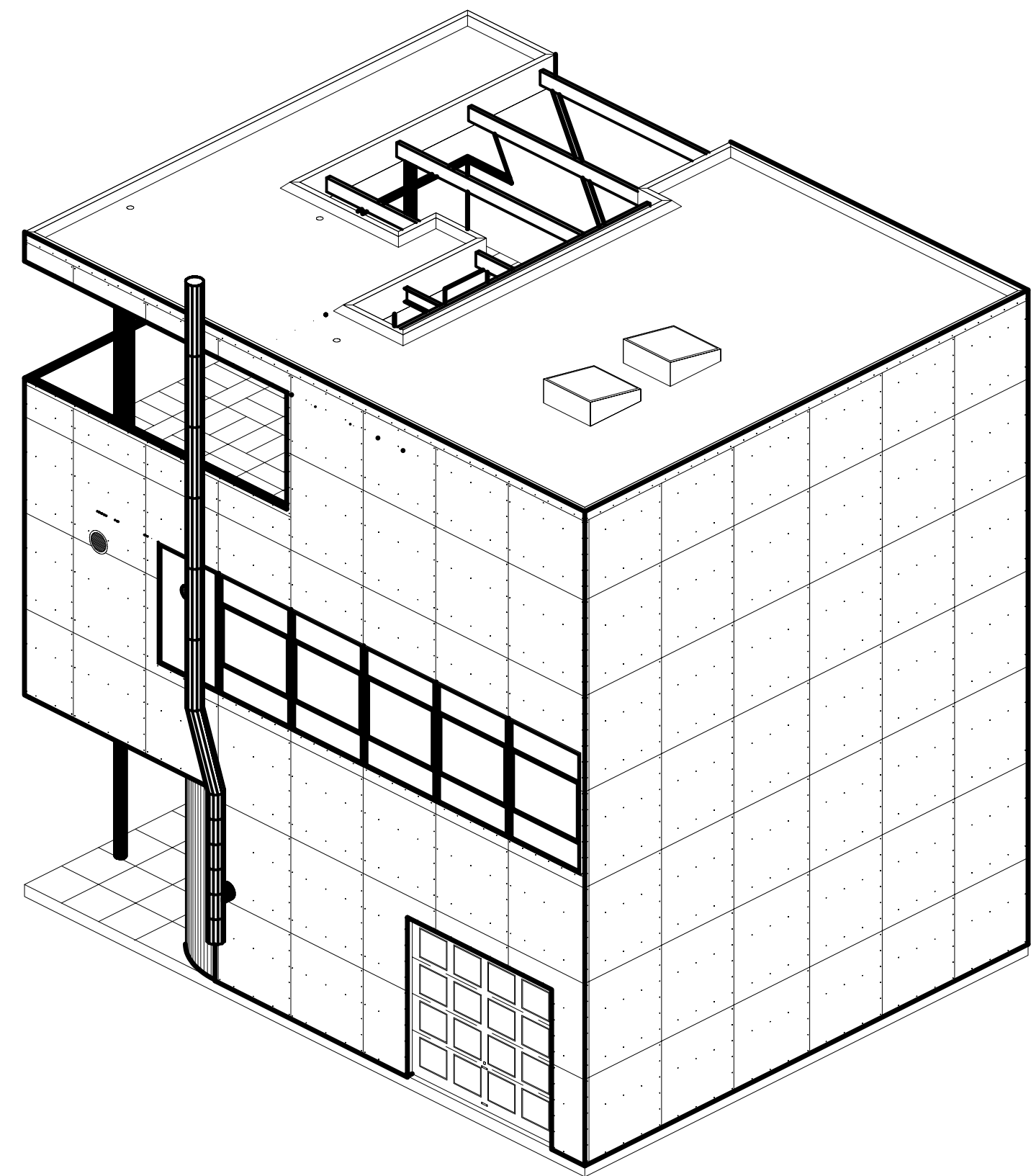
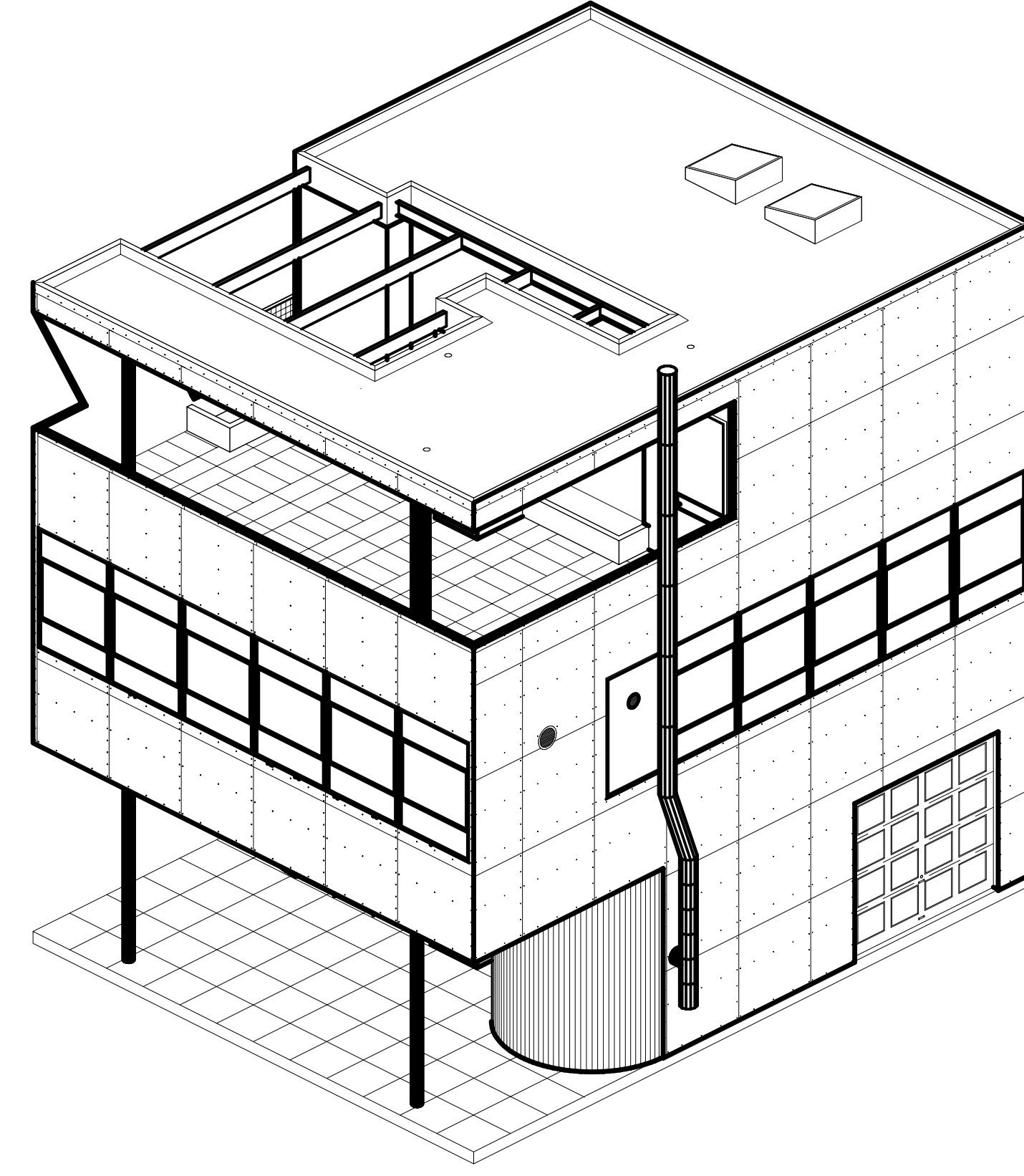
