City of Palm Desert
Historic Context Statement & Reconnaissance Survey Findings

Prepared for:

City of Palm Desert

Prepared by:

Architectural Resources Group

March 19, 2025

Cover image: Ca. 1965 aerial photograph, Shadow Mountain Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Overview and Scope

In June 2024, the City of Palm Desert retained Architectural Resources Group (ARG) to develop a citywide historic context statement and conduct the first phase of a citywide historic resources survey. By establishing a preliminary list of the City's potential historical resources, this document serves as a valuable information tool that can help to guide planning and land use decisions. While the City and the Historical Society of Palm Desert have developed several well-researched lists of known historic properties, Palm Desert has never had a comprehensive citywide survey. The scope of this project is to establish a citywide historic context statement, survey all properties in the city constructed through 1980 (up to 45 years of age by the time of this project's completion in 2025) and preliminarily identify those that appear potentially eligible for local, state, or federal listing.

This phase of the project involved community outreach, background research, development of a citywide historic context statement, and reconnaissance survey. Each task is addressed in more detail in Chapter 2, Methodology. The Palm Desert citywide historic context statement and reconnaissance survey findings are intended to serve as a basis for the identification, evaluation, and documentation of historic resources within Palm Desert's city limits. It is also intended to help inform future land use and planning decisions to ensure that the City's historic, architectural, and cultural resources are duly recognized and appropriately managed.

1.2 Description of the Survey Area

The City of Palm Desert is located in the Coachella Valley in Riverside County, approximately 75 miles southeast of the County's capital of Riverside. Palm Desert is bounded by the census-designated communities of Thousand Palms, Desert Palms, and Del Webb Sun City, as well as the Coachella Valley National Wildlife Refuge and the San Bernardino Mountains to the north (north of the Interstate 10 Freeway), the City of Rancho Mirage and the unincorporated community of Cahuilla Hills to the west/southwest, the Santa Rosa Mountains to the south, and the City of Indian Wells and census-designated community of Bermuda Dunes to the east/northeast.

Palm Desert is located between the San Bernardino Mountains on its north and the Santa Rosa Mountains on its south, with the latter range bounding the City's southern limits. It is situated across a variety of geographic and geologic conditions including a mid-valley alluvial plain and limited mountain foothills (comprising a portion of Cahuilla Hills), as well as the sandy desert valley floor. The extensive alluvial deposits formed by drainage from these mountains form the alluvial fans and plains upon which portions of the City have developed. The slopes of the mountain foothills, which span the majority of the southwestern portion of Palm Desert west of Highway 74 and south of Highway 111, with a small section of hills on the east side of Highway 74 at the city's southernmost border, are incised with east- and north-trending canyons, creeks, and gullies. This area of the city is developed with various private subdivisions and golf courses, as well as public parks with hiking trails, picnic facilities, and other amenities. The northwest-southeast spanning Whitewater Storm Channel bisects the city just north of major

thoroughfare Fred Waring Drive. Palm Desert has a vast array of mature street trees, both native (Ocotillo, Ironwood, and Acacia) and imported (Olive, Pepper, various species of Palms, and others).

Palm Desert is a majority residential community, with its built environment dominated by detached single-family houses, multi-family condominium complexes, and resort-style country club developments on a wide range of scales, constructed primarily between the late 1940s and 1970s. Most of the city's commercial development is concentrated along major automobile corridors, including Highways 111 and 74, El Paseo, Portola Avenue, and Fred Waring Drive. The downtown district along Highway 111 east of Highway 74 and west of Deep Canyon Road comprises the densest collection of commercial retailers, restaurants, office spaces, banks, etc. Very little of the city is zoned for industry/manufacturing. These areas are situated at the northernmost border of Palm Desert, abutting Interstate 10 and the Union Pacific Railroad lines on the city's north. In the central portion of the city, south of Hovley Lane and north of the Whitewater Storm Channel, exists another section zoned for industry/manufacturing. Several schools, such as College of the Desert and Palm Desert High School, occupy large parcels as well.

Generally speaking, Palm Desert's streets are wide and paved with asphalt; common planning features include concrete sidewalks and curbs, street lamps, and landscaping including street trees (and in medians on Highway 111, El Paseo, Portola Avenue and other major corridors). The city's irregular street grid pattern reflects its historic patterns of residential development, which were largely guided by the Palm Desert Corporation and various independent developers who subdivided large and small swaths of land over the course of the 20th century. Most of the grid is oriented to the cardinal directions with rectangular portions of land throughout the city subdivided for residential use. These areas typically include curvilinear street patterns and cul de sacs that became popular in the postwar era.

Appendix A, Survey Area Map, shows the extent of the City and the areas surveyed and not surveyed during reconnaissance.

1.3 Project Team

All tasks for this project were conducted by personnel who meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards* in Architectural History.[1] The ARG project team included Katie E. Horak, ARG Principal; Mary Ringhoff, ARG Senior Associate and Project Manager; Brannon Smithwick, ARG Architectural Historian; Morgan Quirk, ARG Architectural Historian. ARG intern Kiara Hosseinion provided research assistance.

The project team also includes local expert and architectural historian Luke Leuschner, who participated in all phases of the project and is a co-author of this report.

[1] The *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards* were developed by the National Park Service. For further information on the Standards, please refer to https://www.nps.gov/articles/sec-standards-prof-quals.htm.

1.4 Previous Designations and Surveys

Palm Desert has not conducted a comprehensive citywide survey before this point. The City and the Historical Society of Palm Desert maintain well-researched lists of known historic properties, and Luke Leuschner (closely associated with the HSPD) provided additional historical background information for numerous properties. These sources were the basis for the property list compiled during the reconnaissance survey.

The following designated resources, and resources in the process of being designated, are located within the City of Palm Desert and were not included in the current survey:

Designated Resources in Palm Desert as of March 19, 2025

Designation Number	Address	Name	Designation Status
	75800 Avondale Dr	Avondale Country Club (Del Safari)	Historic District (designation in progress)
CRPC22-03	72806 Bursera Way	Charles du Bois Model Home	Landmark
CRPC13-03	44870 Cabrillo Ave	Maryon Toole House	Landmark; CA Register
CRPC19-01	Cactus Ct & Mesquite Ct	King's Point at Palm Desert (Shadow Cove)	Historic District
CRPC 2010-01	72861 El Paseo	Palm Desert Fire Station #1	Landmark
CRPC 2010-02	73800 Ironwood St	Shadow Mountain Golf Club	Historic District
CRPC14-01	74135 Larrea St	Randall Henderson House	Landmark
CRPC22-02	45656 Mountain View Ave	Overpeck House	Landmark
CRPC 2010-03	45480 Portola Ave	Portola Community Center; Palm Desert Community Library	Landmark
CRPC13-02	45630 Portola Ave	Palm Desert Community Church; Spiritual Center of the Desert	Landmark
CRPC22-01	111-183 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #1	Historic District
CRPC21-01	211-283 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #2	Historic District
CRPC21-02	311-383 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #3	Historic District
CRPC24-0006	1401-1416 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #4	Historic District
CRPC16-01	501-516 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #5	Historic District
CRPC16-01	601-616 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #6	Historic District
CRPC16-01	701-716 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #7	Historic District
CRPC16-01	801-816 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #8	Historic District
CRPC16-01	901-916 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #9	Historic District
CRPC16-01	1001-1016 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #10	Historic District
CRPC13-01	1101-1116 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #11	Historic District
CRPC13-01	1201-1216 Sandpiper Cir	Sandpiper Circle #12	Historic District

	73697 Santa Rosa Wy	Miles Bates House	Landmark; CA Register; National Register
	45710 Shadow Mountain Dr	Charles Gibbs House	Landmark
CRPC18-01	47869 Sun Corral Trl	Owl House	Landmark

2. Methodology

2.1 Technical Guidance

To ensure that the methodology described herein incorporated the most up-to-date standards and was rooted in professional best practices, ARG consulted the following informational materials maintained by the National Park Service (NPS) and the California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP):

- National Register Bulletin (NRB) 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*
- NRB 16A: *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*
- NRB 16B: *How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form*
- NRB 24: *Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*
- California Office of Historic Preservation (OHP): *Writing Historic Contexts*
- OHP: *Instructions for Recording Historical Resources*

2.2 Archival Research

The project team conducted primary and secondary source research in order to inform the writing of the historic context statement and provide valuable property-specific information for the reconnaissance survey Research included the overview of pertinent city planning documents (municipal codes and planning reports); primary resources (historic photographs, maps, ephemera, building permits where available); and secondary sources (newspaper articles, local published histories and unpublished manuscripts). The following sources and repositories were consulted:

- Collections of the Historical Society of Palm Desert
- Pre-Incorporation Building Permits Collection (originally sourced from the Riverside County Building & Safety Department, digital copies from the Historical Society of Palm Desert and available online by permission)
- Collections of the City of Palm Desert Community Development Department, Planning Division
    - Including the Palm Desert Historic Preservation Committee's "Unofficial Current Investigation Site Listing" property list, 2006
- Luke Leuschner's "Mid-Century Buildings in Palm Desert (Pre-1969)" map and database (available online by permission)
- Riverside County tract maps, GIS data, historic aerial photographs, and assessor information
- ARG's in-house library of architectural reference books, journals, and other materials
- Online collections available through the Riverside County Public Library, the Los Angeles Public Library, Newspapers.com, Genealogybank.com, the California Digital Newspaper Collection

through UC Riverside, the Online Archive of California, California Revealed, USC Digital Libraries, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Archives, and Ancestry.com

Information about residential tracts, gleaned through local expert research, is included as **Appendix E.** Tract Development Summaries. This appendix aims to provide additional context about residential development in Palm Desert to inform future researchers; a comprehensive history of each tract is outside the scope of this project.

2.3 Reconnaissance Survey

A reconnaissance survey is an essential component of the preparation of a historic context statement, as it informs the project team about a city's patterns of development and major and minor physical components, as well as enables a street-by-street look at all of the city's resources at once for effective comparative analysis. The reconnaissance survey provides the basis for the subsequent intensive-level survey.

Prior to conducting the reconnaissance survey, ARG created a spreadsheet containing information on all previously identified properties, derived from information provided by the City, the HSPD, and Mr. Leuschner's research. It was augmented by information from the California Office of Historic Preservation's Built Environment Resource Directory (which contain information such as properties already listed in the National Register). This draft property list served as the beginning for the expanded property list as it was refined and added to during reconnaissance. ARG used the City's Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data, supplemented by Riverside County Assessor data, to develop a map that color-coded all of the city's parcels by decade of development. This "chronology map" (**Appendix B**) helped to identify different development patterns in the survey area and locate groupings of properties that might be unified by age and appearance. The map also identified all buildings constructed after 1980, which were not included as part of the survey.

The GIS data were also used to create a base map for use during the reconnaissance survey; this base map included all parcels in the city, and made note of all previously identified properties. ARG used this map in tandem with the draft property list to ensure every street was driven and every parcel was inspected. During the reconnaissance survey, a "windshield" inspection was conducted, in which surveyors drove every publicly accessible street in the city to inspect properties meeting the age requirements of this project. The general age of buildings, property types, architectural styles, and levels of integrity were noted and compared. Based upon observations made during reconnaissance, the survey team added individual properties that appeared to be potential resources, as well as cohesive groupings of properties that appeared to be potential historic districts. ARG also assessed the integrity of all previously identified properties, which in some cases led to them being eliminated from the list because they had been demolished or extensively altered.

Upon completion of the reconnaissance survey, ARG conducted additional research using historic building permits, photographs, maps, newspaper articles, and other sources to glean information like construction date, architect, builder, and original owner. This information was added to the property list. A map showing preliminary findings based on the reconnaissance survey was generated, and was refined over

the course of the survey into the final reconnaissance survey findings map (**Appendix C**). The final list of all properties identified as potentially eligible is included as **Appendix D**.

Reconnaissance Survey Limitations

Palm Desert contains a number of gated country clubs and residential communities which could not be surveyed from the public right-of-way. ARG noted all inaccessible properties during the reconnaissance survey and conducted baseline research on them to ascertain development dates. The post-1980 properties were eliminated from consideration. The City provided HOA and property management contact information for the remaining properties, which ARG used to reach out and request access. Access was granted for the majority of the pre-1981 properties, and the survey team drove the interior streets in the same manner as of the public streets while conducting reconnaissance survey. Access could not be acquired for a handful of properties and they remain unsurveyed; additional research and outreach would be required to determine whether any are potentially eligible. The inaccessible properties are listed below.

Inaccessible Gated Properties

Number	Street	Name	Notes
41500	Monterey Ave	Monterey Country Club	Includes 261 Cordoba, which research indicates is a 1950s ranch house within the gated country club.
73750	Country Club Dr	Palm Desert Greens	
77333	Country Club Dr	Palm Desert Resort Country Club	

A handful of individual properties were also not visible enough from the public right-of-way to ascertain conditions or preliminarily evaluate potential eligibility. These are noted in the reconnaissance findings list (**Appendix D**). They remain on the list despite their lack of visibility because research indicates they have high potential for historical significance, and additional research and outreach would be required to confirm their physical integrity.

2.4 Community Outreach

ARG and City staff participated in a number of outreach events over the course of the project to provide community members with information about the project and solicit feedback. Soon after project kickoff, City staff and ARG created a project-specific webpage on the *Engage Palm Desert* platform (https://www.engagepalmdesert.com/historic). This webpage outlined the project scope, provided information on upcoming outreach meetings, included a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section, and included an online information submittal form.

ARG presented an overview of the project at a hybrid (in person/virtual) public kickoff meeting through the Cultural Resources Preservation Committee (CRPC) on August 28, 2024. City staff and ARG met with members of the HSPD in a virtual meeting on December 9, 2024. A second hybrid public outreach meeting occurred on December 10, 2024, with ARG attending in person. Each meeting provided an overview of the project's scope and purpose, and solicited information, feedback, and questions from

members of the community. Both the website and the outreach events were noticed and publicized by the City of Palm Desert via the usual channels as well as "e-blasts" to a list of community members and organizations known to be interested in historic preservation. On an ongoing basis, ARG consulted informally with members of the HSPD and community members who had submitted information.

2.5 Historic Context Statement

In tandem with the reconnaissance survey, ARG drafted a citywide historic context statement included in Chapter 4, Historic Context Statement. A historic context statement is a technical document that establishes a framework for the evaluation of historic resources and is a critical component of a local preservation program. Per the National Park Service (NPS), a historic context is "an organizational framework that groups information about related historic properties based on a theme, geographical area, and period of time."[2]

The citywide historic context statement was prepared in accordance with the Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) approach developed by the NPS. Often applied to large-scale surveys, the MPD approach streamlines the evaluation process by distilling major patterns of development into discernible themes that are shared by multiple properties within a given survey area. Utilizing the MPD approach ensures that properties with shared associative qualities and/or architectural attributes are evaluated in a consistent manner.[3] The context statement for Palm Desert is organized primarily into a sequential series of contexts and themes, which capture major occurrences in the city's development history and are expressed in its built resources. Baseline eligibility standards and integrity thresholds were developed for each theme to provide the City with a framework for using existing eligibility criteria to make future decisions about the eligibility of a property. The context statement is also intended to serve as a resource for future land use decisions and preservation endeavors undertaken by property owners or the City. It is important to note that the context statement itself does not include evaluations of any historical resources for eligibility under national, state, or local significance criteria. It is not intended to add or replace existing eligibility criteria for designation, but to provide context to the existing criteria.

[2] National Park Service, National Register Bulletin 24*: Guidelines for Local Surveys* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1977, rev. 1985), 6.
[3] For more information on the MPD approach, please refer to NRB 16B*: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form:* https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB16B-Complete.pdf.

3. Regulatory Environment

This first phase of the Palm Desert historic resources survey does not include full evaluations of properties for historical significance and eligibility for designation; such evaluations typically occur in a later intensive survey phase. The findings presented in this report reflect preliminary assessments based on the historic context statement and any additional information gleaned through research, outreach, and reconnaissance survey. However, information on the regulatory context within which properties would be evaluated for eligibility is presented in this chapter to provide a framework for understanding the process, as well as for applying the evaluation guidelines provided for each theme in the historic context statement.

3.1 National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is the nation's master inventory of known historic resources. Established under the auspices of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the national, state, or local level. Eligibility for listing in the National Register is addressed in National Register Bulletin (NRB) 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. NRB 15 states that in order to be eligible for the National Register, a resource must both: (1) be historically significant, and (2) retain sufficient integrity to adequately convey its significance.

Significance is assessed by evaluating a resource against established eligibility criteria. A resource is considered significant if it satisfies any one of the following four National Register criteria:[4]

- Criterion A (events): associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;
- Criterion B (persons): associated with the lives of significant persons in our past;
- Criterion C (architecture): embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- Criterion D (information potential): has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Once significance has been established, it must then be demonstrated that a resource retains enough of its physical and associative qualities – or *integrity* – to convey the reason(s) for its significance. Integrity is described as a resource's "authenticity" as expressed through its physical features and extant characteristics. Generally, if a resource is recognizable as such in its present state, it is said to retain integrity, and if it has been extensively altered then it does not. Whether a resource retains sufficient integrity for listing is determined by evaluating the seven aspects of integrity defined by the NPS:

[4] Some resources may meet multiple criteria, though only one needs to be satisfied for National Register eligibility.

- Location (the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred);
- Setting (the physical environment of a historic property);
- Design (the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property);
- Materials (the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular manner or configuration to form a historic property);
- Workmanship (the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory);
- Feeling (a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time);
- Association (the direct link between an important historic event/person and a historic property).

Integrity is evaluated holistically by weighing all seven of these aspects together, and is ultimately a "yes or no" determination – that is, a resource either retains sufficient integrity, or it does not.[5] Some aspects of integrity may be weighed more heavily than others depending on the type of resource being evaluated and the reason(s) for its significance. Since integrity depends on a resource's placement within its historic context, integrity can be assessed only after it has been concluded that the resource is in fact significant.

Generally, a resource must be at least 50 years of age to be eligible for listing in the National Register. Exceptions are made if it can be demonstrated that a resource less than 50 years old is (1) of exceptional importance, or (2) is an integral component of a historic district that is eligible for the National Register.

3.2 California Register of Historical Resources

The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is an authoritative guide used to identify, inventory, and protect historical resources in California. Established by an act of the State Legislature, the California Register program encourages public recognition and protection of significant architectural, historical, archeological, and cultural resources; identifies these resources for state and local planning purposes; determines eligibility for state historic preservation grant funding; and affords certain protections under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

The structure of the California Register program is similar to that of the National Register, but more heavily emphasizes resources that have contributed specifically to the development of California. To be eligible for the California Register, a resource must first be deemed significant under one of the following four criteria, which are modeled after the National Register criteria listed above:

[5] Derived from NRB 15, Section VIII: "How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property."

- Criterion 1 (events): associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States;
- Criterion 2 (persons): associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history;
- Criterion 3 (architecture): embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values;
- Criterion 4 (information potential): has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, state, or the nation.

Mirroring the National Register, the California Register also requires that resources retain sufficient integrity to be eligible for listing. A resource's integrity is assessed using the same seven aspects of integrity used for the National Register. However, since integrity thresholds associated with the California Register are generally less rigid than those associated with the National Register, it is possible that a resource may lack the integrity required for listing in the National Register but still be eligible for listing in the California Register.

Resources may be nominated directly to the California Register. There is no prescribed age limit for listing in the California Register, although California Register guidelines state that "sufficient time must have passed to obtain a scholarly perspective on the events or individuals associated with the resource."[6]

Certain properties are automatically listed in the California Register, as follows:[7]

- All California properties that are listed in the National Register;
- All California properties that have formally been determined eligible for listing in the National Register (by the State Office of Historic Preservation);
- All California Historical Landmarks numbered 770 and above; and
- California Points of Historical Interest which have been reviewed by the State Office of Historic Preservation and recommended for listing by the State Historical Resources Commission.

[6] California Department of Parks and Recreation, California Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistance Series #6: California Register and National Register: A Comparison* (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2001), 3. According to the *Instructions for Recording Historical Resources* (Office of Historic Preservation, March 1995), "[a}ny physical evidence of human activities over 45 years old may be recorded for purposes of inclusion in the OHP's filing system. Documentation of resources less than 45 years old may also be filed if those resources have been formally evaluated, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation." This 45-year threshold is intended to guide the recordation of potential historical resources for local planning purposes, and is not directly related to an age threshold for eligibility against California Register criteria.

[7] California Public Resources Code, Division 5, Chapter 1, Article 2, § 5024.1.

3.3 City of Palm Desert Historic Preservation Ordinance

Palm Desert administers its own program for designating historic and cultural resources at the local level. The City's local designation program is governed by Title 29 (Cultural Resources Ordinance) of the Palm Desert Municipal Code. The list of locally designated historic and cultural resources within the City is called the Palm Desert Register. The Ordinance distinguishes between the designation of individual resources (Landmarks) and concentrations of resources (Historic Districts).

Landmarks

To be eligible for listing as a Landmark, a cultural resource must retain integrity (the City uses the same aspects of integrity as the National Register)[8] and meet at least one of the following criteria at the local, state, regional, or national level:

- Criterion A: Is associated with an event or events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of history; or
- Criterion B: Is associated with the lives of persons significant in the past; or
- Criterion C: Embodies distinctive characteristics, or is one of the few remaining examples of a style, type, period or method of construction or possesses high artistic value; or
- Criterion D: Represents the work of a master builder, designer or architect; or
- Criterion E: Is an archaeological, paleontological, botanical, geological, topographical, ecological, or geographical resource that has yielded or has the potential to yield important information in history or prehistory; or
- Criterion F: Reflects distinctive examples of community planning or significant development patterns, including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth, agriculture, or transportation.

Landmark designation lies within the purview of the City Council, and requires a certified survey, recommendation from the CRPC, and written property owner consent.

Historic Districts

To be eligible for listing as a Historic District, a grouping of properties (either geographic or thematic)[9] must represent a significant and distinguishable entity that meets at least one of the following criteria at the local, state, regional, or national level:

- Criterion A: Exemplifies or reflects special elements of cultural, social, economic, political, aesthetic, engineering, architectural, or natural history; or

[8] See Palm Desert Municipal Code, Chapter 29.20.010, Definitions.
[9] See Palm Desert Municipal Code, Chapter 29.20.010, Definitions.

- Criterion B: Is identified with persons or events significant in history; or
- Criterion C: Embodies distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction, or is a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship; or
- Criterion D: Represents the work of master builders, designers, or architects; or
- Criterion E: Reflects distinctive examples of community planning or significant development patterns, including those associated with different eras of settlement and growth, agricultural, or transportation; or
- Criterion F: Conveys a sense of historic and architectural cohesiveness through its design, setting, materials, workmanship or associations; or
- Criterion G: Is an archaeological, paleontological, botanical, geological, topographical, ecological, or geographical resource that has yielded or has the potential to yield important information in history or pre-history.

As with Landmarks, designation of Historic Districts lies within the purview of the City Council, and requires a certified survey, recommendation from the CRPC, and written property owner consent.

4. Historic Context Statement

4.1 Purpose and Overview

Historic and cultural resources are significant because of their association with trends and patterns that came together to shape a community's development over time. As such, a community's historic and cultural resources cannot be adequately evaluated without first taking into account the historic context(s) with which they are associated. In National Register Bulletin 24*: Guidelines for Local Surveys: A Basis for Preservation Planning*, the National Park Service (NPS) defines a historic context as "a broad pattern of historical development in a community or its region, that may be represented by historic resources."[10] Those historic contexts that are relevant to a particular community and are expressed in its built environment are identified and examined in a technical document known as a historic context statement. A historic context statement examines a community's history through the lens of its built fabric, links extant built resources to the key pattern(s) of development that they represent, and establishes a clear analytical framework by which historic and cultural resources can be evaluated.

While a historic context statement helps to relay the story of a particular community, it is not intended to be an all-encompassing history of that community; rather, its aim is to identify and describe broad historical patterns so that one may better ascertain how a community's built environment and cultural climate came to be. Historic context statements are generally organized by context and theme: **contexts** cast the widest net and capture a broad historical pattern or trend. Additionally, within each context are one or more relevant **themes** that are represented through extant property types sharing physical and/or associative characteristics. Accompanying each theme is a list of associated property types and guidelines for establishing eligibility and assessing integrity under the theme. The historic context statement is meant to provide a framework for evaluating properties, both those that have been identified and those that have not, for historical significance and for eligibility under landmark designation programs.

4.2 Summary of Contexts and Themes

Six contexts have been identified for the evaluation of historic resources in Palm Desert and collectively comprise this historic context statement. The first five contexts are organized chronologically, and capture major patterns and trends in the city's development history that are expressed through its extant built resources. Within each of these contexts are themes that provide a focused discussion relative to particular property types. The sixth context, entitled *Architecture and Design*, identifies and defines the dominant architectural styles that are reflected in every phase of Palm Desert's development and collectively shape the city's physical form. A summary of each context is included below.

- **Context: The Palm Desert Area, Pre-1910**

  The Cahuilla people and their ancestors inhabited the Palm Desert area for many thousands of years prior to the arrival of European colonizers and missionaries in the eighteenth century, and have maintained a strong connection to their homeland ever since. Transportation routes and federal homestead legislation facilitated scattered non-Indigenous settlement in this area starting

[10] Bulletin 24, 14.

in the late 19th century. No surface vestiges of pre-1910 resources are known to exist within the Palm Desert city limits, but subsurface archaeological resources may exist. Because the character and condition of possible archaeological resources are not known, separate themes have not been developed for this context. Instead, it presents a general framework for evaluating these resources.[11]

- Context: Early Development in Palm Desert, 1910-1945

  The Palm Desert area saw its first industrial development starting around 1910, when the earliest homesteaders received land patents and established agricultural pursuits, including date and citrus farming. These farms and ranches were sited mostly in what is now the north part of the city. The stage was set for a different pattern of development in the 1930s, when Highways 74 and 111 were completed and William A. Johnson and then the Mollin Investment Co. developed the first residential subdivision, Palm Village. Only a few homes were constructed prior to 1946, and the establishment of an Army vehicle pool nearby during World War II dominated activity in the area. This context examines built resources associated with the Palm Desert area's formative period of growth, prior to the postwar boom that was to come.

- Context: Palm Desert Planned Community Development, 1946-1956

  The end of World War II and the lifting of wartime building restrictions opened up the floodgates for development in Southern California, ushering in a period marked by unprecedented growth. In Palm Desert's case, brothers Cliff and Randall Henderson proved the main shapers of a new residential community; the Palm Desert Corporation established strict guidelines to manage the architectural character of the town, and the majority of construction activity in the immediate postwar period was conducted by the PDC. Cliff Henderson's Shadow Mountain Club, the first large-scale resort in Palm Desert, became the bellwether for future development. Palm Village developed in a more ad hoc fashion, soon merging with Palm Desert to constitute a single community which saw commercial and institutional development as well as residential. The liquidation of the PDC in 1956 would lead to a period of more diversified, and extremely rapid, growth. This context examines the built resources constructed during Palm Desert's first era of major development, which was carefully planned, and established Modernism as the dominant architectural idiom.

- Context: Palm Desert Diversified Development, 1957-1966

  After the PDC liquidated in 1956, Palm Desert saw its most robust period of development as numerous developers rushed in to take its place, with the southern part of town in particular seeing rapid establishment of single-family residential subdivisions and multi-family residential complexes for both seasonal and (increasingly) full-time residents. Commercial and institutional development also soared during this time as new businesses appeared to provide services to the growing community. As in the immediate postwar period, Modernism dominated the built environment. This context examines the abundant built resources associated with Palm Desert's

[11] As noted in the evaluation guidelines for this context, full evaluation under National Register Criterion D/California Register Criterion 4/Palm Desert Landmark Criterion E, Historic District Criteria C, G requires development of an appropriate archaeological research design, which is outside the scope of this study.

most intense period of development after the end of the PDC and continuing until the community experienced a brief lull in construction activity in the late 1960s.

- Context: Palm Desert Country Clubs and Incorporation, 1967-1980

  Palm Desert's development continued anew in the late 1960s as condominium complexes and planned country clubs joined other property types. Commercial and institutional development proceeded in kind, and all property types continued to be dominated by Modernism, though now in more Late Modern and historicist adaptations of Modernism than Mid-Century Modern styles. Palm Desert incorporated in 1973 and established new guidelines on growth and development. The city saw steady growth through the 1970s and by 1980 had achieved most of its current character. This context examines the built resources established during this late period of development.

- Context: Architecture and Design, 1910-1980

  This context provides an overview of the range of architectural styles that represent each period of Palm Desert's developmental history. As such, this context spans the entirety of the period addressed by this historic context statement. Early buildings are few in number and typically reflect an undefined vernacular idiom, sometimes incorporating elements of more defined styles, or Period Revival styles, especially the desert-appropriate Pueblo Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival. Most of Palm Desert's buildings are associated with post-World War II development and reflect various Modern styles, particularly Mid-Century Modern. Ranch style designs also date to this period. This context also provides short biographies of the most notable and prolific local architects and designers working in Palm Desert. Additional information on important architects, builders, and designers and on their projects is woven through the rest of the contexts.

Summary Table of Contexts and Themes

Context	Theme	Sub-Theme
The Palm Desert Area, Pre-1910		
Early Development in Palm Desert, 1910-1945	Early Industrial Development, 1910-1945	
	Early Residential Development, 1910-1945	
	Early Commercial Development, 1910-1945	
Palm Desert Planned Community Development, 1946-1956	Residential Development, 1946-1956	
	Commercial Development, 1946-1956	
	Institutional Development, 1946-1956	
Palm Desert Diversified Development, 1957-1966	Residential Development, 1957-1966	
	Commercial Development, 1957-1966	
	Institutional Development, 1957-1966	
	Residential Development, 1967-1980	

Palm Desert Country Clubs and Incorporation, 1967-1980	Commercial Development, 1967-1980	
	Institutional Development, 1967-1980	

Architecture and Design, 1910-1980	Period Revival	Spanish Colonial Revival
		Pueblo Revival
	Modernism	Early Modern
		Moderne
		Hollywood Regency
		Mid-Century Modern
		Polynesian/"Tiki" Modern
		Late Modern
	Ranch	Minimal Ranch
		Hacienda Ranch
		Contemporary Ranch

4.3 Context: The Palm Desert Area, Pre-1910

Historical Overview

The Cahuilla people are the original inhabitants of the Coachella Valley, including the area that is now Palm Desert.[12] Their full traditional territory spans a large area from the San Bernardino Mountains in the north to the Borrego Desert in the south, and as far east as the Colorado River.[13] Speakers of a Takic (Shoshonean) branch of the Uto-Aztecan language family, the Cahuilla were geographically divided into Mountain, Desert, and Pass groups with mutually intelligible dialects. The Desert Cahuilla traditionally lived at higher elevations in canyons in the heat of the summer and on the valley floor during the winter, and dug wells to access groundwater. Archaeological survey conducted prior to development of the Ironwood Country Club in the 1970s indicated that the Cahuilla had a prehistoric presence in Deep Canyon.[14] The closest known valley settlement to today's Palm Desert in the historic period was the Cahuilla village at what is now Indian Wells, a community that derived its name from the wells there.

Due to their inland location, the Cahuilla did not experience early contact with Spanish explorers and colonists, and aside from trade had little direct interaction with Spanish, Mexican, or American colonizers until the mid-19th century. Notably, like other Southern California Tribes, the Cahuilla suffered devastating losses from imported diseases to which they had no immunity.[15] During the Gold Rush and after California became a U.S. State in 1850, American travel through Cahuilla territory increased and colonization began

[12] Information in this section is derived primarily from Mona de Crinis, "Cahuilla Territory,"*Me Yah Whae* Fall/Winter 2021-2022, accessed December 2024, https://www.aguacaliente.org/documents/Cahuilla_Territory.pdf; Miranda Caudell, "A People's Journey," *Me Yah Whae* Fall/Winter 2016-2017, accessed December 2024, https://www.aguacaliente.org/documents/OurStory-10.pdf; and City of Palm Springs, Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings (prepared by Historic Resources Group for the City of Palm Springs, December 2018).
[13] Native Land Digital, accessed December 2024, https://native-land.ca/; de Crinis, "Cahuilla Territory," 60.
[14] "Studying Silver Spur for Relics," *Desert Sun* August 3, 1972/
[15] Ryan M. Kray, "Second-Class Citizenship at a First-Class Resort: Race and Public Policy in Palm Springs" (PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2009), 36.

in earnest. In 1852, the Treaty of Temecula assigned the Cahuilla, Luiseño, and Serrano a 30 x 40 mile piece of land between the San Gorgonio Pass and Warner Ranch in San Diego County, along with supplies and equipment. The U.S. Senate did not ratify the treaty, one of a group known as the Barbour Treaties, and some government agencies did not inform the Tribes the treaties were defunct.[16]

The U.S. General Land Office surveyed the Coachella Valley in 1855-1856 as part of the larger land surveys of the West at that time, assigning square-mile (640 acre) sections in townships and ranges. The alluvial fan flowing northeast from the Santa Rosa Mountains at the future location of Palm Desert lay largely within Township 5 South, Range 6 East and Township 4 South, Range 6 East, San Bernardino Meridian.[17] The only human-made feature noted within today's Palm Desert boundaries on the 1856 survey plat was a road, presumably following the route of an older Cahuilla trail, running roughly northwest/southeast through the area and connecting with the Cahuilla rancheria and water source at Indian Wells.

In 1862, the discovery of gold near La Paz, Arizona attracted would-be miners from the Los Angeles area. They traveled through San Gorgonio Pass and into the Coachella Valley, with the primary route being the trail established by William Bradshaw along existing Indian trade routes The Cahuilla trail depicted as a road on the 1856 survey plat is presumed to have been incorporated into the Bradshaw Road through the Palm Desert area. Stagecoach service along the Bradshaw Road had stops every 15-30 miles to acquire water and change teams.[18] The only stop between the Agua Caliente Tribe's *Sec-he* hot springs at today's Palm Springs and the Cahuilla village at today's Indian Wells was in Palm Desert: a rudimentary station known as Sand Hole. It was sited at an intermittent and unreliable seep, meaning the stop did not see regular use and apparently never had buildings constructed there.[19] No remnants of the Bradshaw Road alignment survive in Palm Desert.

The Bradshaw Road remained the main connector between Los Angeles and the Coachella Valley until the arrival of the railroad in 1876. In that year, the Southern Pacific Railroad's new line from Los Angeles to Yuma, Arizona reached Indio.[20] Cahuilla workers were among those who built it; as traditional lifeways were rendered unsustainable, many Cahuilla turned to wage labor like construction, farming, and mining. In the 1860s and 1870s, the federal government deeded odd-numbered sections of land for ten miles along either side of potential railroad routes to railroad companies to encourage expansion. This created a "checkerboard" of one-mile-square sections with odd numbers owned by the railroad and even numbers owned by the federal government, a pattern that would prove influential in the development in

[16] Vyola J. Ortner and Diana C. du Pont, *You Can't Eat Dirt: Leading America's First All-Women Tribal Council and How We Changed Palm Springs* (Palm Springs, CA: Fan Palm Research Project, 2011), 235; Kray, "Second-Class Citizenship,"30-31; Palm Springs, Historic Context Statement, 31.
[17] General Land Office, Survey Plat for Township No. 5 South, Range No. 6 East, San Bernardino Meridian, California (San Francisco: Surveyor's General Office, July 15, 1856); General Land Office, Survey Plat for Township No. 4 South, Range No. 6 East, San Bernardino Meridian, California (San Francisco: Surveyor's General Office, February 29, 1856).
[18] Tracy Conrad, "History: Little-Known Desert History of the Bradshaw Trail," *Desert Sun* December 19, 2021.
[19] Historical Society of Palm Desert, "Palm Desert Milestones" (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), citing Joseph M. Nixon, *A Line in the Sand: Musings & Essays on Stagecoaching, Volume III: Where the Dust Settles* (Authorhouse, 2020).
[20] J. Wilson McKenney, *Desert Editor:…the Story of Randall Henderson and Palm Desert* (Georgetown, California: Wilmac Press, 1972), 34.

the Coachella Valley. The government set aside some of its lands to be held in trust for multiple Cahuilla Tribes in the region, but this did not occur in Palm Desert. Here, the owners of the checkerboard lands were primarily the federal government and the Southern Pacific Railroad. Both soon began deeding parcels to other parties.

Homesteaders were most of the Palm Desert area's new occupants, seeking land patents from the federal government under the 1862 Homestead Act. The Homestead Act and subsequent legislation (e.g., the 1877 Desert Land Act, the 1909 Dry Farming Act, the 1938 Small Tract Act) aimed to transfer federal land in the public domain to private ownership. The original Act required an applicant to declare intent to homestead a parcel and then reside on the land for five years, cultivate it, and make improvements to it, like constructing houses and outbuildings. If the homesteader successfully "proved up" the claim, they would receive a patent for the parcel, usually 160 acres in size or some fraction thereof. Later land patent acts eased the residency requirements, added the possibility of livestock ranching, and increased the size of parcels that could be acquired. Homesteading was hugely influential in the American settlement of the West – in California alone, almost 39 million acres were transferred to homesteaders from the public domain by 1958.[21]

The Palm Desert area saw the establishment of homesteads prior to the 1910s, but few successfully achieved a patent, and no physical remnants are known to survive.[22] Palm Desert's geography made homesteading a very difficult proposition, accounting for both the comparatively late dates of the area's first known patents, and for the apparent failure of most of the homesteads before applicants received patents. The area's massive alluvial fan boasted deep and fertile soil, but unlike neighboring areas like Indian Wells and Palm Springs, Palm Desert had only one natural spring, and it was the intermittent seep derided as "Sand Hole" by 19th century stagecoach travelers. Water had to be reached by digging wells, an expensive proposition, or by transporting it from Indio. The alluvial fan also flooded frequently, as stormwater coursed down from the steep canyons of the San Jacinto-Santa Rosa Mountains. But the year-round sunshine inspired agriculturalists to attempt farming anyway. In 1904, the U.S. Department of Agriculture aimed to promote date production in the Coachella Valley by establishing an experimental agricultural station in Indio and showcasing varieties from Algeria, Iraq, and Egypt.[23] As discussed in the next context, this came to fruition with a burgeoning date industry starting in the 1910s.

The earliest patents in the Palm Desert area appear to date to 1910-1915, meaning these homesteaders' original claims and occupancy would have dated to 1905-1910. The earliest patents from T. 5N R. 6E, SBM are those of Lewis Carpenter in the SW ¼ of Section 22 (now part of Indian Wells) in 1910 and William L. Jencks in the NW ¼ of Section 18 (now part of Rancho Mirage) in 1912. Others followed, with logical concentration around water sources, particularly the Indian Wells. The first patent in what is now Palm

[21] California Department of Transportation, *A Historical Context and Archaeological Research Design for Agricultural Properties in California* (Division of Environmental Analysis, California Department of Transportation, Sacramento, CA 2007), 40-45, cited in City of La Quinta, Historic Resource Survey and Context Statement (prepared by Urbana Preservation & Planning, LLC for the City of La Quinta, April 2023), 24 .
[22] The Bureau of Land Management maintains searchable land patent records from the General Land Office, accessible at https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx.
[23] City of La Quinta, Historic Context Statement, 34; McKenney, *Desert Editor*, 38-39.

Desert proper appears to have belonged to Winfield Scott Frey, who received patent to a little under 150 acres in the SW ¼ of Section 18 in 1913.[24] John H. Folks followed with the SE ¼ of Section 10 in 1915.[25] In the neighboring T. 4N R. 6E, in what is now the northern extent of Palm Desert, Frank Mason received patents in Section 28 in 1914 and 1915 as assignee of Amos King and John D. Palmer, respectively.[26] As these early homesteaders were able to improve their parcels enough to receive patents for them, they were either hauling in water from elsewhere, digging wells deep enough to hit groundwater, or managing with some combination of the two. Little has been written about pre-1910 well drilling, so the full story of early homesteaders' irrigation methods is currently unknown.[27] More homesteaders would follow these first few over the next several decades, as discussed in the next context, Early Development in Palm Desert, 1910-1945.

Evaluation Guidelines: The Palm Desert Area, Pre-1910

Summary

Resources evaluated under this context are significant for their association with the original inhabitants of the Palm Desert area (the Cahuilla and their ancestors) and/or with subsequent pre-1910 inhabitants, primarily homesteaders. No extant properties or surface vestiges associated with this context are currently known to exist. Given the lack of known resources associated with this context, separate themes have not been developed. Full evaluation of any archaeological resources under National Register Criterion D/California Register Criterion 4/Palm Desert Landmark Criterion E/Palm Desert Historic District Criteria C, G requires development of an appropriate archaeological research design, which is outside the scope of this study. The evaluation guidelines presented herein provide only a general approach to evaluating archaeological resources.

Associated Property Types	• Prehistoric and historic archaeological resources (residential, agricultural, transportation-related)
Property Type Summary	Surviving resources associated with this context are extremely rare, if extant at all, and are expected to be obscured from public view. They may include subsurface sites, features, and/or artifacts that may be discovered through construction or other activities that entail disturbance of the ground.
Geographic Location(s)	Unknown

[24] Patent No. 333676, issued May 14, 1913, accessed December 2024, https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx.
[25] Patent No. 503487, issued December 15, 1915, accessed December 2024, https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx.
[26] Patent No. 431633, issued September 16, 1914 and Patent No. 458486, issued February 17, 1915, accessed December 2024, https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx. An assignee takes over the responsibilities and ownership of a patent from the original owner.
[27] Most sources (e.g., McKenney, *Desert Editor*, 39-40) note the first documented wells in Palm Desert were drilled by Bob Blair starting around 1910.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for this context begins in the prehistoric period, with the first use and occupation of the Palm Desert area by hunting and gathering groups on a seasonal basis. It ends in 1910, when the area began seeing more substantial homesteading and agricultural activities including the larger-scale drilling of wells.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when evaluating integrity. As resources associated with this context are extremely rare, greater latitude may be allowed in terms of integrity. They witnessed dramatic changes in setting over time, and the loss of integrity of setting should not equate to a loss of property integrity. A greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a resource must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

In addition, since resources of this type are presumed to be archaeological in nature, these resources ascribe to eligibility standards and integrity considerations specific to archaeological resources (e.g., focus and visibility), as described in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.*

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
D/4/E[28]	An **individual property** eligible under this context may be significant: • For yielding, or being likely to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of Palm Desert and/or Southern California	The assessment of integrity for resources considered for information potential depends on the data requirements of the applicable research design. A property possessing information potential does not need to recall visually an event, person, process, or construction technique. It is important that the significant data contained in the resource remain sufficiently intact to yield the expected important information, if the appropriate study techniques are employed.[29]	To be eligible under this context, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (pre-1910), and • Retain sufficient integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

[28] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).
[29] For more information about the application of Criterion D, refer to National Register Bulletin No. 15.

D/4/G	A **historic district** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For yielding, or being likely to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of Palm Desert and/or Southern California	See above.	• See above

4.4 Context: Early Development in Palm Desert, 1910-1945

Historical Background

The Coachella Valley proved to have an ideal climate for date production, as promoted by the experimental agricultural station established in 1904, and as a result it became a major agricultural area in the 1910s-1920s. Locales near flowing springs or the valley's lone permanent water source, the Whitewater River, had a clear advantage; much of the Palm Desert alluvial fan did not have such access, and its earliest homesteaders struggled to establish date palms as well as other crops like citrus, grapes, and vegetables. Deep well drilling to access the valley's underlying aquifer was necessary, and evolving techniques made this feasible, though still relatively expensive, for the area's farmers.

Walter Schmid owned what may have been the first well in what is now Palm Desert, drilled by Bob Blair around 1910 north of Highway 111 and west of Cook Road.[30] A patent file does not exist for land in this area (Section 21 of T. 5S R.6E) as it was originally owned by Southern Pacific Railroad, who would have sold parcels off to owners in a non-homestead context. This is a good illustration of the variety of ways in which owners were acquiring land in the Palm Desert area as agricultural expansion proceeded in the 1910s. Other landowners followed with additional wells, and agriculture grew quickly through the 1910s and 1920s. The northern part of what is now Palm Desert transformed into acres of date palm groves interspersed with other crops, with farm buildings and infrastructure dotting the groves. Farmers hauled their products to Indio for freighting via the Southern Pacific Railroad, and some also operated roadside stands and buildings for direct sales of their products.[31] No vestiges of any of these early improvements are known to survive in Palm Desert. In 1918, valley residents created the Coachella Valley County Water District to regulate pumping from the underground water table and to control the stormwater that still plagued the area during flood season.

