



CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: MARCH 7, 2012

CONSENT CALENDAR

SUBJECT: CASE HSPB #33: INITIATION OF AMENDMENT TO THE CLASS 1 HISTORIC DESIGNATIONS FOR FOUR HISTORIC SITES ASSOCIATED WITH ALBERT FREY: THE FREY HOUSE II (686 PALISADES DR.) THE VALLEY STATION OF THE PALM SPRINGS AERIAL TRAMWAY (WESTERLY TERMINUS OF TRAM WAY) THE LOEWY HOUSE (600 PANORAMA ROAD) AND THE CAREY-PIROZZI HOUSE (651 W. VIA ESCUELA), CLASS 1 HISTORIC SITES

FROM: David H. Ready, City Manager

BY: The Planning Department

SUMMARY

On February 15, 2012, the City Council, after conducting a public hearing on the historic designation of Palm Springs City Hall, directed staff to return with information on the other four properties included in Council Resolution 18907. (Resolution 18907 was adopted in 1996 to designate as historic / Class 1 five properties associated with architect Albert Frey.) Staff has prepared a brief description of each property for Council review and direction.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Initiate by motion amendments to the historic designations for the Frey House II (686 Palisades Dr.) the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway (westerly terminus of Tram Way) the Loewy House (600 Panorama Road) and the Carey-Pirozzi House (651 W. Via Escuela) and direct the HSPB to conduct a public hearing to consider appropriate recommendations.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

In 1996, five properties designed by Albert Frey were designated historic Class 1. The Council's resolution (No. 18907) designating these sites does not specifically state what portions of the properties are designated historic, except that exterior alterations must be approved by the HSPB or City Council and must maintain the architectural integrity of the buildings. In response to staff's conclusion that only the buildings are subject to

the historic classification, the City Council on February 15, 2012 requested additional study to determine the appropriateness of a revised designation for these for properties. Since any amendment of a historic designation must be reviewed first by the Historic Site Preservation Board, staff is seeking Council action to initiate the process.

PRIOR ACTIONS

On October 2, 1996, the City Council conducted a public hearing and unanimously approved the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, the Palm Springs City Hall and the Carey-Pirozzi House as historic Class 1 sites.

ANALYSIS

On a separate agenda item, the Council is considering how to address the historic designation of the Palm Springs City Hall, so it will not be covered in this memo. The remaining four properties – Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House and the Carey-Pirozzi House – are briefly described from excerpts from Joseph Rosa's *Albert Frey, Architect* (published 1990). Should the City Council conclude that amendments are appropriate, the Council may initiate the amendments and direct them to the HSPB for public hearing and recommendation.

The Frey House II

"The Frey House II is located on a steep hill with natural rock outcroppings. A platform, which is parallel to the road, projects beyond the house and acts as a deck for the pool and as a roof for the carport below. The house, which is three steps higher than the deck, is on an east-west axis. The platform is placed in relationship to the natural contours of the mountain, and the teardrop shape of the pool is the result of the interaction of these two different orders. ...Although the house seems at first to have no relationship to the site, it is actually firmly rooted in the mountain and interacts literally with the landscape. The elevation of the floor changes with the natural grade, and a large boulder penetrates the plane of the glass wall anchoring the house to the site."

The Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway

"One of the best examples of Frey's work in which architecture and structure are thoroughly integrated is the *Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway* (1949-1963). ...To adapt to the awkward site chosen for the Valley Station, Frey designed the building to rest on two plateaus which span a shallow stream flowing down Chino Canyon. This status was thus conceived as a covered bridge, its walls are actually structural trusses spanning the two sides of the valley, and the windows reveal the structure of the trusses. The roof plane of the Valley stations is parallel to the slope of the land, which allows one to look up to the mountain and moving cable cars."

It should also be noted that the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway is operated by the Mount San Jacinto Winter Park Authority, a State-created agency. As a state agency, the tram and its facilities are not subject to local ordinance. Therefore, while the City may designate the Valley Station as historic, it does not have authority to require HSPB review of alterations or new construction.

The Loewy House

"...Frey designed a house in 1946 (600 Panorama Road, currently being restored) for the industrial designer Raymond Loewy in which the walls become planes that define the points of entry. The Loewy House consists of two long, narrow rectangles at right angles to each other which surround a pool that passes under one of the sides of the house. The only strong vertical element is the back of the fireplace, which denotes the entry, located at the intersection of the two rectangles. ...the roof projects into the desert to claim part of the landscape as private space."

The Carey-Pirozzi House

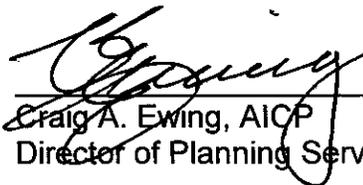
"In the *Carey House* (1956, 651 W. Via Escuela, 1983 Frey alteration), Frey gave the client the "average suburban house" that she had requested, yet still respected the unique natural formation of the land. This interaction between two seemingly dissimilar concerns created an unusual building. The house is built at various levels above the ground plane, which provides a carport below and exposes the rocks and boulders that cover most of the site. ...The exterior walls are sheathed with asbestos cement board fastened with exposed screws. The windows are steel sash casement and the window zone is differentiated from the wall zone by the use of colored asbestos cement board. ...The only visual connection between the house and the ground other than the angled steel columns is a large exterior stair."