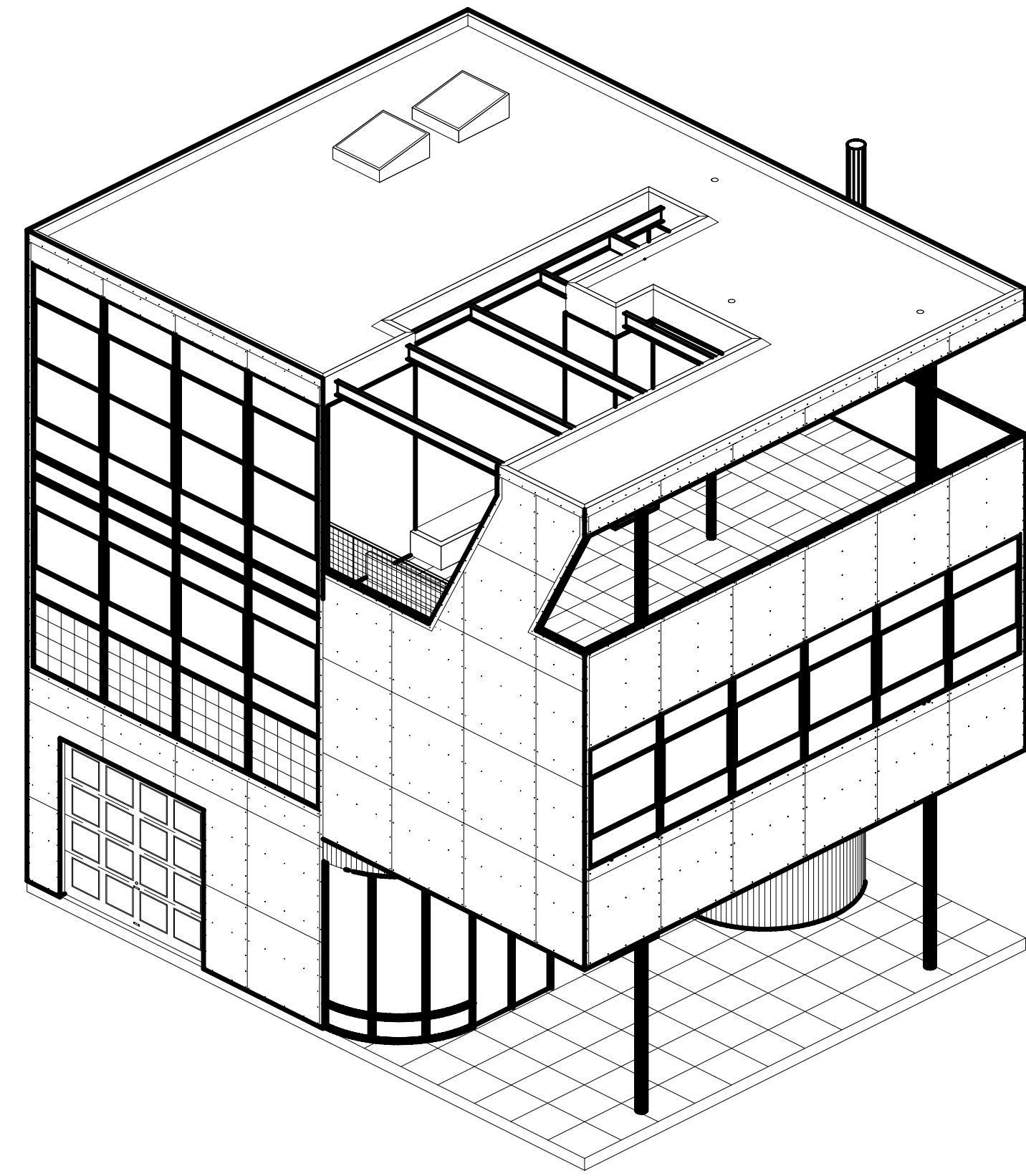
1. Vicinity Map
2. Site Plan and related application materials.