The parcel that would become the heart of early Palm Desert was patented by Charles MacDonald in 1920, and he established a robust irrigation system.[32] Razor magnate King C. Gillette purchased MacDonald's property with business partner Thomas Rosenberger in 1929 and developed it with his son King Gillette Jr. They added adjacent acreage from other owners and by filing at least one patent, and went on to install five more wells, a few acres of date trees, and a large grove of grapefruit trees; some sources state he also constructed six homes, but it is more likely the houses dated to the subsequent residential development a few years later.[33] Conveniently located near the local landmarks of Caleb

[30] McKenney, *Desert Editor*, 40. The author cites records prepared by Ole J. Nordland, secretary of the Coachella Valley Water District, as the source of most of his well-drilling information in Chapter 4.
[31] Some likely transported their products to sell in the more active market of Palm Springs, as the Gillette family is known to have done at the Palm Springs Date Market in the 1930s-40s. "King Gillette Will Operate P.S. Date Mart," *Palm Springs Limelight-News* October 28, 1939.
[32] Patent No. 777685, issued October 15, 1920, accessed December 2024, https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx; HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones," 17; Author unknown, "Palm Desert" unpublished manuscript describing early Palm Village development, on file at the HSPD, PD-History-General-1940s-50s.
[33] "Razor King to Grow Grapefruit on Desert Tract," *Riverside Daily Press* February 21, 1929; "Big Development by K.C. Gillette," *Date Palm* February 15, 1929, quoted in City of Palm Desert Historic Preservation Committee, "History and Tour of Palm Desert Historical Sites, April 27, 2007" (tour booklet on file at the City of Palm Desert and at the

Cook's date ranch in Indian Wells (patented 1917) and the new La Quinta Hotel (1926) which patterned itself after the resorts of Palm Springs, the Gillettes may have intended their property for eventual residential or mixed use development from its inception.[34]

During the 1930s, several factors converged to influence future development in Palm Desert. First, the Coachella Valley received important automobile route improvements, starting with completion of the Palms-to-Pines Highway (State Route 74) between Hemet and Palm Desert in 1933. This provided a more direct route between the Inland Empire and the valley. Soon after, a paved road through the Coachella Valley connecting Palm Springs to Indio was completed; the "Road to Indio" (State Route 111) was immediately adjacent to the date farms of Palm Desert and Indian Wells. The Gillette Ranch was well-sited at the intersection of the two thoroughfares. This attracted the attention of William A. Johnson, president of the American Pipe & Construction Company, who began acquiring land here in 1933 and would go on to start subdividing it into the area's first residential subdivision, to be known as Palm Village, over the next few years.[35] The Mollin Investment Company took over the subdivision in 1938 and continued developing it, offering the first properties for sale in 1940. Palm Village is discussed further in the residential development theme below.

In 1936, Randall Henderson began publishing his *Desert Magazine* in El Centro. While the magazine did not move to Palm Desert until 1947, its 1930s establishment was key to the growth and character of the future community. It would go on to function as both a commercial and civic-institutional entity, among the first in Palm Desert; as no institutional development appears to have occurred prior to 1947 (when the first post office as well as the local headquarters of *Desert Magazine* was established), this context does not develop a separate theme for civic-institutional development between 1910 and 1945. The central role of Randall and Cliff Henderson in the subsequent development of Palm Desert is discussed in the Planned Development in Palm Desert, 1945-1956 context below.

In 1938, a new land patent act would cause a resurgence in homesteading activity, on a smaller and more residential scale: the Small Tract Act authorized the Secretary of the Interior to dispose of certain public lands as five-acre tracts. Like earlier land patent acts, the Act allowed the leasing of these tracts to applicants who would make improvements in order to receive a patent for permanent ownership. Local homesteading re-emerged in the 1940s as a result, in a pattern known as jackrabbit homesteading. This did not really become active until late 1944 when the U.S. Land Office began accepting applications, but it accounted for the bulk of the homesteading activity in and around Palm Desert, especially in today's unincorporated Cahuilla Hills.[36]

The Palm Village area became the site of a military installation during World War II, when the Army established the Palm Village Vehicle Pool here as part of General George Patton's much-larger Desert

---

HSPD); HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones," 22. A 1939 article states that "six desert bungalows" were due to be constructed in Palm Village, when the subdivision was being developed by the Mollin Investment Co., and it is more likely that this is the date of house construction (aside from the Gillette house itself and any associated outbuildings). "Palm Village Starts Near Indio," *Palm Springs Limelight-News* November 18, 1939.

[34] Olive Orbison, "Background of Palm Village Is Told By Writer," *Indio News* February 17, 1949 (on file at HSPD).

[35] Historic Preservation Committee, "History and Tour;" HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones," 26.

[36] McKenney, *Desert Editor*, 114.

Training Center. Soldiers and officers maintained and repaired thousands of vehicles and wheeled weapons for distribution to training units and overseas divisions, and received important training on the use of equipment in a desert environment.[37] Most personnel stayed in Cathedral City rather than on-site. The installation was dismantled in 1944. While the Vehicle Pool brought a great deal of activity and infrastructure to Palm Village, no permanent structures were erected, and the only remnants of the Vehicle Pool appear to be a small selection of concrete pads in Deep Canyon. By the time that development began in earnest in the 1940s, all that remained from the Vehicle Pool was a large parcel of disturbed soil at the base of Palm Desert's alluvial fan and some scattered concrete pads. The end of World War II in 1945 would bring about a new and very different development era for the Palm Village area, led by brothers Cliff and Randall Henderson.

Theme: Early Industrial Development, 1910-1945

Walter Schmid's ca. 1910 well was soon joined by that of other landowners and homesteaders hoping to establish agricultural operations in the Palm Desert-Indian Wells area. At least 17 other wells were present in T. 5S R. 6E by 1919, most north of what is now Highway 111, and Blair is thought to have drilled about six of them.[38] A Coachella Valley Water District official listed 17 pre-1919 well owners in T. 5S, R 6E (including portions of today's Indian Wells as well as Palm Desert): "A. Chapin, E.B. Densmore, C.E. Cook, George Coombs, Charles Thomas, Krutz family, Harold McKenzie, A.F. Grier, W.H. Hayhurst, Conroy Date Garden, George Jenks, Battary Well, W.S. Frey, Art Thomas, E.S. Morrow, Mrs. C.F. Saunders, and Capt. John F. Faulks."[39] As noted in the previous context, Frey was the first known patent holder in Palm Desert proper (1913), and John H. Folks (appears to be the correct spelling/appellation) was a contemporary. The Jencks family held multiple early patents – in addition to the one claimed by William Jencks in 1912, his relative Lucy P. Jencks received a patent in 1918, also in Section 18 but in the portion that is now part of Palm Desert.[40] Caleb Cook was a particularly notable pioneer in the local date industry. He received his patent for 160 acres in the NW ¼ of Section 22, T. 5S R. 6E (what is now Indian Wells) in 1917.[41] The Cook Ranch became a regional showpiece that encouraged the establishment of other date farms.[42]

The primary industry in the Palm Desert area prior to 1945 was agriculture. The primary focus was date production, but citrus (particularly grapefruit), grapes, and some other fruits and vegetables were also present; citrus would come to overtake date palms here and elsewhere in the Coachella Valley after World War II. Resources associated with industrial development in the prewar period included outbuildings, fenceline features, bladed roads, and extensive irrigation systems. One of the best known irrigation networks was Charles MacDonald's, which included a well, pumping plant, and reservoir in addition to ditches and other water control features. The MacDonald reservoir remained in place through

[37] Historic Preservation Committee, "History and Tour."
[38] McKenney, *Desert Editor*, 40.
[39] McKenney, *Desert Editor*, 40.
[40] Patent No 652917, issued November 7, 1918, accessed December 2024, https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx. Rochelle McCune of the Historical Society of Palm Desert has conducted background research into many of these early patent holders; in this case, it appears that the Jencks patent holders did not actually reside on their patented land. This is a pattern that appears elsewhere as well.
[41] Patent No. 566261, issued February 8, 1917, accessed December 2024, https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx.
[42] HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones," 12.

the Gillette Ranch era and later was used as a swimming pool in Palm Village until it was filled in and covered over in the 1950s.[43] Owner and tenant residences, many of which reflected a vernacular idiom, were also established on individual landholdings. Some were larger and reflected Period Revival or Ranch styles, like the Spanish Colonial Revival Gillette residence (no longer extant) and the Hacienda Ranch Seaton residence anchoring Roberta's Date Ranch (1937, extant at 43301 Portola Avenue, though not visible from the public right of way, later owned by ventriloquist Edgar Bergen).[44] These resources are more likely to be eligible for their association with residential development than with industrial development, though eligibility under both themes is possible.

Evaluation Guidelines: Early Industrial Development, 1910-1945

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for their association with early industrial development in Palm Desert. Between about 1910 and 1945, Palm Desert's chief economic engine was agriculture. Beyond the 1930s-established intersection of Highways 111 and 74, the landscape largely consisted of vast date palm groves interspersed with citrus, grapes, and other common yields. This area included large holdings like the Gillette Ranch, and smaller and more modest operations that were anchored by the house of the family who owned the land or their tenants. Primarily grown as cash crops, dates and other produce were taken to Indio for freighting by rail; the Palm Desert area does not appear to have had a packing house district or other major infrastructure related to distribution to commercial produce markets. Small lumber yards, pipe manufacturing operations, or other businesses related to industrial development may have been established during this period, but research indicates any such operations dated to the post-World War II period.

Resources associated with this theme are extremely rare, if existent at all. Palm Desert's early farms and agricultural lands have since been subdivided and developed. Small remnants may remain, particularly on the north side of the city, and they may be archaeological in nature. Full evaluation of any archaeological resources under National Register Criterion D/California Register Criterion 4/Palm Desert Landmark Criterion E/Palm Desert Historic District Criteria C, G requires development of an appropriate archaeological research design, which is outside the scope of this study. If any packinghouses or other facilities associated with the transport and distribution of cash crops remain, they would likely be located along one of the major thoroughfares, including Highway 111, Highway 74, Portola Avenue, or Cook Street, as would any surviving lumber yards or other industrial resources that are associated with this theme.

Associated Property Types

Industrial

- Irrigation infrastructure feature (ditch, well, pumphouse, etc.)
- Designed landscape (remnants of groves, orchards, farms, etc.)
- Packinghouse
- Warehouse

[43] HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones," 17; Author unknown, "Palm Desert" unpublished manuscript describing early Palm Village development, on file at the HSPD, PD-History-General-1940s-50s.
[44] HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones," 28.

- Lumberyard
- Pipe manufacturing plant
- Archaeological remnants of any industrial features

Property Type Summary

Industrial resources that are associated with the early economy of Palm Desert are extremely rare, if extant at all, and may be obscured from public view. The early economy was driven almost exclusively by agriculture, and the resources that were associated with agricultural uses have since been subdivided and developed. There may be some remnant features of early farms and date palm groves, and/or resources related to their operation and product distribution, that survive. Surviving resources, particularly irrigation-related, may include subsurface sites, features, and/or artifacts that may be discovered through construction or other activities that entail disturbance of the ground.

Geographic Location

Any remaining remnants of early agricultural development are more likely to be located in the north portion of the city. If any packinghouses, lumberyards, or other buildings associated with the distribution of crops survive, they would likely be located along major thoroughfares.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for this theme begins in 1910, with increased well drilling and agricultural development, and ends in 1945, with the end of World War II and the beginning of Palm Desert's first major development period.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As most agricultural lands in Palm Desert have been subdivided and developed and most traces of its agricultural past have been erased, any surviving resources associated with this theme have likely experienced a dramatic change in setting, and the loss of integrity of setting should not equate to a loss of property integrity. A greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a resource must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

In addition, since some early industrial resources may be archaeological in nature, these resources ascribe to eligibility standards and integrity considerations specific to archaeological resources (e.g., focus and visibility), as described in *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.*

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, F[45]	A resource that is eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with the earliest patterns of industrial development and growth in Palm Desert,	A resource that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event or historical pattern.[46] A resource from this period should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. A resource that has lost some historic materials but maintains its original design intent (e.g., route alignment) and is recognizable as an early industrial resource may still be eligible under this criterion.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1910-1945), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.
B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A resource that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1910-1945), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's

[45] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).
[46] National Register Bulletin 15.

			productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
D/4/E[47]	An **individual property** eligible under this context may be significant: • For yielding, or being likely to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of Palm Desert and/or Southern California	The assessment of integrity for resources considered for information potential depends on the data requirements of the applicable research design. A property possessing information potential does not need to recall visually an event, person, process, or construction technique. It is important that the significant data contained in the resource remain sufficiently intact to yield the expected important information, if the appropriate study techniques are employed.[48]	To be eligible under this context, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1910-1945), and • Retain sufficient integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.
D/4/G	A **historic district** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For yielding, or being likely to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of Palm Desert and/or Southern California	See above.	• See above

Theme: Early Residential Development, 1910-1945

The oldest extant house known to survive in Palm Desert (43301 Portola Avenue) was constructed by Roberta and Bill Seaton in 1937; known as Roberta's Date Ranch, the property was originally surrounded by formal gardens, date palm groves, grapevines, and alfalfa fields and is now surrounded by a mobile home park.[49] The Seatons sold the house to ventriloquist Edgar Bergen in 1942, and it has been known as

[47] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).

[48] For more information about the application of Criterion D, refer to National Register Bulletin No. 15.

[49] HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones," 28; City of Palm Desert Historic Preservation Committee, "History and Tour of Palm Desert Historical Sites, April 27, 2007" (bus tour booklet on file at the City of Palm Desert and at the HSPD).

the Bergen House since that time. Though not visible from the public right of way, the 3,000-square ft. house is thought to retain its original Hacienda Ranch style and its overall historic character. No extant residences are known to pre-date this house, as properties like the Gillette house and other farm/ranch residences have been demolished.

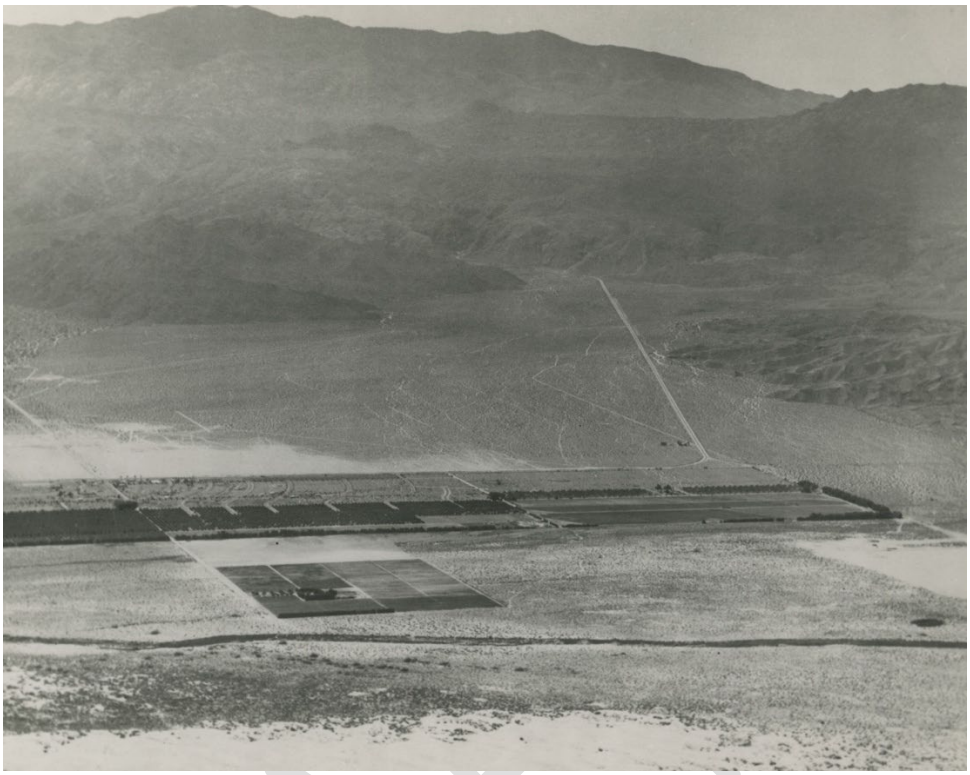
Most of Palm Desert's pre-World War II residential development occurred in the area immediately abutting the north side of Highway 111, where the MacDonald Ranch and then Gillette Ranch had been. William A. Johnson began acquiring land here in 1933 and became the area's first residential developer. By 1935, he had subdivided about 50 lots.[50] Multiple secondary sources note that Johnson hired landscape architect Charles Gibbs Adams to design the subdivision's curving layout; this may be correct, but it appears that the curvilinear street layout was not graded until late 1939. Adams' participation is as likely to have been under the next manager of Palm Village as under Johnson. Research was unable to confirm this in primary sources.[51] A 1949 article remembered the earliest layout of this subdivision to be "one mile long and half a mile wide, and looking like nothing human."[52] Similarly, secondary sources state that Johnson constructed six to eight houses, but construction of homes in the Palm Village subdivision prior to 1938 could not be confirmed.[53] It is entirely possible that either Johnson or a few individual owners built homes at that time, but primary sources do not confirm the assertion.

[50] McKenney, *Desert Editor*, 116.

[51] These sources also state that Adams was renowned for his designs for the City of Beverly Hills, but this is likely erroneous. Beverly Hills' historic master plan was designed by Wilbur D. Cook with Myron Hunt, not Adams, who did design at least one residential estate garden in that city. Aerial photographs of the Palm Village area in January 1939 and September-December 1939 show that the curvilinear layout was not being graded until the latter date. Fairchild Aerial Surveys, Flight C-6060, September 27, 1939 – December 7, 1939, and Flight C-5582, January 13, 1939, available through UC Santa Barbara Library Geospatial Collection, accessed December 2024, https://www.library.ucsb.edu/geospatial/aerial-photography.

[52] "Background of Palm Village Is Told."

[53] HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones," 26; "Background of Palm Village Is Told." Newspaper articles from 1940 mention construction of the first homes in Palm Village, after the Mollin Investment Co. had taken over the development (e.g., "New Palm Village Development Now Open," *Desert Sun* January 12, 1940).



A 1930s aerial showing the Seaton Ranch in the foreground, Palm Village, the recently completed Highway 74, and the barren alluvial fan that would later become Palm Desert. (Historical Society of Palm Desert).

Around 1938, the Mollin Investment Company took over management of the development and began subdividing and building in earnest; Johnson sold his interest in the tract to Mollin in 1942.[54] It appears to have been under Mollin management that the development was first advertised under the name Palm Village, and that actual subdivision construction took place. In November 1939, local laborers were at work laying out Palm Village, "a new and unique community for people desiring desert homes."[55] The 330-acre tract had graded streets with trees planted in parkways, waterlines were being installed, and local architect Cleo Blanchet had been chosen to design an administration building.[56] Planned next was construction "of at least six desert bungalows, several of which will be furnished and open to the public as model homes."[57] Two months later, the water system was complete, the landscape was planted, the administration building (location unknown) had been built by G. Maurice Romney, and Palm Village was officially opened for sales.[58] The developers noted the subdivision was a "highly restricted home community, where your kind of people will be your neighbors."[59] This language, along with the known language in Palm Village home deeds, indicates the tract had racially restrictive covenants in addition to

[54] McKenney, *Desert Editor*, 116.
[55] "Palm Village Starts Near Indio," *Palm Springs Limelight-News* November 18, 1939.
[56] "Palm Village Starts Near Indio."
[57] "Palm Village Starts Near Indio."
[58] "New Palm Village Development Now Open;" Palm Village display advertisement, *Desert Sun* January 12, 1940.
[59] Palm Village display advertisement.

covenants controlling architectural design.[60] This was a pattern common across Southern California and the nation at that time. Federal Housing Authority (FHA) loans were available, indicating Palm Village adhered to FHA guidelines.

As of January 1940, plans had been approved for at least eight homes, to be constructed on spec by contractors from Salt Lake City and Hollywood.[61] By the end of the year, the developer was touting recreational opportunities through the Palm Village Club, "an informally organized, closely restricted club designed to offer sports facilities to residents, members and their guests."[62] The subdivision also included a wire fence and tamarisk hedge to ensure privacy. Though the developer optimistically reported strong sales of Palm Village lots through 1940, it does not appear that more than a dozen or so homes were built before 1945.[63] These were relatively small and modest, built in vernacular adaptations of Moderne, Modern, and Minimal Traditional styles. Houses built during this period generally reflected the design standards of the FHA, with modest footprints and conventional styling. Today, only a few homes dating to 1939-1941 survive in the Palm Village area. Some are not visible from the public right-of-way and their condition cannot be assessed. The known 1930s-40s homes include at least four on San Marino Circle, and one each on San Jacinto Avenue and San Jose Avenue. These scattered homes and the reservoir-turned-swimming-pool constituted the bulk of Palm Village and of the area's prewar residential development. No multi-family residential properties are known to have been constructed during this time.

[60] Luke Leuschner, personal communication regarding previous deed research, December 2024.
[61] "New Palm Village Development Now Open."
[62] "Palm Village Season To Open," *Los Angeles Times* November 10, 1940
[63] "Palm Village Season To Open;" "Desert Community Properties Selling," *Los Angeles Times* December 1, 1940;

The Raymond Wilson homestead at the corner of Highway 74 and 111 pictured in 1934 during architect Albert Frey's stay at the property. (Palm Springs Art Museum)

Outside of Palm Village, the only known residential development between 1910 and 1945 were scattered farm houses and homesteads, including the "jackrabbit homesteads" of the Cahuilla Hills (outside the boundaries of today's City of Palm Desert). Like the houses of Palm Village, these early residential properties tended to be relatively small and built in vernacular interpretations of defined styles, or even built of salvaged materials in purposely rustic and ad hoc style. A few, like the 1937 Seaton-Bergen house, were larger and built in recognizable architectural styles – in this property's case, Hacienda Ranch. All told, actual residential construction in Palm Desert was minimal at this time. But the layout of Palm Village provided an open framework that would fill in with new residential development after the end of World War II, and in tandem with the rise of the Palm Desert Corporation.

Evaluation Guidelines: Early Residential Development, 1910-1945

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of residential development in Palm Desert during the pre-World War II period. Homesteading and agricultural development led to the construction of scattered residences, but it was not until the subdivision of Palm Village in the 1930s that the project area saw an organized residential subdivision. Even then, very few (likely less than a dozen) single-family residences were constructed before 1945, and no multi-family residences are known to have been built. Resources associated with this theme are rare, and do not appear to be found as cohesive, intact groupings that could be historic districts. They are more likely to be individual properties

significant for their association with early patterns of residential development rather than for their architectural character. Individual properties may also be significant if they are associated with important events or people from this period.

Associated Property Types

Residential

- Single-family residence

Property Type Summary

All known residential development from this period consisted of detached, low-scale, single-family houses, most commonly in the Palm Village area. Most were designed simple Minimal Traditional, Modern, or Moderne styles, often in a modest vernacular interpretation, rooted in the design standards of the FHA. At least one extant property (the Seaton-Bergen House) is larger and reflects the Hacienda Ranch style.

Geographic Location

Residential development from this period was largely concentrated in the Palm Village area north of Highway 111, though a few properties (e.g., the Seaton-Bergen House) were outside Palm Village.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for this theme begins in 1910, with increased well drilling and agricultural development leading to more settlement and eventual residential development, and ends in 1945, with the end of World War II and the beginning of Palm Desert's first major development period.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As resources associated with this theme are rare, some latitude should be granted when evaluating associated properties. A greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a building must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, F[64]	An **individual property** eligible under this theme may be significant:	A resource that is significant for its association with historic patterns of events or as the site of a significant historic event is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum:

[64] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).

	• For its association with residential development in Palm Desert during this period; or • As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	character or appearance during the period of its association.[65] A residential property from this period should retain integrity of location, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. A property that has lost integrity of setting may still be eligible. A resource that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. A resource is generally not eligible if it retains some basic features conveying form and massing, but has lost the majority of features that characterized its appearance during its historical period.	• Date to the period of significance (1910-1945), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A property that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1910-1945), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's

[65] National Register Bulletin 15.

			productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

Theme: Early Commercial Development, 1910-1945

While no commercial properties dating to 1910-1945 are known to survive in Palm Desert, several appear to have been constructed during this period, and this theme is minimally developed to address any properties that may be identified in future studies.

Most early businesses catered to travelers and seasonal visitors, with little specifically provided for the few people actually residing in the Palm Village area, and with any major development rendered impracticable by the Depression and then materials rationing and building restrictions during World War II. Some local farmers sold their products – dates in particular – from roadside stands along the Palm Springs-Indio highway. King Gillette Jr. is known to have sold dates at a market in Palm Springs during the 1930s and 1940s before transitioning to mail-order business.[66] Given Palm Village's location at the intersection of two regional highways, it seems likely that an auto service station would have been among the first commercial properties established here, but research did not yield any information on such a business.

The Palm Village Pool as created by the Mollin Investment Co. (Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

[66] "King Gillette Will Operate P.S. Date Mart," *Palm Springs Limelight-News*, October 28, 1939; "Milner Leases P.S. Date Market," *Limelight-News* July 31, 1942.

The Mollin Investment Co. made the old Gillette reservoir-turned-swimming pool into a business in the 1940s, charging admission to the "restricted public" – in other words, the white public.[67] The company also appears to have also established the Palm Village Market as the area's first grocery and dry goods store in 1946; some secondary sources state the market was first opened in the pump house building next to the swimming pool in 1944-45, before construction of the new building.[68] Bob Keedy managed the market for use by locals as well as visitors. In 1941-42, "Bob's Palm Village Stables" offered riding instruction on local desert trails.[69] Other early businesses were planned, though it is unclear how many, if any, were actually constructed. One example is the La Hacienda Rancho D'Oro hotel, which announced in May 1940 that its 30-acre Palm Village property featuring Monterey Revival and Mission Revival buildings would be ready for occupancy in November.[70] No further mention of this ambitious endeavor could be found. Some secondary sources state that the Palm Village Inn opened as the area's first restaurant in 1943, but the earliest available primary sources state Bill Ude opened the Inn opened in November 1945, with an official "grand opening" in January 1946.[71]

After the end of World War II and with the rise of the Palm Desert Corporation, many more commercial properties were established. This is discussed in the next context, Planned Development in Palm Desert, 1945-1956.

Evaluation Guidelines: Early Commercial Development, 1910-1945

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of commercial development in Palm Desert during the pre-World War II period. Commercial properties established during this time were associated with the Palm Village residential development under the management of the Mollin Investment Company, and were very few in number. No extant resources are known to be associated with this theme, but evaluation guidelines are provided in the event any are identified in future studies.

Associated Property Types

Commercial

- Retail building
- Restaurant
- Auto-oriented business
- Recreational facility (stables, pool)
- Signage

[67] "Swimming" display advertisement, *Desert Sun* May 3, 1940.
[68] HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones";
Hal Rover, Kim Housken, and Brett Romer, *Images of America: Palm Desert* (Historical Society of Palm Desert, 2009), 27.
[69] Display advertisements, *Desert Sun* December 1941-March 1942. The business name does not appear to refer to Bob Keedy.
[70] "Natt Head to Manage Own Hotel in Desert Near Palm Springs," *Desert Sun* May 3, 1940.
[71] "Bill Ude Opens New Restaurant at Palm Village," *Desert Sun* November 2, 1945; "Grand Opening" display advertisement, *Desert Sun* January 11, 1946.

Property Type Summary	Commercial development from this period was minimal and catered primarily to travelers and visitors. A local market, swimming pool, stable, and roadside date stands are the only known pre-World War II commercial properties to have existed, and none are extant.
Geographic Location	Resources associated with this theme would be expected along the south edge of the original Palm Village area (the north side of Highway 111, roughly between Monterey Avenue on the west and Deep Canyon Road on the east), and along the major thoroughfares of Highways 111 and 74.
Period of Significance	The period of significance for this theme begins in 1910, with increased well drilling and agricultural development leading to more settlement and eventual residential/commercial development, and ends in 1945, with the end of World War II and the beginning of Palm Desert's first major development period.
Integrity Considerations	A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As resources associated with this theme are extremely rare if existent at all, some latitude should be granted when evaluating associated properties. A greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though properties must still retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, F[72]	An **individual property** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of commercial development in Palm Desert during this period; and/or	A resource significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event or historical pattern. A commercial property from this period should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1910-1945), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its

[72] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert

	• As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	important association with the city's development during this period. A resource that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. Minor alterations – such as door replacement, re-roofing, or compatible re-stuccoing – shall not, in and of themselves, render a resource ineligible. However, the cumulative impact of multiple minor alterations may compromise a resource's overall integrity. More substantive alterations that are difficult to reverse – such as extensive storefront modifications that obscure the original form and program of the building, modification of original fenestration patterns, the removal of historic finishes or features – compromise a resource's integrity and are likely to render it ineligible.	association with the historic context.

4.5 Context: Palm Desert Planned Community Development, 1946-1956

Historical Background

The end of World War II brought about significant growth in Southern California, and the Coachella Valley was certainly no exception. In the years immediately following the war, the region underwent great development as a result of the Los Angeles region's considerable expansion in both population and industry. The region, which had served as a center for wartime manufacturing efforts, parlayed its industrial wartime campaign into a stable aerospace and manufacturing industry. Vast quantities of land in the region's hinterlands – the San Fernando and San Gabriel Valleys, and further communities in San Bernardino and Riverside Counties – were developed with affordable tract homes for returning GIs and their soon-to-be families. Between 1940 and 1950, Southern California's population grew by a staggering 53%.[73]

Prior to the war, Palm Springs was marketed as an exclusive resort city complete with high-end hotels like the Desert Inn and El Mirador, and a selection of exclusive subdivisions like Las Palmas, Deepwell Ranch, and Smoke Tree Ranch with custom-built resort homes for business executives, Hollywood stars, and the generally well-to-do.[74] A selection of more affordable lodges and hotels catered to the middle classes, and a selection of subdivisions were also more affordable – Palm Village, twelve miles east of Palm Springs, was among them – but the city overwhelmingly catered to an upper-class lifestyle. In the further reaches of the Coachella Valley, agriculture still dominated, with the occasional development (such as the 1926 La Quinta Inn) following the Palm Springs model.

This narrative changed with the end of World War II. Within a span of only a few years, Southern California's middle-class population had skyrocketed and its economy was vastly prosperous. The Coachella Valley had only two main industries, tourism and agriculture, but it contained vast quantities of undeveloped land, the nucleus of a robust tourism industry that had gone dormant during the war, and most importantly, great proximity to hordes of recreation-seeking middle-class Californians. Within months of the end of World War II in September 1945, development began in earnest throughout the Coachella Valley, this time catering to a broader, middle-class clientele. From the beginning, development was of a seasonal and recreational character unlike the development happening in Los Angeles. Central Palm Springs was infilled with new housing, shopping centers, and resorts – the El Mirador Hotel, converted to a military hospital during the war, was revamped and reopened.[75]

Moreover, the style of this new development was a marked shift from the design prior to the war. Whereas Spanish Revival and Mediterranean architecture previously dominated in the Coachella Valley in an attempt to align with the character of other resort cities like Santa Barbara, Palm Springs signaled its difference postwar with Mid-Century Modern architecture. Designed by the likes of Albert Frey, John Porter Clark, Willian Cody, Donald Wexler, and E. Stewart Williams, "Desert Modernism," and various other adaptations of Modernism became the norm for new development. The Mid-Century Modern

---

[73] Kevin Starr, *Embattled Dreams: California in War and Peace, 1940-1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 193-194.
[74] Lawrence Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 154-157.
[75] Culver, *Frontier of Leisure,* 179-180.

design of postwar development ranged from the refined (e.g., Paul Williams and A. Quincy Jones' Palm Springs Tennis Club) to the more fantastical (e.g. Albert Frey's North Shore Yacht Club or William Krisel's butterfly roofs), but it was all intended to market a new and exciting epoch of the middle-class desert.[76]

Most of this new development, however, occurred in the undeveloped desert surrounding Palm Springs. This land, stretching from Cathedral City to Indio, was incredibly affordable and plentiful while still being proximate to the allure and facilities of Palm Springs. Previously, this region had largely consisted of scattered date ranches, other agricultural operations, and the occasional unsuccessful real estate subdivision, making it easy for developers to acquire large parcels. Between 1945 and 1960, cities like Cathedral City, Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, Indian Wells, and La Quinta were developed (or in some cases entirely conceived) with large-scale subdivisions largely targeted towards the middle-class. Following the Palm Springs precedent, this development was frequently designed in a Mid-Century Modern style. Such was the context in which Palm Desert was born.

The genesis of today's Palm Desert, however, occurred during a chance encounter between two brothers, Clifford ("Cliff") and Randall Henderson, during World War II. Born in Iowa, the brothers each migrated to California in the first decade of 20th century, where they attended USC, served in World War One, and launched their own successful careers. Cliff found notability in the fledging aviation industry, where he served as the first manager of the airport that would become LAX, before moving onto to a prominent position as the Manager of the National Air Races. There, he developed a broad network that included star aviators, entertainers, and industry figures. Before and after the National Air Races, he was an astute businessman with investments in multiple ventures, including a short-lived car dealership venture and investment properties with Carl Henderson, another brother who had become a Santa Monica realtor and developer.[77]

Randall had pursued a similarly successful but highly different path. He had worked under the famed *Los Angeles Times* journalist Harry Carr during college, and quickly became entrenched in the world of journalism and publishing. He was also fascinated with the deserts of the American Southwest, and after college he managed a number of papers in small desert towns including the *Parker Post* and *Blythe Herald.* His first big break came at the end of World War I when he purchased the *Calexico Chronicle* in Imperial Valley, about 130 miles south of the Coachella Valley, and oversaw the expansion of the paper and his role as a voice of the desert. His most enduring success, however, was his establishment of *Desert Magazine* in 1936 with fellow author J. Wilson McKenney.[78] Dedicated to all things having to do with the desert, the magazine featured articles on a variety of topics, featuring articles on such things as desert flora and fauna, historic lore, and homesteading techniques. It quickly gained a cult-like following of desert enthusiasts until its publication ceased in the early 1980s.

When World War Two arrived, both Henderson brothers enlisted. By great chance, they crossed paths at a military base in Northern Africa where they discussed their plans after the war. Cliff was reeling from the success of his latest venture, the iconic Streamline Moderne Pan-Pacific Auditorium in Hollywood,

[76] Culver, *Frontier of Leisure*, 179-189.
[77] Luke Leuschner, "Palm Desert: A Sellable Dream on Forsaken Land, Part I," *The Hourglass,* Fall 2021.
[78] J. Wilson McKenney, Desert Editor: The Story of Randall Henderson and Palm Desert (Georgetown: Wilmac Press, 1972), 69-72.

which he had developed with their fellow brother Phil Henderson. Randall was still busy with *Desert Magazine,* which had developed into a nimble operation based in El Centro, and he was making plans to relocate its headquarters to the Coachella Valley at the conclusion of the war. Cliff, whose primary business interest had become real estate development, apparently noted that he would be interested in developing a subdivision around such a locale.[79]

Randall began acting on his plans for the future of Desert Magazine immediately after being discharged in the fall of 1944, before the war had ended. He imagined purchasing a considerable piece of acreage in a remote part in or near the Coachella Valley, building a publishing plant, art gallery, employee lodging, and an "arts and crafts village." After a few months of searching with the help of Palm Springs realtor Raymond Cree (who initially offered Randall land in Rancho Mirage that would ultimately become Thunderbird Country Club), he encountered the land at the intersection of Highway 111 and Highway 74, which sat on a large undeveloped slope facing Palm Village.[80] The land had been the Army vehicle pool as part of General Patton's regional Desert Training Center during the war.[81]

The vehicle pool part of the Desert Training Center on present-day Palm Desert. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

[79] McKenney, *Desert Editor,* 50-53. Later in his life, Cliff Henderson falsely claimed that he had discovered and founded Palm Desert largely without Randall, exaggerating a story that he had visited the former ranch of entertainer Edgar Bergen in 1945 and conceived of the city there. This story has been overturned in light of previously unseen and extensive documentation at the Historical Society of Palm Desert and the Randall Henderson Collection at the Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley.

[80] Letter from Randall Henderson to J. Wilson McKenney, November 16, 1944. Randall Henderson Letters Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert.

[81] Sid Burks, "Before the City of Palm Desert, There Was Palm Village," *Desert Sun,* June 29, 2017, https://www.desertsun.com/story/life/2017/06/29/before-city-palm-desert-there-palm-village/419487001/.

Randall drafted a prospectus for the owners of Palm Village, proposing that they donate land to Desert Magazine in exchange for its promised economic boost. Recalling Cliff's comment in Africa, however, Randall showed his younger brother the proposal, who immediately took a liking to the idea of purchasing land on the slope and developing a subdivision, of which Desert Magazine would receive complementary land. Cliff brought in their other brother, Phil, and began planning in earnest. Between 1944 and 1945, Randall played a key role in piecing together the parcels while Cliff and Phil worked on piecing together a vision and financial structure for the project.[82]

The original 1946 rendering for Palm Desert featuring Tommy Tomson's signature curved streets. (Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

The vision for the community quickly grew from a Desert Magazine outpost to an entire desert city, and Randall and Cliff's visions soon came into conflict. Originally, Desert Magazine was to be placed at the center of the subdivision, and Randall envisioned a subdivision that supported a humble population of year-round desert residents, with arts and culture central to the vision. Cliff, however, began to envision a seasonal resort city in the mold of Palm Springs, suited for the upper-class populations typical of his personal network. Within a short period, Randall's vision was pushed aside, and Desert Magazine's

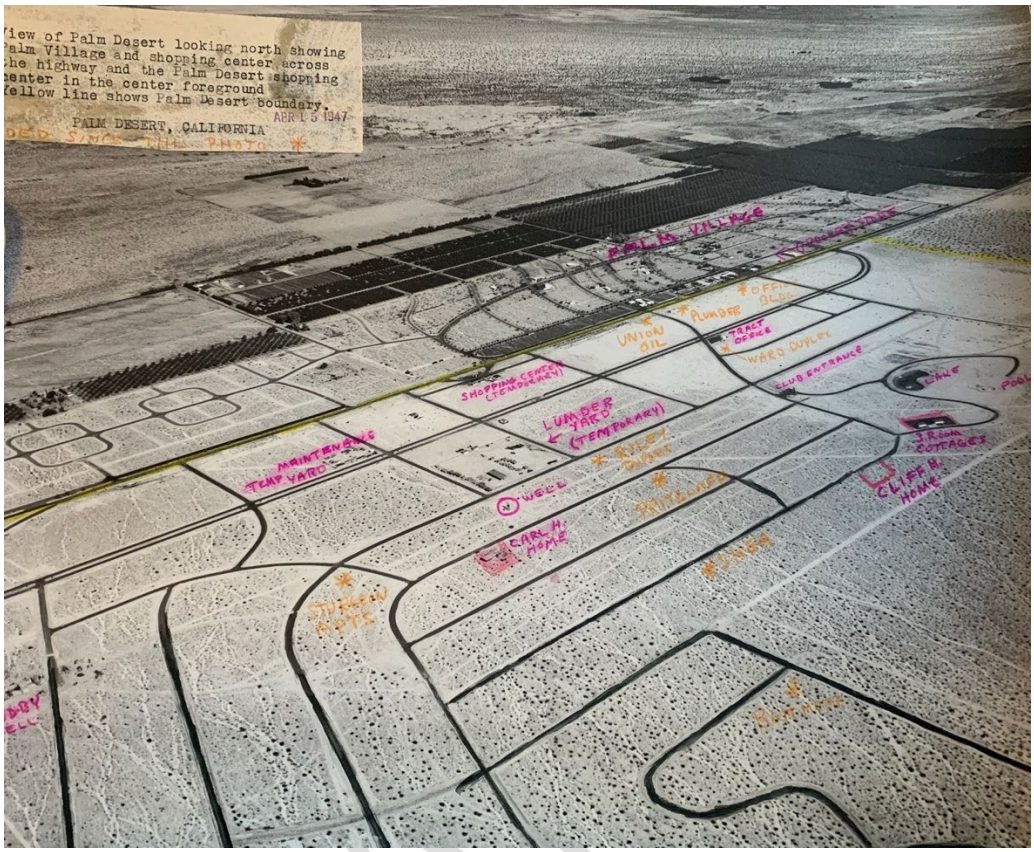
[82] McKenney, *Desert Editor,* 60-61. Letters in the collections of the HSPD detail the many land transactions that Randall helped to facilitate.

complementary forty-acre parcel was relocated to the edge of the subdivision.[83] At the center of Cliff's city was to be the Shadow Mountain Club, an exclusive club for the city's residents following the model of operations like the Palm Springs Tennis Club and Palm Springs Racquet Club.

Formal planning proceeded throughout 1945 and early 1946. Cliff brought on their brother-in-law Tommy Tomson, a Los Angeles landscape architect noted for his designs for Los Angeles Union Station and Rancho Santa Anita Racetrack, for the urban planning. In turn, the famed Los Angeles architect Gordon Kaufmann, responsible for such works as the Los Angeles Times headquarters and Hoover Dam, was hired to be the community's architect under his firm Kaufmann, Lippincott, and Eggers.[84] Various combinations of the Henderson brothers (Cliff, Phil, and Randall), Tomson, and Kaufmann visited desert cities like Tucson and developments like Smoke Tree Ranch to gather ideas for the city they were to build.[85]

Attempting to echo the sound of a resort city, Phil Henderson suggested the name "Palm Desert," which was essentially to be a town conceived by and for a high-end seasonal population, developed at once by a corporation.[86] Randall, although he had succeeded in getting a site for Desert Magazine and its facilities, had taken on an advisory role to Cliff, though he frequently found his advice cast aside. A final blow occurred to Randall's vision when the arts and crafts village he was to develop with Cliff fell through, and he essentially retreated into the planning of Desert Magazine's new facilities, which had merely become one part of Cliff's entire city.

[83] The relocation of the Desert Magazine was due to logistical difficulties as much as it was to a growing dissonance between Cliff and Randall's vision for Palm Desert. The land at the center of the plan, where Desert Magazine was to be located, was owned by a man named Raymond Wilson who created a challenge for the Palm Desert Corporation, and Desert Magazine was relocated amidst discussions with Wilson over the availability and provision of his land.
[84] Steven Keylon, "The Glamorous Gardens of Tommy Tomson: Part One," *Eden* 18, no. 4 (Fall 2015): 12–18.
[85] Letter from Randall Henderson to Cliff Henderson, February 26, 1945, Randall Henderson Papers, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley (facsimiles available at Historical Society of Palm Desert).
[86] Letter from Randall Henderson to Cliff Henderson, June 1, 1945, Randall Henderson Papers, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley (facsimiles available at Historical Society of Palm Desert).



A 1946 aerial of Palm Desert shortly before sales opened in November. (Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

The Palm Desert Corporation (PDC) officially came into existence in 1946 with Cliff at the helm. Its principal investors included such figures as tire magnate Leonard Firestone, entertainer Edgar Bergen (who also owned a nearby ranch), and actor Harold Lloyd.[87] The PDC became responsible for all aspects of community development and planning. It laid all the subdivision's streets (which Randall had named after desert plants) and underground utilities, constructed the Shadow Mountain Club and Shadow Mountain Lake, sales facilities, and a number of other auxiliary structures. Given that PDC was to build an entire town, it also incentivized the establishment of necessary features like a post office, elementary school, fire station, and church.[88] Unlike many other developments of the ensuing decade, it did not develop the housing itself, but instead sold lots to individual homeowners and spec builders. Carl Henderson, the brother who was a Santa Monica realtor, was brought on to handle the sales for the community. When the new town opened for sales in November of 1946, it had nearly sixteen miles of paved streets but only two houses constructed on them: one was Cliff's, and the other was Carl's.

[87] "New Community is Planned," *Palm Springs Limelight News,* October 11, 1946.
[88] Luke Leuschner, "Sellable Dream, Part I," 2021.

The first day of construction in the summer of 1946, showing the empty slope of Palm Desert (with disturbance from WW2 vehicle pool) from the corner of Portola Ave and Highway 111 (top, left); One of the early Palm Desert billboard alongside Highway 111 (top, right); The first day of sales on November 16, 1946 (bottom, left); Cliff Henderson showing prospective buyers a rendering of the Gordon Kaufmann-designed Shadow Mountain Club (bottom, right). (Clifford Henderson Collection, HSPD)

The years in which the PDC developed and owned Palm Desert were some of the most critical not only because the corporation literally brought it into existence but also set the tone of the city for the decades to come. The PDC controlled all aspects of Palm Desert: who its residents were, what type of houses they were allowed to build, and what businesses could open. Ultimately, it followed all the conventions of a high-class resort city as exemplified by Palm Springs. Although there was no government, the PDC created the Palm Desert Community Association to review prospective residents, who were subject to racial restrictions.[89] The PDC's most enduring legacy was the establishment of Palm Desert as a seasonal resort community, a character which it still largely possesses.

It was this period in which the region known as Palm Desert saw its second wave of growth since the creation of Palm Village, which had languished during the war. Dozens of seasonal estate homes were

[89] Luke Leuschner, "Palm Desert: A Sellable Dream on Forsaken Land, Part II," *The Hourglass,* Winter 2022.

constructed on the lots surrounding the Shadow Mountain Club in addition to dozens more in adjoining subdivisions. Under a new owner, Palm Village also opened additional units and resurrected its sales campaign immediately postwar, and many of its lots filled out with smaller, affordable homes intended for a more year-round clientele. At the same time, other subdivisions like Panorama Ranch and Palm Dell were conceived and opened at this time, oftentimes capitalizing on the name of Palm Desert as cultivated by the PDC. Indeed, much of the growth in Palm Village and other subdivisions can be attributed to the PDC's success in drawing residents.

