



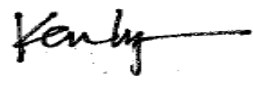
# CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING SERVICES

### MEMORANDUM

**Date:** September 6, 2022

**To:** HSPB

**From:** Ken Lyon, RA, Principal Planner, Historic Preservation Office 

**Subject:** **AN APPLICATION BY THE VILLA ROMA HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATION, FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT DESIGNATION OF “THE VILLA ROMA GARDEN HOMES” LOCATED AT 2500 SOUTH SIERRA MADRE, (MASTER APN #512-120-070), CASE HSPB #140 (KL).**

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#### SUMMARY:

At the June 7, 2022 meeting of the HSPB, a public hearing was conducted to consider Case 140; an application for historic district designation of the Villa Roma Garden Homes. At that meeting staff advised that the criteria findings necessary to recommend historic district designation could not be made.

The Board disagreed and passed a motion (4-0-3, Rosenow, Rose and Kiser absent) recommending that the City Council designate Villa Roma Garden Homes as a historic district based on findings that it met criterion “c” (“Example of a Period”) and “f” (“Represents a significant entity whose components lack distinction”)¹. The Board directed members Hansen and Nelson to work with staff to develop a draft resolution reflecting the Board’s action and findings for adoption at the July HSPB meeting.

At the July 6, 2022 meeting the board considered and rejected a second draft resolution prepared by staff. Attached is a third draft resolution for the Board’s consideration and approval prepared by Member Hansen.

**Recommendation:** Adopt the Resolution 140: “A RESOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, FINDING THAT THE VILLA ROMA GARDEN HOMES LOCATED AT 2500 SOUTH SIERRA MADRE DRIVE, (MASTER APN #512-120-070) QUALIFIES AS A HISTORIC DISTRICT AND

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¹ The staff report erroneously enumerated the Criteria as “i, ii, iii, etc.”. The correct enumeration in the ordinance is “a, b, c, etc.” and the draft resolution uses the correct formatting.

RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL DESIGNATE “THE VILLA ROMA GARDEN HOMES” AS HISTORIC DISTRICT HSPB #140 / HD-10 SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS.”

DISCUSSION:

Palm Springs Municipal Code (“PSMC”) 8.05.090 (Procedures and Criteria for Designation of Historic Districts) states in section (B,5) that the HSPB resolution shall reflect the boards action, its findings relative to the criteria for designation, a list of contributing and non-contributing resources within the proposed district and any applicable conditions imposed.

The board did not identify the contributing and non-contributing resources in its action of June 6, 2022. The attached draft resolution includes a proposed list of contributing and character-defining features for the Board’s consideration.

CONCLUSION:

The attached draft resolution recommends that the City Council designate Villa Roma as a historic district based on Criterion “c” and “f”. The Board’s condition of approval for improvement in the Design Guidelines is included as is a proposed listing of contributing resources and a list of character-defining features.

Attachment:

- Vicinity Map
- Draft Resolution.

RESOLUTION NO. 140

A RESOLUTION OF THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, FINDING THAT THE VILLA ROMA GARDEN HOMES LOCATED AT 2500 SOUTH SIERRA MADRE DRIVE, (MASTER APN #512-120-070) QUALIFIES AS A HISTORIC DISTRICT AND RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL DESIGNATE “THE VILLA ROMA GARDEN HOMES” AS HISTORIC DISTRICT HSPB #140 / HD-10 SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS.

THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD FINDS AND DETERMINES AS FOLLOWS:

- A WHEREAS, Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code allows for the designation of historic sites and districts; and
- B WHEREAS, on August 19, 2021, an application for historic district designation was submitted to the City by a group of property owners within the proposed Villa Roma Garden Homes Historic District. The application included a report (“the report”) dated August, 2021 that evaluated the area for eligibility relative to the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance; and
- C WHEREAS, on October 2, 2021, December 4, 2021, and February 5, 2022 the City’s Historic Preservation Officer (“HPO”) attended video-conference meetings with property owners within the proposed historic district as required by the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance; and
- D WHEREAS, in May 2022, members of the Historic Site Preservation Board (HSPB) and City staff conducted site inspections of the proposed historic district; and
- E WHEREAS, on June 7, 2022, a noticed public hearing of the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board to consider Case HSPB #140 was held in accordance with applicable law; and
- F WHEREAS, at the said hearing, the HSPB carefully reviewed and considered all the evidence presented in connection with the hearing on the project, including, but not limited to, the staff report and all written and oral testimony.

THE HISTORIC SITE PRESERVATION BOARD OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS RESOLVES:

SECTION 1: FINDINGS RELATIVE TO THE CRITERIA FOR THE DESIGNATION OF HISTORIC DISTRICTS.

*Evaluation of the Application.* Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 8.05.090 (B,5), the HSPB shall evaluate the application and make findings in conformance with the following criteria:

*Criteria and Findings for Designation of Historic Districts. The proposed district and contributing resources located therein exhibit exceptional historic significance and meet one or more of the criteria listed below:*

The Board found that the Villa Roma Garden Homes Historic District, as a whole, exhibits exceptional historic significance because it is reflective of the post-World War II shift in residential development patterns from single family houses to include multi-family housing and to embrace new and innovative form of multi-family property types. The Board also found that the historic district exemplifies the postwar garden apartment community type that today contributes to Palm Springs' Mid-century Modern residential landscape. These findings are further discussed under the criteria below.

*(Criterion "a") The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community;*

The proposed area does not qualify as a historic district under Criterion "a".

*(Criterion "b") The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history;*

The proposed area does not qualify as a historic district under Criterion "b".

*(Criterion "c") The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history;*

The Board found that Villa Roma Garden Homes qualifies as a historic district based on Criterion "c". In making its finding, the Board determined that the historic district is significant within the theme, "Post-World War II Multi-Family Residential Development" in Palm Springs, as discussed in the citywide historic context statement. Villa Roma Garden Homes exemplifies new trends and patterns of multi-family development from the postwar period when prosperity brought a new group of upper middle and middle-class tourists, residents, and second-home owners to the city. This gradual democratization of Palm Springs would irrevocably change the city during the 1950's and 60's through the use of innovative and creative forms of multi-family residential development and ownership options.

The Board further found that Villa Roma Garden Homes exemplifies the multi-family garden apartment community property type of the 1960s, and now regarded as ubiquitous to Palm Springs' residential landscape. The type employed a Modern design aesthetic and sometimes incorporated historic architectural styles such as the Roman elements applied to Villa Roma Garden Homes. The garden apartment type of the 1960s features low-slung buildings and a site plan that incorporates separation of pedestrian and

vehicular traffic, no or few through streets, landscaped areas, and amenities such as pools, clubhouses, and gathering spaces deliberately designed to foster a unique sense of community and social interaction.

*(Criterion “d”) The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction;*

The proposed area does not qualify as a historic district under Criterion “d”.

*(Criterion “e”) The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age, or that possesses high artistic value;*

The proposed area does not qualify as a historic district under Criterion “e”.

*(Criterion “f”) The resource represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, as used in evaluating applications for designation of historic districts, for parcels on which more than one entity exists; or*

The Board found that Villa Roma Garden Homes qualifies as a historic district based on Criterion “f”. In making this finding, the Board noted that the historic district derives significance from being a unified entity comprised of a variety of contributing features and because it characterizes Midcentury Modern garden apartment communities of the post-War era in Palm Springs. The identity of the district results from the interrelationship of its contributing features that convey a visual sense of the overall historic environment and period of development.

Thus, the Board found that the development as a whole entity is significant, although the individual components lack distinction (i.e., exceptional historic significance”).

*(Criterion “g”) The resource has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to national, state or local history or prehistory.*

The proposed area does not qualify as a historic district under Criterion “g”.