Department of Planning Services Vicinity Map

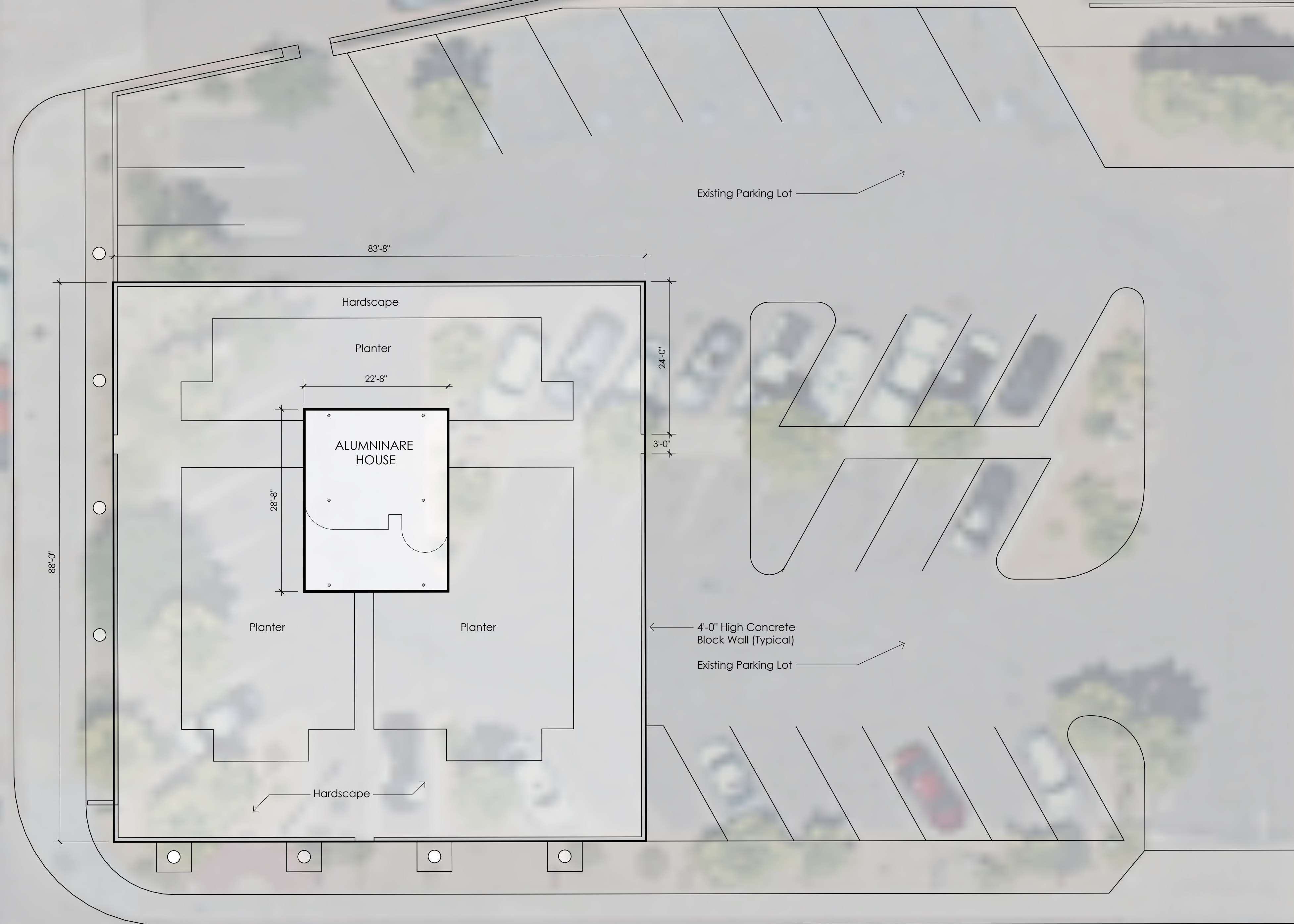


CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
Case HSPB #35 / 3.330 MAA



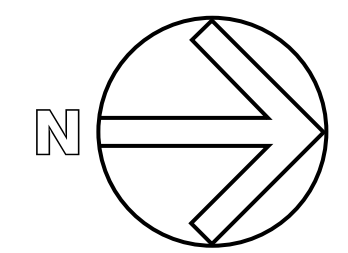
ALUMINAIRE HOUSE

WEST TAHQUITZ CANYON WAY



NORTH MUSEUM DRIVE

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Aluminaire House Exhibit at the Palm Springs Museum

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8/20/2020 N.T.S.