The first Palm Desert Post Office as constructed by the PDC. (Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Most vitally, Palm Desert emerged as a distinct town within the Coachella Valley. Whereas previously the only placename had been that of the languishing Palm Village, Palm Desert both emerged and usurped its predecessor. Integral to this was the PDC's hard-fought campaign to establish a post office under the name of Palm Desert, which they succeeded in doing. Additionally, by 1950, the Palm Desert Community Church and the Palm Desert School also carried the name. In 1951, Palm Village officially became part of Palm Desert with an honorary declaration. Even before then, however, "Palm Desert" had taken the place of "Palm Village" on regional maps.

While the residential components of Palm Desert grew at a decent rate, other parts of the community, like its commercial districts, were not as quick to grow. Industrial development, including the date farming and other agricultural operations that had shaped Palm Desert in its earlier years, began a rapid decline as the area's residential development grew in the postwar period and groves were replaced with seasonal houses. In 1949, the Coachella Valley's irrigation capability increased greatly with the completion of the Coachella Branch of the All-American Canal; this decade-long construction project transported water from the Colorado River and became part of an even larger system with 1960s

expansions.[90] The valley's agricultural industry diversified to include more citrus, grapes, and other crops beyond dates. By the mid-1950s, though, Palm Desert was well on its way to becoming more residential than agricultural. The community did not see significant development in agriculture or any other industry beyond that of resort tourism after this time, and no known historic industrial properties are known to survive beyond those from its early development period before World War II. For this reason, the current context and subsequent ones do not include separate themes for industrial development.

While the first years of sales had been successful for the PDC, by the early 1950s it was faced with some financial difficulty as it struggled to keep up the pace. In their dedication to cultivate a "refined" resort city, the PDC did not allow for certain types of development that may have otherwise proven lucrative, such as when they turned down a developer who sought to build out an entire neighborhood with middle-class homes. Numerous of the PDC's planned subdivision units were not completed, and its complete vision was far from realized.[91]

Ultimately, the PDC liquidated its acreage in 1956 when it sold all of its remaining properties to a consortium headed by businessmen Howard Ahmanson and A. Ronald Button, who formed the Palm Desert Sales Company.[92] The new owners of Palm Desert were concerned less with image than they were with sales, ushering in a new and largely unrestrained era of Palm Desert's development, but one that was similarly dominated by a seasonal lean.

Theme: Residential Development, 1946-1956

Palm Desert largely came into being after World War II, and the architecture, character, and demographics of its residential growth were strongly shaped by the influences of this time period Engendered by a robust postwar economy in Southern California and the seasonal allure of the Coachella Valley, the Palm Desert Corporation saw foremost to the development of a residential community. Considering that Palm Desert was to be a seasonal resort city, the development of residences was the immediate goal. The PDC owned most of the land south of Highway 111, on which it developed a series of residential units beginning in 1946. These units varied in character, with development ranging from smaller vacation homes to large estates, but they were all subject to significant oversight from the PDC.

Residential development was primarily focused on the southern slope of Palm Desert during the period (which was owned/subdivided by the PDC), in addition to the Palm Village area, which was also expanded with additional subdivision units. A selection of smaller residential subdivisions like Panorama Ranch and Palm Dell were also subdivided, but development was sparse in these tracts.

The PDC maintained a variety of requirements and regulations to ensure that development in the community met a high standard. Unlike numerous other Coachella Valley developers of the postwar period, the PDC (except in a few instances) did not develop residential stock themselves, they sold lots within their exclusive subdivision. To purchase a lot in Palm Desert, one had to first submit an application to the Palm Desert Community Association, which consisted of PDC executives and other local

[90] City of La Quinta, "Historic Resource Survey and Context Statement" (prepared by Urbana Preservation & Planning, LLC for the City of La Quinta Design & Development Department, April 2023), 35-36.
[91] Leuschner, "Sellable Dream, Part II," 2022.
[92] "Palm Desert Sold to New Developers," *Los Angeles Times,* August 30, 1956.

stakeholders.[93] Then, in order to construct a home, a prospective homebuilder had to meet the PDC's architectural restrictions, which required a minimum square footage (depending on the unit) and suggested a "modern Ranch" design.

Thus, as was intended, much of the residential development in Palm Desert followed a high-class seasonal model. The homes were larger in size, typically Mid-Century Modern or Ranch in style, and intended for seasonal occupancy. As one editorial explained at the time,

> Architectural plans for some of [Palm Desert's homes] are 'out of this world' – the very latest in modern desert design for 'real living' is incorporated into the plans, with unique outdoor and indoor patios – the latest in heating and cooling systems. Although planned for comfort, the true desert atmosphere and the beautiful panoramic view of the entire desert and snow-capped mountains is preserved.
>
> One of the outstanding features of Palm Desert is the location – situated at the intersection of Palms-to-Pines Highway, with a gradual slope upward toward the mountains. It is planned so that every lot has a view that nothing can obstruct—truly an ideal desert community for the discriminating to build their desert dream home.[94]

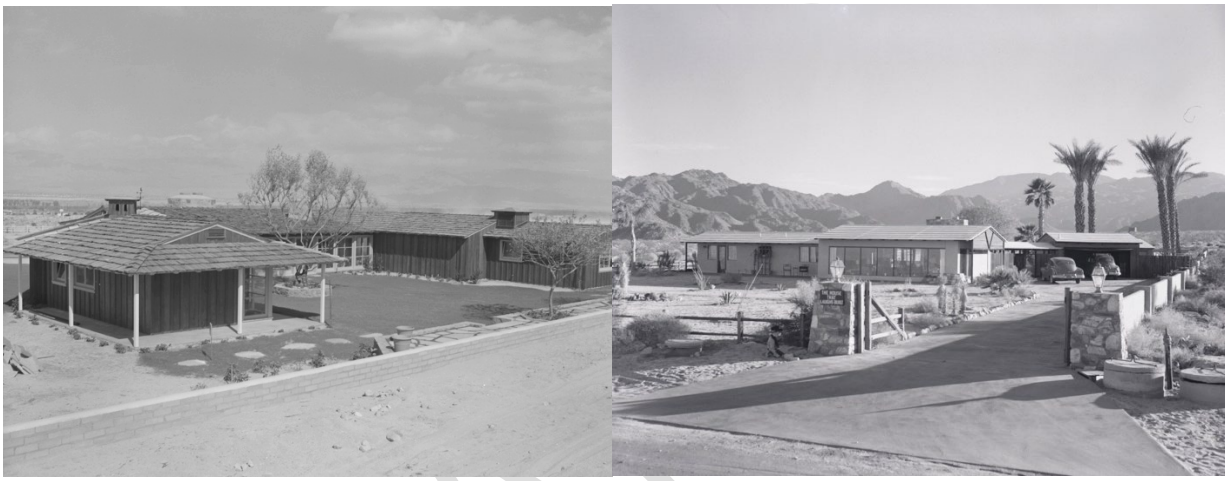
The epitome of this was the neighborhood known as the Shadow Mountain Estates, the portion of the subdivision which was immediately adjacent to the Shadow Mountain Club and contained the largest estate lots.[95] Residents of the Shadow Mountain Estates were among the most prominent of the community, consisting of the PDC's primary investors, a variety of businessmen, and even entertainers like Ole Olsen or politicians like Washington's former Governor Monrad Wallgren. The PDC widely publicized these residents and their homes in newspaper advertisements, sales materials, and general editorials on the community.[96]

The first two residences built on PDC land were those of Cliff and Carl Henderson. Designed by architect Henry Eggers, who came from the firm Kaufmann, Lippincott, and Eggers that was responsible for PDC's various buildings, the two homes were designed in a modern Ranch style in the Shadow Mountain Estates neighborhood. The Henderson brothers were not the only PDC investors quick to develop their own homes. Leonard Firestone, the tire magnate and prominent investor, built his William Pereira-designed home nearby in 1950, designed in a grand Mid-Century Modern style.

These were soon followed by several prominent homes designed by known architects. One of the first was the Herbert Pritzlaff residence (1947) designed by architect Cliff May, noted as the "father of the Ranch house." The Pritzlaff residence was also landscaped by Tommy Tomson, who, in addition to his

[93] Original copies of Palm Desert Community Association forms, Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert.
[94] "Famous Names to Build at Palm Desert," *Palm Spring Limelight-News,* January 25, 1947.
[95] Shadow Mountain Estates was not a legal subdivision unit, rather it was an informally designated portion of Palm Desert Unit #1 touted by PDC materials.
[96] "Every Home is in Complete Harmony with the Desert Setting," *Sun Spots 5th Anniversary Home Review,* 1952.

work for the PDC, also landscaped a number of its early and prominent homes.[97] Another architect, H.E. Weston, who specialized in estate homes, built a selection of the earliest Shadow Mountain Estates homes. These included the residence for entertainer Ole Olsen (no longer extent), industrialist Walter Botthof (1947), which was the most expensive and publicized of the earliest PDC homes, and a selection of spec homes developed by Weston himself. Other designed residences included the Jascha Veissi house (1951) by Frederick Monhoff, the Charles McVey house by Herbert Burns (1949), and two homes by prominent Palm Springs architect Albert Frey, the Adrian Pelletier house (1950) and the Jason Joy house (1950). All these examples, like nearly all homes built on PDC land, were designed to some extent in a modern style.



Two exemplary Shadow Mountain Estates homes: the Herbert Pritzlaff house (left, significantly altered) designed by Cliff May and landscaped by Tommy Tomson and the Ole Olsen house (right, no longer existent) designed by H.E. Weston. (Shadow Mountain Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

While Palm Springs had risen in prominence in part to its close association with Hollywood and celebrity, who built and rented custom homes in its estate subdivisions, such was not the case with Palm Desert. The crowd attracted by the PDC, even if moneyed, represented a more typical affluent business class. One exception to this was William Boyd, known better by his moniker and television role "Hopalong Cassidy," built a Mid-Century Modern vacation home in the Shadow Mountain Estates area in 1955. Boyd would maintain a prominent role in the community, frequently appearing at community events and the Shadow Mountain Club, and later developed other properties within the community.

The architect most responsible for the design of the residences sprouting up on PDC's land, however, was Walter S. White. Never having attended formal architecture school, White instead learned architecture as a designer at Douglas Aircraft Company, and in the offices of architects such as the Leopold Fischer, Harwell Hamilton Harris, Rudolph Schindler, and finally the Palm Springs firm of Clark & Frey.[98] White split off from Clark & Frey in 1947 and set up his own office in Palm Desert, where he became the community's primary architect and allied himself with the PDC, who widely publicized the stark Mid-

[97] Steven Keylon, "The Glamorous Gardens of Tommy Tomson: Part Two," *Eden* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2016): 8-17.
[98] Volker M. Welter and Walter S. White, *Walter S. White: Inventions in Mid-Century Architecture* (Santa Barbara: Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California Santa Barbara, 2015), 13-15.

Century Modern homes he was filling their neighborhoods with. In addition to homes in Palm Desert at large, White was responsible for a significant portion of the earliest homes in Shadow Mountain Estates.[99] These included the E.W. Stewart house (1951), the Claude S. Voile house (1948), the Charles Milliken house (1950), the Tom Brown house I (1951), and Tom Brown house II (1952). Numerous of these White-designed houses were featured in regional and national architecture magazines.

The prominent Palm Desert architect Walter S. White standing over an unrealized renovation of the Shadow Mountain Club (Clifford Henderson Collection, HSPD); the E.W. Stewart house designed by White in the Shadow Mountain Estates (Walter S. White Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, UC Santa Barbara)

While these estate homes were proof to the PDC that its development campaign was working, other sections of its subdivision were not as exclusive. In particular, PDC's units #4 and #6 were intentionally planned for more affordable residences, both seasonal and long-term, even if they only made up a marginal portion of PDC's land base. Unit #4, the neighborhood south of El Paseo and east of Portola Avenue, was intended to be more family oriented. In the middle of it was the land donated by PDC for the Palm Desert School and Palm Desert Community Church, and lots were smaller and zoned for a slightly higher density (apartments and duplexes were allowed). Of all the land subdivided by the PDC, this was the neighborhood most likely to house year-round residents. Unit #6, the neighborhood west of Highway 74 and south of El Paseo, was similarly constituted of smaller lots, although it still maintained a seasonal character.[100]

Once again, White was responsible for the design of numerous homes in Unit #4 and #6. In 1950, the developer Melvin Bradford approached the PDC with a proposal to develop the "Palm Desert Metro Homes," a tract of smaller, White-designed homes in Unit #6. Bradford was ultimately turned down by the PDC because they did not want the appearance of a mass-produced tract within the community's

[99] Welter, *Walter S. White,* 41-42.
[100] Leuschner, "Sellable Dream, Part II," 2022.

borders.[101] Ultimately, Bradford only developed a handful of the Metro Homes, although White went on to design a selection of other homes in the neighborhood. Somewhat like the spec-built model of the Metro Homes, builder Charles Gibbs hired White to design two houses in Unit #6 which he then sold (one of which is a CoPD Landmark). While the White-designed homes in Unit #6 were its most notable, around a dozen other homes were built during the PDC's tenure, typically in a more vernacular Mid-Century Modern style.

One of only a few of the Palm Desert Homes developed by Metro Homes in PDC Unit #6 and designed by Walter White. (Walter S. White Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, UC Santa Barbara)

The PDC advertised many of these Unit #6 homes as proof that the community had lots and homes available for a variety of homeowners. Despite this, the development of Unit #6 was never as complete or publicized as the more exclusive Shadow Mountain Estates. Only a couple dozen homes were constructed and adjoining subdivision units – intended to be as affordable as Unit #6 – were graded but never paved or opened for sales by the PDC. In the Shadow Mountain Estates neighborhood, even when homes were built for speculative purposes, they were custom-built and designed. One example of this was the Stanthony Corporation's custom-built "Hospitality House" (1956), a Mid-Century Modern model home designed by architect William Bray that was intended to show off the corporation's kitchen appliances and was featured in a selection of national publications and sales materials.[102]

Unit #4 also came to consist of around two dozen homes and apartments. Once again, White was responsible for the design of a handful of homes, including the Harvey Ackman house (1952), Ruth Criswell house (1949, no longer extent), and Fred Johnson house (1952, no longer extent), but most were vernacular Mid-Century Modern homes. A few apartment buildings and duplexes were also developed in Unit #4, most notably the Tropical Garden Apartments (1949) and a set of Moderne duplexes developed

[101] Welter, *Walter S. White,* 46.

[102] Brochure for Stanthony Corporation's "Hospitality House," Clifford W. Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert; "Three-Day Open House Set for Preview of Stanthony Hospitality House," *Desert Sun,* March 23, 1956.

by a woman named Vee M. Bear on the corner of Lantana Drive and Fairway Drive.[103] Unit #4 was also adjacent to the Desert Magazine properties, and in 1950 Randall Henderson built his first house (existent, CoPD Landmark #7) on this land. Designed in a Spanish Revival style, the home embodied Randall's desert-minded ethos, and was published in *Desert Magazine* for its strides to adapt to the region's harsh environmental conditions.

Two of Palm Desert's early multi-family properties: the Tropical Gardens Apartments (left) in Unit #4 and the Late Moderne interior of the Edith Eddy Ward duplex (right, later Sun and Shadow Hotel Apartments) designed by Herbert Burns. (Shadow Mountain Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert).

Multi-family housing also existed in other parts of Palm Desert, though it was mostly built as hotel apartments for the seasonal population. An exception to this was the duplex that realtor Edith Eddy Ward built for herself and her mother in 1947, designed in a Late Moderne style by Palm Springs architect Herbert Burns. In 1950, Ward sold the duplex to a couple who hired Burns to expand it into the Sun and Shadow Hotel Apartments, which offered both short-term and long-term accommodations for seasonal visitors to Palm Desert.[104] Sun and Shadow was located on San Luis Rey Avenue just off of El Paseo, and it was on these streets – the lower portion of Unit #1, Shadow Mountain Drive and below – where a selection of hotel apartments were developed.

It was also in the area of multi-family housing that the PDC broke the mold and developed housing of their own. In 1949, seeking alternative pathways to profit, the PDC sought to capitalize on the seasonal economy of their creation and conceptualized the "Sun Lodges," a group of homes on El Paseo. Predating the emergence of the condominium by several years, the Sun Lodges were small, freestanding houses with communal facilities and maintenance services. Designed by White and planned by Tommy Tomson, they were Mid-Century Modern in style and an immediate success.[105] The PDC developed successive sections of the Sun Lodges between 1949 and 1953, many of which were sold to patrons of the Shadow Mountain Club who desired a seasonal residence but did not want to build one of their own. As commercial development progressed in the El Paseo region in proceeding decades, however, the Sun Lodges fell into disrepair and were ultimately demolished.

---

[103] "Hotels, Lodges, and Bungalow Apartments at Palm Desert," *Sun Spots 5th Anniversary Home Review,* 1952.
[104] Steven Keylon, *The Design of Herbert Burns* (Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2018), 53-55.
[105] Welter, *Walter S. White,* 44.

The Sun Lodges as designed by Walter S. White and developed by the Palm Desert Corporation. (Walter S. White Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, UC Santa Barbara)

What Palm Desert accomplished with the development of its residential neighborhoods was the establishment of a population base, albeit seasonal, and the cultivation of the image of a refined, upper-class community. An externality of this, however, was the opportunity for surrounding subdivisions to capitalize on this image, which they did. Palm Village, which was purchased by the Mollin Investment Company in 1942, underwent a new expansion campaign and was similarly built out during the immediate postwar period. Despite the claims of its advertising materials, this development was not nearly as controlled as that built on PDC's land. Palm Village was intended from its inception to be an affordable resort community, and it came to have a diverse mixture of both small and large homes, apartment buildings, commercial lodges, and architecturally significant homes.

The majority of homes in Palm Village were small, more vernacular homes built by both seasonal and year-round residents alike. Unlike the PDC, Palm Village had been developed by multiple parties, and it was not as concerned with the promulgation of a Modernist architectural vocabulary. Its homes were typically humble Spanish Revival, Ranch, or Minimal Traditional designs, although Moderne and Mid-Century Modern examples can be found in the neighborhood. Homes were typically built by individual homeowners, though the Mollin Investment Company did build at least one model home, located on the southeast corner of San Juan Ave and De Anza Way. Lots were smaller, more affordable, and after the Mollin Investment Company liquidated in 1948, the neighborhood became even more unrestricted, eventually becoming the de facto neighborhood for Palm Desert's working class and people of color.

Census data indicates that very few non-white people lived in Palm Village-Palm Desert during the PDC era, however, likely as a result of racially restrictive covenants and other methods of intimidation and discrimination. In 1950, the census for the area enumerated several Filipino workers at the Desert Air Hotel, a Black couple, the Thompsons, at Pasatiempo Ranch (where Jesse Thompson worked as a foreman), and a handful of Mexican-born farm workers on local date ranches, but everyone else was

white.[106] The subsequent development of Palm Village took place under I.C. Stearns and Ralph Hoffman's Palm Village Land Company, which purchased the remainder of the Gillette Ranch for expansion.[107]

The employee housing (demolished) built by the Palm Desert Corporation on a parcel north of Highway 111. (Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Employee lodging was another category of affordable housing that was present but rare in the 1940s and 1950s. The PDC built employee lodging (no longer existent) for its workers on land north of Highway 111, but it does not appear that it was in operation for very long, nor is it clear if its non-White workers (of which there many) lived there. Similarly, the Shadow Mountain Stables (no longer existent) also contained a selection of small apartments, typically rented to seasonal workers.

Although the majority of homes built in Palm Village between 1946 and 1956 were more vernacular and less notable than those of the overshadowing Palm Desert, a selection of significant residences was also constructed. The Maryon E. Toole residence (1946) by Austrian-born architect Rudolph Schindler is perhaps the most architecturally significant building in Palm Desert at large, and among those of the entire Coachella Valley (CoPD Landmark #6).[108] Schindler, a disciple of Frank Lloyd Wright and a host of notable European Modernists, designed the small house using his philosophies of "Space Architecture," which sought to achieve multi-dimensionality and complex interior spatial conditions. Completed in 1948,

[106] U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1950 Enumeration Data, accessed December 2024 at ancestry.com. Complicating the demographic picture is the fact that Latinos were often enumerated as white – this was the case for the farm workers noted in 1950, whose ethnic heritage is denoted by their place of birth.
[107] HSPD, "Palm Desert Milestones," 40; Orbison, "Background of Palm Village Is Told By Writer."
[108] Esther McCoy, *Five California Architects* (New York: Reinhold, 1960), 190.

Toole lived in the house for about twenty years, during which time the surrounding neighborhood almost completely filled in. The Toole house was an anomalous and eccentric design amidst the other Palm Village homes.

Similarly, Walter White's design for the Miles C. Bates house (CoPD Landmark #8) in 1954 was singular within the context of Palm Village. For the 800-square-foot house, White designed a patented roof system to accomplish a wave-like roof (hence the home's colloquial name as the "Wave House").[109] The Bates house was sited in a less developed portion of Palm Village that was formerly part of the King Gillette Ranch and was surrounded by date groves. White also designed a selection of smaller houses in the Palm Village neighborhood, including a cluster of spec homes developed by Charles Gibbs (who had built two White-designed houses in PDC's Unit #6) just down the street from the Bates house. Both the Toole house (1946) and the Bates house (1954) were small, built on an economical budget, commissioned by eccentric clients, and represented unique and inventive strains of Modernism Ultimately, neither of these homes would have been possible under the PDC's architectural restrictions.

In Palm Village, the Miles C. Bates "Wave" house (left, 1954) designed by Walter S. White (left) and the Maryon Toole house (right, 1946) designed by Rudolph Schindler. (Walter S. White Papers and Rudolph M. Schindler Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, UC Santa Barbara)

While Palm Village existed prior to the PDC's entry into the area, other residential subdivisions emerged during this period, capitalizing on the same Coachella Valley-wide context of development and tourism, but also on the publicity of Palm Desert itself. One of these subdivisions was Panorama Ranch, a subdivision attached to the PDC's Unit #4 neighborhood (the more affordable, year-round oriented unit) that was developed by engineer-turned-developer John Harnish. Planning for the subdivision began as early as 1946, and in 1949 Panorama Ranch opened with the intention of being a seasonal subdivision much like Palm Desert itself, but with smaller and more affordable lots.[110] If anything, the character of Panorama Ranch was an extension of the directly adjacent PDC Unit #4. Harnish laid out and paved all the streets, at the center of which was a communal swimming pool and a "Sports Corral" with recreational facilities.

[109] Welter, *Walter S. White,* 64-65.
[110] "New Subdivision Now Under Way East of Village," *Desert Sun,* January 7, 1949.

Harnish was among a selection of landowner types in the 1940s and 1950s that had purchased desert land when it was affordable, holding it for the possibility of future development or value appreciation. This type of landowner/developer stretched back to King C. Gillette's time, and others from the 1940s included Raymond Wilson (who owned a lucrative parcel at the center of the PDC's plans), Amos Odell, and Philip Boyd. Boyd, who owned a large swath of land including Deep Canyon, even filed for his own subdivision adjacent to Unit #4 and Panorama Ranch in 1946, named Deep Canyon Ranch, although it consisted of only a few streets and did not open until 1956.[111] Even then, only a couple of houses were built.

Development in Panorama Ranch during the first years of its existence largely languished. Harnish built a set of three homes designed by Rancho Mirage-based architect Barry Frost in a Mid-Century Modern style which were sold as spec homes. One of them, on the northwest corner of Panorama Drive and Peppergrass Street, which was more Moderne than Ranch, was known as the "Steelite Home" since it was built with prefabricated steel panels. An executive of the Steel Lite Corporation, the company which partnered to construct the home, was noted for landing on the roof with a helicopter during the home's construction to test the supposedly superior structural qualities.[112]

The handful of homes built by individual homeowners in Panorama Ranch were very similar to those of Palm Village in that they were small, designed by anonymous architects, and more vernacular in style. Given that sales and construction in the subdivision were relatively unsuccessful, in 1953 Harnish developed a set of ten "Pool-Side Homes" around the formerly communal pool and Sports Corral. Clearly following the precedent set by the PDC's Sun Lodges, the homes were small, intended for a seasonal clientele, and offered maintenance services.[113] Thus, both the Sun Lodges and Pool-Side Homes developments show early attempts in Palm Desert to diversify its housing, but typically with its seasonal residents in mind.

Concurrent to PDC's operations, the rancher Amos Odell was developing his own plans for a subdivision named Palm Dell Estates north of Highway 111 and west of Palm Village. Some of the earliest advertisements for Palm Dell Estates situated it within the "Palm Springs area" or "Palm Valley" (a generic term for the mid-valley region) since Palm Desert had yet to be established as its own community. Palm Dell Estates opened in the beginning of 1947, shortly after Palm Desert's opening, and was envisioned as a large resort subdivision with a central pool and recreational area.[114] Ultimately, only a handful of houses were built in Palm Dell – even less so than Panorama Ranch – and only a quarter of the initial street plan was ever realized. The small quantity of houses which were built were very much in the simpler and more affordable character of Palm Village.

Its owner, Amos Odell, however, still owned a considerable amount of acreage adjacent to Palm Dell on what is now College of the Desert. Odell was one of the last ranchers in the Palm Desert area to cultivate

[111] [Notice for Deep Canyon Ranch], *Desert Sun,* September 20, 1946; [Deep Canyon announcement], *Desert Sun,* January 10, 1956.
[112] "Lands on Home," *Desert Sun,* March 11, 1949.
[113] Advertisement for "Pool-Side Homes," *Desert Sun,* February 12, 1953.
[114] Advertisement for Palm Dell Estates, *Desert Sun,* February 7, 1947.

his land with date palms and other crops, which had been a standard practice in the area starting in the 1930s. He built himself his own ranch house in 1946, a stark Late Moderne house (now part of the COD campus) that has been attributed to architect Herbert Burns.[115] The Odell Ranch House was essentially the last house of its type built as a new era of development settled over the Palm Desert area.

The years between 1946 and 1956 represented the emergence of Palm Desert, its first wave of housing development, and the establishment of its character. Its housing stock, however, was relatively diverse between the properties developed in Palm Desert, Palm Village, Panorama Ranch, and other tracts. This central chapter to Palm Desert came to a close in 1956, however, with the liquidation of the PDC to the Palm Desert Sales Company, who was largely concerned with selling property and did not go to the extreme lengths to cultivate a "refined" desert community in the way that the PDC had.[116]

While the four aforementioned subdivisions supplied the most residential development during this period, a number of other residential subdivisions were actively being conceived by 1956, including what would become Silver Spur Ranch, Shadow Hills Estates, and Palm Desert Highlands. By the end of the 1950s, Palm Desert had an actual population base (even if it was mostly seasonal), several of its own realtors and developers, and an established character. Moreover, the greater Coachella Valley was undergoing the greatest phase of its postwar transformation in the late mid-to-late 1950s, as thousands of resort homes were actively being developed in Palm Springs and other communities. By being one of the first to capitalize on the postwar context, the PDC had almost come too early. It laid the foundations for Palm Desert's future growth – which was to be expansive – but it was never successful according to the parameters it had set for itself. The PDC had succeeded in incentivizing the construction of well over a hundred homes on its own land and had set the stage for the development of surrounding subdivisions, but a majority of its lots were undeveloped or unsold. Although it owned more land that was slated for more residential subdivision, it did not develop or open additional units after its initial opening. This land, and the unsold lots within its established units, would undergo great residential development in the following chapter of Palm Desert's development, even if it wasn't always on the PDC's terms.

Evaluation Guidelines: Residential Development, 1946-1956

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of residential development in Palm Desert in the immediate postwar period. The new town witnessed a great increase in new residential construction at this time, transforming it from a small, peripheral community into a full-fledged seasonal resort destination. The Palm Desert Corporation was the primary shaper of Palm Desert's residential built environment at this time, establishing requirements to maintain the desired level of architectural quality. There are numerous examples of single-family and multi-family residential resources associated with this theme, most of which were built as modest dwellings for seasonal or year-round residents. More distinctive and architecturally articulated examples of custom homes designed by local and regional architects are also relatively common. Resources that are significant under this theme likely consist of both individual properties, and concentrations of dwellings that are not individually

[115] Don Cameron, "Palm Valley," *Desert Sun,* July 19, 1946.
[116] "Palm Desert Sold to New Developers," *Los Angeles Times,* August 30, 1956.

distinctive but collectively convey patterns and trends associated with postwar development in Palm Desert.

Associated Property Types

Residential

- Single-family residence
- Multi-family residence
- Residential community building/clubhouse
- Planned community amenity (pool, golf course)
- Subdivision/planned community planning feature
- Historic district

Property Type Summary

Residential development in postwar Palm Desert consisted predominantly of low-scale single-family residences with lesser amounts of low-scale multi-family residences. Significant resources associated with this theme are likely expressed both as individual properties and in the form of historic districts. There may also be features related to subdivision and planned community development, including entrance markers, signage, shared amenities, and landscaping.

Geographic Location

Citywide. Residences from this period are scattered across the city, with denser concentrations south of Highway 111/the existing Palm Village.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for this context begins in 1946, with the end of World War II and the beginning of the Hendersons' planning, and ends in 1956, with the liquidation of the Palm Desert Corporation.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As resources associated with this theme are common, the integrity of eligible properties should be quite high. A slightly greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a building must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements

A/1/A, F[117]	An **individual property** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with residential development in Palm Desert during this period; or • As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	A resource that is significant for its association with historic patterns of events or as the site of a significant historic event is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association.[118] A residential property from this period should retain integrity of location, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. A resource that has lost integrity of setting may still be eligible. A property that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. A resource is generally not eligible if it retains some basic features conveying form and massing, but has lost the majority of features that characterized its appearance during its historical period.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1946-1956), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

A/1/A, E, F	A **historic district** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of residential	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority (51%) of the components within the district boundaries must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. Integrity of design, setting,	To be eligible under this theme, a historic district should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1946-1956), and

[117] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).
[118] National Register Bulletin 15.

	development in Palm Desert during this period	and feeling must be strongly present in the district overall, and it should convey a strong sense of time and place. A contributing building must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. 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 massing, form, roofline, or fenestration patterns of an individual building, alter the original design intent, or that are not reversible may result in non-contributing status for an individual building. In order for a historic district to retain integrity, the majority (51% or more) of its component parts should contribute to its historic significance.	• Retain the majority (51% or more) of the contributors dating to the period of significance.

B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A resource that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1946-1956), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and

			• Be directly associated with the notable person's productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

Theme: Commercial Development, 1946-1956

Although Palm Desert largely came into existence during the late 1940s and early 1950s, its development was largely residential. Commercial development would take several years to mature, mostly due to the fact that Palm Desert did not have a sizeable year-round population to make such development viable. Although Palm Desert did succeed in growing its base of residents, its population numbered only a few hundred people at the height of season and shrank to a diminutive number during its blistering summers.[119] This unstable population prevented any substantial commercial development from occurring during this period, although such neighborhoods as Palm Village (which housed a more year-round demographic) had existing businesses that the area's residents patronized.

With exceptions, the little commercial development that occurred between 1946 and 1956 catered to the needs of a seasonal population. There were essentially two categories of commercial development: recreational businesses activated during season (e.g., lodges, apartment hotels, private clubs) and service businesses (e.g., real estate sales offices, auto-related services, architecture and interior design offices). When the Palm Desert Corporation (PDC) began construction in 1946, there were essentially no commercial businesses to speak of, though some commercial development was getting underway in Palm Village.

[119] This pattern is illustrated in the 1950 census data, which enumerated residents of the area in late May – numerous notes show seasonal residents' permanent residences to be elsewhere (usually in California). The April 1950 telephone directory for Palm Village-Palm Desert lists 101 residents, most of whom are presumed to have been permanent. "Telephone Directory for Palm Desert Palm Village" (Coachella Valley Home Telephone and Telegraph Company, April 1950). On file at the HSPD.

An early view of El Paseo, Palm Desert's downtown commercial strip, shortly after its paving in 1946. (Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

In its planning for the community, the PDC made provisions for a commercial region of the town at the base of the subdivision, directly adjacent and parallel to Highway 111. A central downtown street named "El Paseo" was imagined to be the center of all commercial activity. Randall Henderson, advising his brother Cliff and the PDC's land planner Tommy Tomson (who also happened to be his brother-in-law), suggested the segregation of two commercial types in the commercial layout of Palm Desert. Given that Palm Desert was located directly on busy Highway 111, Henderson sought to prevent the incursion of highway-oriented businesses (e.g., service stations, fast food) into Palm Desert's El Paseo.[120] With this advice, Tomson planned Palm Desert's downtown commercial district to create a Highway 111 frontage that would be dedicated to highway-oriented businesses, complete with a frontage road and angled parking spaces, while directly behind it was El Paseo, the city's downtown commercial district. Buffering the commercial businesses of Highway 111 and those of El Paseo was an interior parking area that could be used by patrons of both types of businesses. This arrangement exists to this day, although the character of businesses facing 111 and those facing El Paseo was never as divided as intended.

The PDC laid out El Paseo at the same time it paved the rest of the city's streets between 1946 and 1947. Constructed with landscaped medians, the PDC (particularly Cliff Henderson) had envisioned the street as an upscale downtown, with retail shopping and dining similar to the commercial thoroughfares of high-class cities like Santa Barbara or Beverly Hills. The earliest vision for the street as conceptualized by

[120] Letter from Randall Henderson to Cliff Henderson, July 13, 1945, Randall Henderson Papers, Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley (facsimiles available at the Historical Society of Palm Desert).

Randall Henderson was for a typical western downtown, with arcades used to combat the desert heat. There had initially been plans for an "arts and crafts" village to flank El Paseo, developed by a partnership between Desert Magazine and PDC, although this plan fell through as PDC increasingly devoted itself to the provision of a high-end resort city.[121] The PDC put up signs on El Paseo that advertised commercial property for such businesses as an apparel shop, drug store, or soda fountain. This, however, was largely presumptuous, and development was nonexistent on El Paseo in those earliest years.

Some of the early commercial structures built by the Palm Desert Corporation, including a shopping center along Highway 111 (left, demolished) and the sales office (right, demolished). (Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

The very first commercial businesses in Palm Desert (outside of Palm Village) were a group of three modular structures (no longer extant) erected by the PDC fronting Highway 111, containing a date shop, antique store, sales office, and later, the first post office. It was here that the PDC hosted the grand opening of the Palm Desert subdivision on November 16, 1946, where a large crowd congregated to hear the pitch of Cliff Henderson and his salesmen.[122] Between 1946 and 1947, numerous structures were built by the PDC and its affiliated dedicated to real estate operations. Carl Henderson, a real estate developer and Henderson sibling, was commissioned to handle the PDC's sales campaign, and built himself an office (1947, no longer extant) designed by modern architect William Cody near the corner of Highway 111 and Portola. The Carl Henderson office was what he called "Duplex Shops," and contained two commercial units, each with an apartment at back.[123] The PDC also built a more substantial sales office in 1948 designed by Henry Eggers (no longer extant) at the junction of Highway 111 and 74. Although the PDC was the most prominent land sales company in the area, other subdivisions like Panorama Ranch, Palm Dell, and Palm Village also maintained their own on-site sales offices.

[121] Prospectus for Palm Desert, ca. 1946, Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert.
[122] "Palm Desert Project Underway," *Palm Springs Limelight News,* November 15, 1946.
[123] "New Style Shops Go Up at Palm Desert," *Desert Sun,* October 24, 1947.

Walter S. White's sleek office along Highway 111, featuring his classic mitered corner window. (Walter S. White Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, UC Santa Barbara)

As the community grew, businesses relating to the construction, design, and maintenance of residences were the ones to first appear in Palm Desert. The contractor R.P. Shea, whose firm was responsible for the construction of most of Palm Desert's earliest buildings, took over a small building built by the PDC. It was there that the architect Walter S. White also maintained his earliest office.[124] In 1949, however, White built his own Mid-Century Modern office building (significantly altered) on the Palm Village side of Highway 111. The design was a sleek facade sheathed in corrugated aluminum interrupted by a dramatic corner window (one of White's specialties) and was among the more significant commercial structures in Palm Desert's history. Just down the highway, White designed a building in 1954 (existent) for the Valley Lumber Company, a Palm Springs-based business which supplied the building materials for many of Palm Desert's earliest homes. Similarly, Kelley's Furnishings, a business based in Palm Springs, constructed a Mid-Century Modern furniture showroom that opened in 1951, but soon went out of business.[125]

A scattering of other service businesses was also constructed during this period. In the late 1940s, one of the first to open was a Union Oil gas station at the corner of Highway 111 and San Luis Rey Ave, a stark Mid-Century Modern building (no longer extant) that was essentially the only service station in the immediate vicinity. The station was built by a man named R. C. Moore, but became noted for its later owner, Jerry Malone, who assumed an active role in the community. On the adjacent corner, the Bank of America built a branch (no longer extant) which opened in 1956. Early publicity noted that the Mid-Century Modern bank structure was to "conform with the architectural pattern established by the Palm Desert community," which, like its residential architecture, followed a modern style.[126] Mid-Century

[124] Welter, *Walter S. White,* 34.
[125] "Kelley's Opens Smart New Shop in Palm Desert Area," *Desert Sun,* December 20, 1951.
[126] "Bank of America Starts Building at Palm Desert," *Desert Sun,* August 22, 1955.

Modernism was integral to the promulgation of a new era of leisure in the Coachella Valley at large, and Palm Desert's commercial structures were almost entirely designed in Mid-Century Modern styles. They were not the Spanish Revival structures commonly found in Southern California's other resort communities like Santa Barbara, Avalon, or even 1930s Palm Springs, for that matter.

GOING UP—New professional building being erected on Palm Village avenue in Palm Village.

Rendering for the Palm Village Professional Building, a typical commercial plaza of mid-century Palm Desert (Desert Sun)

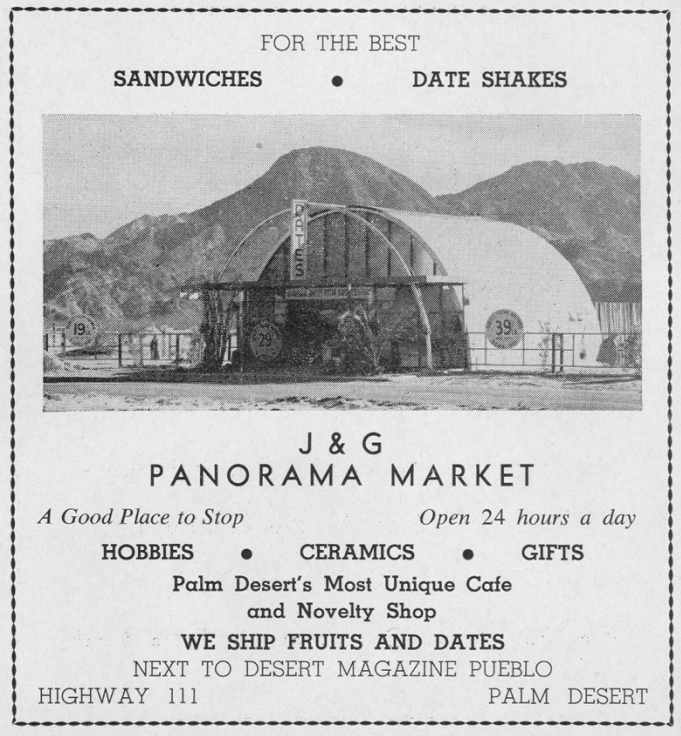
The majority of commercial activity in Palm Desert was centered in a selection of small-scale shopping centers and professional buildings that opened in the late 1940s and early 1950s. These developments were typically U-shaped buildings around a central courtyard, with small commercial spaces for professional offices, shops, and in some instances, restaurants. The small population did not allow for large freestanding commercial businesses, but these small shopping centers were affordable and allowed for maximum flexibility in business types.

The first of these to be developed was the Palm Village Professional Building located on the northern side of Highway 111 adjacent to the Palm Village Market. Built in 1947 by a local physician who maintained his offices there, the building was designed in a Moderne style by architect Hector Tate.[127] In the next few years, a selection of professional offices rented space in the building, including a selection of physicians and the local architect Barry Frost. While the PDC had constructed their own shopping center in 1946 (the set of four modular buildings), it was mostly decommissioned in the immediate years, and a few of the structures were relocated and used for other purposes. As early as 1949, Cliff Henderson and his business partner Leonard Firestone had made plans to construct a Mid-Century Modern shopping center designed

[127] "Construction of New Professional Building Begun in Palm Village," *Desert Sun,* October 10, 1947.

by architect William Pereira as an extension of their Firecliff Lodge, although the venture never materialized.

The first formalized shopping center to open on the land owned by the PDC was the Palm Desert Patio Shops, developed by May L. Hanson in 1951. The six-unit commercial development consisted of two Mid-Century Modern buildings designed by architect Walter S. White (significantly altered) which housed the Palm Desert Pharmacy and its soda fountain, the offices of prominent real estate agent Edith Eddy Ward, a construction office, and a few gift shops.[128] The complex, located on the south side of Highway 111 at the corner of Larkspur Lane, became the main shopping center for Palm Desert and was home to a large variety of businesses in the following years. It was also at the end of 1951 that the Kelley's Furnishings showroom opened in Palm Desert about one block to the west, at the corner of Highway 111 and present-day San Pablo Avenue.[129] The business closed in shortly after its opening, and the building was purchased by Cliff Henderson, who turned it into another shopping center named "The Center," which housed his offices and a rotating selection of other businesses (no longer extant).[130]



The Panorama Market, hosted in a repurposed WW2 era Quonset hut. (Desert Sun)

While most businesses occupied small spaces in these shopping centers, a few others built their own freestanding buildings. The most memorable of these was the Panorama Market, constructed around

[128] "Patio Shops at Palm Desert to Open Tomorrow," *Desert Sun,* September 28, 1951.
[129] "Kelley's Opens Smart New Shop in Palm Desert Area," *Desert Sun,* December 20, 1951.
[130] The Center (as owned by Cliff Henderson) should not be confused with the Palm Desert Shopping Center developed by R.K. Hanson in 1956, a block to the east, which also was known at times as "The Center" and is still existent.

1949 at the entrance to the Panorama Ranch subdivision, the corner of Highway 111 and Panorama Drive.[131] The structure (significantly altered) was a repurposed Quonset hut that sold dates, fruit, and gifts, much like the other gift shops in Palm Desert. Though it sold food products, Panorama Market was primarily targeted towards a touristic clientele and not the kind of market intended to service a year-round community. Panorama Market also built a set of Pueblo Revival buildings in the early 1950s behind the main structure, and appeared to have used them as both commercial space and apartments.

The main grocery store for the Palm Desert area, the Palm Village Market, opened its new building in November 1946. Developed by Mollin Investment, the market was managed by Bob Keedy (locally noted for his namesake diner that he later opened).[132] As noted in the 1910-1945 context, this market may have been founded as early as 1944, but its original building is not extant. The 1946 building (74104 Highway 111, extant though altered) was a simple brick-clad structure designed with hints of the Moderne style and had two storefronts. The market was opened around a month after the official opening of Palm Desert itself, which did not have a grocery market of its own. Palm Desert did, however, have Peacock's Palm Desert Bottle House (no longer extant), Elmer Peacock's small liquor store that opened in 1947 on Highway 111 and was noted for having the first neon sign in Palm Desert.[133]

MID-DESERT MARKETING. This is the new modern market erected in Palm Village which makes shopping easy for desert residents along the Palm Springs-Indio highway. The Palm Village Market which opened Nov. 9, is managed by Bob Keedy and owned by the Mollin Investment company.

The Palm Village Market, the main grocery store for the area. (Palm Springs Limelight-News)

The Desert Magazine headquarters was another hub of Palm Desert's commercial activity. The publication had been the creation of Randall Henderson, who founded the business in 1937 with his friend J. Wilson McKenney. Until the end of Randall's leadership in 1958, the Desert Magazine attracted a

[131] "Panorama Ranch Progress Rapid," *Desert Sun,* February 25, 1949.
[132] [Untitled article about opening of Palm Village Market], *Palm Springs Limelight-News,,* December 14, 1946.
[133] "Peacock Puts Up His Sign in Palm Desert," *Desert Sun,* August 29, 1947.

passionate crowd of subscribers who adored its articles on desert flora and fauna, historical lore, hiking trails, and anything have to do with the desert or desert living. It was the search for a new location for the publication's headquarters that had led Randall to the land which would become Palm Desert in the first place. Since Desert Magazine promised a certain amount of economic activity, the PDC provided the publication with a forty-acre parcel of land. In the earliest urban plans, the headquarters was to be located at the center of Palm Desert, but due to both logistical issues and Cliff's shift to a plan for a resort community, it was ultimately pushed to the edge of town.