NOTIFICATION

All owners of the subject properties have been notified of this item.

FISCAL IMPACT:

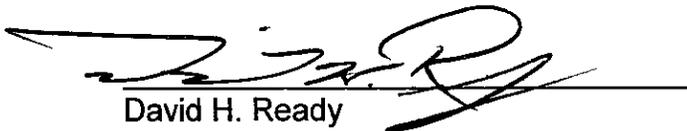
No fiscal impact.



Craig A. Ewing, AICP
Director of Planning Services



Thomas J. Wilson
Assistant City Manager, Dev't Svcs



David H. Ready
City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

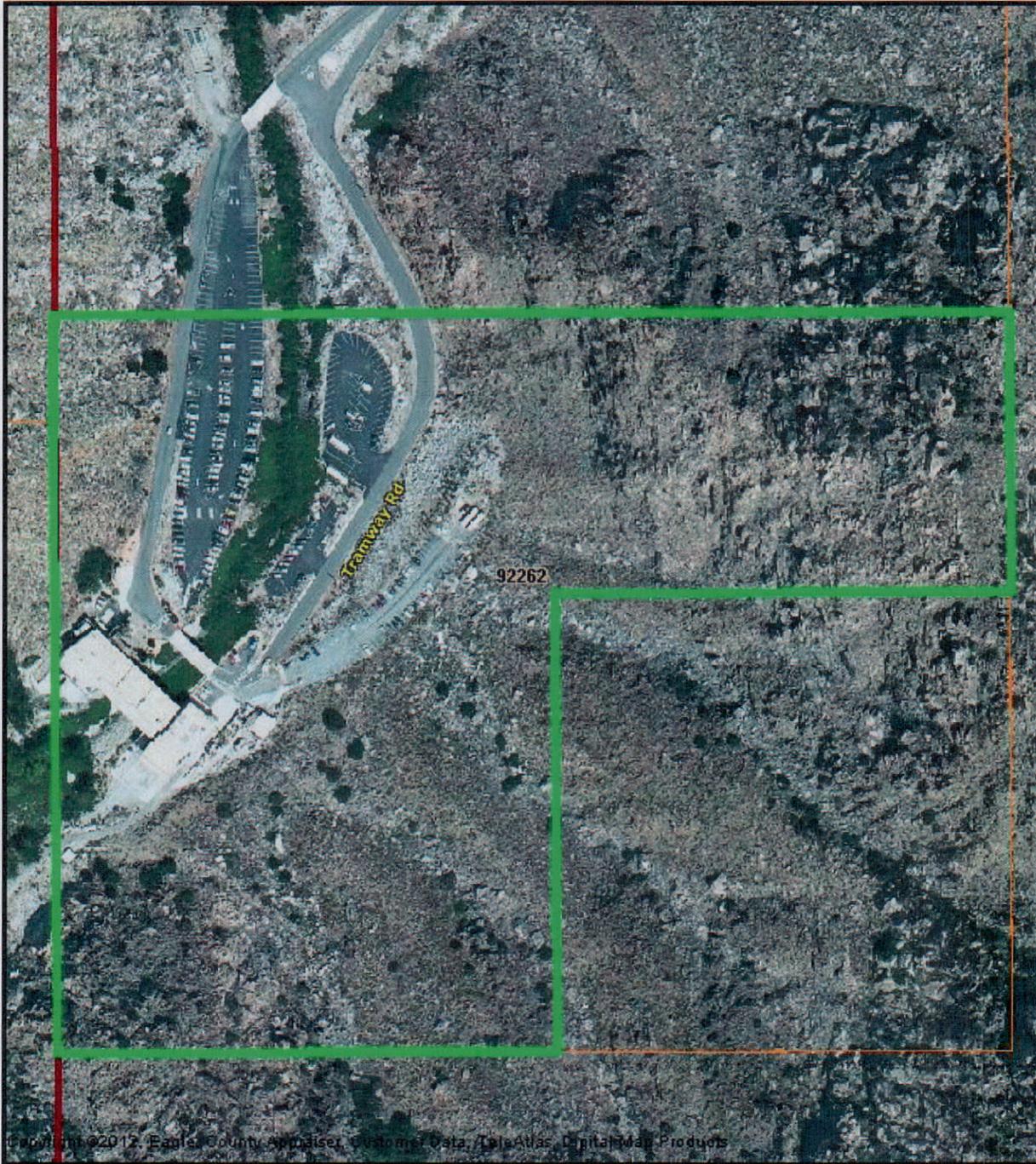
1. Vicinity Maps
2. City Council Resolution 18907