## SECTION 2 – LIST OF CONTRIBUTING AND NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES WITHIN THE PROPOSED HISTORIC DISTRICT.

The contributing features of the Villa Roma Garden Homes Historic District are:

- Its site plan.
- Nineteen (19) residential building composed of 2, 3, and 4 dwelling units per building.
- Midcentury modern design emphasizing horizontal massing, flat rooflines,

- overhanging eaves, minimal exterior detailing, and construction materials including concrete block (split face, slumpstone, and screen block), aluminum, and glass
- Original Roman-themed architectural elements, most notably a “Temple of Venus,” ringed by ionic columns and surmounted by a circular roof pierced by a large oculus and fronted by a semi-circular reflecting pool with foundation (excluding the 2013 replacement of the Venus statue.)
  - Temple “ruins” with ionic columns located at the northeast and southwest portion of the Temple of Venus lawn area.
  - Carports.
  - Swimming pool and spa.
  - Clubhouse including the colonnade and the folded-plate portico on the west side facing the swimming pool.
  - Original statuary, benches, and planters
  - Original monument sign (not including the plastic signage)

The non-contributing features of the Villa Roma Garden Homes Historic District are:

- Additions to back patios on residential units.
- Solar panels and related concealment screens.
- Glass block windows.
- Steel security doors.
- Non-original entry light fixtures.
- Ground mounted pool equipment and equipment enclosure.
- Pool fencing.
- Desert landscaping.

### SECTION 3: CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES.

The character-defining feature of the Villa Roma Historic District are the combination of the following:

- Low-slung single-story buildings.
- Repetitive building design.
- Various “roman-inspired” precast objects (statues, benches, planters) that create a whimsical thematic quality to the district.
- Primary dwelling entrances facing small common-use courtyards rather than the street.
- Carports and parking areas accessed from the perimeter public streets, placed between clusters of units, and separate from pedestrian courtyards and outdoor passageways.
- Limited private outdoor space for each dwelling, mostly in the form of small patios.
- Large open common use spaces – (1) a corner open lawn area and (2) a centralized common-use swimming pool, terrace, and community building.

### SECTION 3: ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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

### SECTION 4: CONDITIONS THAT APPLY TO HISTORIC DISTRICTS.

According to Section 8.05 of the Municipal Code, the following General Conditions shall apply to Historic Districts:

1. It shall meet the definition of a historic district as outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.020.
2. An archival file on the properties in the district shall be maintained by the City.
3. It may be qualified as 'historic' at the federal, state, and/or county level.
4. The structures or resources in the district may not be modified nor objects removed without following the procedures outlined in Municipal Code Section 8.05.120 "Demolition, Alteration or New Construction within a Historic District – Certificate of Appropriateness".
5. A marker explaining the historic nature of the site may be installed at the site in a location viewable from the public way.
6. Compliance with all rules and regulations for Historic Sites and Historic Districts under Chapter 8.05 of the Municipal Code shall be required.
7. The site shall not be further subdivided.
8. The City Clerk shall submit the Council Resolution to the County recorder for recordation within 90 days of the effective date of the Council's resolution.

The following Specific Conditions of Approval shall apply to the Villa Roma Historic District:

1. Design Guidelines. The property owners in the proposed historic district shall develop a set of design guidelines as outlined in Section 8.05 for review and approval by the City's HPO prior to the City Council public hearing to consider the HSPB's recommendation.
2. Review of future Certificates of Appropriateness ("C of A"). Alterations to buildings, structure, objects, and other character-defining and contributing resources within the historic district and described in Sections 2 and 3 are to be evaluated pursuant to PSMC Section 8.05.120 (E), including consistency with the Design Guidelines.

Based upon the foregoing, the HSPB hereby recommends that the City Council designate

The Villa Roma Garden Homes located at 2500 South Sierra Madre Drive, as Historic District HSPB #140 / HD-10.

ADOPTED THIS SEVENTH DAY OF JUNE 2022.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

ATTEST:

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

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David Newell, AICP  
Assistant Planning Director