Randall commissioned the Palm Springs architect Harry Williams, noted for this design of La Plaza and other historicist structures, to design the headquarters in a Pueblo Revival style intended to mirror the desert ethos of the publication. The magazine's staff relocated from El Centro to the new building (extant though significantly altered) in the summer of 1948.[134] In addition to the main structure, Desert Magazine also built quarters for its employees at the rear of the building (existent). Positioned prominently on Highway 111, Desert Magazine, like many other publication headquarters of the period, most notably *Sunset Magazine*'s Cliff May-designed headquarters, welcomed visitors and offered a variety of amenities. It contained not only the offices and printing facilities for the magazine, but also a desert library, gift shop, a small Bank of America branch (prior to the construction of their own building), and the Palm Desert Art Gallery, which hosted shows for a number of notable artists including John Hilton, Agnes Pelton, and Carl Bray. Additionally, Desert Magazine also opened a printing arm of the business known as Desert Press (later Desert Printers) which provided printing services for the surrounding community. Indeed, many of the PDC's sales materials were printed by Desert Press, as well as a selection of local newspapers like the *Palm Desert Progress*.[135]

[134] McKenney, *Desert Editor,* 65.
[135] McKenney, *Desert Editor,* 65-66.

The Desert Magazine headquarters as designed by architect Harry J. Williams. (Shadow Mountain Collection, HSPD)

Given the seasonal economy of Palm Desert, the vast majority of commercial activity was not in retail or dining, but in lodging and accommodations. In the postwar period, many lodges, motels, and hotel apartments were constructed in both Palm Village and Palm Desert. Some, especially in Palm Village, were catered to a more affordable demographic, such as those people passing through on Highway 111, while others, mostly on PDC land, were nicer lodges catering to patrons of the PDC's Shadow Mountain Club. By the mid-1950s, well over a dozen lodges existed in the greater Palm Desert area.

The very first lodge to open in the Palm Desert opened before the community even had that name. The Palm Village Inn, located at the corner of Highway 111 and Portola Avenue, was built on the namesake subdivision, and formally opened in January of 1946, months before the Palm Desert project was announced. The Palm Village Inn (no longer extant) was a Ranch style structure with a porch that faced onto the barren slope which would soon become Palm Desert. The Inn also contained the area's first restaurant, Bill Ude's Café, and its accommodations were typically catered to a middle-class crowd.[136]

[136] "Palm Village," *Desert Sun,* January 25, 1946.

The Palm Village Inn at the corner of Highway 111 and Portola Avenue, one of the area's earliest lodge operations. (Clifford Henderson Collection, HSPD)

Multiple other lodges opened in the Palm Village area in the late 1940s and early 1950s, typically small and economical motor courts. These included the Palm Village Biltmore (no longer extant) and the Palm Village Guest Cottages (no longer extant), in addition to a selection of unnamed roadside lodges. Nearby to the Palm Village Inn were the Sage and Sun Guest Apartments (1946, no longer extant), a series of bungalows adjacent to the Palm Village reservoir and swimming pool.[137] These Palm Village lodges were typically designed in a Ranch style or a basic Mid-Century Modern style and were humbler, vernacular operations that did not use architecture to promote a brand. A few lodging businesses were constructed in the interior of Palm Village's subdivision, including the Del Lingo Lodge (1954), although the majority were concentrated along Highway 111. These various Palm Village lodges were typically more affordable and catered to more of a highway economy, though such notables as the writer Aldous Huxley were occasionally noted for staying in one of them.[138]

Lodging businesses also proliferated on the land developed by the PDC. In particular, the street Shadow Mountain Drive, which was sandwiched between the namesake club and El Paseo, was developed with several lodges intended to serve the high-end seasonal population of Palm Desert. The foremost of these

[137] "New Cottages at Palm Village," *Desert Sun,* November 8, 1946.
[138] Brandy Brent, "Carousel," *Los Angeles Times,* March 15, 1949; Huxley stayed at the Sage and Sun Guest Apartments with his family on at least one occasion, in 1949, and was joined by the actress Constance Collier.

was the Firecliff Lodge, which opened in February of 1948 after two years of planning.[139] Cliff Henderson had partnered with his colleague Leonard Firestone (also a prominent investor in the PDC) to create the lodge, which was an amalgamation of their names. Although it was not developed by the PDC, it was designed by their allied architect Henry Eggers in a Mid-Century Modern and Ranch style. Its main office and restaurant building sat at the corner of El Paseo and San Luis Rey Avenue, and behind it was two rows of freestanding bungalows which stretched the block to Shadow Mountain Drive. Like many of the other lodges of the period, it contained its own restaurant. In fact, nearly all dining businesses in the first decade of Palm Desert's existence were typically contained in lodges.

The Firecliff Lodge bungalows (demolished) as designed by Henry Eggers for Cliff Henderson and Leonard Firestone. (Shadow Mountain Collection, HSPD)

The earliest lodge to open on PDC land was the Twin Palms Apartments (1947, standing) at the corner of Shadow Mountain Drive and Tumbleweed Lane.[140] This was followed soon after by the House of Riley (1947, standing), the Shadow Mountain Terrace (1950), Larrea Lodge (1952, no longer extant) Gates of the Desert (1953, standing), and the Samareu/Desert Patch Inn (1953/55, standing), all of which were on or in the immediate vicinity of Shadow Mountain Drive.[141] These lodges were typically constructed in a U-shaped pattern around a central pool or lawn and of a more basic design with modern elements.

The Sun and Shadow Hotel Apartments (significantly altered) was among the more significant pieces of architecture in Palm Desert when constructed in 1950. Designed by modern architect Herbert Burns, the structure was initially a duplex (1947) owned and occupied by realtor Edith Eddy Ward and her mother,

[139] "Opening of Firecliff Lodge This Week is Milestone in Palm Desert History," *Palm Springs Limelight News,* February 20, 1948.
[140] "The Twin Palms at Palm Desert Host to Throng," *Desert Sun,* December 9, 1947.
[141] "Hotels, Lodges, and Bungalow Apartments at Palm Desert," *Sun Spots 5th Anniversary Home Review,* 1952.

which was also designed by Burns. In 1949, a couple purchased the duplex from Ward and hired Burns to expand it into a lodge, which epitomized Burns' sleek Late Moderne design with strong linear volumes and a distinctive use of sandstone.[142] The hotel offered both short-term and long-term stays which, again, catered to the seasonal population. The Palm Desert Adobe (no longer extant), which opened in 1948, was another notable lodge owned and operated by the Vernon Peck family.[143] Located on Highway 74 near the intersection of Highway 111, the lodge consisted of two rows of bungalows around a central pool area, designed in a vernacular Ranch style.

The Palm Desert Adobe (demolished), one of the community's earliest and most eccentric lodge operations run by the Peck family. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

While the proliferation of lodges was a result of the area's seasonal economy, the center of seasonal commercial activity was the Shadow Mountain Club, the crown jewel of PDC's operations. A private club had been central to Cliff Henderson's efforts since he shifted the Palm Desert model away from a year-round community and towards a seasonal resort community. By World War II, several private clubs had appeared in Palm Springs, including the Palm Springs Tennis Club and Palm Springs Racquet Club, which followed the model of a central clubhouse complete with recreational facilities, like swimming, tennis, and pickleball. Particularly in the postwar period, these private clubs were typically Mid-Century Modern in design, which offered proof of their exciting yet refined nature. It was within this context that the idea of the Shadow Mountain Club was developed.

[142] Keylon, *Herbert Burns,* 53-55.
[143] Brochure for the Palm Desert Adobe, Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert.

The design for the club, a curved building around a large pool, was initially conceptualized by PDC's architect Gordon Kaufmann, who fell ill during the project and handed it off to a younger member of his firm, Henry Eggers, of Kaufmann, Lippincott, and Eggers. Eggers developed the plans further, but they were ultimately completed by an outside architect, the prominent modernist A. Quincy Jones.[144] The clubhouse, which opened to a four-day, celebrity-studded event in December of 1948 after a number of delays, was a stark Mid-Century Modern design (significantly altered) of stone, wood, and glass set amidst a dramatic expanse of pristine desert.[145] Its curved walls faced onto a massive pool (existent) designed by Tommy Tomson in the shape of a figure-eight, flanked by twin palms. The Shadow Mountain Club was by far the most significant work of architecture constructed by the PDC and was featured in several national publications and newsreels upon its completion, in addition to being photographed by prominent photographer Julius Shulman.

The Shadow Mountain Club (1946-48): a modernist amalgamation of designs by Gordon Kaufmann, Henry Eggers, and A. Quincy Jones featuring Tommy Tomson's iconic figure-8 pool. (Julius Shulman Collection, Getty Research Institute)

More than an architectural masterpiece, however, the Shadow Mountain Club was foremost a commercial operation owned and operated by the PDC, particularly under the watchful eye of Cliff Henderson. It was a private, members-only club whose membership consisted of many early PDC homeowners and a selection of non-residents who were simply members. It was intended to be the central social venue for Palm Desert's visitors and homeowners alike. In fact, residents of Palm Desert were allowed guest privileges to the club. The Shadow Mountain Club had a dining room and bar, where it reaped most of its income, and maintained a seasonal calendar of events, parties, and holiday celebrations for its members. During season, the Club would put on synchronized diving and swimming performances, fashion shows, and other events intended to garner crowds and celebrity. In 1950, the accompanying Shadow Mountain Stables opened, featuring a horse track and modernist stables designed by the architect Alfred Truesdell Gilman.[146] Other amenities included the Shadow Mountain Lake (no

[144] "Minutes of Meeting of the Directors of the Palm Desert Corporation," 1947, Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert.
[145] "Nation's Leading Figures to Attend Gala at 4-Day Event at Shadow Mountain Club," *Desert Sun,* December 7, 1948.
[146] "Modern New Stables Ready at Shadow Mountain Club," *Desert Sun,* December 22, 1950.

longer existent), and artificial lake and reservoir that dated to the earliest phase of construction in 1946, and was used for boating and recreational events.

By the mid-1950s, while Palm Desert was host to various businesses and a small but growing population, its commercial development was still lacking. El Paseo, now the centerpiece of the city's commercial district, was almost completely empty except for the Firecliff Lodge. What little commercial development had occurred – three small shopping centers, Desert Magazine, a gas station, various lodges, sales offices, and a few freestanding businesses – had occurred almost exclusively along Highway 111, which could make up for the lack of year-round residents by appealing to the consistent traffic on the highway. Except in a few instances, commercial development also occurred for the support of a seasonal economy. In the following decade, however, commercial growth would accelerate along with other forms of development.

Evaluation Guidelines: Commercial Development, 1946-1956

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of commercial development in Palm Desert in the immediate postwar period. The new town's residential growth during this time led to the construction of new commercial properties to provide services to residents and visitors alike. There are numerous examples of commercial properties dating to this period, though relatively few retain their original appearance due to subsequent alterations. Resources that are significant under this theme are likely to consist of individual buildings; Palm Desert does not appear to retain cohesive, intact groupings of commercial properties dating to this period which could be historic districts.

Associated Property Types	Commercial • Retail store or complex • Office building • Hotel/motel/lodge • Private club • Restaurant • Mixed-use (commercial/office/residential) • Bank/financial institution • Auto-oriented business • Signage
Property Type Summary	Commercial development in postwar Palm Desert consisted predominantly of low-scale commercial buildings that housed a variety of common commercial uses. Resources may include retail and/or office buildings and complexes; hotels, motels and lodges; private clubs; restaurants; mixed-use buildings; bank buildings; auto-related commercial buildings like repair shops, service stations, or garages; and signs.
Geographic Location	Central city, generally along Highway 74 and Highway 111 within the city limits. Immediate postwar commercial development in Palm Desert is concentrated along these major corridors.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for this context begins in 1946, with the end of World War II and the beginning of the Hendersons' planning, and ends in 1956, with the liquidation of the Palm Desert Corporation.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As unaltered resources associated with this theme are relatively rare, some latitude should be granted when evaluating associated properties. A greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though properties must still retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, F[147]	An **individual property** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of commercial development in Palm Desert during this period; and/or • As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	A resource that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event or historical pattern. A commercial property from this period should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. A resource that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1946-1956), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

[147] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).

		Minor alterations – such as door replacement, re-roofing, or compatible re-stuccoing – shall not, in and of themselves, render a resource ineligible. However, the cumulative impact of multiple minor alterations may compromise a resource's overall integrity. More substantive alterations that are difficult to reverse – such as extensive storefront modifications that obscure the original form and program of the building, modification of original fenestration patterns, the removal of historic finishes or features – compromise a resource's integrity and are likely to render it ineligible.	

B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A property that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1946-1956), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity (listed above), and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

Theme: Civic/Institutional Development, 1946-1956

The Palm Desert area experienced its first phase of civic development between 1946 and 1956. All that had existed in the area prior to World War II was a small conglomeration of homes on the Palm Village subdivision, which prevented civic growth by lack of sheer population. As development picked up in the postwar period and the population grew, so did civic development. In particular, the Palm Desert Corporation (PDC) was concerned with cultivating a "refined" community – even if it was primarily seasonal – and instituted their own civic development campaigns. Since the PDC was building an entire community, the responsibility for providing and incentivizing civic amenities largely fell on them. Civic growth was slow, and in many instances, it was part of a business-minded development campaign, but the basic foundations for many of the city's civic institutions were laid during this period.

The first civic institutions developed in Palm Desert were dedicated to some of the most basic city services: a post office and firehouse. Although Palm Village had predated Palm Desert, its population was small, and it never succeeded in establishing its own post office. The PDC, however, had grander ambitions, and one of its first campaigns was the establishment of a post office with the Palm Desert name. This was partly due to the fact that Desert Magazine headquarters – initially integral to the PDC's plans – needed a post office for its magazine circulation. At the same time, Palm Village had recently been purchased by another company with plans to expand and improve the subdivision, including its own post office. After learning that Palm Village had submitted their own request for a post office, the PDC met with them and convinced them to withdraw their request.[148]

The first Palm Desert post office (no longer extant) officially opened on July 17, 1947, with a ceremony hosted by Cliff Henderson and the PDC. The first post office building was a small modular structure provided by the PDC, and the first postmaster was William "Bill" Myers, a young veteran of World War Two.[149] The establishment of the post office was integral to Palm Desert's formal claim over the region, and from then on Palm Village was thought of as a neighborhood within the Palm Desert area. "Palm Desert," but not Palm Village was officially recognized on maps, and in 1951 Palm Village officially merged with Palm Desert with a symbolic declaration. When the first Palm Desert post office opened in 1947, the population of Palm Desert was diminutive and scarcely a dozen homes had been built. Palm Village was hardly larger, but it had existed longer, and its placename was established locally. In fact, when the PDC had initiated their campaign with government authorities, not even a single structure had been built. The PDC's victory in securing a post office was a testament to their successful campaign and the ambitions of their plans.

The post office quickly outgrew the small building allocated by the PDC, which was part of a small shopping center of modular buildings, and a new and larger location was constructed in 1951. The second post office (no longer extant) was a Moderne design constructed by the Conair Sales Corporation, a building company which specialized in a novel system of concrete construction.[150] The building, although foreshadowed by a series of beautiful renderings by its architect Richard Bild, was ultimately a simple utilitarian structure with a decorative Moderne feature applied to its façade.

---

[148] McKenney, *Desert Editor,* 57-58.
[149] "Open Palm Desert Post Office," *Desert Sun,* July 18, 1947.
[150] "Work Starts on Post Office at Palm Desert in Ten Days," *Desert Sun,* January 12, 1951.

The first Palm Desert Fire Station built by the Palm Desert Corporation, featuring a roof designed by Walter S. White. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Similarly, the PDC also saw to the construction of the first fire station in the area. A handful of fires had destroyed various houses in the preceding years (most notably the Herbert Pritzlaff house by Cliff May and the Walter Botthof house by H.E. Weston) and the need for a fire station became increasingly apparent as the population grew. The PDC allocated a lot at the western end of El Paseo, the commercial thoroughfare that was yet to be developed, and built a fire station in 1952.[151] The building (standing, CoPD Landmark #1) was a standard design supplied by Riverside County officials to firehouses across the county. The PDC, however, found the design too utilitarian, and commissioned the architect Walter S. White to enliven the design, which he accomplished by adding his signature pointed roof.[152] The firehouse was staffed by the Palm Desert Volunteer Fire Association and was in operation for many years after its construction.

Yet another civic asset to Palm Desert was the construction of its first school, the Palm Desert School (now the site of George Washington Charter Elementary School), in 1949.[153] Although Palm Desert had a very small year-round population, let alone a significant population of families, it leveraged its geographic location at the center of the Coachella Valley to catalyze the construction of its first school – a method it would use in later years to attract additional schools and colleges. Students from a variety of surrounding communities attended the school, which had an initial class size of around 200 students (Palm Desert's entire year-round population was not even that large).

[151] "Palm Desert Fire Station Dedicated," *Desert Sun,* May 29, 1952.
[152] Letter from Cliff Henderson, ca. 1951, Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert.
[153] "Palm Desert School Rising," *Los Angeles Times,* December 19, 1948.

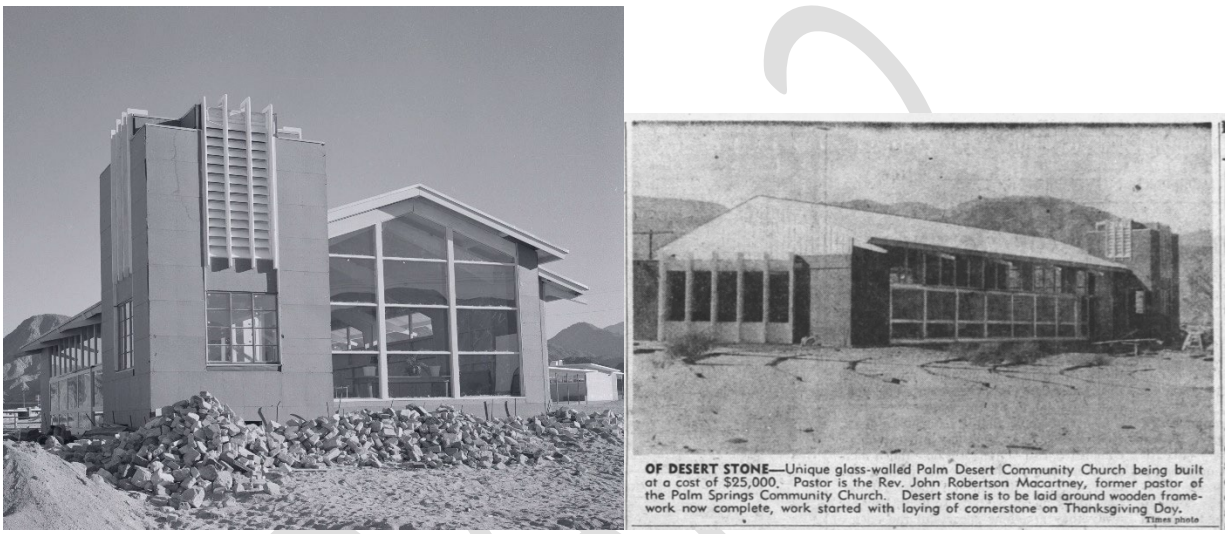
The PDC provided the land, a seven-acre parcel in the more affordable Unit #4, to the Riverside County school system, which built the school between 1948 and 1949. The school (no longer extant) consisted of a set of Mid-Century Modern classrooms and administration offices designed by the modern architect Stanley Ring, a local architect who had initially worked in the offices of Walter S. White. The Palm Desert School served was the main primary school serving Palm Desert and surrounding communities for the following decade, until a few others were constructed.

The Palm Desert School (demolished) designed by architect Stanley Ring in 1948. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Directly adjacent to the site of the school, in the part of Palm Desert dedicated by PDC to civic development, was the community's first church. Since its earliest plans, the PDC had allocated a portion of land, which it named the "Church Square," for the construction of churches and other religious facilities. A church was an important component of Palm Desert's brand as a refined community, and the PDC continually planned and incentivized for such. The Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church was inaugurated on Thanksgiving Day of 1948 by the local pastor Reverend Joseph R. Macartney, who held the first services on an outdoor platform at the site of the future church.[154] Over the next two years, the church organization fundraised and continued to hold its services in a variety interesting locations, including the Shadow Mountain Stables and the Herbert Burns-designed residence of Edith Eddy Ward. At one point, the PDC even trucked in a surplus modular army chapel for use by the organization, although it appears it went unused.[155]

[154] Outdoor Service Held at Palm Desert on Thanksgiving," *Desert Sun,* November 23, 1948.
[155] "Army Post Chapel Used by Community Church at Palm Desert," *Palm Springs Limelight News,* April 1, 1949.

The PDC provided the parcel of land to the church, which was constructed between 1949 and 1950 in a Mid-Century Modern style designed by local architect Barry Frost. The church (45630 Portola Avenue, CoPD Landmark #5) had a simple one-room layout with walls of glass, angular beams that were dramatically expressed on the interior and exterior, and a bell tower. The cornerstone was laid on Thanksgiving Day of 1950, exactly two years after the first services.[156] The Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church became the first formalized church in Palm Desert and was essentially the only church in the community for the next decade. In 1951, a manse (significantly altered) was constructed on the property as designed by Walter S. White.



The Palm Desert Community Church designed by Barry Frost under construction (left) and shortly after its completion (right). (Shadow Mountain Collection, HSPD; Los Angeles Times)

Although they were both commercial ventures, the Shadow Mountain Club and Desert Magazine developed into local institutions. The two were theoretically opposed – one was a gleaming Modernist clubhouse for seasonal residents, and the other a historicist Pueblo for desert enthusiasts – but they each became a civic asset in their own right. The Desert Magazine hosted the Palm Desert Art Gallery, which put on art shows by numerous professional and amateur artists. Besides the art shows, the gallery was also used as a gathering space for a number of local civic efforts. As a former partner in the Desert Magazine operations recalled, "The generous space became the meeting place for numerous pioneer movements: church groups in their formative weeks, first meetings of community library sponsors, land use discussions by leaders of nearby developments, and other community organizations."[157]

Randall Henderson, the editor of Desert Magazine and the Henderson brother who had initially lobbied for Palm Desert to be a year-round community, was particularly interested in the establishment of a local library. The magazine's headquarters contained a "desert library" for its employees, but its resources and circulation were limited. In the early 1950s, Randall committed a portion of Desert Magazine's land for a future library building – a vision which would not be realized for another decade. The first formalized

[156] "Ceremonies Mark Laying of Cornerstone of Church," *Desert Sun,* November 24, 1950.
[157] McKenney, *Desert Editor,* 59.

library was established in 1955 in a commercial space at the Palm Desert Patio Shops (significantly altered) as part of the Riverside County Library System, and though it was not the freestanding library that its earliest proponents conceptualized, it was a first for the community.[158]

An art show at the Desert Magazine headquarters in Palm Desert, one of many civic activities held at the structure. (Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

At various times in the early 1950s, there were efforts to establish a community center and other civic buildings. At first, the surplus army chapel that the PDC had hauled in for the church was also intended to serve as a community center, though this plan never materialized. Similarly, there were efforts in 1955 to establish a community center.[159] In 1951, the Palm Desert Little Theater moved into an existing cabinet shop (73550 Santa Rosa Way, extant and now with a different use) to become the community's first permanent performing arts venue.[160]

If anything, the Shadow Mountain Club served as an informal community center for Palm Desert. From its opening in 1948, the club's programming was targeted not only to its private members but to the Palm Desert community at large. It held annual events on Easter, Thanksgiving, and other holidays which were open to the general public, as well as other events like an annual "County Fair," or special events honoring the first 99 homebuilders in Palm Desert. It was also the meeting place of many of Palm Desert's earliest business and service organizations, many of which were established during this period. These organizations included the Palm Desert Boosters [Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce] (est. 1953), Palm

[158] Lou Kuehner, "Palm Desert," *Desert Sun,* January 24, 1955; "Stars Help Raise Money for Palm Springs Library," *Riverside Daily Press,* July 21, 1953.
[159] "Palm Desert C of C Plans Community Center," *Desert Sun,* November 25, 1955.
[160] "Little Theatre Group Formed," *Cathedral Citizen* November 1, 1951 (clipping on file at HSPD); Palm Desert Playhouse 1967-1968 Season (booklet on file at HSPD).

Desert Women's Club (est. 1955), and the Palm Desert Rotary Club (est. 1948), who both held early events and meetings at the clubhouse.[161]

The Shadow Mountain Club was foremost a private club, but a very important one to the early Palm Desert homeowners, particularly those who occupied the exclusive Shadow Mountain Estates. Its membership was a host of executives, celebrities, and other notables, and it was arguably the most prominent institution in the community for the first decade of Palm Desert's existence.

By the mid-1950s, Palm Desert, largely through the efforts and planning of the PDC, had laid the foundation for its civic assets. It had a church, school, post office, library, and firehouse: the very basic requirements for any community. These were integral to the PDC's plans to construct an entire and complete community and had been part of their planning efforts since the community's inception. Additionally, other institutions like the Shadow Mountain Club and Desert Magazine contributed to the civic environment. In the following decades, the variety and quantity of civic assets would grow.

Evaluation Guidelines: Civic/Institutional Development, 1946-1956

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of civic and institutional development in Palm Desert in the immediate postwar period. The new town's expansion during this time included the establishment of civic and institutional properties, mostly by the Palm Desert Corporation and its affiliates. There are relatively few examples of civic/institutional properties dating to this period, some have already been landmarked, and others have been altered. Resources that are significant under this theme consist of individual buildings or small institutional complexes (e.g., church campuses) rather than cohesive groupings of properties (potential historic districts).

Associated Property Types

Public institutional
- Post office
- Fire house
- Public utility building
- School

Private institutional
- Church/religious building
- Social club/meeting hall/clubhouse
- Theatre

Property Type Summary

Institutional development in postwar Palm Desert consisted predominantly of low-scale public civic/governmental buildings and private buildings. Civic/institutional resources may include post offices; fire houses; public utility buildings; school buildings and campuses; religious buildings and campuses; theaters; and buildings seeing long-term use by fraternal, social, or interest-based organizations.

[161] "Palm Desert Boosters Elect Ellsworth First President," *Desert Sun,* December 10, 1953.

Geographic Location	Central city/south of Highway 111. Immediate postwar institutional development in Palm Desert was largely associated with the Palm Desert Corporation and its property south of the older Palm Village.
Period of Significance	The period of significance for this context begins in 1946, with the end of World War II and the beginning of the Hendersons' planning, and ends in 1956, with the liquidation of the Palm Desert Corporation.
Integrity Considerations	A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As unaltered resources associated with this theme are rare, some latitude should be granted when evaluating associated properties. A greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though properties must still retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A. F[162]	A resource eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of civic/institutional development in Palm Desert during this period; and/or • As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	A resource that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event or historical pattern.[163] An institutional property from this period should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. An institutional property that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1946-1956), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

[162] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).
[163] National Register Bulletin 15.

		original style and appearance in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. A resource is generally not eligible if it retains some basic features conveying form and massing, but has lost the majority of features that characterized its appearance during its historical period.	

B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A resource that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1946-1956), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

4.6 Context: Palm Desert Diversified Development, 1957-1966

Historical Background

While the foundations for Palm Desert had been laid by the Palm Desert Corporation (PDC) in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the built environment of the following decade saw immense growth and diversification. The PDC had largely created Palm Desert: they laid out its streets and infrastructure, attracted the first homeowners and businesses, and cultivated the community as a refined and seasonal destination. This, of course, emerged within the context of the Coachella Valley's expanding prominence as a region of leisure and affluence, particularly through trendsetting Palm Springs.

In its ambition, however, the PDC had struggled in two respects. The first was that it almost arrived too early to the resort boom that would remake the Coachella Valley. Construction on Palm Desert had begun in 1946 with the nation hardly out of the war (the PDC, in fact, had numerous delays and difficulties with war-related material shortages). While the population and economy of Southern California had already seen its great wartime expansion, the Coachella Valley's postwar epoch would not begin in earnest until the 1950s. Palm Desert was among a number of developments that emerged immediately after the war, but the encompassing and Mid-Century Modern development that the region was noted for (e.g., country clubs or the William Krisel-designed tracts built by the Alexander Construction Company) occurred later into the 1950s. The initial phase of Palm Desert, although it saw its fair share of Modernist development, was an early adopter of the postwar leisure model for which the Coachella Valley would become known. For this reason, the sale and development of Palm Desert's land was never as extraordinary as envisioned despite over a hundred homes being built.

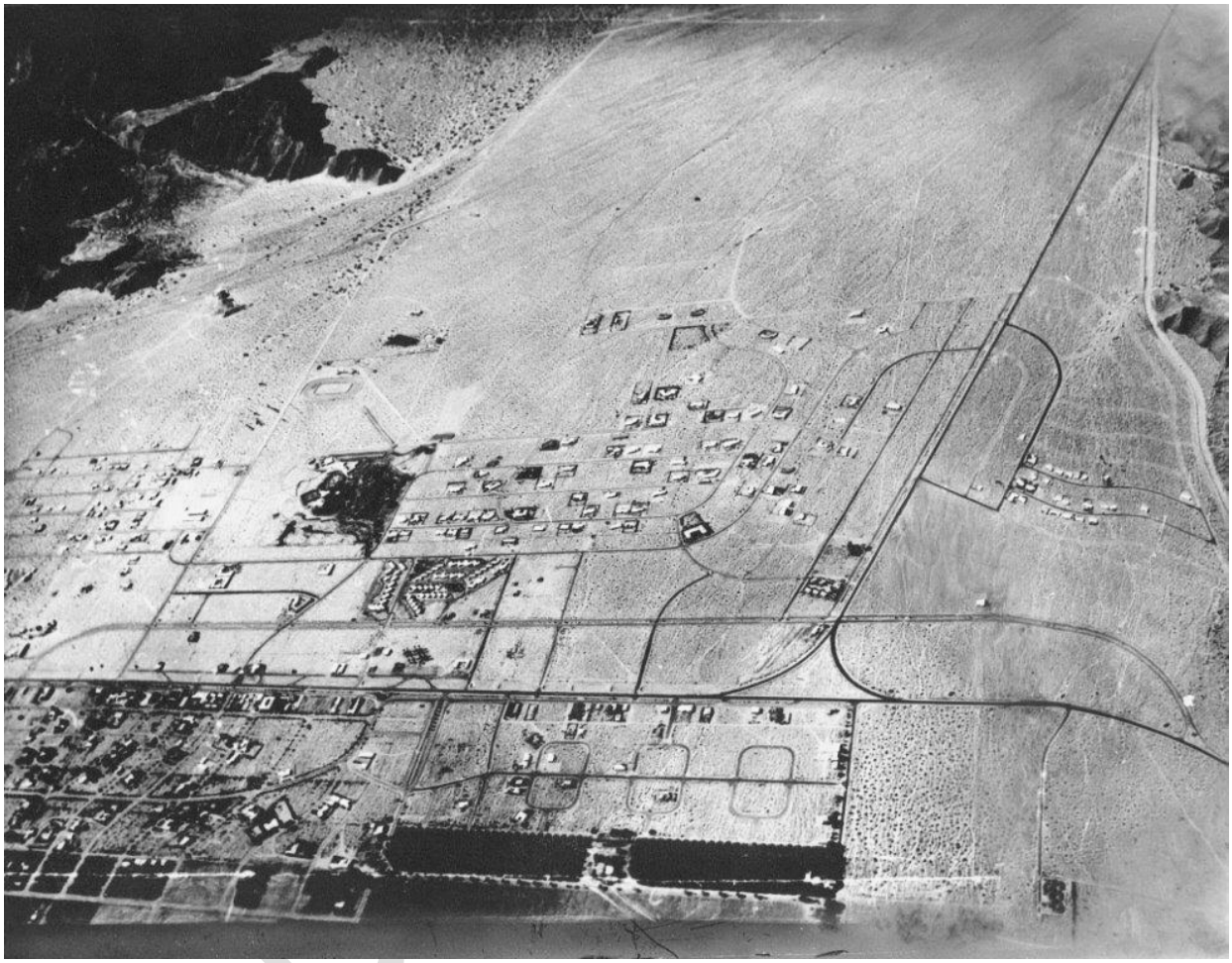
The second struggle that PDC faced was self-inflicted. In its efforts to cultivate a refined resort community, it had imposed a host of explicit and implicit restrictions, whether it be those defining the type and size of architecture, or the race and religious affiliations of its prospective residents. This fared well for attracting the overwhelming White, wealthy, and seasonal population the PDC so desired, but less for the creation of a "complete" community, as Randall Henderson had once posed the issue to his endeavoring brother Cliff.[164] Except for two small units of the PDC's land, almost the entirety of Palm Desert was dedicated to expensive seasonal homes. For this reason, the PDC was limited in who it could sell land to, and middle-class buyers were relegated to either the two affordable units which the PDC developed, or, increasingly, the subdivisions (e.g. Palm Village, Panorama Ranch) which surrounded the city. Once again, this meant that the PDC struggled to sell portions of its property, and it was unsuccessful in attracting a diverse or year-round population.

This all changed in 1956 when the PDC liquidated its landholdings to a consortium that consisted of the Baldwin Hills Sales Company (led by A. Ronald Button, the developer behind Rancho Mirage) and the Home Savings and Loan Association (led by famed Los Angeles developer-banker Howard Ahmanson). The sale included all the PDC's unsold lots and land but did not include the Shadow Mountain Club (which had been sold three years prior) or the properties owned solely by PDC's president Cliff Henderson, which consisted of the Firecliff Lodge, various other buildings, and a selection of lucratively sited parcels.[165]

---

[164] Luke Leuschner, "Palm Desert: A Sellable Dream on Forsaken Land, Part I," *The Hourglass,* Fall 2021.
[165] "Three Villagers Instrumental in Record Land Sale," *Desert Sun,* September 3, 1956.

The Palm Desert Sales Company (PDSC) was the entity created by Button and Ahmanson to sell the recently acquired property. Unlike the PDC, the PDSC tolerated greater and more diverse development on its land in its efforts to recoup its initial investment. Whereas the PDC had once turned down a small tract of Mid-Century Modern homes for fears of homogeneity, the PDSC welcomed large-scale condominium developments. (In fact, more than once Cliff Henderson publicly criticized the PDSC's practices, and at one point they sued him over a very public conflict arising from their handling of El Paseo's medians.[166])



An aerial of Palm Desert taken in the early-to-mid 1950s, just prior to the liquidation of the Palm Desert Corporation. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Despite the PDSC's leniency, the overall orientation of Palm Desert was still a high-class resort community. The PDC had established it as such and it remained one, even if its population diversified and a larger portion became year-round. Development in the surrounding communities (particularly Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells) was similarly oriented around this model. Integral to the maintenance of this model were two typologies that emerged in the 1950s and 1960s: the condominium and the country

[166] Gene Johnson, "P.D. Meet Brings New Association," *Desert Sun,* March 12, 1962.

club.[167] The condominium offered good design by any one of the region's noted Modernists and convenience at an affordable price. The country club, with its provision of recreational facilities (golf, tennis, etc.) and estate lots, perpetuated and expanded the high-class leisure model. And in numerous cases – particularly in Palm Desert – the combination of the two was even more lucrative.

The PDC had laid the foundations for Palm Desert to grow, but with the combination of PDSC's looser guidelines and a fruitful economic context, the community achieved its greatest period of development. In 1956, Palm Desert had one church, but by the end of the 1960s, it had nearly ten. Over a dozen subdivisions spawned in the undeveloped land bordering Palm Desert. Dozens of condominium developments and spec-built tracts filled in interior land, the commercial frontage on Highway 111 grew, and for the first time, development began along El Paseo.

New subdivisions included Silver Spur Ranch, Palm Desert Highlands, Shadow Village, and Palm City (Palm Desert Country Club). Moreover, these new subdivisions diversified the types of residents that lived in Palm Desert. Whereas the residents of the PDC era had been wealthy Angelenos seeking a weekend retreat, a growing proportion of the population consisted of the middle class, retirees, and even families. Palm Desert's seasonal character did not necessarily change overall, but it was extended to a larger audience. At the same time, it came to acquire a small but decent population of families with such developments as Shadow Village(Palm Desert Dreamhomes) and Palm Desert Country Club.

These new subdivisions also increased the boundaries of Palm Desert, which would not officially incorporate as a city until 1973. The land south of Highway 111 had been mostly developed by the PDC, though new subdivisions like Silver Spur Ranch, Palm Desert Highlands, Highland Palms Estates, Shadow Hills Estates, and Deep Canyon Ranch consumed most of the remaining land that was owned by neither the PDC or the PDSC, and infill development (e.g., Sandpiper) filled out the larger patches of land within the PDC's former subdivision. Increasingly, with subdivisions like Shadow Village, Halecrest Country Club Village, and Palm City (Palm Desert Country Club), development was also occurring in the vast and undeveloped acreage north of Highway 111, and Palm Desert's boundaries (still unofficial) grew.

While the PDC and a few of its allied builders (e.g., R.P. Shea) and architects (e.g., Walter S. White) had held a virtual monopoly over community's construction and design, the field of actors widened during this period. White moved away in the late 1950s, and architects and designers such as a John Outcault, Charles W. Doty, Harold Bissner, Robert Pitchford, John P. Moyer, and Robert Ricciardi were residents and practitioners in Palm Desert, designing in a preferred Mid-Century Modern styles. Other developers, like Monte Wenck, Adrian Schwilck, Charles White, Hal Kapp, and Ted Smith entered the scene, developing a range of buildings from individual spec homes to entire subdivisions. And at the same time, as Palm Desert became more established, capital was flowing in from developers across a broader region, many of whom brought in their own architects.

More than some of this growth can be attributed to the context of the Coachella Valley, which was undergoing its greatest phase of postwar development as far as the Salton Sea. This phase, beginning in the mid-1950s and lasting until the late 1960s, was marketed towards the middle and upper-middle class with mass-produced Mid-Century Modern tracts and communities across the Coachella Valley. With its

[167] Culver, *The Frontier of Leisure,* 154-157.

mid-valley location, Palm Desert was well situated to capitalize on this growth, and it certainly did. Advertisements for the developments and businesses touted Palm Desert's proximity to both ends of the Coachella Valley, and it was quite literally in the center of regional growth. This centrality helps to explain the development of Palm Desert's new businesses and subdivisions, but it was particularly integral to the establishment of civic amenities like the College of the Desert, the Palm Desert Library, additional schools, and any number of its new churches. Palm Desert entered the 1950s as a small but established resort city and left the 1960s as a formidable, mid-valley presence.

Theme: Residential Development, 1957-1966

Perhaps nothing expanded or diversified as much in Palm Desert in the 1950s and 60s than its residential development. Beginning with the liquidation of the Palm Desert Corporation (PDC) in 1956, the new epoch of development was marked with laxer architectural restrictions, which made way for a greater variety of housing typologies. Whereas the vast majority of residential development in the preceding period had primarily been custom-built single-family homes – whether estate-sized or small weekend retreats – this period saw to the development of condominiums, large-scale tracts, and increasingly novel housing types at multiple levels of affordability. This new housing facilitated a large increase and socioeconomic diversification of Palm Desert's population, thereby catalyzing development in all other sectors as well.

While the shift in residential development can be partially attributed to the sale of the PDC itself and the resultant managerial shift, perhaps the most significant quantity of residential development occurred on land that was never owned by the PDC. In many instances, these subdivisions were parasitic to those plotted by the PDC, as they were connected to streets and utilities initially laid out by the PDC and benefitted from the image it had produced. During the bulk of PDC's tenure, Panorama Ranch had been the only new subdivision that was realized directly adjacent to their land, while Palm Village and Palm Dell Estates were previously existent or developed at the same time. By the middle of the 1950s, however, Palm Desert had grown enough in size and prominence, and even if it was not as much as the PDC intended, it was able to attract development by outside interests. There was significant land available north of Highway 111, but also various parcels south of Highway 111, particularly those on the southernmost portion of the slope (closer to Deep Canyon) which had never been acquired by the PDC.

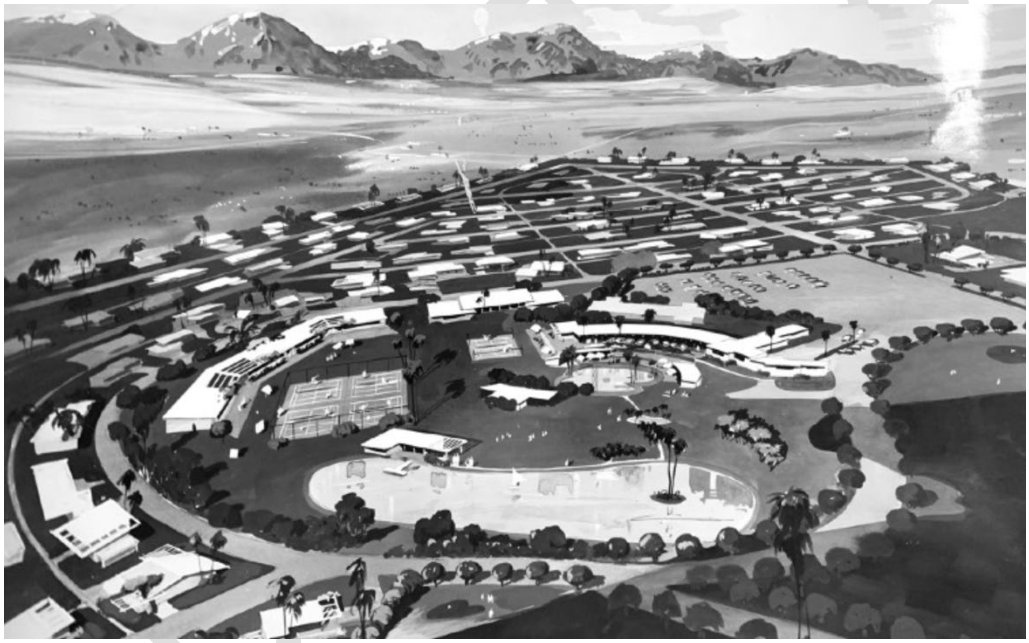
Around the time the PDC was undergoing discussions for the liquidation of their land, work was underway for such subdivisions as Shadow Mountain Park (1954), Palm Vista (1955), Shadow Hills Estates (1956), Silver Spur Ranch (1956), Palm Desert Highlands (1957), and Desert Garden Homesites (1957). Nearly all of these subdivisions were developed by people unaffiliated with the PDC on peripheral land, but many of the developers behind them would become distinct and recurring figures in Palm Desert's development.

The first of these, Shadow Mountain Park, was the result of the sale of the Shadow Mountain Club in 1953 to a consortium of its members.[168] The new owners sought to revamp and redevelop the club, including a small subdivision on a parcel of land below the club's grounds that faced the Shadow Mountain Lake. Designed by PDC affiliate and landscape architect Tommy Tomson, the Shadow Mountain Park subdivision (which was essentially only two curving streets) largely followed the PDC model. Lots

[168] "Palm Desert Club Sold to Members," *Los Angeles Times,* November 30, 1953.

were offered to members of the Shadow Mountain Club and homes were expected to be custom-built and Mid Century Modern. Only a handful of homes were built in the first years of the subdivision's existence, but they were larger Mid Century Modern homes that faced the Shadow Mountain Club grounds. These included the Robert Overpeck residence designed by Warren Frazier Overpeck (1957, CoPD Historic Landmark), the Jack Blair residence (1957) and George Walling residence (1956), both designed by John P. Moyer.[169]

While the PDC had never really developed and sold housing (except for the Sun Lodges), beginning in the 1950s, many developers would also build spec houses as part of their subdivision in addition to offering the sale of individual lots. The Palm Desert Highlands subdivision, founded in 1957 by prominent realtors Ted Smith and Hal Kapp, was one such instance.[170] The subdivision, which was a small set of streets on the southernmost portion of Palm Desert's slope, was intended to be an upper-class development with commanding views and estate-sized lots. The architect John P. Moyer was brought on to design four houses by an affiliate of Smith and Kapp, which were featured in all the development's advertising and ultimately sold for a profit.[171]



Tommy Tomson's rendering of the Shadow Mountain Park neighborhood. (Clifford Henderson Collection, HSPD)

In the immediate vicinity of Palm Desert Highlands was Silver Spur Ranch, another subdivision which exemplified the new era of development. Founded by the couple Adrian and Mercedes Schwilck in 1956, Silver Spur Ranch was a large project (landholdings totaled around 600 acres at one point) on the southernmost slope, offering lots priced and sized at multiple levels. The Schwilcks (and successive developers) developed dozens of houses and duplexes on the property in multiple phases, beginning in 1957 and continuing into the 1960s. These homes consisted of a few models designed in a Mid-Century

[169] Luke Leuschner, *Landmark Nomination for the Robert K. Overpeck Residence,* January 22, 2022.
[170] "Palm Desert Highlands Proves Slogan of Palm Desert," *Desert Sun,* March 15, 1958.
[171] [Advertisement for Palm Desert Highlands], *Desert Sun,* April 19, 1958.