Frey House II, 686 Palisades Drive

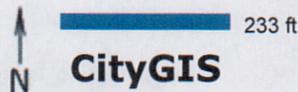


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Valley Station / Palm Springs Aerial Tram, Terminus of Tram Way



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The Loewy House, 600 Panorama Road



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Carey-Pirozzi House, 651 W. Via Escuela



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Recorded
10-8-96
38625

RESOLUTION NO. 18907

OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS,
CALIFORNIA, DESIGNATING THE FREY HOUSE II, THE
VALLEY STATION OF THE PALM SPRINGS AERIAL
TRAMWAY, THE LOEWY HOUSE, PALM SPRINGS CITY
HALL, AND THE CAREY-PIROZZI HOUSE AS CLASS 1
HISTORIC SITES.

* * * * *

WHEREAS the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey House have contributed substantially to the historic architectural diversity of the City of Palm Springs; and

WHEREAS the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey-Pirozzi House have long been landmarks of the City of Palm Springs for residents, architectural students and visitors; and

WHEREAS the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey-Pirozzi House together constitute a significant portion of a body of work designed by the architect Albert Frey, FAIA, along with various partners; and

WHEREAS the life and work of Albert Frey, FAIA, has been well-documented, and his work is recognized world-wide as significant toward the development of the International style and other modern movements of architecture, especially as he adapted such styles and movements to the local environment; and

WHEREAS the Palm Springs General Plan provides for the long-term preservation of significant architectural and historic buildings; and

WHEREAS Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code provides for the designation of sites with architectural and historic significance; and

WHEREAS on September 10, 1996, the Historic Site Preservation Board held a public hearing to recommend the designation of the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey-Pirozzi House as historic sites and unanimously recommends to the City Council designation of said properties as Class 1 Historic Sites; and

WHEREAS the City Council concurs in the recommendation of the Historic Site Preservation Board regarding the architectural and historic value of the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey-Pirozzi House; and

WHEREAS the designation of the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey-Pirozzi House shall further the purposes and intent of the General Plan and Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code; and

WHEREAS the designation of the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey-Pirozzi House shall promote the sensitive preservation and restoration of said sites.

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

- Section 1. The Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey House were constructed during the period 1946-1965 and have since contributed to the historic architectural diversity of the City of Palm Springs.
- Section 2. The Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey House are excellent examples of the Modern architectural movement in the City of Palm Springs as designed and adapted by the renowned architect Albert Frey, FALA.
- Section 3.
- a. The Frey House II, owned by Albert Frey ("Owner"), and located at 686 Palisades Dr., shall be designated as a Class 1 Historic Site pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. The site is located on Lot 10, and a portion of Lot 8, of Palm Springs Palisades, M/B 19/23, Riverside County, California; APN 513-110-020.
 - b. The Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, owned by Mount San Jacinto Winter Park ("Owner"), and located at the westerly terminus of Tram Way, shall be designated as a Class 1 Historic Site pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. The site is located on a portion of Sec. 7, T.4S., R.4.E., Riverside County, California; APN 505-020-012.
 - c. The Loewy House, owned by James Gaudineer ("Owner"), and located at 600 Panorama Rd., shall be designated as a Class 1 Historic Site pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. The site is located on a portion of the SW1/4 SE1/4 of Section 3, T.4S., R.4E., Riverside County, California; APN 504-292-014.
 - d. Palm Springs City Hall, owned by the City of Palm Springs ("Owner"), and located at 3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, shall be designated as a Class 1 Historic Site pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. The site is located on Lot 16 of Palm Valley Colony Lands, MB 14/652, San Diego County, California; APN 502-150-005.
 - e. The Carey-Pirozzi House, owned by Vincent & Karen Pirozzi ("Owners"), and located at 651 W. Via Escuela, shall be designated as a Class 1 Historic Site pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code. The site is located on Parcel 1, R/S 27/75, Riverside County, California; APN 504-193-002.
- Section 4. No permits for the exterior alteration to the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey-Pirozzi House shall be granted without the prior approval of the Historic Site Preservation Board and/or the City Council, pursuant to Chapter 8.05 of the Palm Springs Municipal Code; approved alterations shall maintain the historic architectural integrity of the building.
- Section 5. The Owners shall permit the City to demark the Frey House II, the Valley Station of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, the Loewy House, Palm Springs City Hall, and the Carey-Pirozzi House as historic sites with a plaque of the City's choosing.
- Section 6. This resolution, and the historic designation put in place by it, shall not affect title to the subject properties.

Section 7. The City Council hereby directs the City Clerk to submit this resolution to the county recorder for recordation within 90 days of the effective date of this resolution.

ADOPTED this 2nd day of October, 1996.

AYES: Members Barnes, Hodges, Oden, Spurgin and Mayor Kleindienst
NOES: None
ABSENT: None

ATTEST:

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

By [Signature]
City Clerk

[Signature]
City Manager

REVIEWED & APPROVED: [Signature]