Modern and Ranch style, and were sold to a variety of retirees, seasonal residents, and even families. In the early 1960s, after a period of absence which involved re-purchasing their stake in Silver Spur Ranch, the Schwilcks developed dozens of Mid-Century Modern homes and duplexes designed by architect Richard Harrison, particularly on the street Feather Trail.[172]

The development of Silver Spur Ranch and other subdivisions of the period was a combination of development initiated by the primary developer(s), affiliated spec builders, and individual homeowners. Other investors and affiliates of Silver Spur Ranch developed their own sets of spec homes, including a selection of Ranch homes designed by architect Earl Kaltenbach in 1957, a set of Mid-Century Modern homes designed by architect William Krisel between 1960 and 1961, and even a pair of Donald Wexler-designed homes also built in 1960. At the same time, individual lots (of which there were many) were sold to prospective homeowners, resulting in such notable homes as the Paulette Johnson house designed by Walter S. White (1958) and the Thomas Hearns house designed by Cliff May (1962). Similarly, the singer Bing Crosby was sold a parcel of land on the uppermost portion of Silver Spur Ranch's landholdings (which were only partially developed) where he built a Mid-Century Modern Ranch house by architect Howard Lapham (1958, extensively altered), which was later noted for hosting John F. Kennedy multiple times during his presidency.[173]

A view of the sales office and entrance to Silver Spur Ranch, including the pink Jeep in which sales agents drove prospective buyers around the development. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

[172] Tracy Conrad, "A Twisty, Unlikely Tale of Three Palm Desert Characters Who Changed the City Forever," *Desert Sun,* January 24, 2021, https://www.desertsun.com/story/life/2021/01/24/history-twisty-tale-three-palm-desert-men-who-changed-city-forever/6689483002/.
[173] Robert Hartmann, "Red Tide Wanes, Kennedy Asserts," *Los Angeles Times,* March 24, 1962.

Another small subdivision of the period, owned and developed at once by Eugene Roberts of Roberts Construction Inc, was the Desert Garden Homesites. Located on land that was originally part of the Desert Magazine's landholdings, the subdivision consisted of a single roundabout street on which Roberts developed ten Mid-Century Modern homes designed by local architect John Outcault.[174] Outcault also designed and built his family home on the subdivision in which he lived for a decade.[175]

Being developed at the same time was the adjacent Shadow Hills Estates (1956), a subdivision developed by Monte Wenck through the 1950s and 60s.[176] Wenck and his associates laid out the subdivision directly adjacent to the former Panorama Ranch (which had also been revamped and expanded during the period into the Palm Desert Estates), and built well over a hundred Mid-Century Modern houses, duplexes, and apartment buildings. Many of these homes and units (existing in varying states of alteration) are attributed to Charles W. Doty, a local architect who had his start in the offices of Walter S. White.[177] Because they were produced at a larger scale and in varying sizes, and proximate to schools, these homes attracted a variety of homeowners, not just the wealthy seasonal residents that had been typical of the PDC era.

While numerous small subdivisions (including those mentioned above) emerged on land within or immediately adjacent to the boundaries of Palm Desert as established by the PDC, other subdivisions were much larger in size and developed beyond the initial boundaries of the community. These were mass-produced tracts, typically in a basic Mid-Century Modern style, and more importantly, they catered to entirely different demographics. The first of these was Shadow Village, a large-scale development conceived by the national housing developer Sproul Homes Inc on a parcel north of Palm Desert that was formerly agricultural.[178] Previously, the only subdivision that had been built in the area was a small, later unit of Palm Village.

A series of sweeping streets, Sproul built around sixty homes (of a planned 400) that were targeted to a demographic of nuclear families. Prices for a brand-new house began at just $16,750 and could be financed by affordable FHA loans, and open houses featured free balloons and ice cream for the children of potential buyers. Shadow Village was ultimately sold halfway through its development, at which point it was built out in the late 1950s and early 1960s with another series of affordable homes known as the California Dream Homes.[179] Most consequentially, Shadow Village introduced a larger year-round population to Palm Desert, and many of the homes were in fact occupied by young families. The provision

[174] "Desert Gardens Set to Open," *Desert Sun,* February 6, 1959.
[175] "John Outcault – Leading the Way," *Palm Desert Post,* July 15, 1965.
[176] [Advertisement for Shadow Hills Estates], *Palm Springs Life Annual Pictorial,* 1959; Helen Anderson, "Palm Desert," *Desert Sun,* September 27, 1954.
[177] [Advertisement for Shadow Hills Estates model home], *Desert Sun,* March 16, 1956. Doty designed an initial model home at the corner of Deep Canyon Road and Peppertree Drive that was built in 1956. Although his involvement in future homes is not documented, the homes that Wenck and others built in Shadow Hills are typical of his work, and many of them follow the same design/floor plan as the model home Doty is known to have designed. He also partnered with Wenck on a variety of other projects in Palm Desert. Further documentation is needed to understand the full scope of his involvement, as it appears that architect Richard Dorman may have also been involved, but it is clear that Doty was associated with Wenck.
[178] "Shadow Village Project Starts," *Desert Sun,* May 2, 1959.
[179] "Dream Homes Buys Shadow Village Lots," *Desert Sun,* May 31, 1960.

of families also aided in the establishment of public schools (Palm Desert Middle School and Abraham Lincoln Elementary School) on adjacent land.

Much more dramatic than Shadow Village was the development originally conceived as Palm City (1960) by developers Nel Severin and H. Marshall Secrest, who purchased over 550 acres of empty desert land far to the east of Palm Desert, straddling the border of La Quinta along Washington Avenue. Palm City was envisioned to be a self-sufficient community unassociated with another community, much like what the PDC had done with Palm Desert. Plans called for a development of upwards of 1,800 homes and apartments to accommodate a population of 4,000, complete with a shopping and health center, recreational facilities, and a golf course.[180] Moreover, Palm City was intended to be a retirement community, upheld by an age requirement. While retirees had previously accounted for some of Palm Desert's population, many of them were diffused throughout a larger seasonal community and hadn't previously been concentrated in a purpose-built neighborhood like Palm City.

Palm City homes were designed in nineteen models, many of which had Ranch, Polynesian, and other exotic influences, and a complex of apartment buildings was also developed.[181] The developers succeeded in building the first unit of 450 homes, a portion of the second unit of another 450+ homes, a shopping center, various recreation buildings, and a cooperative apartment complex before the endeavor failed in 1963, at which point it was sold to another set of investors.[182] The new owners renamed the development Palm Desert Country Club (formally associating it with Palm Desert), laid the streets for the third unit, dropped the minimum age requirements, and made general improvements. While the majority of the neighborhood's residents were still retirees, an increasing number of families moved into the affordable homes. While Palm Desert had always been a seasonal community, neighborhoods like Shadow Village (Palm Desert Dreamhomes) and Palm City (Palm Desert Country Club) diversified its population, attracting a more middle-class and year-round clientele of families and retirees alike.

[180] Jack Davis, "City of 4,000 Due in Year," *Desert Sun,* February 28, 1961.
[181] Brochures for Palm City and Palm City Cooperative Apartments, ca. 1961, Historical Society of Palm Desert Archives.
[182] "Palm City to Change Image," *Palm Desert Post,* January 6, 1964.

An aerial of Palm City [Palm Desert Country Club] shortly after the first phases of its development. (Shadow Mountain Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Similar in ambition and scope to Palm City was the development Halecrest Country Club Village. Initially conceptualized in 1959 as a $60 million retirement development containing hundreds of homes, a shopping center, hotel, eighteen-hole golf course, and even a landing strip, the project's ambitions were reduced even before ground was broken in 1960.[183] The developers, a partnership between Los Angeles developers Golconda Development Company and Hale Company, ultimately consisted of nine groupings of around a dozen homes, each with a shared pool area. The homes were small single-family homes designed in a simplified Mid-Century Modern style typical of tract development and were primarily sold to young families. Halecrest Country Club Village was located slightly further north of Shadow Village alongside Cook Street, in an area covered in sand dunes and date farms. A testament to the immense development happening in the postwar period, in 1962, a photograph of Halecrest emerging from a foreground of sand dunes was featured on the cover of Life Magazine for a story on "Opening Up the Desert for Living."

Residential development within the historic boundaries of Palm Desert – PDC-owned land and Palm Village – also continued apace. The Palm Desert Sales Company (PDSC) initiated their own sales campaign to liquidate the PDC's residual land, selling individual lots but also larger parcels. Whereas the PDC had emphasized the construction of custom-built homes by individual homeowners (whether estate-sized or not), the new wave of infill development was led by spec builders who purchased lots and developed a series of houses, often of the same model or designed by the same architect.

[183] "Officials Reveal Plans for Senior Citizens Project," *Desert Sun,* July 28, 1959.

A view of Palm Village from the 1960s, showing some of the smaller, more affordable single-family homes for which it became known. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Monte Wenck, who had developed Shadow Hills Estates, and his associate M.L. Beard built not only Shadow Hills Estates, but also purchased nearly all the residual lots within the former Panorama Ranch and built many of the same models that had built in Shadow Hills Estates. Similarly, the Palm Springs-based developer J.C. Dunas built what he labeled the "Purple Hills Estates." Although named as if they were their own subdivision, Dunas built dozens of homes designed by the notable architect Charles DuBois on lots he had purchased from the PDSC in the early- and mid-1960s.[184] They were not separated from surrounding houses like most "estates" might have been but were mixed in with numerous custom homes built under PDC's tenure. Most of them, however, can be found on the streets of Salt Cedar, Goldflower, Tamarisk, and Bursera, which were streets plotted but not developed by the PDC.

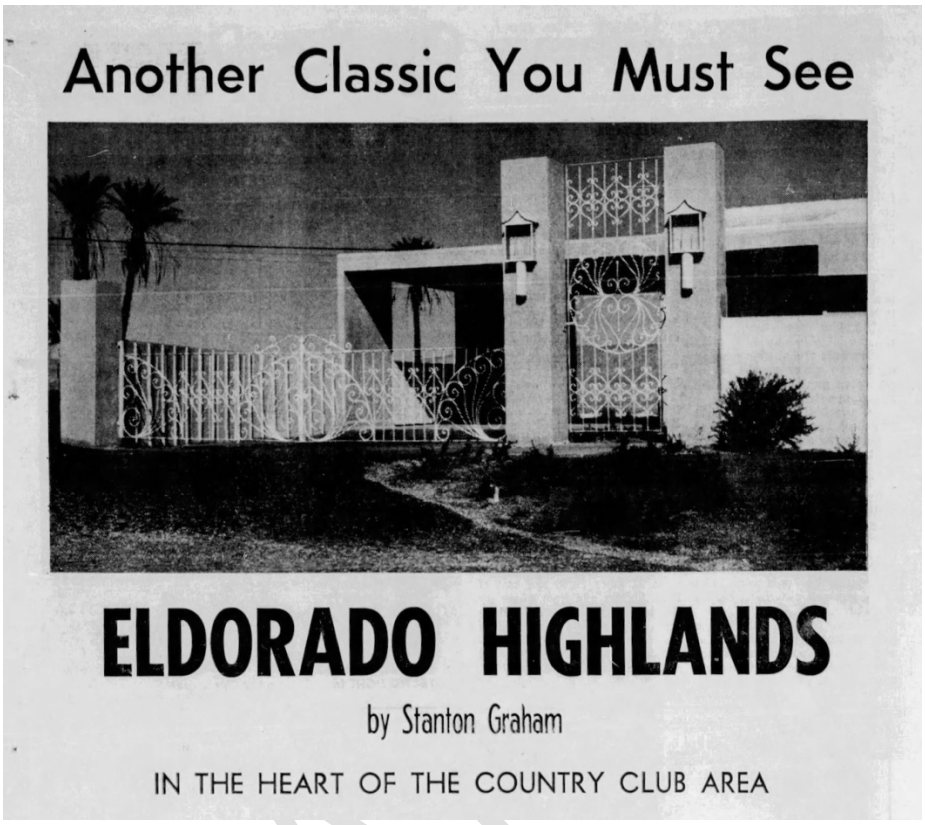
Residential infill development was also prevalent in the former Palm Village during this time. With the construction of surrounding family-oriented neighborhoods and the College of the Desert, these homes were typically single-family, designed in a simplified Mid-Century Modern style, and built by a wide selection of speculative builder-developer types. One such example was Walter White's design for Charles Gibbs of low-cost single-family housing, of which only two were built (significantly altered). Small apartment complexes and duplexes were also prevalent infill developments in Palm Village.

[184] [Illustration of Purple Hills Estates home], *Desert Sun,* October 1, 1965.

The design of the Purple Hills Estates homes by Charles DuBois also embodied a general shift that residential architecture in the Coachella Valley underwent in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Although mostly still classified under the large umbrella of Mid-Century Modern, the architecture of the period began to move away from the design of the 1940s and early 1950s which was either a refined and cleaner Modernism, or a Modernism that was hybridized with the Ranch style (as was the case with the PDC's "modern ranch" requirements). Instead, this next period of Mid-Century Modernism was noted for its integration of exotic or historicized elements, with themes that ranged from Polynesian to Grecian. DuBois, for example, designed a "Parthenon" model for the Purple Hills Estates, as well as other designs that were ambiguously French and Italian. Whereas the first phase of Mid-Century Modernism was noted for its clean lines and spans of glass, the late 1950s and 1960s was the era of breezeblock, swag lights, and otherwise fantastical theming.

Similar to the design of Purple Hills Estates were three contemporary tracts, Desert Stars (1961), Eldorado Highlands (1963), and Highland Palms Estates (1964). All three tracts were built on or directly adjacent to Palm Desert Highlands (1957), which had hardly any further development since the handful of spec homes built at its inception. In 1963, the developer Stanton Graham purchased an entire empty street within the former Palm Desert Highlands and built twenty homes. The homes were marketed as luxury single-family homes and designed by Graham in a variety of eclectic styles that included "Greek, Roman, Mediterranean, Oriental, or Spanish" models, in addition to typical Mid-Century Modern designs.[185] On a small tract next to Eldorado Highlands, the developer Charles White had built Desert Stars (1961), which consisted of twenty-two homes designed by architect Charles W. Doty in a basic Mid-Century Modern style. With another developer, White expanded the subdivision with sixteen more homes in 1964 (following the eclectic designs of Eldorado Highlands), this time known as Highland Palms Estates.[186]

[185] "Subdivision Departs from Usual Palm Grove," *Desert Sun,* December 14, 1963.
[186] Desert Stars brochure, ca. 1961, Historical Society of Palm Desert Archives; "Highland Palms Estates Presents Unique Desert Dwellings with Preview Opening and Party Today," *Desert Sun,* July 24, 1964.



An advertisement for Stanton Graham's Eldorado Highlands. (Desert Sun)

In some cases, the architects themselves acted as spec builders, designing sets of homes or scattered homes which were then sold for a profit. One such local architect-developer was John P. Moyer, who created the El Toro Development Company under which he bought lots across Palm Desert and developed numerous homes in a Mid-Century Modern style. The design-build firm Patten & Wild was led by Ross Patten (who acted as the designer) and Duke Wild (who acted as the builder), and developed dozens of homes across Palm Desert, often for small-time developers, but also to sell for their own profit. The Desert Lily Estates (1965), which was a small subdivision begun on land purchased from the PDSC in the Purple Hills Estates area, consisted of estate-sized homes that each had the appearance of a custom design and were designed/built by Patten & Wild.[187] They, along with around a dozen homes built on Willow Street, were financed by a small developer named L. W. Thompson, who had joined in with others in filling out empty lots in Palm Desert with attractive, sellable homes.

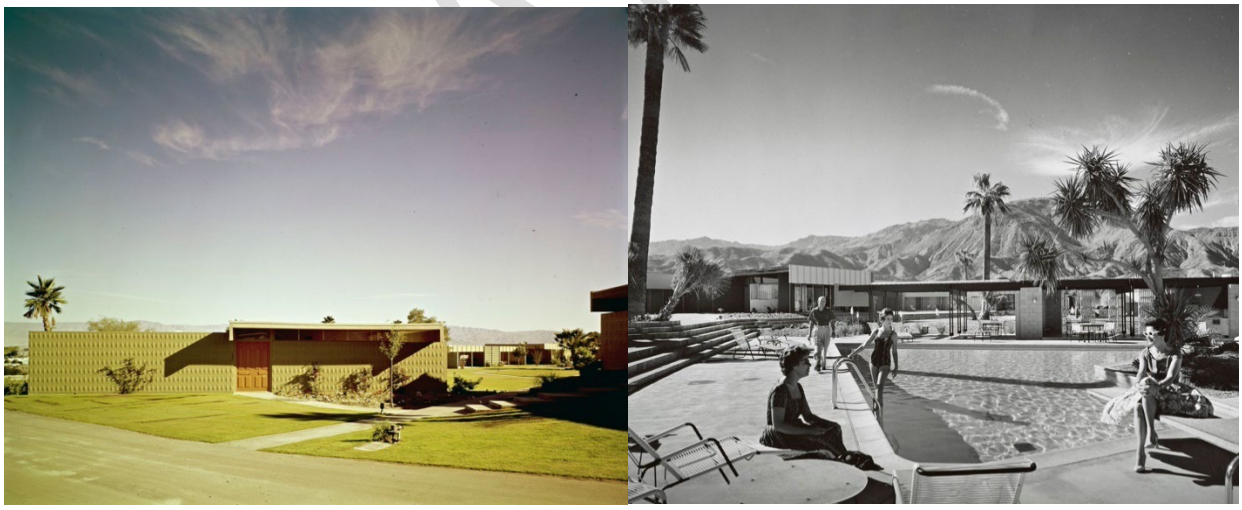
Equally successful as single-family infill development was the massive development of condominiums. While the condominium was almost ubiquitous by the end of the 1960s, only ten years prior it was a completely novel and untested concept. The earliest versions were marketed as "co-operative apartments," and some of the first and most popular of these were in Palm Desert. As the mid-century progressed, the condominium proposed an enticing model for the Coachella Valley's developers: they were ideal for seasonal residents who did not want the upkeep of a single-family house, they were

[187] Historic building permits for Willow Street, Historical Society of Palm Desert Archives.

cheaper to build and could be marketed to a larger demographic, and with a talented architect, they could be sold as impressive works of architecture without the commanding price tag.

The Sun Lodges (no longer existent) developed by the PDC were essentially condominiums with shared amenities and individual ownership, but it was the Sandpiper that began this epoch of residential development in earnest. In 1958, the developer George Holstein purchased a fifty-acre parcel of formerly PDC-owned land at the base of Highway 74 along El Paseo and hired the iconic firm Palmer & Krisel (led by William Krisel) to conceive of a condominium development.[188] Krisel designed "circles" of condominiums, in which triplex (and duplex) structures encircled a common area with a pool, barbeque area, lawn, and landscaping. The condominiums themselves were of utmost Mid-Century Modern design, featuring clerestory windows, private atriums, and a diverse selection of breezeblock and shadowblock. The site planning was tiered to preserve mountain views, and all the units faced towards the interior of their respective circle.

Sandpiper was a massive success for Holstein and ultimately developed in multiple phases between 1958 and 1969, eventually consisting of eighteen circles (CoPD Landmark #4, Sandpiper Circles #5-12). It was immediately seen as a new precedent for resort community development, especially within the Coachella Valley, and imitations of its design – well-designed circles of condominiums encircling a pool – became countless. Upon the completion of the first circles in 1958 and 1959, Sandpiper was photographed by famed photographer Julius Shulman and featured in numerous national architecture publications. Whereas the previous era of Palm Desert had been defined by the well-designed single-family house, this phase was particularly noted for the well-designed condominium.



Julius Shulman's photographs of Sandpiper taken at various stages in its development. (Julius Shulman Collection, Getty Research Institute)

[188] Lydia Kremer, "Sandpiper Condominiums Are a Reminder of Modernism's Influence in Palm Desert," *Palm Springs Life,* February 20, 2015, https://www.palmspringslife.com/sandpiper-condominiums-are-reminder-of-modernisms-influence-in-palm-desert/.

Following almost immediately in the footsteps of Sandpiper were a series of condominium developments designed (and in some cases developed) by the architect Harold Bissner. Shortly after the opening of the first Sandpiper units, Bissner designed the Sands and Shadows condominiums (1959) located on a parcel neighboring Sandpiper on Highway 74, for the Pasadena-based developer Neill Davis.[189] Like Sandpiper, one-story Mid-Century Modern condominiums encircled a central pool area, and marketing for the units emphasized the high design and lack of maintenance that accompanied ownership. Once again successful, a second unit of Sands of Shadows was built in 1963, this time designed by Bissner in partnership with a younger designed named Robert Pitchford. Bissner & Pitchford, established in 1959, went on to design around half a dozen condominium and apartment developments in Palm Desert, all located within existing neighborhoods on formerly undeveloped parcels, including the Village Green (1961) and Mountain Shadows (1963).[190]

Condominium developments proliferated across the board. The former president of the PDC, Cliff Henderson, even joined in on the growing trend with his Firecliff Colony, which was to be a large set of duplex condominiums designed in a Mid-Century Modern style by Los Angeles architect Warren Frazier Overpeck. Although only one duplex was ultimately built, Henderson repurposed the land for the Shadowcliff Apartments in 1965, which were a set of six low-slung apartments (later turned into condominiums) designed by architect John Outcault and landscaped by Tommy Tomson.[191]

[189] "Sand and Shadow Work Under Way," *Desert Sun,* September 11, 1959.
[190] "Mountain Shadows," *Desert Sun,* December 13, 1963; [Advertisement for Village Green], *Desert Sun,* March 16, 1961.
[191] Blueprints and sales brochures for Shadowcliff and Firecliff Colony, 1950s-60s, Historical Society of Palm Desert Archives.

The Shadowcliff Apartments designed by John Outcault and landscaped by Tommy Tomson. (Clifford Henderson Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Similarly formative during this period as the condominium was the introduction of the country club typology to the Coachella Valley. The first of its sort was the Thunderbird Country Club, which opened in 1956 to great success and was quickly emulated. Although the institution of the country club had existed for some time (e.g., Shadow Mountain Club, Palm Springs Tennis Club, etc.), it had never been combined with an integrated residential component.[192] In Thunderbird, estate-sized homesites were placed directly on golf fairways, which quickly filled up with custom-built homes by the area's greatest architects. In the years immediately following, developers (including those behind Thunderbird) rushed to build country clubs in the Coachella Valley including Eldorado Country Club, Tamarisk Country Club, and La Quinta Country Club. They combined the amenity, recreation, and society of the club with the high-class residential model that the Coachella Valley was known for.

The first country club of the sort to be developed in Palm Desert was the Shadow Mountain Golf Course which opened in 1959 on a parcel of land directly adjacent to the namesake club. The golf course itself was designed in consultation with celebrity golfer Gene Sarazen, and a series of lots were sited to face it. One set of these lots was the Shadow Mountain Golf Estates, which were larger lots tailored to custom-built homes. Only a handful of homes were built in the Estates, including three Mid-Century Modern homes built in 1964-65 by Patten & Wild, designed in consultation with architect Christer Barlund.[193]

[192] Stanley Fonseca, "Whiteness on the Green: Golf, the Coachella Valley, and the Leisure-Industrial Complex," *Pacific Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (2021): 448-474.
[193] [Advertisement for Patten & Wild-built homes], *Desert Sun,* August 4, 1965.

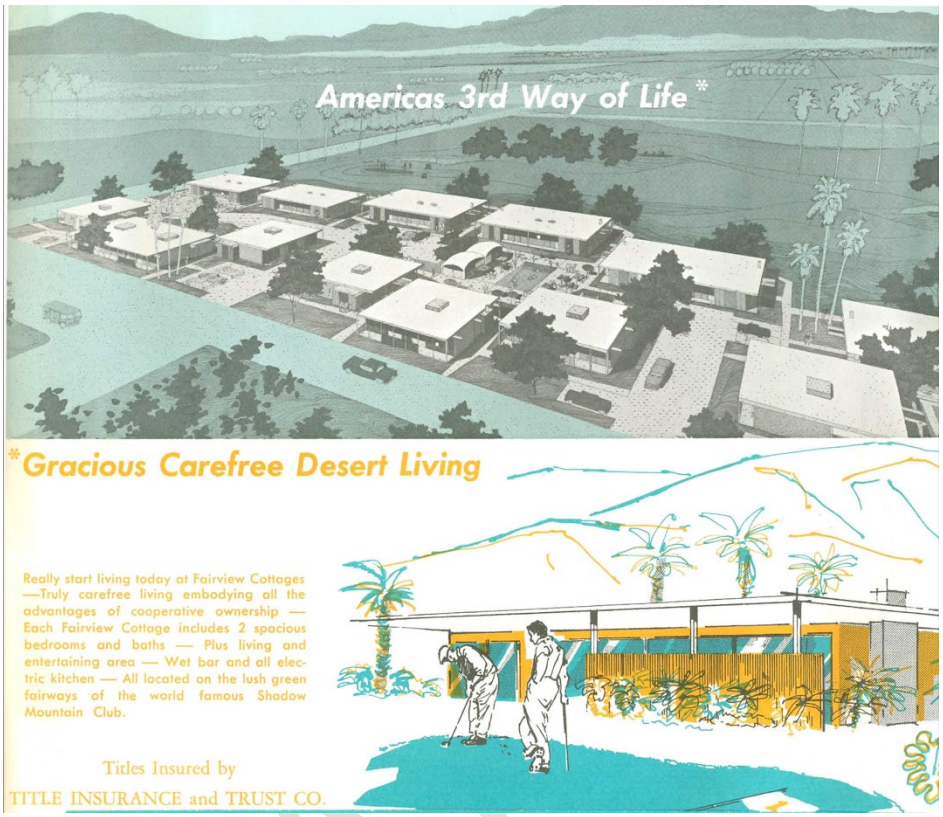
The greatest and most profitable success, however, was the combination of the two prevailing models of the period: the condominium *and* the country club. In 1961, the developer Adrian Schwilck (from Silver Spur Ranch) purchased a large quantity of the residential lots facing the Shadow Mountain Golf Club and developed the Shadow Mountain Fairway Cottages, which consisted of over fifty condominium units designed by modern architect Richard Harrison of Wexler & Harrison.[194] Initially drawing the ire of the residents of the surrounding Shadow Mountain Estates neighborhood, where the best and most expensive single-family houses had been built, the cottages quickly sold out and were expanded in multiple phases over the following years.

On another corner of the Shadow Mountain Golf Course, the developer Monte Wenck built his own set of condominiums (frequently confused with the Fair*way* Cottages) named the Fairview Cottages and designed by Los Angeles architect Richard Dorman in 1963.[195] (Wenck initially had much grander plans to develop out the Shadow Mountain Club which he had purchased in 1965 and these condominiums were to be one part of a greater expansion.) And on the opposite side of the golf course, on one of the remaining parcels, a developer built the Bissner & Pitchford-designed Mountain Shadows.

In new residential developments across Palm Desert, golf courses and condominiums were major sellers. When the developer of the Shadow Mountain Fairway cottages, Adrian Schwilck, repurchased his stake in Silver Spur Ranch with the proceeds from the cottages, he filled out entire portions of the neighborhood with more condominiums facing a small golf course.[196] Similarly, new residential developments like Palm City (Palm Desert Country Club) were planned around a golf course, and numerous plans were conceptualized but never realized for condominium-laden golf courses and country clubs.

Even if the condominium succeeded in perpetuating the seasonal residential model, it diversified the housing types – and the affordability – of residences in Palm Desert. Similarly, the 1950s and 1960s also saw a great expansion in apartment development throughout Palm Desert's existing neighborhoods. As before, new apartment buildings were concentrated on Ocotillo Drive, the lower portion of Shadow Mountain Drive, Palm Village, and the former PDC Unit 4 and Panorama Ranch. Also like their predecessors, these new apartments were typically Mid-Century Modern designs and sited around a pool and were suited to both seasonal and year-round residents. Many of these new apartments, however, featured more of the exotic elements and theming increasingly prominent in the architecture of the 1950s and 1960s. Harold Bissner designed and developed a few of these, including the Halekulani Apartments (1958) and the Maui Palms Apartments (1964, with Robert Pitchford), which combined Polynesian, Hawaiian, and Japanese motifs into an ambiguously exotic theme.[197]

[194] Conrad, "A Twisty, Unlikely Tale," January 24, 2021.
[195] Brochure for Fairview Cottages developed by Monte Wenck, 1963, Historical Society of Palm Desert Archives.
[196] Conrad, "A Twisty, Unlikely Tale," January 24, 2021.
[197] "New Apartment Project Slated," *Desert Sun,* September 5, 1965.



An original brochure for the Fairview Cottages designed by modern architect Richard Dorman for Monte Wenck at the height of the condominium craze. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

On Shadow Mountain Drive, another noteworthy project was the Continental Six designed by architect Charles W. Doty, a six-unit apartment building with a prominent façade featuring yellow diamonds that lit up at night, recalling the Googie sub-style of Mid-Century Modern architecture. Another prominent project of Doty's was the Tripalong Apartments (1958, extensively altered) in the Palm Village neighborhood, which were developed by prominent Palm Desert resident and actor William Boyd (a.k.a. Hopalong Cassidy).[198] Nearby to the Tripalong, one of architect Walter S. White's final projects was a set of bungalow apartments for Richard Deman (partially demolished) in 1957. Likewise, John Outcault was busy with apartment designs, including buildings for Holger Hathern (1959), Charles White (1961-64), and the Candlewood Inn (1959). Charles Doty also designed the Fairline Apartments (1959) and Shadow Hills Apartments (1960) which, once again, were Mid-Century Modern in style.

More affordable than even apartments or condominiums, the 1950s and 1960s saw the arrival of the first mobile home and trailer parks in Palm Desert. The first of these was the Silver Spur Mobile Home Trailer Park (1961), sited along Highway 74 on the upper slope of Palm Desert, followed a few years later by the Marco Polo Mobile Home Park (1964).[199] Even if they were markedly more affordable than other

[198] "Palm Desert's 'Tripalong' Apartments Completed, Newest Project in Palm Desert," *Desert Sun,* November 1, 1958.
[199] "New Park Under Way, Project at Silver Spur On," *Desert Sun,* January 13, 1961; "Marco Polo Village Plans Open House," *Desert Sun,* October 16, 1964.

residential developments of the era, they sought to contribute to the cultivated image of Palm Desert. These mobile home parks attempted to recreate the amenities typical of other resort developments, and featured pools, clubhouses of Mid-Century Modern design, and recreation facilities. Marco Polo's clubhouse featured an inventive folded-plate roof design fronting a pool. Mobile home parks also contributed to the demographic growth of a retiree population, which grew significantly during this era.

An original advertisement and postcard for the Marco Polo Mobile Village along Portola Avenue. (Los Angeles Times; Historical Society of Palm Desert)

While the previous era of development had largely arrived through the efforts of individual homebuilders (incentivized and guided by entities like the PDC), the 1950s and 1960s was the era of builders and developers who built spec houses, tracts, condominiums, and apartments which homeowners bought into. While it was no longer the norm that it was during the tenure of the PDC, several architecturally significant homes were built on lots purchased by individuals within existing subdivisions. Empty lots were still widely available from either the Palm Desert Sales Company or individuals. Although developers mostly developed homes themselves or sold lots to other builders, all the aforementioned subdivisions and sales companies did not refrain from selling lots to individuals. In fact, many of the same architects working on tract and spec homes were also designing custom homes.

While the designs of Walter White had dominated much of the custom-built home market in the late 1940s and early 1950s, the architect John Outcault was particularly prolific during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Outcault, who was based in Palm Desert, specialized in a Mid-Century Modern style that was not as minimal as White's and incorporated such popular elements as breezeblock. Many of his custom homes were built in the Shadow Mountain Estates area, the central neighborhood created by the PDC. Some of Outcault's most prominent designs included his Mid-Century Modern residences for Virgil

Pinkley (1959), Ralph Hale (1958), Ed Welcome (1959), Paul Moller (1962), J.R. Cummings (1963), Gordon Bain (1961, demolished), and even Randall Henderson (1962, significantly altered).

The Virgil Pinkley residence designed by architect John Outcault in 1959. (Maynard Parker Collection, Huntington Library)

Although not as common, some developers and builders did build one-off spec homes that were estate sized and custom-built. The most notable of these was a 1963 house built by the developer William Kemp (a developer who had completed later circles of Sandpiper) designed by the architect William Krisel, later known as the "Lost Krisel" for its late rediscovery.[200] Though not as custom as the 1963 house, Holstein also built two spec homes in 1957 designed by Krisel on Tamarisk Street, just prior to his development of Sandpiper. These houses fit well into the existing character of the neighborhoods where they were built, most of which consisted of custom-built, architect-designed homes. Unlike the preceding decade of residential development, however, they had become less of a norm.

Across the board, development in Palm Desert in the early- to mid-1960s was robust to the point where it could be considered a building glut. Unlike previous decades, developers built large quantities of homes and condominiums at once, which changed the relationship between the homeowner and the home, and increasingly attracted investment from broader sources. A selection of developments either never came to fruition or went bankrupt in the face of this, including Silver Spur Ranch, which had initiated a massive

[200] Greg Archer, "The Lost Krisel," *Palm Springs Life,* February 1, 2012, https://www.palmspringslife.com/the-lost-krisel/.

expansion campaign only to be forced into foreclosure in 1965, and Palm City, which abandoned many of its plans and was rebranded as the Palm Desert Country Club. Amidst this glut, development slowed in Palm Desert in the mid- to late-1960s.

Evaluation Guidelines: Residential Development, 1957-1966

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of residential development in Palm Desert between 1957 and 1966. The replacement of the Palm Desert Corporation with the Palm Desert Sales Company and many other developers led to the community's greatest period of growth, as the single-family residential idiom was transformed into a diverse set of both single- and multi-family residential options. As such, there are numerous examples of resources associated with this theme, both modest dwellings for seasonal and year-round residents, and larger, more architecturally distinctive custom homes designed by local and regional architects. Resources that are significant under this theme likely consist of both individual properties and concentrations of dwellings that are not individually distinctive but collectively convey patterns and trends associated with postwar suburbanization. Some are in planned developments beyond the classic residential tract, in contexts including country clubs, mobile home parks, condominium complexes, and combinations.

Associated Property Types	Residential • Single-family residence or complex • Multi-family residence or complex • Residential community building/clubhouse/amenity • Subdivision/planned community planning feature • Historic district
Property Type Summary	Residential development in Palm Desert 1957-1966 consisted of single-family and multi-family dwellings on a wide variety of scales and settings. Some were tract houses built in subdivisions, both existing and (mostly) new; others were planned complexes of condominiums or other dwelling types, and still others were part of country clubs or mobile home parks. Significant resources associated with this theme are likely expressed both as individual properties and in the form of historic districts. There may also be features related to subdivision and planned community development, including entrance markers, signage, shared amenities, and landscaping.
Geographic Location	Citywide. Residential development from this period occurred throughout the entire city, with particular but not exclusive concentration south of Highway 111.
Period of Significance	The period of significance for this context begins in 1957, with the rise of new developers following liquidation of the Palm Desert Corporation, and ends in 1966, when the community experienced a lull in development activity.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As resources associated with this theme are very common, the integrity of eligible properties should be quite high. A slightly greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a building must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, F[201]	An **individual property** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with residential development in Palm Desert during this period; or • As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	A resource that is significant for its association with historic patterns of events or as the site of a significant historic event is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association.[202] A residential property from this period should retain integrity of location, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. A resource that has lost integrity of setting may still be eligible. A property that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. A resource is generally not eligible if it retains some basic features conveying form and massing, but has lost the majority	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1957-1966), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

[201] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).
[202] National Register Bulletin 15.

		of features that characterized its appearance during its historical period.	

A/1/A, E, F	A **historic district** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of residential development in Palm Desert	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority (51%) of the components within the district boundaries must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. Integrity of design, setting, and feeling must be strongly present in the district overall, and it should convey a strong sense of time and place. A contributing building must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. 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 massing, form, roofline, or fenestration patterns of an individual building, alter the original design intent, or that are not reversible may result in non-contributing status for an individual building. In order for a historic district to retain integrity, the majority (51% or more) of its component parts should contribute to its historic significance.	To be eligible under this theme, a historic district should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1957-1966), and • Retain the majority (51% or more) of the contributors dating to the period of significance.

B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A resource that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum:

		to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	• Date to the period of significance (1957-1966), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

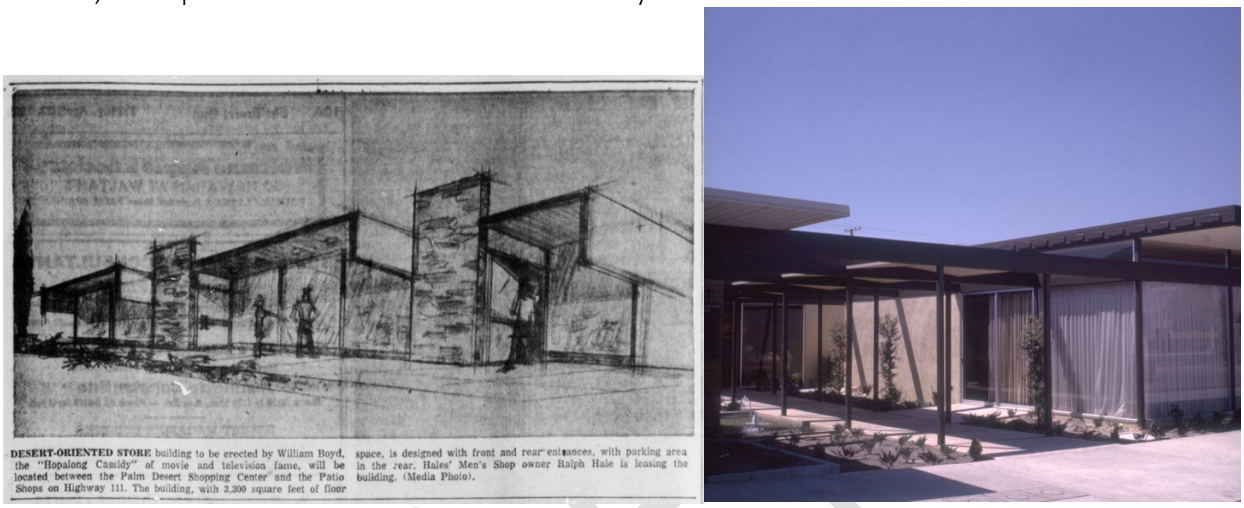
Theme: Commercial Development, 1957-1966

In the 1940s and 1950s, a selection of stores and restaurants had been established in Palm Desert and provided basic commercial needs but little else. The exception to this were businesses related to the community's seasonal needs, particularly those dealing with construction, property sales, architectural design, and maintenance. The development of lodges and seasonal accommodations was also prolific, and such businesses as the Firecliff Lodge (demolished), Palm Desert Adobe (demolished), and Sun and Shadows Hotel Apartments (significantly altered) were built. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, residential development, freed from the constraints of the PDC, increased and diversified Palm Desert's population, thereby providing the demographic and economic support for increased commercial development. The growth was also regional – neighboring cities like Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells were similarly growing but lacked commercial downtowns – and Palm Desert was able leverage its central location to attract businesses. It was during this period, from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, that commercial development immensely grew and diversified along with everything else.

Commercial development was most notable along Highway 111, which developed a (still piecemeal) wall of commercial frontage by the end of the 1960s. Many of these buildings were small, basically designed, and hosted an ever-changing selection of retail and service businesses. In most cases, they were buildings built by one person that contained four or five commercial units. Like in the first phase of commercial development, the model of the commercial plaza and/or shopping center proved particularly lucrative for its flexibility. Numerous developments of this kind fronted Highway 111, complimenting existing plazas such as the Palm Desert Patio Shops or The Center. Although many of these new plazas strayed from the typical U-shaped floor plan of the first generation, they were almost always Mid-Century Modern in design, featuring covered walkways, dramatic awnings, and other elements designed to mitigate the desert sun.

One of the most prominent of these was the twenty-unit Palm Desert Shopping Center (frequently referred to as the Center and easy to confuse with The Center) designed in a Mid-Century Modern style by architect Stanley Ring. Opened in 1957, the Center fronted Highway 111 and was developed by the couple responsible for the adjacent Palm Desert Patio Shops, one of the community's earliest commercial

centers.[203] Shortly thereafter, in the empty lot between the Center and the Patio Shops, the actor William Boyd developed a nameless commercial building (1960) designed by the architect Charles W. Doty. The three-unit structure was designed in a distinct Mid-Century Modern style with rectangular awnings that dramatically expressed themselves on the façade, nicely complimenting the angular Center directly next door.[204] One block over, also on Highway 111, the architect John Outcault designed the Pelgram Building (1958). This was followed shortly thereafter by the adjacent Press Building (1964) designed by Ira Johnson, a disciple of the famed architect William Cody.[205]


DESERT-ORIENTED STORE building to be erected by William Boyd, the "Hopalong Cassidy" of movie and television fame, will be located between the Palm Desert Shopping Center and the Patio Shops on Highway 111. The building, with 3,300 square feet of floor space, is designed with front and rear entrances, with parking area in the rear. Hales' Men's Shop owner Ralph Hale is leasing the building. (Media Photo).

Two of the Mid-Century Modern commercial buildings built along Highway 111 in the 1960s, the William Boyd commercial building by Charles W. Doty (left) and the Press Building by Ira Johnson (right). (Desert Sun; Desert Beautiful Slide Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Although the shopping center and plaza was still the prevailing type of commercial building, a selection of individually occupied commercial buildings also went up along Highway 111. As before, businesses related to the construction, design, and sales of property were common. The most prominent of these was the Desert Property Consultants building (1959, no longer existent) designed by John Outcault for Hal Kapp and Ted Smith at the corner of Highway 111 and Portola Avenue. At the farthest end of Highway 111, close to the border of Rancho Mirage, architect Hugh Kaptur designed the Hoams Pools showroom (1964, no longer existent) in a dramatic Mid-Century Modern style (bordering on Googie) meant to highlight the "demonstration pool" on display.[206] After financing much of Palm Desert's development, the Security First National Bank built a Palm Desert branch (no longer existent) on the prominent corner of Highway 111 and Portola Avenue in 1962, designed by John Outcault. The new bank – a significant upgrade from the small Bank of America built only a few years prior – replaced a model home and sales office (William Krisel, relocated but no longer existent) erected at the corner by the developers of Silver Spur Ranch.[207]

---

[203] [Advertisement announcing the "R. K. Hanson Shopping Center"], *Desert Sun,* June 8, 1957.
[204] [Rendering of Charles Doty-designed commercial building], *Desert Sun,* April 22, 1960.
[205] [Illustration of Press Building under construction], *Desert Sun,* April 3, 1964.
[206] Steven Keylon, *The Modern Architecture of Hugh Michael Kaptur* (Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2019), 97.
[207] "New Bank Open Friday," *Desert Sun,* April 18, 1963; George F. Anderson, "Dr. F.X. McDonald Moving by Sections," *Desert Sun,* July 25, 1962.

For the first time, freestanding restaurants were among the commercial buildings found along Highway 111. Unlike other commercial developments of the period, restaurant buildings were not all designed in a Mid-Century Modern style, but rather in historicist or more expressive Googie styles. Keedy's Fountain and Grill, established in 1957 in the Palm Desert Patio Shops (extensively altered), quickly became a local landmark, although it did not have its own building and was a diner more than an upscale sit-down restaurant. An A&W root beer stand (no longer existent), designed by John Outcault in Mid-Century Modern style and opened in 1961, similarly served a more informal crowd. In the mid-1960s, however, a host of purpose-built restaurants were developed along Highway 111. These included Johnny Bash's Clubhouse (1964, now Cactus Jack's Bar & Grill), Romeo's Steak House (1964, no longer existent), the Hayloft Steakhouse (1964), and Sambo's Restaurant (1966, significantly altered).[208] Apart from the Googie design of Sambo's, they were not Mid-Century Modern in style. The Hayloft was built to mimic a quintessential red barn and Johnny Bash's featured a Mansard roof floating over volcanic rock.

The Palm Desert location of the Sambo's chain, a Googie building (extensively altered) at the corner of Highway 74 and 111. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

While Highway 111 was filling in, El Paseo – the PDC-created downtown strip which had languished for a decade – also experienced a humble amount of commercial growth. Whereas previously the only buildings on the main portion of El Paseo were the Firecliff Lodge, the Sun Lodges, and Sun and Shadows Apartment Hotel, they were joined by a handful of retail businesses and commercial structures in the 1960s. Though the PDC had planned El Paseo to be an upscale shopping district, the first business of the sort did not arrive until 1958 with the opening of Dietz Designs, an interior design business and furniture showroom which decorated Palm Desert's nicer homes and model homes for such developments as

[208] "Sambo's Start is Set," *Palm Desert Post,* May 19, 1966; "An Active Banker for an Active Community," *Palm Desert Post,* February 6, 1964; "Café Grading Starts in Palm Desert Area," *Palm Desert Post,* March 19, 1964; "Johnny Bash Clubhouse Opens Here," *Palm Desert Post,* April 2, 1964.

Sands and Shadows.[209] Dietz Designs was followed in 1961 by the opening of Edith Morre' Shop, a high-end women's retail store that also contained a hairdresser and hosted fashion events (extensively altered).[210] A few other smaller commercial buildings were built, hosting such businesses as Palm Desert Stationers, but businesses of this type were still scarce on El Paseo for many more years.

Two significant Mid-Century Modern shopping centers were also built on El Paseo in the 1960s. The first was the Medical-Arts Building designed by architect Harold Bissner in conjunction with Robert Pitchford (Bissner & Pitchford). The flat-roofed Mid-Century Modern professional plaza, containing twelve office suites, hosted Bissner's own office and a selection of medical, legal, and professional offices.[211] A block away, at the corner of San Luis Rey Avenue and El Paseo, the Town and Country Center was completed in 1966 by architect William Cody in his refined modern style.[212] The two-story TAC Center was also built to accommodate professional offices and was among the more prominent architectural structures in Palm Desert when it was completed. Although it was not Mid-Century Modern, instead designed in a Spanish Revival style, the Villa Escrow Company building opened on El Paseo in 1966, and featured a selection of leasable commercial units in addition to their own offices.[213]These three projects embodied the direction of El Paseo – upscale and professional – but it would still be decades before the street had any cohesion, and the vast majority of it was still undeveloped by the end of the 1960s. Most of the development which did occur during this period was located on the two blocks on either side of the Firecliff Lodge, stretching from Portola Avenue to Larkspur Lane.

The Cosmopolitan Building designed by William Cody (left) in 1966 and the Medical Arts Building designed by Harold Bissner and Robert Pitchford (right) in 1963, both on El Paseo. (Desert Beautiful Slide Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Highway 111 and El Paseo represented two of Palm Desert's commercial districts, but another began to grow on San Pablo Avenue during this period. A short section of San Pablo north of Highway 111, it was the only commercial area that encroached into the interior of the historic Palm Village. The first structure to be developed was the grocery store Palm Desert Market, built in 1956 on the corner of San Pablo and

[209] Jean Patane, "Rancho Mirage," *Desert Sun,* June 13, 1958.
[210] [Illustration of new Edith Morre' building], *Desert Sun,* October 21, 1961.
[211] "Harold Bissner: El Paseo Will Be PD's 'Main Street'," *Palm Desert Post,* December 12, 1963.
[212] William Cody, blueprints for T.A.C. Corporation, 1966, Historical Society of Palm Desert Archives.
[213] "Villa Escrow to Hold Formal Opening Friday," *Desert Sun,* April 14, 1966.

Highway 111 by Winfield Andrews, who then expanded it in 1959 into a larger shopping center with the aid of architect John Outcault.[214] On the opposite corner, Outcault designed a three-unit Mid-Century Modern commercial building for C.W. Rolfe (1962), known best for hosting Village Liquor.[215] Outcault also designed a handful of basic commercial buildings further down San Pablo.

On San Pablo Avenue on the other side of Highway 111, the largest shopping center developed during this period was the Market Basket Shopping Center, a full-scale grocery store center developed by national chain Kroger that contained a Market Basket grocery store, Super-X Drug Store, a Sprouse-Reitz five-and-dime store, and other retail spaces.[216] Upon its grand opening in 1965, it became one of the most prominent mid-valley shopping centers (thanks to Palm Desert's central location) and epitomized the incursion of investment from increasingly national sources in the growth of Palm Desert. The Market Basket, now Jensen's, is substantially altered. Another large shopping center, although somewhat anomalous, was the Palm City Shopping Center (1962) designed in a Mid-Century Modern style by architect William M. Bray A.I.A. that was built as part of Palm City, a retirement community on the border of La Quinta.[217] Although Palm City was initially intended to be its own community, it was ultimately considered part of Palm Desert and was renamed to the Palm Desert Shopping Center by the end of the 1970s under new owners. The center (no longer existent) was a series of buildings that contained a variety of businesses including a grocery store, medical offices, coffee shop, beauty shop, and others.

[214] Gretchen Cheeseman, "Palm Desert," *Desert Sun,* May 29, 1956.
[215] [Illustration of C. W. Rolfe building under construction], *Desert Sun,* April 27, 1962
[216] "All Businesses Will Benefit, Predicts Shop Center Builder," *Palm Desert Post,* October 1, 1964; "Sprouse-Reitz, Super-X Drugs Plan Outlets in Palm Desert," *Palm Desert Post,* September 23, 1965.
[217] "Palm City Sets Shopping Center," *Desert Sun,* March 2, 1962.

The Palm City Shopping Center (demolished) designed by William Bray. (Shadow Mountain Collection, HSPD)

The development occurring in the three adjacent commercial districts (Highway 111, El Paseo, and San Pablo Ave) greatly increased the selection of commercial businesses. In the 1940s and 1950s, commercial development had almost exclusively targeted seasonal residents, particularly with hotel and lodge developments. While Palm Desert's commercial development in the late 1950s and 1960s was focused more on retail and professional growth, additional hotels and motels were also developed, even if they were no longer the primary commercial typology. Moreover, whereas the hotels of the preceding decade were humbler operations of a dozen or so rooms typically owned and run by a couple, the hotels of the 1950s and 1960s were at times larger and designed in more fantastical adaptations of the Mid-Century Modern style.

The development of smaller hotels was still focused primarily on lower Shadow Mountain Drive, exemplified by the Gala Villa (1957) and Chukker Inn (1961), both of which were smaller Mid-Century Modern hotels much in the mold of their predecessors. On Highway 74, adjacent to the Palm Desert Adobe, the whimsical lodge built in the 1940s, the architect Earl Kaltenbach designed and built the Carousel Motor Inn in 1960, a low-slung one-story hotel (no longer existent) wrapped around a central pool.[218] The development of these smaller hotels slowed as the 1960s progressed, and instead the focus was on much larger hotels. The foremost of these was the International Motor Lodge, a fifty-two-room hotel spread out over seven two-story buildings. The largest hotel in Palm Desert when it was completed, the complex also contained a set of interestingly shaped pools, including one that wrapped around a

[218] [Rendering of Carousel Motor Lodge], *Desert Sun,* October 7, 1960.

central fountain made of volcanic rock.[219] Opened directly next door to the International Motor Lodge in 1964, the Sandra-La Motel was a two-story structure designed in an Asian-influenced Mid-Century Modern style, and was among the last of the hotels developed in Palm Desert in the 1960s.

The International Motor Lodge and the renovated Firecliff Lodge. (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

The grandest and most fantastical hotel of the era was not a new development, but rather a renovation of one of the earliest. Cliff Henderson, who maintained full ownership of the Firecliff Lodge, hired the Los Angeles architect Warren Frazier Overpeck in 1958 to oversee a grand renovation of the hotel. Overpeck completely redesigned the Firecliff Lodge, a Ranch style building by architect Henry Eggers, into a swank Mid-Century Modern structure that contained the "Satellite Room," a bar and restaurant (no longer existent) that conjured the atomic character of the 1960s.[220] The structure, which opened to much fanfare, epitomized the direction of Palm Desert's Mid-Century Modern architecture, which had moved away from the refined Ranch style and towards a more populist version of the style.

The Shadow Mountain Club, another prominent commercial development in the early history of Palm Desert, also saw its operations change and grow during this period. In 1959, a separate entity developed the Shadow Mountain Golf Club (SMGC) on an adjacent parcel of land, bringing the first ever golf course to Palm Desert.[221] Recreation was by far the fastest growing sector of the Coachella Valley's economy, and the SMGC followed directly on the heels of country club developments like Thunderbird and Eldorado, which unleashed the first significant wave of golf course development. The SMGC was designed in consultation with famed golfer Gene Sarazen and was open for use to members of the public. The Shadow Mountain Club itself was sold by the PDC in 1953, and then sold again in 1963 to developer Monte Wenck who oversaw a campaign to modernize and expand its facilities. Wenck renamed it the

[219] "One Ready, One to Go for New Motor Lodge," *Desert Sun,* October 1, 1963.
[220] "Cliff Henderson, Founder of Palm Desert, Scores Again," *Desert Sun,* April 17, 1958.
[221] "Sporty Shadow Mountain Golf Course to Be Ready in Near Future, Designed by Gene Sarazen" *Desert Sun,* November 2, 1959.

Shadow Mountain Country Club to align with the names of the newest clubs and built a Mid-Century Modern hotel on the property designed by John Outcault.[222] The renovations to the Shadow Mountain Club illustrated a shift in commercial recreation that occurred in the late 1950s. Whereas private clubs were previously clubhouses primarily used for entertainment and dining, the private clubs of the 1960s were almost entirely focused on golf or tennis.

Evaluation Guidelines: Commercial Development, 1957-1966

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of commercial development in Palm Desert between 1957 and 1966. As the city experienced extraordinary growth in both population and geographic reach, a substantial number of new commercial buildings were constructed to keep pace with the city's growth and serve the various needs of its residents. There are many extant resources associated with this theme. Most consist of Mid-Century Modern and vernacular business blocks, shopping centers, and other common commercial uses that are strung along the city's major thoroughfares. Resources that are significant under this theme are likely to consist of individual buildings; Palm Desert does not appear to retain cohesive, intact groupings of commercial properties dating to this period which could be historic districts.

Associated Property Types	Commercial • Retail store or complex • Office building or complex • Hotel/motel/lodge • Private club • Restaurant • Mixed-use (commercial/office/residential) • Bank/financial institution • Auto-oriented business • Signage
Property Type Summary	Commercial development in postwar Palm Desert consisted predominantly of low-scale commercial buildings that housed a wide variety of common commercial uses. Resources may include retail and/or office buildings and complexes; hotels, motels and lodges; private clubs; restaurants; mixed-use buildings; bank buildings; auto-related commercial buildings like repair shops, service stations, or garages; and signs.
Geographic Location	Central city. Commercial development from this period is concentrated along the major corridors of Highway 74, Highway 111, and other thoroughfares (e.g., Portola Avenue, El Paseo).

[222] "Shadow Mountain Stock Moves," *Desert Sun,* September 21, 1963.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for this context begins in 1957, with the rise of new developers following liquidation of the Palm Desert Corporation, and ends in 1966, when the community experienced a lull in development activity.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As resources associated with this theme are common, the integrity of eligible properties should be quite high. A slightly greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a building must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, F[223]	An **individual property** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of commercial development in Palm Desert during this period; and/or • As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	A resource that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event or historical pattern. A commercial property from this period should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. A resource that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. Minor alterations – such as door replacement, re-roofing, or	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1957-1966), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

[223] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).

		compatible re-stuccoing – shall not, in and of themselves, render a resource ineligible. However, the cumulative impact of multiple minor alterations may compromise a resource's overall integrity. More substantive alterations that are difficult to reverse – such as extensive storefront modifications that obscure the original form and program of the building, modification of original fenestration patterns, the removal of historic finishes or features – compromise a resource's integrity and are likely to render it ineligible.	

B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A property that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1957-1966), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity (listed above), and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

Theme: Civic/Institutional Development, 1957-1966

Under the Palm Desert Corporation (PDC), Palm Desert had seen to the development of a humble set of civic institutions. It had a school, a church, a social club, a small library, an art gallery, and the beginnings

of some professional organizations, though not much else. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, an increase in population size and a diversification of its socioeconomic makeup saw to the rise of many others. There were more people – families, retirees, seasonal residents – motivated to create a civically-minded community, and they did. Between the 1950s and 1960s, Palm Desert added multiple churches of varying denominations, a regionally important community college, its first formalized library, another elementary school, clubhouses, and various other civic developments. As before, the community successfully leveraged its mid-valley location amidst a rapidly developing region to attract and justify many of these efforts.

The amount of Palm Desert's churches and religious facilities grew the most out of all civic enterprises during the period. Demand for church services was at its greatest during season, as thousands of seasonal residents (from many backgrounds and religious affiliations) sought out a place to worship. Dating back to Palm Desert's first decade of growth, numerous religious organizations had more informal beginnings, often using local gathering spaces (like the Shadow Mountain Club or Desert Magazine), restaurants, and even individual homes for their services. As these organizations matured and their constituencies grew, most of them founded building and fundraising committees dedicated to financing their own structures. Between 1950 and 1960, essentially all the churches in Palm Desert were built this way. As one article from 1965 in the *Desert Sun* clearly noted, "Reflecting the growth of the desert, many churches throughout are being built, rebuilt, or decorated, meeting the needs of thousands of residents who attend services on Sunday."[224]

The first of these new churches to be built in Palm Desert was the Sacred Heart Catholic Church, opened in 1958. The church, a Mid-Century Modern structure of brick, glass, and expressive wooden beams, was fundraised by prominent resident Bing Crosby (who owned a house above Silver Spur Ranch) and later noted for hosting president John F. Kennedy on his desert visits.[225] As was the case with Crosby's involvement in Sacred Heart, prominent residents, ranging from celebrities to former presidents, were frequently involved in fundraising and publicizing new churches and other civic amenities. Sacred Heart was located further north of Palm Desert proper, at the end of Deep Canyon Road, which was later adjacent to the subdivisions (Shadow Village, namely) that hosted the most of Palm Desert's young families.

Shortly after Sacred Heart, ground was broken in 1959 on a new Christian Science church at the corner of Portola Avenue and Larrea Street. This general area was originally intended by the PDC to be the "church square," and was set aside for the development of religious and educational facilities. Although only the Palm Desert Community Church was built during the PDC's administration, various religious and civic structures were developed on the land during the 1950s and 1960s, and it ultimately came to fulfill its original purpose. The First Church of Christ, Scientist designed by John Outcault was one of these, and opened in 1960.[226] Around the same time, the Hope Lutheran Church (1961-62) was completed and

[224] "Desert Churches Feel Pinch of Growth," *Desert Sun,* November 24, 1965.
[225] "Sacred Heart Church Builds Edifice," *Desert Sun,* May 16, 1958; Renee Brown, "John F. Kennedy Surprised Palm Springs in 1962," *Desert Sun,* June 18, 2016, https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/2016/06/18/president-john-f-kennedy-jfk-palm-springs-frank-bogert/85963830/.
[226] "Landscaping Completed on PD Science Church," *Desert Sun,* March 5, 1960.

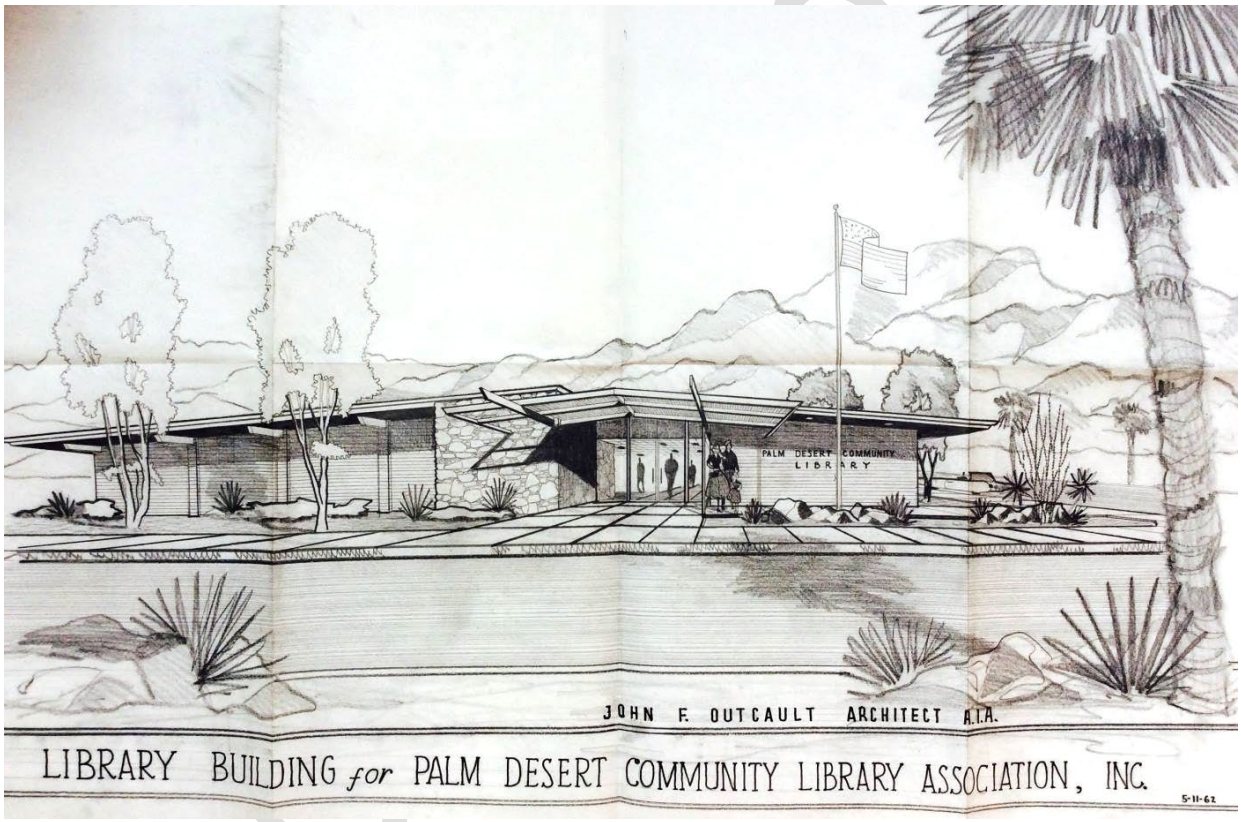
opened one block down (no longer existent) at the corner of Portola Avenue and Fairway Drive.[227] As was ubiquitous with church designs of the era, both of these were designed in a Mid-Century Modern style. Outcault's design for the Christian Science church was a low-slung, angular structure, while Hope Lutheran was an A-frame sheathed in stained glass.

John Outcault's rendering for Palm Desert's Christian Science Church from 1959. (John Outcault Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, UC Santa Barbara)

On the opposite side of Palm Desert, another grouping of churches would come to be developed on Highway 74 in the later 1960s. The first of these was St. Margaret's Episcopal Church, completed in 1965 by local architect Robert Ricciardi. The Mid-Century Modern design called for a long horizontal structure constructed of brick, on top of which rested a pitched roof with a simple fold that cantilevered over the front elevation. It was also during this period, beginning in 1963, that the Palm Desert Community Church began planning (via a committee with President Dwight Eisenhower as its honorary chair) for a much larger church on an adjacent parcel, which would not be built for a few years. Further removed from central Palm Desert, St. John's American Lutheran Church was another church dating to this period of civic growth. Located on Washington Avenue, the easternmost border of Palm Desert, it was built next to Palm City (Palm Desert Country Club) after the group had met for several years prior in the Palm Desert Country Club clubhouse. The Los Angeles-based firm Maul and Pulver designed the Mid-Century Modern church, which opened in 1964.[228]

[227] "For Hope Lutheran, Dedication Is Set," *Desert Sun,* February 17, 1962.
[228] "'A Venture of Faith' Brings St. John's to Dedication Day," *Desert Sun,* April 25, 1964.

The process of fundraising for Palm Desert's churches was very much a civic endeavor, frequently led by fundraising committee that solicited contributions (whether money, land, or services) from a variety of stakeholders. This process, however, was not only limited to churches, and perhaps the foremost example of an active group was the Palm Desert Community Library Association (PDCLA). Founded in 1958, the PDCLA was an organization solely dedicated to funding a building for the Palm Desert Library, which had previously been hosted in a small rental space. Randall Henderson donated a parcel of land that was formerly part of his Desert Magazine landholdings, a variety of organization and individuals donated to the building fund, and architect John Outcault donated his design services.[229] The Palm Desert Community Library (CoPD Landmark #3) opened in 1963 to great success and remained the community's library for over three decades.



The Palm Desert Library designed by John Outcault, which opened in 1963. (John Outcault Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, UC Santa Barbara)

Elsewhere in Palm Desert, educational facilities also contributed to a growing civic environment. The Palm Desert School (1950) was the only primary school in the community for over a decade until the construction of the Abraham Lincoln Elementary School in 1963. Lincoln School, as it was known, was constructed in the northern portion of Palm Desert directly adjacent to the Shadow Village neighborhood, which had been developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s as a family-friendly subdivision. Lincoln School was a direct result of the growth of families who lived year-round (even if they were still greatly outnumbered by seasonal residents and retirees) and established another area of Palm Desert that would

[229] "Library for Palm Desert All Set, Friday Set as Start in Building," *Desert Sun,* May 10, 1962.

be further developed with educational facilities. The school's design, a series of hexagonal Mid-Century Modern classrooms and offices (no longer existent), was completed by noted Palm Springs architects E. Stewart Williams and John Porter Clark and opened for classes in 1964.[230]

E. Stewart Williams and John Porter Clark's Mid-Century Modern design for Lincoln Elementary School (demolished) from 1963. (E. Stewart Williams Collection, Palm Springs Art Museum)

However, the most consequential educational institution to arrive to Palm Desert in the 1960s, and perhaps the most prominent development of the period, was the College of the Desert (COD). In 1958, voters across the Coachella Valley overwhelmingly approved a measure to establish a community college district, and the search for a site somewhere in the Coachella Valley immediately began. Given that it was intended to serve the entire region, Palm Desert soon emerged as a clear candidate for the college given its central location to both Palm Springs and Indio.[231] The rancher Amos Odell (who had previously

[230] "PD's Lincoln School Finally Open After 10-Day Delay," *Palm Desert Post,* January 23, 1964.
[231] Denise Goolsby, "College of the Desert Traces Its History to 1958," *Desert Sun,* October 18, 2014, https://www.desertsun.com/story/news/education/2014/10/19/college-of-the-desert-history-palm-desert/17251991/.

developed the subdivision Palm Dell) sold his 120-acre "Odell Ranch" to the college, which was supplemented with a parcel from another landowner. Odell's house, a Late Moderne design by the architect Herbert Burns, would soon become the COD President's house.

The Bay Area architect John Carl Warnecke (noted for his design of President John F. Kennedy's memorial) was hired to design the campus, and Palm Springs architect John Porter Clark was chosen to supervise a team of prominent local architects tasked with executing individual buildings, which included E. Stewart Williams, Albert Frey, Robson Chambers, Donald Wexler, and Richard Harrison.[232] The design was a Mid-Century Modern campus that incorporated elements of Brutalism (heavy concrete volumes, rough aggregate, etc.) and New Formalism (Classically influenced geometry), while also accommodating for the desert environment with an extensive use of colonnaded walkways. Warnecke also made a point to include date palms in the landscaping of the campus, which were intended to recall the date grove so typical of the Coachella Valley's agricultural origins, including those of the former Odell Ranch.

A view of John Carl Warnecke's College of the Desert (1958), designed in the New Formalism style. (Desert Sun)

COD opened for classes in 1962 and quickly developed into the most prominent higher education institution in the Coachella Valley (a position which it retains). It was also highly consequential for Palm Desert in a variety of ways. COD cemented the community as an important mid-valley location, drawing a diverse student constituency from across the Coachella Valley, promoted further growth, and diversified the image of Palm Desert, which was still an overwhelmingly seasonal community. COD continued to expand over the ensuing decades, and its precedent aided in the establishment of future higher education schools in Palm Desert.

[232] Goolsby, "College of the Desert," *Desert Sun,* 2014.

Another sign of Palm Desert's growth was the establishment of yet another post office. The community had quickly outgrown its existing post office, a small structure constructed by the PDC in 1951 (which had replaced an even smaller structure), and a new one was promptly constructed in 1958 on El Paseo, just east of Portola Avenue.[233] The new post office was a simple Mid-Century Modern structure (no longer existent) that served the community for over a decade.

Just as the Shadow Mountain Club and Desert Magazine had served as important community gathering places for events, meetings, and even religious services, other private clubhouses developed in the 1950s and 1960s also served this role. In 1963, the developers of Silver Spur Ranch built a Mid-Century Modern "Recreation Hall" designed by the local architect Robert Ricciardi, which also included an angular pool and shuffleboard.[234] Although it did not have dining facilities or sponsored events like the Shadow Mountain Club, it was frequently used for neighborhood and community events. St. Margaret's Episcopal Church and University Baptist Church, for example, held their first services in the building, while other organizations like the Palm Desert Junior Women's Club also held meetings there. Likewise, the clubhouse and recreation buildings at Palm City (Palm Desert Country Club) were also host to a similar selection of community events.

The Shadow Mountain Club, despite being sold twice during this period and later revamped as the Shadow Mountain Country Club, also maintained a prominent role in the community. It continued to be activated by a variety of service organizations, sporting and holiday events, business conferences, and various other events. Most notably, the Shadow Mountain Palette Club, an organization of amateur artists dedicated to plein-air painting, was established at the club in 1961 and became one of the more prominent art organizations in the Coachella Valley.[235]

Evaluation Guidelines: Civic/Institutional Development, 1957-1966

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of civic and institutional development in Palm Desert between 1957 and 1966. As the city experienced extraordinary growth in both population and geographic reach, a substantial number of new civic and institutional buildings were constructed to keep pace with the city's growth and serve the various needs of its residents. There are many extant resources associated with this theme. Most are expressed either in the form of individual buildings or comprise institutional campuses with multiple buildings and site features. Resources that are significant under this theme consist of individual buildings or small institutional complexes (e.g., church campuses), as well as larger cohesive groupings of properties (potential historic districts, with the College of the Desert campus as the prime example).

Associated Property Types	Public institutional

[233] "Palm Desert Post Office Has Busiest Year in History," *Desert Sun,* January 8, 1958; "Post Office is Barometer of Expansion, New Building Needed to Take Care of Growth," *Desert Sun,* May 16, 1958.
[234] "Clubhouse to Open at Resort," *Los Angeles Times,* April 28, 1963.
[235] Ann Japenga, "Happy Are the Painters: How a Cocktail Waitress and a Roadside Artist Sparked a Desert Art Happening," *California Desert Art,* September 28, 2022, https://www.californiadesertart.com/happy-are-the-painters-how-a-cocktail-waitress-and-a-roadside-artist-sparked-a-desert-art-happening/.

- School building/campus
- Civic/government building (post office, fire house)
- Public utility building

Private institutional

- Church/religious building
- Social club/meeting hall/clubhouse

Property Type Summary

Civic and institutional development during this period consisted of a wider variety of property types than seen in previous development periods. Institutional resources may include school buildings and campuses; civic/governmental buildings like post offices and fire houses; public utility buildings; religious buildings and campuses; and buildings seeing long-term use by fraternal, social, or interest-based organizations.

Geographic Location

Citywide. Institutional properties from this period can be found throughout the city, with particular concentrations along major thoroughfares.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for this context begins in 1957, with the rise of new developers following liquidation of the Palm Desert Corporation, and ends in 1966, when the community experienced a lull in development activity.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As resources associated with this theme are common, the integrity of eligible properties should be quite high. A slightly greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a building must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, F[236]	A resource eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of	A resource that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association with	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum:

[236] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).

	civic/institutional development in Palm Desert during this period; and/or • As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	the important event or historical pattern.[237] An institutional property from this period should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. An institutional property that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. A resource is generally not eligible if it retains some basic features conveying form and massing, but has lost the majority of features that characterized its appearance during its historical period.	• Date to the period of significance (1957-1966), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

A/1/A, E, F	A historic district eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of civic/institutional development in Palm Desert during this period	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority (51%) of the components within the district boundaries must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. Integrity of design, setting, and feeling must be strongly present in the district overall, and it should convey a strong sense of time and place. A contributing building must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. In general, minor or reversible alterations or in-kind replacement	To be eligible under this theme, a historic district should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1957-1966), and • Retain the majority (51% or more) of the contributors dating to the period of significance.

[237] National Register Bulletin 15.

		of original features and finishes are acceptable within historic districts. Significant alterations that change the massing, form, roofline, or fenestration patterns of an individual building, alter the original design intent, or that are not reversible may result in non-contributing status for an individual building. In order for a historic district to retain integrity, the majority (51% or more) of its component parts should contribute to its historic significance.	

B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A resource that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1957-1966), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

4.7 Context: Palm Desert Country Clubs and Incorporation, 1967-1980

Historical Background

The decade following the late 1960s was perhaps the most crucial in the establishment of contemporary Palm Desert. The decade saw to the continued development of the community's assets, but more pressingly, to the incorporation of the community as its own city. Until the 1970s, "Palm Desert" was a loosely defined community. Its borders were informal and at times reached into Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells. Indeed, various prominent developments in those two cities – including Eldorado Country Club, Eisenhower Medical Center, or Desert Air Park – had associated themselves with Palm Desert at one point or another. By the 1970s, population of Palm Desert had greatly expanded, and now contained a much more diverse constituency of year-round families and retirees living in a variety of developments, even if it was still primarily a seasonal community.

Palm Desert recovered quickly from the late-1960s lull in construction activity, which could be attributed in part to the diminishing novelty of the style and type of previous developments, combined with larger economic trends. The refined Mid-Century Modern style (with Desert Modernism as a local subset) which had put the Coachella Valley on the map, had taken a more popular and exotic turn at the beginning of the 1960s, and by the early 1970s had lost even more of its appeal. The early country club model, which had been pioneered to immense success in the late 1950s and early 1960s with its single-family estates sited on a golf course, also needed a revamp to reinvigorate its profitability.

The development of the late 1960s and 1970s accounted for these issues in multiple ways. First, the architecture moved further away from Mid-Century Modernism, now fully embracing historicist themes and motifs, the Late Modern style, or, increasingly, a combination of both. An ambiguous Southwestern style became popular across California, incorporating elements from Spanish and Pueblo Revival styles to give form to architecture that had stucco walls and red tile roofs but still retained modern impulses. Examples of this style developing in Palm Desert from this period range from the Palm Desert Tennis Club (John Outcault, 1971-73) to the clubhouse of Del Safari Country Club (John Galbraith, 1969). Architects previously working in a distinctly Mid-Century Modern style began designing almost solely in this style. In other instances, the Late Modern style, with its high-tech and structurally expressive approach, found its way into some of Palm Desert's architecture. Generally speaking, architecture became more eclectic, historicist, and regional.

The second way that developers responded to new demands, particularly in the realm of residential architecture, was the final and complete expansion of the condominium model. While condominiums had been introduced as part of country clubs in the prior decade (e.g., Shadow Mountain Fairway Cottages) and had already found widespread popularity in Palm Desert, their implementation was taken even further. New large developments in Palm Desert, including Ironwood Country Club (1971), Marrakesh Country Club (1968), and Sommerset Villas (1977), consisted entirely or mostly of condominiums. Developers also purchased the remaining vacant parcels in the heart of Palm Desert and filled them with self-contained condominium communities.

These new country clubs and condominiums were also part of a regional shift that was occurring across the Coachella Valley. Whereas attention had been initially focused on Palm Springs in the postwar era, and mid-valley cities like Palm Desert had developed as a result, this dynamic reversed in the 1960s and

1970s. The country clubs, which had been pioneered and matured in the hinterlands surrounding Palm Springs, came to offer a much more enticing and exclusive product than Palm Springs could, made increasingly affordable to various income levels via condominiums.[238] Country club developments required large parcels of land (which Palm Springs did not have) and limited restrictions on development, which unincorporated communities like Palm Desert did not pose. For this reason, country clubs of varying sizes became widespread in the communities outside of Palm Springs, which went into a decline during this period. Rancho Mirage, Indian Wells, Palm Desert, and Bermuda Dunes prevailed during this period with their country clubs, golf tournaments, and upscale narrative.

The increased development of country clubs and condominiums in the late 1960s and 1970s exacerbated an identity crisis which Palm Desert had begun to face in the early 1960s. On one hand, unlike Rancho Mirage or Indian Wells, it was not an entirely seasonal community, and although many of its residents were seasonal, it was also home to increasing numbers of families due to the development of affordable single-family tracts and schools. On the other hand, it was not entirely year-round or working-class community like Indio or Cathedral City. It occupied a position (and arguably still does) somewhere in between, supporting a variety of year-round and seasonal residents at varying socioeconomic levels, though certainly leaning towards a demographic that was upper-class and White. In many ways, this limbo reflected its geographic location at the very center of the Coachella Valley, and in other ways, it symbolized the unresolved dispute between Cliff and Randall Henderson, the two brothers who founded Palm Desert, over the character of Palm Desert.

This dynamic began to boil over in the late 1960s in light of continued development which many residents saw as compromising to the refined character of Palm Desert. The community, which was unincorporated, had limited control over development and planning, which was governed by Riverside County. In the 1940s, the PDC had instituted total control over the development of its land, but the sale to the Palm Desert Sales Company (PDSC) diminished this control, and an increasing variety of landowners and developers who answered to no one except the county further complicated matters.

The result was that development in Palm Desert, even within its historic boundaries and directly adjacent to the most upscale neighborhoods, began to fall out of the existing character of the city. Affordable apartments and condominiums, mobile home parks, and even a proposed K-Mart all earned the wrath of legions of residents and organizations who quickly realized how little control they had over the planning of Palm Desert.[239] Even developments like Ironwood Country Club and Deep Canyon Tennis Club, which were both upscale country clubs, were faced with opposition. In turn, the period between the late 1960s and early 1970s was one of relative civic crisis. Such organizations as the Palm Desert Property Owners Association (PDPOA) and the Concerned Citizens of Palm Desert (CCPD) came into existence and prominence, waging numerous fights against development, particularly in the historic heart of Palm Desert south of Highway 111.[240]

---

[238] Stanley Fonseca, "Whiteness on the Green: Golf, the Coachella Valley, and the Leisure-Industrial Complex," *Pacific Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (2021): 448-474.
[239] "K-Mart Project in Palm Desert is Gone… But Melody Lingers," *Desert Sun,* January 1, 1974.
[240] "Association Signs Agreement," *Palm Desert Post,* January 30, 1964; "PD Citizens Group Formed to Protect Local Interests," *Palm Desert Post,* June 17, 1961.

Between the 1960s and the early 1970s, there were multiple attempts to incorporate the city, which finally succeeded in 1973. The failure of other attempts to incorporate Palm Desert can be attributed to either the fact that it had such loose borders, or that it had overreaching ambitions.[241] Palm Desert's earlier incorporation attempts had included significant parts of both Indian Wells and Rancho Mirage, which were also facing similar growing pains to Palm Desert. A competition was essentially started between the three communities, as all of them vied to incorporate and included parts of the others within their borders. Ultimately, Indian Wells and Rancho Mirage both incorporated before Palm Desert and left most of its border untouched. Developments like Eisenhower Medical Center, Desert Air Park, and Eldorado Country Club, however, which at times were previously associated with Palm Desert, now formally belonged to those cities.

After Palm Desert incorporated and elected its first city council in 1973, it took its newfound cityhood seriously, implementing a robust planning program and incentivizing the types of development it sought out. It placed strict limits on building height, type, and density and retroactively policed the built environment, even banning most types of signage (which saw to the eradication of the city's neon in 1979). And after a series of devastating flash floods in the years immediately after incorporation, the City also undertook a massive infrastructural campaign that was completed in the early 1980s.[242] The immediate result of Palm Desert's incorporation and first phase of planning was that development slowed, and what did continue was typically of an upscale nature.

Palm Desert's role as a formidable mid-valley presence expanded during the institutionalization of the city. Schools like Palm Desert Middle School and Palm Desert Middle School were planned or constructed, while existing institutions like College of the Desert expanded. El Paseo finally matured into an upscale downtown, while Highway 111 also continued to fill in. By the end of the 1970s, the City was at work on the first civic center, containing Palm Desert's first park and government buildings, and plans were also underway for the Palm Desert Town Center, the largest mall in the Coachella Valley.[243] Palm Desert had entered the late 1960s rife with development but without a clear vision and left the 1970s as a newly minted yet planned city.

Theme: Residential Development, 1967-1980

The end of the 1960s brought about yet another distinct phase of residential development in Palm Desert. In the 1950s and 1960s, the prevailing models of residential development across the Coachella Valley were split between the condominium and the country club, and in some cases a lucrative combination of the two. Palm Desert had seen these in projects like the Shadow Mountain Fairway Cottages (1961), Sandpiper (1958), and Sands and Shadows (1959) These projects were typically marketed to an upper-class seasonal or retiree population, but developments were built in the community for other demographics including Palm City (1960) and Shadow Village (1959).

---

[241] "Anger and Confusion Follow PD Action," *Desert Sun,* September 22, 1966; Chuck Kramer, "Cityhood Plans Progressing in Valley," *Desert Sun,* January 4, 1964.
[242] Janice Kleinschmidt, "The Fascinating History of Palm Desert, Celebrating 50 Years," *Palm Springs Life,* November 5, 2023, https://www.palmspringslife.com/the-fascinating-history-of-palm-desert-celebrating-50-years/.
[243] "Palm Desert Civic Center Planning Set," *Desert Sun,* June 1, 1979.

The 1950s and 1960s also saw to a shift in the prevailing source of development in Palm Desert, which had previously been accomplished mostly through individuals building their own custom homes in subdivisions. Increasingly, the prevalent source of development was developers who laid streets *and* built homes or condominiums for sale, and custom-built homes were not as common. In other parts of Palm Desert, developers purchased empty lots and parcels in existing subdivisions and filled them in with spec homes and condominiums. Finally, the last shift was in architectural style, which saw a turn away from a refined Mid-Century Modern and Ranch to a more popular style that incorporated themed elements.

These shifts in Palm Desert's mid-century development took further hold at the end of the 1960s and 1970s. Residential developments of this period almost ubiquitously consisted of condominiums that were combined with recreational facilities. Moreover, while Palm Desert had a golf course since the late 1950s, it previously did not have a formal upper-class "country club" with a residential component built by the same developer. This changed in the late 1960s as the country club further solidified its regional presence, especially in the communities in the middle and eastern portion of the Coachella Valley, where vacant land was widely available.

Development on two of Palm Desert's first country clubs, Marrakesh County Club and Del Safari Country Club [Avondale Golf Club], began at the end of the 1960s. They were each private, gated clubs that were to contain a central clubhouse, full-size golf course, communal pools, recreational facilities, and a residential component sited directly on the golf course. Moreover, they both embodied the direction of branding and architecture in the late 1960s, which departed from a refined modernism, and towards an eclectic, popular, and vaguely historicist direction. Marrakesh, for example, was designed in a Hollywood Regency style thematized with Moroccan branding, while Del Safari was both designed and themed with African motifs, including lakes named after mountains in Africa and faux spear decorations on its entrance gates.

Marrakesh Country Club was announced in the fall of 1967 by venerable Coachella Valley developer Johnny Dawson, who was responsible for such prototypical country clubs as Thunderbird and Eldorado.[244] He had purchased the former Haystack Ranch, a large parcel of land on the upper slope of Palm Desert that had evaded previous developers' acquisition, and hired the prominent Los Angeles architect John Elgin Woolf to oversee all aspects of its planning and design.[245] Woolf envisioned sets of condominiums (designed in four models) winding around a verdant golf course landscape that was overlooked by an elegant clubhouse. The entire development was to be painted in a distinctive pink and white color scheme, from which Dawson later extrapolated the Moroccan theme. Woolf designed every aspect of the development in his distinct Hollywood Regency style, from the gate house to lampposts. When Woolf fell ill near the conclusion of the project's design, the commission for the clubhouse was given to Palm Springs architect Richard Harrison, who provided a design for a boxier, austere structure more typical of his noted Mid-Century Modern work.[246] Theodore Robinson, prominent designer of golf courses, was also brought on for the construction of the community's full-size golf course.

---

[244] "Marrakech Country Club is Name of Dawson Project," *Desert Sun,* July 11, 1968.
[245] Steven Price, "Pink Gold," *Palm Springs Life,* January 30, 2019, https://www.palmspringslife.com/marrakesh-country-club-50-years/.
[246] Gail Phinney, "Marrakesh Country Club," *John Elgin Woolf: Master of Hollywood Regency,* https://johnelginwoolf.com/marrakesh-country-club/.

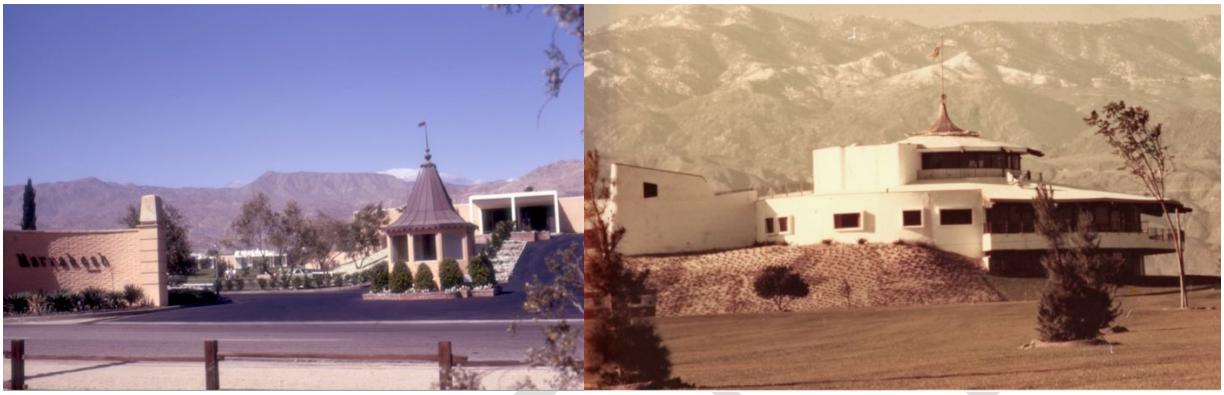
Built in phases between 1968 and 1979, Marrakesh opened to outstanding success in Palm Desert, embodying the type of development that the community sought: low-density and well-designed homes for an upper-class clientele. Marrakesh's developers built everything within its walls, from the golf course to the condominiums, and strictly controlled and maintained all aspects of the design. There were no single-family homes in the 364-uniit development, and residents had to adhere to Woolf's design. An entire social life was formed around the clubhouse, which contained a dining room and entertaining spaces overlooking the golf course.[247]

Architect John Elgin Woolf's original rendering for the Marrakesh Country Club, designed in his quintessential Hollywood Regency style. (John Elgin Woolf Papers, Architecture and Design Collection, UC Santa Barbara)

While Marrakesh was underway, a group of investors led by local residents Burton Graham and George Glickley announced the Del Safari Country Club in the beginning of 1969. They commissioned the Pasadena architect John F. Galbraith to design the clubhouse, an inventive design that combined African motifs with a highly sculptural Pueblo-influenced style.[248] The clubhouse, completed in 1970, was circular, balcony-wrapped three-story structure that sat atop an artificial hill, giving it commanding views of the

[247] Price, "Pink Gold," *Palm Springs Life,* 2019.
[248] "New Major Golf Project Planned," *Palm Desert Post,* May 29, 1969.

full-size golf course and surrounding desert. Del Safari was developed on a large parcel of vacant land north of Palm Desert (almost bordering Bermuda Dunes), pushing the border of the town farther than ever before. Del Safari, which was developed in a similar context and concept as Marrakesh, never enjoyed the success of its contemporary. Despite building one set of condominiums, the developers followed a custom-built development model and only a handful of homes were built.



The entrance and clubhouse of Marrakesh Country Club (left) painted in its classic pink and John F. Galbraith's Late Modern clubhouse for the Del Safari Country Club (right), both embodying 1960s shifts in architecture. (Desert Beautiful Slide Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

By far the largest and most comprehensive country club development of this period was Ironwood Country Club, a sprawling development on upwards of 1000 acres tucked at the very top of Palm Desert's southern slope. The developers, a consortium led by Robert Haynie and Jack Vickers, had purchased land formerly part of Silver Spur Ranch at the base of Deep Canyon, and hired architect William Cody to envision a plan with upwards of 3000 housing units, three golf courses, tennis facilities, a clubhouse, and variety of other amenities.[249] This plan (as many others were during this period) was met with backlash from neighborhood groups, and ultimately reduced in scale.[250] Still, it was the largest residential of any type proposed in Palm Desert since Palm City.

Over the course of ten years, against the backdrop of various citizen backlashes and incorporation, the developers of Ironwood built upwards of 1,000 homes. Most of them were condominiums designed by architect Francisco Urrutia in a Late Modern style hybridized with Southwestern motifs, resulting in angular volumes that had stucco walls and Spanish red tile roofs.[251] Elsewhere, units also included single-family "Fairway Homes" and estate-sized lots for custom-built houses. The central clubhouse (architect unknown) was also a Late Modern design that looked out onto the golf course designed by Desmond Muirhead in consultation with famed golfers Arnold Palmer and Jack Nicklaus.[252] Palmer had invested in the Ironwood development early on and became its spokesperson, which was a marketing move typical of mid-century country clubs (previously seen in Palm Desert with Gene Sarazen's role in the marketing of the Shadow Mountain Golf Course).

[249] Ron Dresnick, "Largest PD Development Proposed," *Palm Desert Post,* December 29, 1971.
[250] "Silver Spur Opposition Withdrawn," *Desert Sun,* September 21, 1972.
[251] [Illustration of Ironwood progress], *Palm Desert Post,* March 6, 1975.
[252] "Stars to Initiate Course," *Desert Sun,* February 3, 1973.

Marrakesh, Del Safari, and Ironwood represented the pinnacle of this new and robust era of country club development in Palm Desert, but they were supplemented by numerous smaller developments which similarly marketed the fashionable life offered by condominiums. The Palm Desert Tennis Club (1971), built across the street from Ironwood, was a 100-unit condominium complex that wrapped around a central clubhouse and championship tennis courts.[253] John Outcault, the architect of the complex, traded his typical Mid-Century Modern style for a 1970s Spanish style. Likewise, the Deep Canyon Tennis Club (1971) opted for tennis as its marketable recreational amenity and was developed on an empty parcel along Highway 74.[254] Built in two phases, one in 1971 and one in 1979, the complex eventually totaled 360 condominium units hosted by a series of two-story buildings (which were the subject of some controversy).

Fairway Homes at Ironwood Country Club as designed by Francisco Urrutia in a Late Modern and Southwestern influenced style. (Julius Shulman Collection, Getty Research Institute)

[253] "103 Unit Racquet Club Planned in Palm Desert," *Palm Desert Post,* August 19, 1971.
[254] Ron Dresnick, "PD Condominium Project to Offer Swimming & Tennis," *Palm Desert Post,* July 8, 1971.

A significant amount of development in the 1970s occurred on empty lots and parcels within central Palm Desert (south of Highway 111), and by 1980 the area was largely filled in. This was due to larger developments like Ironwood and Marrakesh, but especially to the further proliferation of condominium complexes. The condominium, also evidenced by their development in new country clubs, further increased its presence in Palm Desert's built environment. As before, they were outstandingly popular and could be marketed to retirees and professionals alike, they could be designed by talented architects, and they were built by a wide selection of developers. Their design, however, had shifted towards the Late Modern and Southwestern aesthetic of contemporary, and they were increasingly gated complexes with some shared amenities.

Condominium developments of this type included Mountainback (1971-73), Sommerset (1977), Corsican Villas (1973-76), King's Point (1974-76), and Sandroc (1973). Talented architects, many of whom had previously made their names designing Mid-Century Modern structures, were frequently commissioned for their design. The Palm Springs architect Hugh Kaptur designed King's Point (CoPD Landmark CRPC19-01) in a highly angular Late Modern and Southwestern style, while architect Barry Berkus, noted internationally for his condominium designs, designed the Corsican Villas, and San Diego architect Paul Thoryk designed Sandroc.[255] Each of them contained communal facilities (pools, tennis courts, etc.), and even if they weren't complete "country clubs," they attempted to emulate its upper-class model. Retirees, seasonal residents, and young professionals – but rarely families – were among the targeted demographics.

[255] "Corsican Villas Mark Opening," *Desert Sun,* April 13, 1974; "View Selling Point for Sandroc Site," *Desert Sun,* April 13, 1973; "King's Point at PD Plans Approved," *Palm Desert Post,* July 5, 1973.

Advertisements for two 1970s condominium developments, Mountainback and Corsican Villas, both designed in a Late Modern style. (Desert Sun)

The total effect of these infill complexes, combined with the country clubs being built at the same time, was that Palm Desert had an overwhelming amount of residential development occurring in the first few years of the 1970s. Even if they emulated the refined image the existing population sought, they also provoked various controversies and community concessions. They also continually reminded the residents of Palm Desert, which had failed in its previous attempts of incorporation, of its lack of city planning controls. In most instances, these developments were well-designed by virtue of their marketing to an upper-class clientele, but there were also instances where they were not.

The most dramatic of these, and with major consequences for the city, was the development of the Indian Creek Villas by McKeon Construction Company. In 1970, McKeon purchased an empty parcel of land along Highway 74 directly below St. Margaret's Church and built a 352-unit condominium complex.[256] The units were all contained in streets of a standard two-story fourplex designed in a Minimal Ranch style, which did not meet the standards of previous or contemporary development. The project

[256] "Major Apartment Project Underway," *Palm Desert Post,* October 29, 1970.

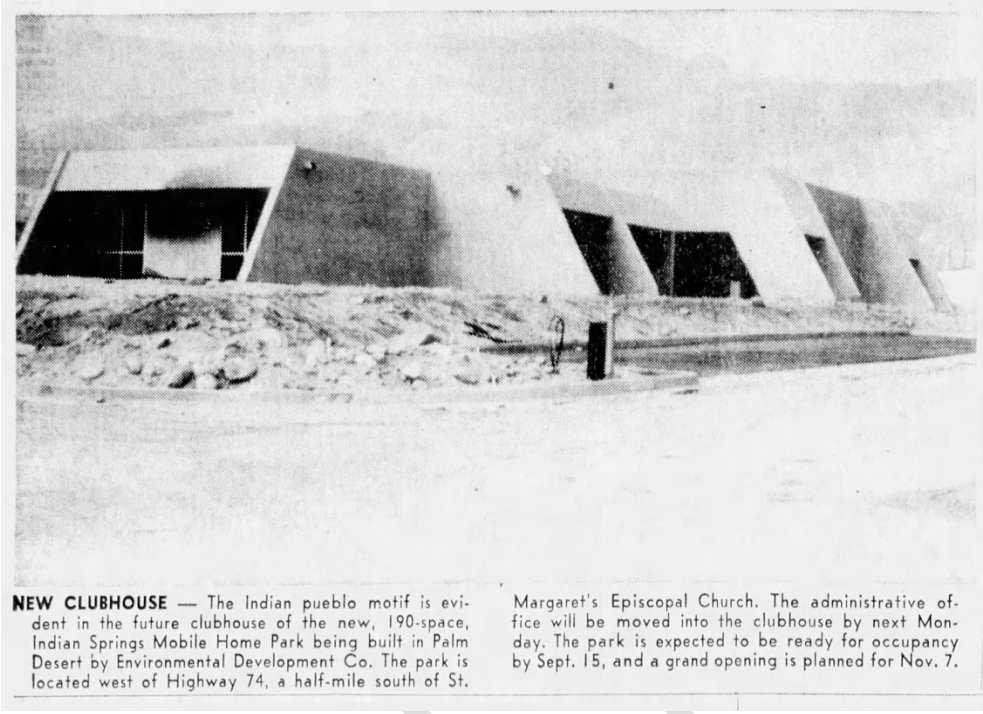
was highly visible to many of Palm Desert's residents who used Highway 74 daily and was sited adjacent to a number of upper-class single-family homes. While the development was not technically affordable housing, the units at Indian Creek Villas were very affordable, starting at $16,500, which was about half the price of comparably sized units in a development like Mountainback or Palm Desert Tennis Club.

The outrage to Indian Creek Villas was immediate and widespread in Palm Desert, and further dramatized when McKeon announced plans for a second phase on an adjacent fifty-three-acre parcel. Cliff Henderson took out a full-page ad labeling the development a "ghetto," meanwhile hundreds of residents crowded community hearings and a campaign was launched to halt the development.[257] McKeon, in turn, published a letter in the local paper in which they passively threatened to build a high-rise if their land was not rezoned.[258] Ultimately, the residents of Palm Desert succeeded at stymying McKeon's further development, but more importantly, in fanning the flames of incorporation, which finally passed in 1973. The land of McKeon's failed development was sold to the developers of the aforementioned King's Point. That development, an upper-class and well-designed condominium complex, was labeled by one pro-incorporation community organizer as a "fine development and one we approve."[259]

The debacle of the Indian Creek Villas exposed an unspoken debate in Palm Desert over the composition of the city. While the residential development of the 1950s and 1960s had opened numerous avenues for a more diverse stock of families and year-round residents, the kinds of development in the 1970s once again consolidated the image of Palm Desert as an upper-class, seasonal, and overwhelmingly White community. Families did not seek the compact, recreational, and maintenance-free model of the condominium, nor were they typically affordable, though families continued to live in many of the neighborhoods previously established as family-friendly.

Mobile home parks were one sort of residential development that provided a more affordable alternative, particularly to retirees. The ones developed in Palm Desert during this period replicated the high-class country club model – golf courses, clubhouses, etc.—but replaced estate lots and condominiums with mobile homes. In 1971, the Indian Springs mobile home park opened along highway 74, complete with 119 spaces, a community pool, grass lawns, shuffleboard courts, and a clubhouse designed in a distinct Late Modern and Pueblo Revival style by architects Bob Mueller and Jim O'Moffett.[260] Shortly after its opening, the retired movie star Edgar Buchanan moved into the community, which became a retirement community.[261]

[257] Cliff Henderson, [Full-page advertisement again McKeon project], *Daily News,* May 26, 1971.
[258] McKeon Construction, "An Open Letter to Residents of Palm Desert," *Palm Desert Post,* May 27, 1971.
[259] "King's Point at PD Plans Approved," *Palm Desert Post,* July 5, 1973.
[260] "Indian Springs Will Start Accepting Tenants Soon," *Palm Desert Post,* September 2, 1971.
[261] "Star Moves In," *Desert Sun,* February 23, 1973.



NEW CLUBHOUSE — The Indian pueblo motif is evident in the future clubhouse of the new, 190-space, Indian Springs Mobile Home Park being built in Palm Desert by Environmental Development Co. The park is located west of Highway 74, a half-mile south of St. Margaret's Episcopal Church. The administrative office will be moved into the clubhouse by next Monday. The park is expected to be ready for occupancy by Sept. 15, and a grand opening is planned for Nov. 7.

The distinctive Late Modern clubhouse at Indian Springs mobile home park. (Desert Sun)

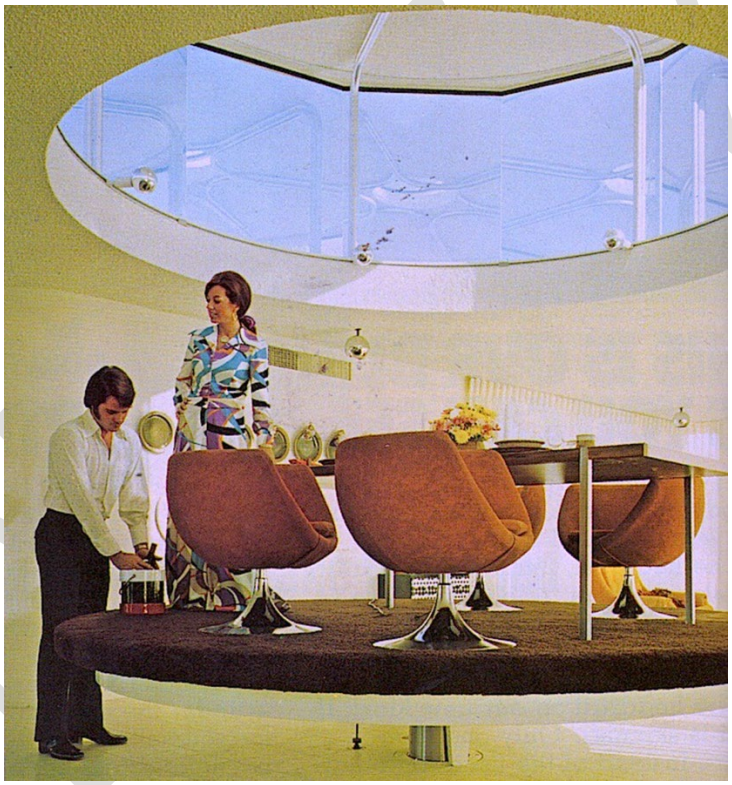
The most significant mobile home park, however, was the Palm Desert Greens development that opened in early 1971. Built on a 400-acre parcel in the undeveloped hinterland north of Palm Desert, the development contained a staggering 1900 spaces, a full-size golf course, and a large central clubhouse with country club amenities.[262] Shortly thereafter, the nearby Sun King Mobile Home Park was announced in 1973, and completed in 1979 as the Portola Country Club, complete with its own golf course and clubhouse. These mobile home parks were country clubs in their own right while serving primarily as retirement communities. The sheer number of spaces built in them – numbering in the thousands – was a comparable figure to Palm Desert's condominiums.

The aforementioned developments – country clubs, condominiums, mobile homes parks – were all contained developments built at once by a developer with a distinct vision. Unlike the 1940s and 1950s, it had become much rarer for an individual to purchase a lot and build a home of their own, let alone an architecturally distinct one (as was once incentivized by the Palm Desert Corporation). Even the single-family home itself, once the staple in Palm Desert, had largely fallen out of favor with developers who opted for profit-maximizing condominiums. In some instances, developers continued to buy empty lots in existing neighborhoods and build single-family spec homes. One developer, Charles "Bud" White, who had built such subdivisions as Desert Stars and Highland Palms Estates, built a few dozen of these spec homes in neighborhoods like Palm Desert Highlands and Silver Spur Ranch, in which there were still numerous empty lots. Palm Desert Country Club, left uncompleted, was filled out in the late 1970s with "Lusk Homes," single-family homes designed in vague Spanish style and built with a set of standard

[262] "Huge Mobile Home Project in PD Gets Zoning Approval," *Palm Desert Post,* December 30, 1970.

plans.[263] This new wave of single-family spec homes was typically designed in Spanish Revival, Territorial, or generic Southwestern styles.

Although uncommon, there were a few notable examples of custom single-family residences built during this period. In the 1970s, Late Modernism emphasized high-tech features, alternative modes of building, and structurally expressive design. Two residences that the Palm Desert architect Charlie Martin built in the 1970s perfectly captured this new architectural movement: the Robert G. Williamson house (1974) and Martin's own house (1978). Again, each was designed in a Late Modern style hybridized with a Southwestern palette, but more novel was Martin's deployment of passive cooling techniques and solar energy. In particular, the Williamson house was cited as one of the first (if not the first) solar houses in the Coachella Valley.[264] The volumes of the house were sloped and covered with rock to give it the appearance of being partially subterranean. Built a block over only a few years later, Martin's own house was built with inventive solar design and embodied the high-tech interest of Late Modernism.[265]



The inventive George Ritter house (1974), a case study in high-tech Late Modernism featuring an elevated dining table.

Another local architect, George Ritter, also built a singular and inventive house for himself and his family in 1974. The home was also a Late Modern design of utmost quality, but its greatest novelty was a dining room platform that could be raised (via a hydraulic lift) to the second story of the house. Ritter's house, along with Martin's designs, were built amid the former Shadow Mountain Estates, and even if they vastly

[263] [Advertisement for Lusk Homes], *Desert Sun,* January 5, 1979.
[264] John Hussar, "Unique Solar House," *Desert Sun,* July 23, 1974.
[265] "Architect With a Vision Advocates Energy-Saving Designs for Desert Homes," *Desert Sun,* May 20, 1981.

departed from the Mid-Century Modern Ranch homes of decades past, they were yet another high-quality contribution to Palm Desert's residential architecture.

Evaluation Guidelines: Residential Development, 1967-1980

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of residential development in Palm Desert between 1967 and 1980. Palm Desert saw an increase in country club development and similar top-down planned communities (e.g., mobile home parks) at this time, and finally incorporated in 1973 to embark on a more organized development path. There are numerous examples of resources associated with this theme, both single-family and multi-family. Resources that are significant under this theme likely consist of both individual properties and concentrations of dwellings that are not individually distinctive but collectively convey patterns and trends associated with postwar suburbanization. Some are in planned developments beyond the classic residential tract, in contexts including country clubs, mobile home parks, condominium complexes, and combinations.

Associated Property Types	Residential • Single-family residence or complex • Multi-family residence or complex • Residential community building/clubhouse/amenity • Subdivision/planned community planning feature • Historic district
Property Type Summary	As in the previous period of development, residential development in Palm Desert during its incorporation period included single-family and multi-family dwellings in a wide variety of scales and settings. Significant resources associated with this theme are likely expressed both as individual properties and in the form of historic districts. There may also be features related to subdivision and planned community development, including entrance markers, signage, shared amenities, and landscaping.
Geographic Location	Citywide. Residential development from this period occurred throughout the entire city.
Period of Significance	The period of significance for this context begins in 1967, when development resumed after a mid-1960s lull, continues through Palm Desert's incorporation in 1973, and ends in 1980, when the country witnessed a series of broad societal and economic changes that brought an end to the postwar period.
Integrity Considerations	A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics.

The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As resources associated with this theme are common, the integrity of eligible properties should be quite high. A slightly greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a building must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, F[266]	An **individual property** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with residential development in Palm Desert during this period; or • As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	A resource that is significant for its association with historic patterns of events or as the site of a significant historic event is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association.[267] A residential property from this period should retain integrity of location, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. A resource that has lost integrity of setting may still be eligible. A property that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. A resource is generally not eligible if it retains some basic features conveying form and massing, but has lost the majority of features that characterized its appearance during its historical period.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1967-1980), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

[266] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).
[267] National Register Bulletin 15.

A/1/A, E, F	A **historic district** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of residential development in Palm Desert	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority (51%) of the components within the district boundaries must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. Integrity of design, setting, and feeling must be strongly present in the district overall, and it should convey a strong sense of time and place. A contributing building must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. 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 massing, form, roofline, or fenestration patterns of an individual building, alter the original design intent, or that are not reversible may result in non-contributing status for an individual building. In order for a historic district to retain integrity, the majority (51% or more) of its component parts should contribute to its historic significance.	To be eligible under this theme, a historic district should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1967-1980), and • Retain the majority (51% or more) of the contributors dating to the period of significance.
B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A resource that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1967-1980), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and

			• Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

Theme: Commercial Development, 1967-1980

Bolstered by population increases spurred by significant residential development in the 1960s, commercial development also continued apace in the 1970s. As happened with residential construction in the mid-to-late 1960s, there was a brief lull in commercial development as the Coachella Valley entered the final phase of its transition to a region of golf and country clubs. No significant commercial project was built in Palm Desert between 1967 and 1970, but the 1970s saw a wave of commercial projects that aligned with the community's development as an upscale resort city. Commercial development during this period was particularly concentrated on El Paseo, which had some buildings like the Town and Country Center (William Cody, 1966 and the Medical-Arts Building (Bissner & Pitchford, 1962), but was still essentially empty and lined with large parcels in the late 1960s. The growth of country clubs finally supplied the stock of residents, albeit mostly seasonal, that allowed for El Paseo's commercial frontage to fill in.

The United California Bank designed by Robert Ricciardi and Bernard Leung as part of the larger Palms-to-Pines Plaza in 1970. (Desert Beautiful Slide Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert)

Once again, the shopping plaza model prevailed for its adaptability in a seasonal community like Palm Desert, in which units quickly filled up with boutique retail stores, interior design offices, lawyer offices, and property management companies. More so than the previous decade, commercial development was upscale in nature, mirroring the character that the PDC had envisioned for Palm Desert's commercial strips. The first major commercial project of the period was the Palms-to-Pines Plaza (1970), a thirty-two-acre complex of buildings (extensively altered) built at the corner of Highway 74 and Highway 111, which also fronted the western end of El Paseo. In conjunction with two Los Angeles-based firms, the local architects Robert Ricciardi and Bernard Leung were hired to design the entire complex.[268] Featuring Spanish tile mansard roofs set over glass walls and supported by expressive wooden beams, the complex was designed in a hybrid of Spanish Revival and Mid-Century Modern styles. Once completed in 1971, occupants included such chains as Safeway, Thrifty Drug Store, Sprouse-Reitz, and a branch of United California Bank, which had its own two-story custom-built building designed by Ricciardi and Leung (no longer existent).[269]

As the Palms-to-Pines Plaza neared its opening at the end of 1971, another commercial plaza was announced at the opposite end of El Paseo, just beyond the intersection at Portola Avenue. The HMS Plaza (an acronym for its developer, Harboe Management Service) was a one- and two-story complex designed in a Spanish and Mission Revival style by local architect John Outcault intended to imitate "early California design."[270] When the initial phase was completed in 1972, it came to host numerous professional businesses, as well as serving as the new headquarters for the Harboe Management Service. A second phase, the HMS Plaza West, was completed in 1977 on an adjacent block to the first phase and was also designed by Outcault.[271]

The HMS Plaza by John Outcault (left) and the Prickly Pear Square by Robert Ricciardi, both illustrating the shifts towards Spanish Revival and Late Modern architecture (or a blend of both styles). (Desert Beautiful Slide Collection, Historical Society of Palm Desert).

While the Palms-to-Pines Plaza (1970-71) and the HMS Plaza (1971-72) were built at the opposite ends of El Paseo, the bulk of commercial development occurred in its interior, between Portola Avenue and

[268] "Palms-to-Pines Plaza Name for New Center," *Palm Desert Post,* September 3, 1970.
[269] "Work to Start Soon on Palms to Pines Plaza," *Palm Desert Post,* July 15, 1971.
[270] "Palm Desert Firm to Build Plaza Complex," *Desert Sun,* November 5, 1971.
[271] Dollie Goldman, "HMS to Construct Financial Complex," *Palm Desert Post,* April 28, 1977.

Highway 74. Previously, the only concentrated area of development on El Paseo was the blocks between Portola Avenue and Larkspur Lane. Small commercial buildings, typically purpose-built for boutique retail shops or professional offices, continued to be developed on these blocks, which were ultimately filled in during this period. In the 1970s, El Paseo was being called such names as "Million Dollar Mile" and "The Boulevard of the Elite" for its ample provision of upscale shops and businesses that drew comparisons to Rodeo Drive.[272] One example of this sort of business, following the precedent of existing stores like Dietz Designs (1958) and Edith Morre' Shop (1961), was the building for the Beau James clothing boutique, a simple design that combined the Spanish Revival and Mid-Century Modern styles. Its opening in 1972 was accompanied by a television special that included such celebrities as Gloria Greer and Dolores Hope and embodied the affluence and glamour that El Paseo was increasingly associated with.[273]

While retail boutiques proved popular, projects on other parts of El Paseo were targeted towards professional services, like lawyers, realtors, and doctors, which had been previously hosted by developments like the Medical-Arts Building (1962) and Town and Country Center (1966). The Coble Plaza East, a two-story building containing "commercial condominiums" intended for professional businesses, was completed in 1973.[274] The same developers also built the Prickly Pear Square further east on El Paseo in 1973, which was a plaza of commercial buildings with spaces used for both retail and professional business.[275] The three buildings that compromised the development were designed in a Spanish and Mid-Century Modern style (like Palms-to-Pines Plaza) with Spanish tile Mansard roofs that floated over tall windows and expressive beams. Not directly on El Paseo but one block over on Portola Avenue, the Portola Square building (1977-78) was built with an almost identical design.

The shopping plaza model was not new to Palm Desert, but what had mostly changed was its design. Unlike previous periods of development, these new commercial plazas were not Mid-Century Modern in style but instead gravitated towards a hybridization of Southwestern palettes (Spanish, Mission, and Mediterranean Revival) with modern elements, including floor-to-ceiling windows, angular walls, and minimal ornamentation. They featured spaces of varying sizes to accommodate a variety of businesses, and were often designed with central courtyards, fountains, or common spaces shared by all tenants.

Apart from previous examples, the most prolific developer of these plazas during this period was the architect Paul Thoryk and his business partner Curt Dunham. Over the course of the 1970s, Thoryk and Dunham developed six different shopping centers on or adjacent to El Paseo, as well as the Sandroc condominium project, creating dozens of retail spaces and dramatically expanding El Paseo's renown as a downtown-like shopping street. Thoryk was a San Diego-based architect practicing in Late Modern and Post-Modern styles, which emphasized high-tech features, regionalism, and at times deconstructive design elements. As the developer-architect, he was responsible for the design of all these projects.

The first and most well-known was Thoryk's Plaza Taxco (1976), which essentially became the model for the rest of his developments. Plaza Taxco was designed as a "contemporary Spanish village," featuring red

[272] Ellen Levesque, "Round Palm Desert," *Desert Sun,* October 26, 1972.
[273] [Beau James opening announcement], *Palm Desert Post,* November 30, 1972.
[274] "El Paseo: For Sale Signs Going," *Desert Sun,* July 3, 1973.
[275] "Golden Miles Grows!," *Desert Sun,* October 29, 1974.

tile roofs, stucco walls, terracotta tile, wrought iron details, and a central courtyard.[276] Thoryk combined these Spanish details with Post-Modern and Late Modern design impulses, including highly angular volumes, dramatic windows, and steep shed roofs. The resulting design, which was exported to his following projects, appeared irrational (much in line with Post-Modern trends), inventive, and regional, considering Southern California's relationship to Spanish Revival architecture. When Plaza Taxco was completed, the famed architectural photographer Julius Shulman photographed the project, nearly thirty years after he had first visited Palm Desert to photograph the Shadow Mountain Club.

Over the next four years, Thoryk and Dunham would fill out a significant portion of El Paseo with shopping plazas, including Plaza de Los Lagos (1977), El Paseo Village (1978, no longer existent), Plaza del Tiempo (1978, extensively altered), Plaza San Pablo (1978), and San Luis Rey Center (1979-80).[277] These all replicated Thoryk's same distinct architectural style, and were host to dozens of businesses, ranging from entire banks to cabinetry stores.

Paul Thoryk's distinctive Late Modern Plaza Taxco, one of multiple similar developments that he designed along El Paseo in the 1970s. (Julius Shulman Collection, Getty Research Institute)

[276] "Construction Begins on El Paseo Complex," *Palm Desert Post,* July 15, 1976.
[277] "El Paseo Village Nearing Completion," *Palm Desert Post,* September 6, 1979.

While Thoryk's projects were among the most architecturally distinctive commercial developments along El Paseo, they were not architectural landmarks in the way two new banks from this period were. In the 1960s, Palm Desert had already seen to the development of Mid-Century Modern banks such as the Security First National Bank (John Outcault, 1962). Even more distinctive, however, was the bank built by Pomona First Federal Savings and Loan in 1973 at the prominent corner of El Paseo and Portola Avenue.[278] Designed by architect Michael Black, the structure was a Late Modern and Brutalist design that instantly became a landmark upon its completion and remains among Palm Desert's most known and distinctive buildings. Embodying the high-tech precepts of Late Modernism, the building is designed around a highly expressive and angular steel structure raised atop rough concrete pedestals. Other details of the design that defies description included triangle-shaped windows with pyramid-shaped planters, diamond motifs, and a large digital clock prominently placed along the street.

Two of the high-tech Late Modern bank designs completed along El Paseo in the 1970s: Donald Wexler's Bank of America (top, 1977) and Michael Black's Pomona First Federal Bank (bottom, 1973). (Historical Society of Palm Desert)

[278] "Pomona First Federal Builds," *Desert Sun,* June 19, 1973.

Similar to the high-tech inspiration behind Pomona First Federal, Palm Desert's new Bank of America (1977) was another Late Modern design that avoided the historicist and regional influences of many commercial structures of the era.[279] The Palm Springs architect Donald Wexler, noted as a pioneer of Mid-Century Modernism, designed the bank to incorporate passive heating and solar (similar to what Palm Desert architect Charlie Martin would soon incorporate in his residential designs). Placed at another prominent intersection, El Paseo at San Luis Rey, the design featured a set of intersecting volumes that culminated in a bank of windows angled to absorb the sun's rays.

In the 1970s, the most significant commercial growth had occurred along El Paseo, which had finally matured into the upscale downtown for which it had been planned three decades earlier. By 1980, it had a relatively solid frontage of commercial stores and plazas, and multiple architectural landmarks. Commercial buildings were still being built along Highway 111, but not nearly at the rate or design of those along El Paseo, which clothed, fed, and entertained many of the same residents buying into the new condominiums and country clubs for which the city had become known.

Evaluation Guidelines: Commercial Development, 1967-1980

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of commercial development in Palm Desert between 1967 and 1980. As the city grew in both population and geographic reach, a substantial number of new commercial buildings were constructed to keep pace with the city's growth and serve the various needs of its residents. There are many extant resources associated with this theme, located throughout the city with concentrations along major thoroughfares (including, finally, El Paseo). Resources that are significant under this theme may consist of both individual buildings and historic districts.

Associated Property Types	Commercial • Retail store or complex/shopping center • Office building or complex • Hotel/motel/lodge • Private club • Restaurant • Mixed-use (commercial/office/residential) • Bank/financial institution • Signage • Historic district
Property Type Summary	Commercial development in postwar Palm Desert consisted predominantly of low-scale commercial buildings that housed a wide variety of common commercial uses. Resources may include retail and/or office buildings and complexes (including shopping centers); hotels, motels and lodges; private clubs; restaurants; mixed-use

[279] "BoFA Tests Solar Energy in New Palm Desert Branch," *Palm Desert Post,* October 13, 1977.

buildings; bank buildings; signs; and geographically unified groupings of commercial properties (historic districts).

Geographic Location

Citywide. Commercial properties from this period can be found throughout the city, though most examples are located along its major vehicular corridors.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for this context begins in 1967, when development resumed after a mid-1960s lull, continues through Palm Desert's incorporation in 1973, and ends in 1980, when the country witnessed a series of broad societal and economic changes that brought an end to the postwar period.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As resources associated with this theme are common, the integrity of eligible properties should be quite high. A slightly greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a building must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, F[280]	An **individual property** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of commercial development in Palm Desert during this period; and/or • As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	A resource that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event or historical pattern. A commercial property from this period should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. A resource that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1967-1980), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

[280] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).

		majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. Minor alterations – such as door replacement, re-roofing, or compatible re-stuccoing – shall not, in and of themselves, render a resource ineligible. However, the cumulative impact of multiple minor alterations may compromise a resource's overall integrity. More substantive alterations that are difficult to reverse – such as extensive storefront modifications that obscure the original form and program of the building, modification of original fenestration patterns, the removal of historic finishes or features – compromise a resource's integrity and are likely to render it ineligible.	

A/1/A, E, F	A **historic district** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of commercial development in Palm Desert during this period.	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority (51%) of the components within the district boundaries must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. Integrity of design, setting, and feeling must be strongly present in the district overall, and it should convey a strong sense of time and place. A contributing building must retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. In general, minor or reversible alterations or in-kind replacement of original features and finishes are	To be eligible under this theme, a historic district should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1967-1980), and • Retain the majority (51% or more) of the contributors dating to the period of significance.

		acceptable within historic districts. Significant alterations that change the massing, form, roofline, or fenestration patterns of an individual building, alter the original design intent, render original storefronts unrecognizable, or that are not reversible may result in non-contributing status for an individual building. In order for a historic district to retain integrity, the majority (51% or more) of its component parts should contribute to its historic significance.	

B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert.	A property that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1967-1980), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity (listed above), and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

Theme: Civic/Institutional Development, 1967-1980

While institutional development continued in the late 1960s and 1970s, it was not as foundational or consequential as that of the years immediately prior, but it continued to embellish the institutions already in place.

The earlier 1960s had seen to the construction of such churches as St. Margaret's (1965), Sacred Heart (1958), and Hope Lutheran (1961), but another wave at the end of the 1960s marked the final phase in the mid-century development of religious facilities. As before, and despite the growing shift towards historicist and Spanish styles in the late 1960s and early 1970s, these new churches were Mid-Century Modern in style. The most dramatic was the new church built for the Palm Desert Community Church, which was the city's original church, established in 1950 on land donated by the Palm Desert Corporation. The Presbyterian congregation had long outgrown their simple Mid-Century Modern church (Barry Frost, 1950), and began planning for a new church in the early 1960s and purchased a prominent parcel along Highway 74.[281]

After a long fundraising and construction campaign, of which former President Dwight D. Eisenhower was honorary chair, the new chapel opened in early 1968. The Los Angeles firm Powell, Morgridge, Richards, and Coughlan were its architects, and John K. Minasian was responsible for the structure's dramatic stained glass.[282] A gradual yet dramatic sloped roof formed the basis for the structure's shape, which reached a peak that was over two stories tall and was spanned entirely with stained glass. The result was even more dramatic on the Mid-Century Modern chapel's interior, in which the roof curved inwards and then dramatically expanded outwards into the two-story stained glass. The new Palm Desert Community Church, soon renamed the Palm Desert Community Presbyterian Church, quickly assumed landmark status in the city.

Two other Palm Desert churches were also built at nearly the same time. One, the United Church of the Desert, was primarily built to serve residents of the Palm Desert Country Club who had previously been meeting in the community's recreation hall. John Outcault designed the new church, completed in 1967, which took the form of two Mid-Century Modern hexagonal buildings that served the small congregation.[283] On the other side of Palm Desert, along Fred Waring Drive, the Palm Springs architect Richard Harrison designed the University Baptist Church in 1967.[284] Like the Palm Desert Community Church, the form of the Mid-Century Modern structure was a singular sloping roof, although Harrison's design was much more angular and featured spider-like legs that descended from one side of the building.

By the end of the 1960s, Palm Desert's educational facilities had been massively expanded with the recent construction of the College of the Desert, and families had also benefitted from the construction of Abraham Lincoln Elementary School (E. Stewart Williams, 1964, no longer existent). The community, however, lacked both a middle and high school despite its two elementary schools and humble population of families. This was partially addressed in 1968, when the regional school district added portable classrooms to Lincoln Elementary for an interim middle school, and then began planning for a new campus on an adjacent parcel.[285]

---

[281] "Ike to Head Palm Desert Church Building Committee," *Palm Desert Post,* November 21, 1963.
[282] "Community Church Opens Doors Sunday at New Home," *Palm Desert Post,* January 18, 1968; "Tower Rises Today," *Palm Desert Post,* July 6, 1967.
[283] "New PDCC Church to Be Ready by Mid-July," *Palm Desert Post,* March 2, 1967.
[284] "Desert Church Construction Belies Building Slump Tale," *Desert Sun,* November 17, 1966.
[285] "Argument Nipped in Bud," *Desert Sun,* May 14, 1968.

Designed by architects Donald Wexler and George Ritter, the new Palm Desert Middle School (partially demolished) opened for students in 1977, and the portable classrooms were hauled off. Wexler and Ritter's design was a low-slung, flat-roofed complex of Mid-Century Modern buildings constructed of brick and wrapped with shaded arcades. Similar to his other projects from the period, Wexler had initially attempted to incorporate solar energy into the structure, but the endeavor was ultimately never funded.[286] Meanwhile, plans were slowly being made for the Palm Desert High School, for which a site had been sourced in 1966 along Cook Street, but the school would not be built until later in 1980s.[287]

As with prior chapters of Palm Desert's history, another site of civic and social engagement continued to be its clubhouses, which continued to be built in numerous of the new country clubs and residential developments. With the growth of formalized civic buildings (e.g., Palm Desert Library), clubhouses decreased in their activation by the community, but still served a civic role in the community. Ironwood Country Club, Marrakesh Country Club, and even mobile parks like Indian Springs and Palm Desert Greens were all built with clubhouses that hosted numerous functions and community events.

Somewhat ironically, Palm Desert had many of the buildings typical of a formalized city despite remaining unincorporated until 1973. It did not, however, have a city hall or any government buildings. When the first city council was elected, the new city government rushed to secure a temporary city hall and rented the former sales office of Sandpiper along El Paseo. A few months later, the City leased space in the Prickly Pear Square (1973) on the opposite end of El Paseo and would remain in that location for nearly a decade.[288] In 1979, with some time and tax revenue behind them, the City began planning for a grand civic center designed by prominent Southwest architect Bennie Gonzalez, although it would not be built until the 1980s.[289]

[286] Keith Carter, "$1 million Sought for Solar Unit at School," *Palm Desert Post,* November 20, 1975.
[287] "Site Escrow Explained, No Action," *Palm Desert Post,* January 27, 1966.
[288] "Prickly Pear Plaza New City Hall Site
[289] "City Hall, Flood Projects Both Possible, Council Told," *Desert Sun,* January 30, 1981.

The Palm Desert Post Office at the corner of El Paseo and Portola Avenue shortly after its opening in 1970. (Desert Beautiful Slide Collection, HSPD)

Another civic building built during the period was the post office that would become the most iconic within the community. By the late 1960s, Palm Desert had outgrown its previous post office (which was already the third post office in the community's short history) and began planning for a larger facility across the street on the prominent corner of Portola Avenue and Highway 111.[290] The new post office, which opened in 1970, was four times larger than the previous facility and designed in a Modern adaptation of a Spanish Colonial/Mediterranean Revival style wrapped in arcades. While Palm Desert would build additional post offices in ensuing decades, this location remains the city's primary post office.

One civic deficiency in Palm Desert was the lack of any formalized park space despite years of plans and attempts to develop a public park for the city. The community organization Desert Beautiful, a considerable civic force in the 1960s onwards, had supported many plans, but none of them materialized. Until the construction of the civic center in the 1980s, the closest thing to a park in Palm Desert was the Living Desert Reserve. Established in 1970 in partnership with the Palm Springs Desert Museum on a portion of Philip Boyd's former ranch, the Living Desert was a 360-acre zoo and nature reserve with hiking trails, cactus gardens, and a selection of desert animals. The architect John Outcault designed the first phase of the Living Desert's facilities – which would eventually grow to become a full zoo – consisting of two diamond-shaped Mid-Century Modern buildings that opened in 1972.[291]

[290] "Site Purchased for New PD Post Office," *Desert Sun,* October 10, 1968.
[291] [Illustration of Outcault rendering', *Palm Desert Post,* May 20, 1971.

CONSTRUCTION is scheduled this summer on the two main buildings (pictured) at the 360 acre Living Desert Reserve. Designed by Palm Desert architect John Outcault as his donation, one building will house a caretaker and the other an exhibit-lecture hall. A grant of $50,000 from the McCallum Desert Foundation provided financing for the structures. Land for the reserve is leased from the gift of Phillip Boyd. The reserve is located opposite Silver Spur Ranch in Palm Desert and thus far has 167 adult and junior members. The reserve already is used for desert life study by students and professionals and will become one of the major tourist attractions in the Coachella Valley.

John Outcault's rendering for the first buildings at the Living Desert Reserve. (Palm Desert Post)

As Outcault himself pointed out during the Living Desert's opening, "it is not unlikely that in ten years that the Living Desert Reserve will be the only undeveloped area left in the desert."[292] While development wouldn't reach quite that level by 1982, ten years after the pronouncement, Palm Desert's physical growth was dramatic considering that its country club-laden slope had been barren desert less than forty years prior.

Evaluation Guidelines: Civic/Institutional Development, 1967-1980

Summary

Resources evaluated under this theme are significant for conveying patterns of civic and institutional development in Palm Desert between 1967 and 1980. As the city continued to grow both in population and geographic reach and then incorporated in 1973, public and private institutions invested in the modernization and expansion of local government services, schools, churches, and other institutional endeavors There are many extant resources associated with this theme. Most are expressed either in the form of individual buildings or comprise institutional campuses with multiple buildings and site features. There are not believed to be historic districts associated with this theme.

Associated Property Types

Public institutional

- School building/campus
- Civic/government building
- Public utility building

Private institutional

- Church/religious building
- Social club/meeting hall/clubhouse
- Nature reserve

[292] "Living Desert Museum Building Planned," *Palm Desert Post,* July 23, 1970.

Property Type Summary

Civic and institutional development during this period was less frantic than in the previous period, but continued to see the establishment of new properties. Institutional resources may include school buildings and campuses; civic/governmental buildings; religious buildings and campuses; private clubs; public utility buildings; and designed institutional landscapes (primarily the Living Desert).

Geographic Location

Citywide. Institutional properties from this period can be found throughout the city, with particular concentrations along major thoroughfares.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for this context begins in 1967, when development resumed after a mid-1960s lull, continues through Palm Desert's incorporation in 1973, and ends in 1980, when the country witnessed a series of broad societal and economic changes that brought an end to the postwar period.

Integrity Considerations

A resource that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type should also be considered when assessing integrity. As resources associated with this theme are common, the integrity of eligible properties should be quite high. A slightly greater degree of alterations may not preclude a resource from being eligible, though a building must still retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance, using the guide below.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
A/1/A, E, F[293]	A resource eligible under this theme may be significant: • For its association with patterns of civic/institutional development in Palm Desert during this period; and/or	A resource that is significant for its historic association is eligible if it retains the essential physical features that comprised its character or appearance during the period of its association with the important event or historical pattern.[294] An institutional property from this period should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1967-1980), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical

[293] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).
[294] National Register Bulletin 15.

	• As the site of a significant historic event from this period.	minimum, in order to convey the important association with the city's development during this period. An institutional property that has lost some historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, and fenestration pattern. A resource is generally not eligible if it retains some basic features conveying form and massing, but has lost the majority of features that characterized its appearance during its historical period.	features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context.

B/2/B	• For its association with a person (or persons) significant in the history of Palm Desert	A resource that is significant for its association with a significant person should retain integrity of location, design, feeling, and association, at a minimum, in order to convey its historic association with a significant individual.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Date to the period of significance (1967-1980), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity, and • Retain enough of its essential physical features to sufficiently convey its association with the historic context, and • Be directly associated with the notable person's productive period – the time during which she or he attained significance.

4.8 Context: Architecture and Design, 1910-1980

Palm Desert's built environment represents an array of architectural types and styles that represent different periods in the city's development. Together, these various architectural styles provide Palm Desert with distinctive aesthetic qualities and help to define the community's character.

The most common architectural styles in Palm Desert correspond with major periods in the community's development history. Well before its incorporation, early development of what later became Palm Desert saw the establishment of a few scattered homesteads after the 1862 Homestead Act was passed, with the earliest known properties dating to the 1910s. None of the region's original homesteads or ranching properties remain extant within the modern boundaries of the city. It was not until the late 1930s that a portion of the land that is now Palm Desert was subdivided and a handful of parcels were developed into Palm Village, intended to be a resort-style desert getaway for middle-class Southern Californians. However, development halted during World War II, and a large portion of the area's land was used for military operations.

After the near cessation of construction during World War II, Palm Desert saw its greatest boom during the postwar period, thanks in large part to the Palm Desert Corporation, a real estate conglomerate helmed by Cliff Henderson that began to develop real estate throughout the area, forging the Coachella Valley's first major planned community. In 1951, Palm Desert officially received its name, although it did not incorporate until 1973. Unlike many other Southern California communities, Palm Desert had room to spare for the sprawling single-family residential subdivisions and multi-family residential complexes which would come to characterize postwar development in the region. Beginning in the late 1940s, most of the area's vacant land (formerly date ranches) and former military properties were developed.

Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, development in Palm Desert continued in full swing with extraordinary construction rates between 1956 and 1966 in particular. Large-scale, custom-built, single-family residences in a variety of styles were built but were very few in number compared to developer-built, single-family residence tract subdivisions in Mid-Century Modern and Ranch styles. Multi-family residential development also proliferated during this period, with developers promoting the ease of luxury desert condominium (and condominium-like) living. Commercial and institutional development was also largely Mid-Century Modern in style, taking on characteristics of the Late Modern style beginning in the late 1960s. Suffice to say Modernism was the dominant idiom for nearly all building typologies in Palm Desert, applied by notable local and regional architects.

For each architectural style that this context identifies, a brief discussion of the style and its origins is provided, followed by a list of typical character-defining features. Character-defining features are defined as those visual aspects and physical features that, together, comprise the appearance of a historic building. They generally include "the overall shape of the building, its materials, craftsmanship, decorative details, interior spaces and features, as well as the various aspects of its site and environment."[295] The National Park Service's (NPS) Preservation Brief 17: *Architectural Character – Identifying the Visual*

[295] National Park Service, Preservation Brief 17: *Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character*, prepared by Lee H. Nelson (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1988), 1.

Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving their Character provides further guidance regarding the identification of character-defining features.

Each of the styles discussed herein is not tailored to a particular property type (though some styles, such as Ranch, may largely be reflected in a single property type). Rather, they are intended to be all-encompassing and applicable to the variety of property types found throughout the city. The table below summarizes the styles discussed in this chapter.

Context	Theme	Sub-Theme
Architecture and Design, 1910-1980	Period Revival	Spanish Colonial Revival
		Pueblo Revival
	Modernism	Early Modern
		Moderne
		Hollywood Regency
		Mid-Century Modern
		Polynesian/"Tiki" Modern
		Late Modern
	Ranch	Minimal Ranch
		Hacienda Ranch
		Contemporary Ranch

Architect and Designer Biographies

The community has an impressive number of buildings designed by notable architects, designers, and prominent local builders. These local and regional practitioners include, but are not limited to, Harold Bissner, Herbert Burns, William Cody, Charles W. Doty, Charles Du Bois, Albert Frey, Richard Harrison, William Krisel, Charles Martin, John P. Moyer, John Outcault, Warren Frazier Overpeck, William Pereira, Robert Ricciardi, Stanley Ring, George Ritter, Adrian Schwilck, Paul Thoryk, Monte Wenck, Donald Wexler, and Walter S. White. While dozens of architects designed buildings within the timeframe covered by this report, the following list of biographies covers architects and designers who either lived in Palm Desert or primarily practiced architecture in Palm Desert. Some of them, such as Walter S. White, are widely known and well documented, while other architects like Stanley Ring, George Ritter, and Robert Ricciardi are less known. Projects designed by all these architects are interlaced throughout this report. This section is intended to provide a brief overview of Palm Desert's resident practitioners.

Harold J. Bissner (1901-1988)

Despite never having received a formal architecture education, Bissner became one of the most successful architects in the San Gabriel Valley, gaining notability first with his Spanish Revival designs, and beginning in the 1940s, with his post-and-beam Mid-Century Modern designs, for which he is best known. In 1958, Bissner relocated to Palm Desert for semi-retirement, where he designed (and in some cases developed) a series of Mid-Century Modern condominiums, including Sands and Shadows Unit #1 (1958),

the Halekulani Apartments (1958), and Maui Palms (1958).[296] The following year, he teamed up with the local designer Robert Pitchford to form Bissner & Pitchford, which quickly became a leading local firm, responsible for such projects as the Medical-Arts Building (1962, no longer existent). Bissner was noted for his combining Mid-Century Modernism with Asian and Polynesian influences, his projects occasionally falling into the Tiki Modern sub-style. After this seemingly unexpected phase of his career, Bissner formally retired in 1966 and moved out of Palm Desert.

Charles W. Doty (n.d.)

Despite his relevance to Palm Desert's architectural history, little is known about the personal biography of Charles Doty, who arrived in the community around 1953 and worked as a draftsman for Walter S. White.[297] By 1955, Doty was working as an independent architect and designing Mid-Century Modern projects (many with White influences), including the CoCo Cabana Apartments (Palm Springs, 1955) and the Richard Winans house (Rancho Mirage, 1956). Over the next decade, Doty became a leading modern architect in Palm Desert and the Coachella Valley at large, designing a wide range of projects in collaboration with developers like Monte Wenck, Charles White, and even actor William Boyd. In addition to involvement designing subdivisions like Shadow Hills Estates, Doty designed significant custom-built projects like the Continental Six Apartments (1962), Tripalong Apartments (1958, altered), and a commercial building for William Boyd (1960). Doty, in particular, embraced a more playful and popular Mid-Century Modern style, with inventive roof forms, breezeblock, and other design features typical of the Googie sub-theme.

Barry Frost (1899-1968)

Although Frost only lived for a short period in Palm Desert and few of his works remain intact, he was among the earliest resident architects. Frost trained at the University of Michigan and spent the first two decades of his career working in the offices of midwestern architects, before serving in World War Two and relocating to the Coachella Valley around 1947.[298] Frost worked with the developer John Harnish on Panorama Ranch, for which he designed two model homes (1949, in various states of alteration) and the Steel-lite Home (1949) in a Mid-Century Modern and Moderne style. Frost's most prominent work was the Palm Desert Community Church (1949-50) designed was imposing beams in a Mid-Century Modern style. Frost, who had established his office in Rancho Mirage, relocated to the Los Angeles area in the early 1950s and designed no further projects in Palm Desert.

Ira Johnson (1934-)

Born in Riverside Country, Ira "Bud" Johnson graduated with a degree in architecture from the University of California, Berkeley in 1959 before working under pioneering modernist William F. Cody.[299] In 1963, he teamed up with architect George Ritter to form Johnson & Ritter, which lasted about a decade and designed a number of commercial and residential projects in the Coachella Valley. Johnson frequently

---

[296] Tracy Conrad, "The Architectural Minds Behind Volcano House, Sands and Shadows, *Desert Sun,* December 3, 2023, https://www.desertsun.com/story/life/history/2023/12/03/palm-springs-history-the-architectural-minds-behind-volcano-house-sands-and-shadows/71770238007/.
[297] "Jan Collier, Charles Doty, Exchange Vows," *Desert Sun,* September 3, 1953.
[298] "Barry Frost," AIA Historical Directory, accessed March 2025, https://aiahistoricaldirectory.atlassian.net/wiki/spaces/AHDAA/pages/36938827/ahd1014899.
[299] Gane, *American Architects Directory,* 455.

worked in a stark Mid-Century Modern style, designing post-and-beam homes and other works such as the Press Building (1964) in Palm Desert.

Charles Martin (1940-2020)

Among a later phase of Palm Desert's architectural practitioners, Charles "Charlie" Martin was among the city's most unique. Raised in the Pacific Northwest, Martin was educated at the University of Washington and attended an "Arcology" workshop by Paolo Soleri in 1964.[300] After returning from a distinguished service in the Vietnam War, Martin moved to Palm Desert in the early 1970s and opened a practice. He was noted for his unique Late Modern style which incorporated passive heating and cooling (no doubt a Soleri influence) and solar, including the Robert G. Williamson house (1974) and Martin's own house (1978, altered).

John P. Moyer (1919-n.d.)

John "Jack" Moyer was raised in San Bernardino and educated at Chouinard Art Institute before a distinguished service in World War Two, where he spent two years in Germany as a POW. In 1952, he moved to Palm Desert with his wife Miriam and began practicing architecture in a Mid-Century Modern style. His earliest projects included the Jack Blair house (1956), George Walling house (1956), and a selection of houses for the Palm Desert Highlands subdivision (in various states of alteration), but he quickly became involved with the Palm Springs developer Jack Meiselmam, for whom he designed multiple subdivisions totaling nearly two hundred homes.[301] Moyer's most inventive and known house one he designed in Pinyon Crest in 1963 known as "Spider House" for a series of spider beams (one of his signatures) that encased the home. In the 1960s, Moyer designed and developed around a dozen spec homes in Palm Desert his company El Toro Development.

John Outcault (1927-1998)

Raised in Palm Springs, Outcault was trained at USC's distinguished School of Architecture, from which he graduated in 1952. Between 1953 and 1956, he worked in the offices of pioneer firm Clark & Frey before starting his own office in Palm Desert.[302] Outcault quickly became a leading architect in the community, where he spent his life and career. In the first two decades of his career, Outcault designed in a quintessential Mid-Century Modern style before turning to Period Revival and Late Modern styles late in his career. While Outcault designed dozens of homes (ranging from custom-built estates to small tracts), he also designed many of Palm Desert's early commercial and civic structures, including the Palm Desert Library (1958-62), Pelgram building (1958), Palm Desert Liquors (1962), and the Living Desert Reserve (1971). His prominent residential projects include Shadowcliff Apartments (1960-61), the Paul Moller house (1962), and the Virgil Pinkley house (1961).

Ross Patten (1922-1996)

---

[300] "Charles Martin Obituary,"*Legacy.com,* 2020, accessed March 2025, https://www.legacy.com/us/obituaries/thedesertsun/name/charles-martin-obituary?id=8090641.
[301] Tracy Conrad, "History: Meiselman, Moyer Built Innovative Homes that Gave Personality to Palm Springs Area," *Desert Sun,* December 13, 2020, https://www.desertsun.com/story/life/2020/12/13/history-meiselman-moyer-built-innovative-communities-palm-springs-area/6525524002/.
[302] Jim West, *Palm Desert: An Architectural Tour into Modernism,* 2016, 11.

Although not an architect by training, Ross Patten was a local developer responsible for the design of dozens of homes and buildings in Palm Desert. Patten moved to the Coachella Valley in 1956 and soon teamed up with the builder Albert "Duke" Wild to establish the firm Patten & Wild, which both built and developed a variety of properties.[303] Patten was typically responsible for designing the building while Wild was responsible for overseeing its construction, although the firm did occasionally work with other architects like Christer Barlund. Patten designed around a dozen spec homes in the Shadow Mountain Estates neighborhood, all of which were designed in a Mid-Century Modern style (with the occasional Tiki Modern influence). He was also responsible for the design of various custom buildings, including the George Lingo house (1963), Robert Johnson house (1964), and Cannon Building (1964). Patten & Wild also became known for their work on large custom estates, epitomized by Frank Sinatra's estate "Villa Maggio" (1970) built by the firm in nearby Pinyon Crest.

Robert Pitchford (1928-2017)

Raised in San Marino, Robert "Bob" Pitchford graduated from the prestigious design school Art Center in 1955 with a degree in automobile design and went on to work as a conceptual designer for the Ford Motor Company for a brief period.[304] In 1957, he settled in the Coachella Valley with his wife Vera with the intent of pursuing architecture, first working in the offices of Rancho Mirage-based architect Jack McCallum. In 1959, Pitchford joined forces with the elder architect Harold J. Bissner to form the firm Bissner & Pitchford, which designed numerous Mid-Century Modern buildings in Palm Desert and the greater region. Pitchford designed a significant selection of Palm Desert condominium developments with Bissner, including the Sands and Shadows Unit #2 (1963), Mountain Shadows (1964) and Village Green (1961). In 1966, the firm dissolved after Bissner's retirement, and Pitchford went on to a successful career as a designer, responsible for buildings across the Coachella Valley.

Robert Ricciardi (1935-n.d.)

In the decades following his move to the Coachella Valley, Robert "Bob" Ricciardi became one of the region's most prolific architects, responsible for dozens of significant projects across the region. After graduating from the University of California, Berkeley in 1959 (the same year as fellow architect Ira Johnson), Ricciardi worked in San Francisco for Welton Becket & Associates and Clarence Mayhew before coming to work for both Palm Springs modernists William F. Cody and Donald Wexler.[305] In 1963, Ricciardi began practicing architecture independently in Palm Desert, designing such Mid-Century Modern works as the Silver Spur Ranch clubhouse (1963) and St. Margaret's Episcopal Church (1965), both in Palm Desert. From the 1970s onwards, Ricciardi shifted towards a combination of Late Modern and Period Revival architecture, designing works like Prickly Pear Square (1973), Palms-to-Pines Plaza (1971), and Palm Desert Town Center (1980). From clubhouse renovations to custom homes to shopping centers to industrial buildings, Ricciardi's career was large, varied, and spread across the Coachella Valley.[306]

Stanley Ring (n.d.)

---

[303] Gloria Greer, "P.D.'s Patten & Wild Build 'Presidential' Homes," *Palm Desert Post,* March 5, 1964.
[304] "Bob Pitchford Obituary," *Legacy.com,* 2017, accessed March 2025, https://www.google.com/search?client=safari&rls=en&q=robert+pitchford+obituary+architect&ie=UTF-8&oe=UTF-8.
[305] Gane, *American Architects Directory,* 757.
[306] Robert Ricciardi AIA portfolio, Historical Society of Palm Desert Collection.

While the biography of Stanley Ring is largely unknown, he was among the earliest resident architects in Palm Desert, arriving around 1948 and living in the community for about a decade. He spent a period working for Walter S. White, Palm Desert's foremost architect, but mostly worked as an independent architect, and later in association with engineering firm Bowen & Bowen.[307] Ring's work in Palm Desert followed a Mid-Century Modern style and includes such prominent projects as the Palm Desert Shopping Center (1956) and the Palm Desert School (1948-49, demolished). In the late 1950s Ring relocated his practice to San Diego.[308]

George J. Ritter (1933-1996)

Born in Oklahoma and educated at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Ritter began practicing architecture in the Coachella Valley around 1964 with fellow architect Ira Johnson.[309] Their firm, Johnson and Ritter, lasted for about a decade, practicing in Mid-Century Modern and Late Modern styles. Ritter lived and worked primarily in Palm Desert, designing such institutional works as the Palm Desert Middle School (with Donald Wexler), Palm Desert High School (with Wexler), and Temple Sinai.[310] Ritter's most singular project was the Palm Desert house he designed for his family in 1974, a modern structure featuring a raising dining room. Ritter's work was often designed in a Late Modern vocabulary and embraced high-tech features noted of 1970s architecture.

Walter S. White (1917-2002)

Born in San Bernardino, White did not pursue a formal architectural education but instead learned from experience working for architects such as Rudolph Schindler, Harwell Hamilton Harris, and Leopold Fischer, and in the engineering department of Douglas Aircraft for a brief period.[311] In the mid-1940s, White moved to Palm Springs to work for the firm Clark & Frey, before setting up his own office in the newly built Palm Desert in 1946. White attached himself to the burgeoning community and its developer, the Palm Desert Corporation, ultimately designing dozens of homes and buildings in the area. Working in a modernist vocabulary, White's architecture was distinct while embodying many of the precepts of Desert Modernism, and signature details include pointed rooflines, mitered corner windows, and angled site planning. His most prominent projects in Palm Desert include the Miles C. Bates house (1954-55), the E.W. Stewart house (1953), and the Paulette Herbert Johnson house (1958), in addition to dozens of homes and building still existent across the community. Indeed, White was the community's first resident architect and largely responsible for establishing its modernist architectural vision. He moved away from Palm Desert in 1959 and settled in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

4.8.1 Theme: Period Revival

By the late 1910s, Period Revival architecture prevailed throughout Southern California. A range of styles associated with Europe and Colonial America inspired Period Revival architecture in the early 20th century. These styles remained a popular choice for residential design through the late 1930s and early 1940s. By World War II, Period Revival architecture had largely given way to styles such as Minimal

[307] Edith Eddy Ward, "Palm Desert Sunbeams," *Desert Sun,* May 6, 1954.
[308] "Stanley Ring," *Modern San Diego,* accessed March 2025, https://www.modernsandiego.com/people/stanley-ring.
[309] John F. Gane, ed., *American Architects Directory* (New York: R.R. Bowker Company, 1970), 766.
[310] George Ritter obituary, *Desert Sun,* April 23, 1996.
[311] Welter, *Walter S. White,* 13-17.

Traditional, Ranch, and Mid-Century Modern, which were more pared down and embraced more contemporary materials in lieu of references to the past.

4.8.1a Sub-Theme: Spanish Colonial Revival

Example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style: 4481 San Jose Avenue.

Spanish Colonial Revival architecture gained widespread popularity throughout Southern California after the 1915 Panama-California Exposition in San Diego. The exposition's buildings were designed by architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, who wished to go beyond the popular Mission architectural interpretations of the state's colonial past and highlight the richness of Spanish precedents found throughout Latin America. The exposition prompted other designers to look directly to Spain for architectural inspiration. The Spanish Colonial Revival style was an attempt to create a "native" California architectural style that drew upon and romanticized the state's colonial past.[312]

The popularity of the Spanish Colonial Revival style coincided with Southern California's population boom of the 1920s. The versatility of the style, allowing for builders and architects to construct buildings as simple or as lavish as money would permit, helped to further spread its popularity throughout the region. The style's adaptability also lent its application to a variety of building types, including single- and multi-family residences, commercial properties, and institutional buildings. Spanish Colonial Revival architecture often borrowed from other styles such as Churrigueresque, Italian Villa Revival, Gothic Revival, Moorish Revival, or Art Deco. The style is characterized by its complex building forms, stucco-clad wall surfaces, and clay tile roofs. The Spanish Colonial Revival style remained popular through the 1930s, with later versions simpler in form and ornamentation. Spanish Colonial Revival is a prevalent Period

[312] Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 418.

Revival style in Palm Desert and is typically applied to commercial buildings along major commercial corridors, although several single-and muti-family residences throughout the city are also indicative of the style.

Character-defining features of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture include:

- Complex massing with varied and visually interesting forms and volumes
- Asymmetrical façades
- Incorporation of patios, courtyards, loggias, or covered porches and/or balconies
- Low-pitched gable or hipped roofs with clay tile roofing
- Coved, molded, or wood-bracketed eaves
- Towers or turrets
- Stucco wall cladding
- Arched window and door openings
- Single and paired multi-paned windows (predominantly casement)
- Decorative stucco or tile vents
- Details often include the use of secondary materials, including wrought iron, wood, cast stone, terra cotta, and polychromatic tile

4.8.1b Sub-Theme: Pueblo Revival

Example of the Pueblo Revival style: 45125 Panorama Drive.

Pueblo Revival architecture evolved out of California at the turn of the 20th century. The style drew from flat-roofed iterations of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture and the multi-family pueblo dwellings of southwestern Native American groups. Pueblo Revival buildings are characterized by their flat roofs with

parapets, projecting wooden roof beams (vigas) that extend through walls, and stucco wall surfaces. As with many Period Revival styles, the architectural idiom reached its height in popularity during the 1920s and '30s in Southern California. In Palm Desert, the Pueblo Revival style is predominately represented in the city's earlier commercial architecture dating to the late 1940s, such as the Desert Magazine Building (1948, Harry Williams). However, a few examples of earlier residential development are also expressed in the Pueblo Revival style.

Character-defining features of the Pueblo Revival style include:

- One story in height
- Flat roofs with parapets
- Stepped-back roof line
- Irregular stuccoed wall surfaces, often earth colored
- Rough-hewn vigas (roof beams)
- Rough-hewn window lintels and porch supports

4.8.2 Theme: Modernism

Modernism is an umbrella term that is used to describe a mélange of architectural styles and schools of design that were introduced in the early 20th century, honed in the interwar years, and ultimately came to dominate the American architectural scene in the decades following World War II. The tenets of Modernism are diverse, but in the most general sense the movement eschewed past traditions in favor of an architectural paradigm that was more progressive and receptive to technological advances and the modernization of society. It sought to use contemporary materials and building technologies in a manner that prioritized function over form and embraced the "authenticity" of a building's requisite elements. Modernism, then, sharply contrasted with the Period Revival movement that dominated the American architecture scene in years past, as the latter had relied wholly on historical sources for inspiration.

Modernism is rooted in European architectural developments that made their debut in the 1920s and coalesced into what became known as the International style. Championed by some of the most progressive architects of the era – including Le Corbusier of France, and Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe of Germany – the International style took new building materials such as iron, steel, glass, and concrete and fashioned them into functional buildings for the masses. These ideas were introduced to Southern California in the 1920s upon the emigration of Austrian architects Richard Neutra and Rudolph Schindler. Neutra and Schindler each took the "machine-like" aesthetic of the International style and adapted it to the Southern California context through groundbreaking residential designs. While Neutra and Schindler were indisputably pioneers in the rise of Southern California Modernism, it should be noted that their contributions dovetailed with the work of figures such as Frank Lloyd Wright and Irving Gill, both of whom had experimented with creating a Modern aesthetic derived from regional sources.

Prior to World War II, Modernism was very much a fringe movement that was relegated to the sidelines as Period Revival styles and other traditional idioms prevailed. Its expression was limited to a small number of custom residences and the occasional low-scale commercial building. However, Americans' perception of Modern architecture had undergone a dramatic shift by the end of World War II. An unprecedented demand for new, quality housing after the war prodded architects and developers to embrace archetypes that were pared down and replicable on a mass scale. As a whole, Americans also gravitated toward an aesthetic that embraced modernity and looked to the future – rather than to the

past – for inspiration, an idea that was popularized by John Entenza's *Arts and Architecture* magazine and its highly influential Case Study House program. Modern architecture remained popular for the entirety of the postwar era, with derivatives of the movement persisting well into the 1970s.

4.8.2a Sub-Theme: Early Modern

Example of the Early Modern style: 44870 Cabrillo Avenue, the Maryon E. Toole residence by Rudolph Schindler

Maverick architects such as Irving Gill had been experimenting with new forms and materials in Southern California since the early 20th century, but among the earliest examples of Early Modernism in the Palm Desert region include Rudolph Schindler's Popenoe Cabin in Indio, constructed in 1922, and Albert Frey's Kocher-Samson Building in Palm Springs, built in 1934. These and other Early Modern designs constructed in the Coachella Valley between the 1920s and the late 1930s by innovators like John Porter Clark and William F. Cody reflected regional adaptations of stricter European Modern idioms like the International Style.[313] Resources that are associated with this subtheme are notable for not fitting neatly into a stylistic category; rather, their designs reflect the innovative and experimental whims of a small group of nonconformist architects who were seeking to develop a new architectural idiom for Southern California that embraced the use of new materials and technologies. Though constructed later, the Maryon Toole House by early Modernist Rudolph Schindler reflects the experimental approach of this style.

[313] Leilani Marie Labong, "Desert Modernism Really Started in the Eastern Coachella Valley," Palm Springs Life, July 22, 2023, accessed December 2024, https://www.palmspringslife.com/desert-modernism-really-started-in-the-eastern-coachella-valley/; Tracy Conrad, "History: Architect Rudolph Schindler's strange and varied clients in the desert," *The Desert Sun*, February 20, 2022, accessed December 2024, https://www.desertsun.com/story/life/2022/02/20/palm-springs-history-rudolph-schindlers-strange-clients-desert/6850679001/.

Character-defining features of Early Modern architecture include:

- Horizontal orientation
- Geometric volumes, often intersecting at angles
- Experimental use of materials (such as concrete, gunite, textile block, redwood)
- Windows arranged in bands, often terminating at corners
- Casement windows, metal or wood sash

4.8.2b Sub-Theme: Moderne

Example of the Moderne style: 74127 Fairway Drive.

Moderne architecture, commonly reflected in the sub-styles of Streamline Moderne, PWA Moderne, or, in its later iterations, Late Moderne, materialized during the Great Depression when the highly stylized Art Deco mode had become perceived as excessive and overly flamboyant. The architectural idiom was relatively inexpensive to build due to its lack of ornamentation and use of less labor-intensive building materials such as concrete and plaster. Inspired by the industrial designs of the time, the Moderne style was popular throughout the country in the late 1930s and continued to be applied, primarily to commercial and institutional buildings, through the mid-1940s. Moderne architecture is characterized by its sleek, aerodynamic form and horizontal emphasis.

Character-defining features of Moderne architecture include:

- Horizontal emphasis
- Flat roofs with parapets
- Smooth, typically stucco wall surfaces
- Curved wall surfaces
- Steel fixed or casement windows, sometimes located at corners

- Horizontal moldings (speedlines)

4.8.2c Sub-Theme: Hollywood Regency

Example of the Hollywood Regency style: 46100 Verba Santa Drive.

The Hollywood Regency style charted a parallel course to the Art Deco and Moderne styles but, unlike these styles, remained popular during the post-World War II period through a stylistic shift into the Late Hollywood Regency idiom. It shares contextual roots with the associated Deco/Moderne movement in that it aspired to be "conservatively modern," taking well-established architectural precedents and updating them with stripped-down Modern elements. However it also drew more explicitly on Neoclassicism and assumed a more historicist appearance. Hollywood Regency style buildings exhibited the overarching sense of horizontality and flat or low profile roof forms that characterized the International style, and applied abstracted Classical motifs like fluting and reeding that were hallmarks of the Moderne styles.

The Regency's unequivocal center of gravity was Southern California. Its ascent is closely associated with the Golden Era of Hollywood in the 1920s and 1930s. The aesthetic was eventually dubbed "Hollywood Regency," which both acknowledged the historical traditions within which it was rooted, but also called attention to its modern aspirations. By the mid-1930s, Hollywood Regency had emerged as one of, and by some accounts, the preferred idiom for the large estates that were built as the personal residences of prominent figures within the Hollywood motion picture industry.

In the postwar era, the Hollywood Regency style experienced a stylistic shift wherein it became more extrapolated, theatrical, and expressive in form and appearance, but continued to evince a sense of social

status and resonated with the class-conscious.[314] This metamorphosis is generally attributed to the work of John "Jack" Elgin Woolf, an actor-turned-architect who worked almost exclusively in the Hollywood Regency and perpetuated its popularity in the postwar years. Woolf tweaked and contorted the tenets of the Hollywood Regency style, focusing less on balanced and delicate proportions and instead honing in on elements that provided buildings with a flamboyant appearance. His trademark style featured strict symmetry, over-scaled front doors, and mansard roofs, as well as dramatic applied ornamentation. Although the Hollywood Regency style is minimally represented in Palm Desert, the Woolf-designed Marrakesh Country Club represents an excellent multi-family residential example of the style, along with several extant examples in the Purple Hills Estates development, designed by Charles Du Bois.

Character-defining features of Hollywood Regency architecture include:

- Symmetry of design
- Steeply-pitched mansard roofs
- Smooth wall surfaces, primarily stucco
- Tall, narrow windows and doors, often with arched or segmental arched openings
- Use of Neoclassical ornament and design elements, such as double-height porches, thin columns, pediments, fluted pilasters, and balconettes with iron railings
- If Late Hollywood Regency: over-scaled front doors with decorative surrounds, and exaggerated applied ornament, such as oval niches, sconces, lanterns, and freestanding urns

4.8.2d Sub-Theme: Mid-Century Modern

Example of the Mid-Century Modern style: 73860 Shadow Mountain Drive. "Continental 6" multi-family property designed by Charles Doty.

[314] Adamo DiGregorio and David A. Keeps, "A Grand Entrance: Take 2," *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 2003.

"Mid-Century Modern" is a broad term that is used to describe the various derivatives of Modern architecture that flourished in the post-World War II period. These include postwar adaptations of the International Style, post-and-beam construction, and more organic and expressive interpretations of the Modern architectural movement. Mid-Century Modernism was popular between the mid-1940s and early 1970s.[315] It proved to be a remarkably adaptable and versatile idiom that was expressed through an array of property types ranging large-scale housing tracts, to commercial buildings, to civic and institutional properties. Its aesthetic was incorporated into both high-style buildings and the local vernacular and was employed by architects and developer-builders alike.

Mid-Century Modernism is rooted in various experiments in Modern architecture that were introduced in the early 20th century. The International Style, which came out of Europe in the 1920s, introduced a cogent approach to design that was characterized by simple geometric forms, smooth wall surfaces, the honest expression of structure and materials, and the absence of superfluous ornament.[316] At about the same time, a small group of maverick American architects including Frank Lloyd Wright and Irving Gill were also dabbling in experimental new forms, methods, and materials in their quest to develop an original style of American architecture.[317] Mid-Century Modernism draws upon these earlier paradigms and is emblematic of how the principles of Modernism were adapted to the conditions of post-World War II life. Over time, architects took the basic tenets of the International Style and similar experiments in domestic Modernism, augmented them, and developed dialects of Modernism that were both rational and sensitive to their respective physical and cultural contexts.

In Southern California, Mid-Century Modern architecture was prevalent between the mid-1940s and mid-1970s. While the style was a favorite among some of Southern California's most influential architects, its minimal ornamentation and simple open floor plans lent itself to the mass-produced housing developments of the postwar period. Mid-Century Modern architecture typically incorporated standardized and prefabricated materials that also proved well-suited to mass production. Subsets of the Mid-Century Modern style include Googie, which is a highly exaggerated, futuristic aesthetic, typically employing upswept or folded plate roofs, curvaceous, geometric volumes, and neon signage, and Mimetic, which is characterized by its application of objects or forms that resemble something other than a building. The Mid-Century Modern style and its subsets were broadly applied to a wide variety of property types ranging from residential subdivisions and commercial buildings to churches and public schools.

Due in large part to its population explosion and economic prosperity in the post-World War II period, the Coachella Valley has a notable and diverse concentration of Mid-Century Modern architecture. Beginning first in Palm Springs, variants of the style were implemented by distinguished local architects including William Cody, Albert Frey, John Porter Clark, Donald Wexler, and E. Stewart Williams, as well as Los Angeles-based architects Dan Palmer, William Krisel, and Charles Du Bois who also frequently worked in the desert. These postwar architects developed what became known as "Desert Modernism," and

[315] SurveyLA, Citywide Historic Context Statement Summary Tables, "Architecture and Engineering, 1850-1980," prepared by Architectural Resources Group and ICF International for the City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources (2021).
[316] Natalie W. Shivers, "Architecture: A New Creative Medium," in *LA's Early Moderns: Art/Architecture/ Photography* (Los Angeles: Balcony Press, 2003), 132.
[317] Shivers, "Architecture: A New Creative Medium," 124.

collectively they made up the Palm Springs School of Architecture "that was born from international Modernism but matured into a fundamentally regional style, fostered in part by Art and Architecture magazine's pivotal Case Study Program (1945-1966), along with specific local conditions."[318] The style gained popularity among speculative real estate developers, contractors, and architects "because its use of standardized, prefabricated materials permitted quick and economical construction. Desert Modernism quickly took root throughout the Valley, and soon became the predominant architectural style in Palm Desert in the postwar years. As such, the style is represented in almost every property type, from single-family residences to commercial retailers and banks to gas stations.[319] Notable Palm Desert architects working in the style included John Outcault, Walter S. White, Charles W. Doty, Harold Bissner, and Robert Ricciardi, among many other designers and buildings working throughout the desert at the time.

Character-defining features of Mid-Century Modern architecture include:

- Simple, geometric building forms of one- or two-story configuration with horizontal massing
- Expressed post-and-beam construction, typically in wood or steel, sometimes with concrete and glass elements
- Flat or low-pitched roofs, sometimes with cantilevered canopies; or bold geometric building forms and motifs that abstractly reference nature (i.e., butterfly, A-frame, folded plate, or barrel vault roofs)[320]
- Wide overhanging eaves
- Horizontal elements such as fascias that cap the front edge of the flat roofs or parapets
- Stucco wall cladding and accents at times used in combination with other textural elements, such as wood, brick, steel, concrete, or stone
- Aluminum windows grouped within horizontal frames
- Oversized decorative elements or decorative face-mounted light fixtures
- Integrated landscapes, often in the form of courtyards, atriums, or plazas
- Decorative screen walls comprising ornamental concrete blocks (bris-soleil) or concrete masonry units

4.8.2e Sub-Theme: Polynesian/"Tiki" Modern

[318] Historic Resources Group, "Citywide Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings," prepared for the City of Palm Springs (2016), 322; "Desert Modernism Style," Visit Palm Springs, February 14, 2022, accessed November 1, 2023, https://visitpalmsprings.com/desert-modernism-2/.

[319] Historic Resources Group, 322.

[320] Architectural Resources Group, "City of La Cañada Flintridge Historic Resources Inventory Update – Survey Report," prepared for the City of La Cañada Flintridge, Community Development Department (2021), 43-44.

Example of the Polynesian/"Tiki" Modern style: 45900 Ocotillo Drive, Maui Palms, designed by Harold Bissner.An interest in Hawaiian culture first appeared in Southern California as early as the Hawaiian music craze during the 1920s and proliferated in the 1940s and '50s with Hawaiian-themed bars such as Clifton's Cafeteria, Cocoanut Grove, Trader Vic's Lounge, Tonga Hut, and Don the Beachcomber emerging in the Los Angeles area. Heightened by the United States' involvement in the Pacific theater during World War II and subsequent opportunities for air travel during the 1950s, interest in Hawaiian culture amongst Southern Californians soared and began to infiltrate local architectural styles by the late 1950s.[321] As a destination marketed toward luxury and leisure, Palm Desert architects were able to easily integrate Hawaiian-influenced architectural features into their designs to support the desert community's ethos of resort-style living. This new thematic style became known as Polynesian/"Tiki" or "Tiki" architecture locally, and was used by architects like Harold Bissner and Charles Du Bois to complement and diversify the overarching Mid-Century Modernism style of their residential work.

Character-defining features of the Polynesian/"Tiki" style include the following:

- Dramatic A-frame roofs, often extending to the ground
- Often includes front door or front gate on A-frame facade
- Application of wood or thatch on exteriors
- Steeply pitched roofs with forward-slanting, front-facing gables
- Exposed rafter and roof beams, outriggers with sweeping or curved lines
- South-Pacific inspired imagery i.e., tiki heads, canoes, torches, birds, etc.

[321] SurveyLA, Citywide Historic Context Statement, "Architecture and Engineering, 1850-1980; Theme: Exotic Revival, 1900-1980," prepared by GPA Consulting for the City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources (2015), 29-33.

- Tropical landscaping i.e., lagoons, waterfalls, palm trees, and other plants[322]

4.8.2f Sub-Theme: Late Modern

Example of the Late Modern style: 73009 Joshua Tree Street.

Late Modern is a broad term that is used to describe an iteration of Modern architecture that came of age between the mid-1950s and 1970s. Compared to their Mid-Century Modern predecessors, which stressed simplicity and authenticity, Late Modern buildings exhibited a more sculptural quality that included bold geometric forms, uniform glass skins on concrete surfaces, and sometimes a heightened expression of structure and system. Subsets of the Late Modern style include New Formalism, which integrates classical elements and proportions, and Brutalism, which typically features exposed, raw concrete (béton brut) and an expression of structural materials and forms. Late Modern architecture was almost always applied to commercial and institutional buildings and is associated with noted architects such as Marcel Breuer, Philip Johnson, and Cesar Pelli. Late Modern typically took the form of commercial and institutional properties along major thoroughfares in Palm Desert, such as retail shops, banks, and churches.

Character-defining features of Late Modern architecture include:

- Bold geometric volumes
- Modular design dictated by structural framing and glazing
- Unrelieved wall surfaces of glass, metal, concrete, or tile
- Unpainted, exposed concrete surfaces

[322] SurveyLA, "Architecture and Engineering, 1850-1980; Theme: Exotic Revival, 1900-1980," 33.

- Unapparent door and window openings incorporated into exterior cladding or treated exterior form
- Minimal ornamentation

4.8.3 Theme: Ranch

Ranch style architecture first appeared in Southern California in the 1930s. Inspired by the Spanish and Mexican-era *haciendas* of Southern California and the vernacular, wood-framed farmhouses dotting the landscape of Northern California, Texas, and the American West, the style projected an informal, casual lifestyle that proved to be immensely popular among the American public. Early iterations of the Ranch style tended to be large, sprawling custom residences that were designed by noted architects of the day. However, after World War II, Ranch style architecture was pared down and also became a preferred style for economical, mass-produced tract housing. By some estimates, nine of every ten new houses built in the years immediately after World War II embodied the Ranch style in one way or another. The style remained an immensely popular choice for residential architecture – and was occasionally adapted to commercial and institutional properties as well – until it fell out of favor in the mid-1970s.[323]

Cliff May, commonly referred to as "father of the Ranch house," propelled the style into the public consciousness and, although he did not invent the ranch house, he is the figure most closely associated with the typology's early popularization. May developed his own distinctive aesthetic that was characterized by open and free-flowing interior plans, a blending of interior and exterior spaces, and a hand-hewn character. Early designs were custom and sprawling, but in the early 1950s, May, in collaboration with the architect Chris Choate, devised a much smaller, scaled-down interpretation of his trademark California Ranch house that was based on a modular plan and could be replicated on a much larger scale. Averaging 950 square feet, these houses are notable for their innovative manufacturing and distributing system; whereas May and Choate designed the models and determined their specifications, the houses' construction was franchised out to individual builders. Marketed as the "Cliff May Homes," these economical Ranch houses were constructed in residential tracts across the nation, with notable examples in the Palm Desert area. The majority of residential development in Palm Desert occurred after World War II, and as a result, a large portion of single-family dwellings in the city are characterized by the Ranch style. Most architects and builders working in Palm Desert during the postwar years had a hand in designing Ranch homes at one point or another, particularly in the modern Contemporary Ranch style, including Walter S. White, John Outcault, Henry Eggers, Philip Boyd, Adrian Schwilck, and Sol Lesser.

4.8.3a Sub-Theme: Minimal Ranch

[323] SurveyLA, Citywide Historic Context Statement, "Architecture and Engineering, 1850-1980; Theme: The Ranch House, 1930-1975," prepared by Architectural Resources Group and ICF International for the City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources (2015), 3-5.

Example of the Minimal Ranch style (altered): 73305 Joshua Tree Street (Carl and Edna Henderson Residence).

Minimal Ranch is a term used to describe pared down versions of the Traditional Ranch house, a residential style of architecture that made its debut in the 1930s and is what is generally considered to be the "quintessential Ranch house." Like their more ornate counterparts, Minimal Ranches were almost always expressed in the form of a one-story, single-family house, although the style was occasionally adapted to commercial and institutional properties in the postwar era. Beginning in the late 1930s, Minimal Ranch houses offered a more affordable and easily mass-produced option for early tract developers and homebuyers alike. Pioneering the mass production of Minimal Ranch housing in Southern California were merchant builders Fred Harlow and Fritz Burns, who developed entire new Ranch style communities across Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Their homes took the expressed form and aesthetic of the custom Ranch houses that had been designed by Cliff May and his contemporaries and simplified them, producing a much more modest interpretation of the Ranch house that was modular and easy to produce at a large scale. Harlow and Burns' developments set a precedent for the mass production of Minimal Ranch housing in the postwar years; the intersection of Ranch style architecture and mass-produced housing reflected the aesthetic preferences and cultural affiliations of homebuyers at the time who aspired to own Ranch homes that were associated with affluence and high style design, but at a more affordable cost.

After World War II, many architects struggled to work within the confines of the commercial building industry. As a result, Southern California's Ranch houses were typically designed and built by local contractors rather than by architects, a trend that further proliferated the production of Minimal Ranch homes. Highly efficient and adaptable in comparison to Traditional Ranches, these houses were typically built to conform to FHA design guidelines as to attain eligibility for federal home loans. Elements like simple square or rectangular footprints; open, free-flowing interior plans; wall materials that lacked variation; and minimal ornament ensured mass-produced Minimal Ranch houses were easy to

standardize and manipulate while still able to accommodate a wide variety of personal tastes.[324] Palm Desert boasts several postwar examples of Minimal Ranch tract development, such as the Holiday Ranch Homes developed by Monte Wenck and Charles White situated just south of Highway 111.

Character-defining features of the Minimal Ranch style include:

- One-story configuration (two-story Ranch houses are rare)
- Asymmetrical composition with one or more projecting wings
- Horizontal massing
- Simple square or rectangular floor plans
- Free-flowing interiors
- Low-pitched gable or hipped roof
- Wide eaves and exposed rafter tails
- Brick or stone chimneys
- Combination of simple wall cladding materials
- One or more picture windows
- Restrained ornamentation
- Attached garage

4.8.3b Sub-Theme: Hacienda Ranch

Example of the Hacienda Ranch style: 45739 Verba Santa Drive.

[324] SurveyLA, "Architecture and Engineering, 1850-1980; Theme: The Ranch House, 1930-1975," 10, 16-18.

Hacienda Ranch architecture represents a variant of the broader Traditional Ranch style. Like Traditional Ranches, Hacienda Ranches emerged in the 1930s and were awash in historical references associated with the vernacular architecture of 19th century California and the American West, and generally took on a distinctive, rusticated appearance. As their name implies, Hacienda Ranches were designed to loosely resemble the haciendas of 19th century California, with features such as clay tile roofs, roughly textured stucco exteriors, and deeply-inset windows indicative of adobe construction. This sub-style of the Ranch house was first erected when California was under Spanish rule from 1769-1821, and later gained prominence under Mexican rule (1821-1848).

Typically, Hacienda Ranches embodied characteristics of the vernacular architecture of Spain, with features like adobe walls, low pitched shed or gabled roofs, decorative wood window grilles called *rejas*, and lattices known as *celosias*. Hacienda Ranch homes broke from the symmetrical formality that was typical of other styles popular at the time (i.e., the various Period Revival styles), instead emulating more asymmetrical or "rambling" horizontal forms that were configured inward and opened to a courtyard area. Their simple designs conveyed a sense of rusticity and authenticity that re-popularized the style in the early 20th century when the American public began to have a renewed interest in its collective past and Colonial-era roots. By the late 1930s, the "Mexican Hacienda" had become Ranch house pioneer Cliff May's preeminent interpretation of the Ranch architectural style. Several Hacienda Ranch homes remain extant in Palm Desert, where the style's horizontal form and earthen materiality effortlessly reflect the ranching history and desert environment of the Coachella Valley.

Character-defining features of the Hacienda Ranch style include:

- One-story configuration (two-story Ranch houses are rare)
- Asymmetrical composition with one or more projecting wings
- Horizontal massing
- Adobe or adobe brick construction
- Low-pitched gable or shed roof
- Clay tile roof cladding
- Wide eaves and exposed rafter tails
- Clay tile roofs
- Brick or stone chimneys
- Troweled stucco walls
- Deeply inset windows and doors
- Hewn lintels
- Grilles (*rejas*) and lattices (*celosias)*

4.8.3c Sub-Theme: Contemporary Ranch

Example of the Contemporary Ranch style: 73436 Tamarisk Street.

Contemporary Ranch architecture emerged after World War II. Buildings designed in the style took on the basic form, configuration, and massing of the Traditional Ranch house, but instead of historically inspired treatments and details that characterized various Period Revival styles, they incorporated the clean lines and abstract geometries associated with Modernism. The Contemporary Ranch style offered an alternative to the Traditional Ranch house and was applied to scores of residential buildings constructed between the mid-1940s and 1970s.

Like the Traditional Ranch houses from which it is derived, the Contemporary Ranch style is almost always expressed in the form of a one-story, single-family house. In lieu of the historicist references and rusticated features that are associated with the Traditional Ranch style, Contemporary Ranch houses exhibit abstract geometries and contemporary details that are most often seen in Mid-Century Modern architecture. Post-and-beam construction was common; carports often took the place of garages; exterior walls tended to be clad in a more simplistic palette composed of stucco and wood; roofs were of a lower pitch and were often more expressive or flamboyant in form; and ornament tended to be more abstract in character and was applied more judiciously. Oriental and Polynesian-inspired motifs were often incorporated into the design of Contemporary Ranch houses.[325] Contemporary Ranches are among the most popular residential style throughout Palm Desert.

- Character-defining features of Contemporary Ranch style architecture include:
- One-story configuration (two-story Ranch houses are rare)
- Asymmetrical composition with one or more projecting wings
- Horizontal massing and abstract form

[325] [325] SurveyLA, "Architecture and Engineering, 1850-1980; Theme: The Ranch House, 1930-1975," 17-20.

- Post-and-beam construction
- Low-pitched gable or hipped roof, sometimes with expressionist qualities
- Combination of wall cladding materials, generally including stucco and wood siding
- Windows and doors are generally treated as void elements
- Abstract ornamental details
- Incorporation of East Asian and Polynesian motifs is common
- Carports are common and often take the place of an attached garage

Evaluation Guidelines: Architecture and Design, 1910-1980

Summary

Resources evaluated under this context and its various subthemes are significant as excellent examples of their architectural styles, types, period, or method of construction; and/or for representing the work of a significant architect or builder; and/or for possessing high artistic or aesthetic values; and/or for representing the last, best remaining example of a type or style that was once common in a neighborhood or the City but is now increasingly rare. Some designed landscapes may also be significant under this context as exceptional examples of landscape architecture. This context applies to residential, commercial, and civic/institutional property types in Palm Desert, and is applicable to both individual properties and historic districts.

Associated Property Types	• Residential (including all sub-types) • Commercial (including all subtypes) • Institutional (including all subtypes) • Historic Districts
Property Type Summary	Significant examples of architectural styles were applied to all types of properties. In Palm Desert examples include single-family residences; multi-family residences; commercial buildings like banks, office buildings, restaurants, and retail buildings; and institutional properties like government buildings, clubhouses, schools, and churches. Concentrations of buildings that collectively convey a significant representation of architectural style(s) or type(s) may be identified as historic districts.
Geographic Location	Citywide.
Period of Significance	The period of significance for this context spans the entirety of Palm Desert's modern development history between 1910 and 1980.
Integrity Considerations	An individual property that is significant must also retain certain aspects of integrity in order to express its historic significance. Determining which aspects are most important to a particular property type requires an understanding of its significance and essential physical characteristics. The rarity of a property type and of an architectural

style should also be considered when assessing integrity. In general, properties being evaluated for their architectural significance are held to a higher integrity threshold than those being evaluated under other contexts. The following is a guide.

Criteria	Significance	Integrity Considerations	Registration Requirements
C/3/C, D[326]	An **individual property** eligible under this theme may be significant: • As an excellent embodiment of an architectural style, type, period, or method of construction; and/or • As the notable work of a master architect, designer, or builder; and/or • For possessing high artistic or aesthetic values; and/or • As one of the last, best remaining examples of a type or style in a neighborhood or the City that is increasingly rare.	An individual property significant for its architecture is eligible if it retains most of the physical features that constitute its style or technique.[327] It should retain integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and feeling, at a minimum, in order to be eligible for its architectural merit. A property that has lost a few historic materials or details may still be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its original style and appearance in terms of the massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, texture of materials, and ornamentation. A resource is generally not eligible if it retains some basic features conveying form and massing but has lost the majority of features that originally characterized its style or type.	To be eligible under this theme, a resource should, at a minimum: • Represent an excellent or influential example of an architectural style(s) or type, and/or • Be associated with a significant architect or designer, and • Retain the essential character-defining features of the style or type, and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity.
C/3/C, D, F	A **historic district** eligible under this theme may be significant: • For embodying distinctive characteristics of an architectural style, type, period, or	In order for a historic district to be eligible for designation, the majority (51%) of the components within the district boundaries must possess integrity, as must the district as a whole. Integrity of design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling must be strongly present in the district	To be eligible under this theme, a historic district should, at a minimum: • Represent an excellent or influential concentration of an architectural style, type,

[326] Eligibility criteria are listed in the following order: federal (National Register), state (California Register), local (Palm Desert).
[327] National Register Bulletin 15.

	method of construction; and/or • As a valuable example of the use of indigenous materials or craftsmanship; and/or • As the notable work of one or more master architects, designers, or builders; and/or • For conveying a sense of historic or architectural cohesiveness through its design, setting, materials, workmanship or associations	overall, and it should convey a strong sense of time and place. A contributing building must retain integrity of design, setting, materials, and workmanship to adequately convey the significance of the historic district. 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 massing, form, roofline, or fenestration patterns of an individual building, alter the original design intent, or that are not reversible may result in non-contributing status for an individual building. In order for a historic district to retain integrity, the majority (51% or more) of its component parts should contribute to its historic significance.	period, or method, and/or • Be associated with a significant builder, architect or designer, and • Retain the majority (51% or more) of the contributors reflecting the architectural style(s), and • Retain the essential aspects of integrity.

5. Reconnaissance Survey Findings

5.1 Summary of Reconnaissance Survey Findings

240 resources were identified in the reconnaissance survey phase as potentially eligible for designation, including:

- 210 individual resources
- 30 groupings of resources (potential historic districts)

Potentially eligible resources identified in the survey, both individuals and districts, are depicted in ***Appendix C****: Reconnaissance Survey Findings Map* and listed in ***Appendix D****: Reconnaissance Survey Findings Property List*.

6. Bibliography

Adams, Russell B. *King C. Gillette: The Man and This Wonderful Shaving Device.* Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1978.

California Office of Historic Preservation. *Technical Assistance Series #6: California Register and National Register: A Comparison.* Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2001.

Caudell, Miranda. "A People's Journey," *Me Yah Whae* Fall/Winter 2016-2017, accessed December 2024, https://www.aguacaliente.org/documents/OurStory-10.pdf.

City of La Quinta, Historic Resource Survey and Context Statement. Prepared by Urbana Preservation & Planning, LLC for the City of La Quinta Design & Development Department, April 2023.

City of Palm Desert Historic Preservation Committee. "History and Tour of Palm Desert Historical Sites, April 27, 2007." Bus tour booklet on file at the City of Palm Desert and at the HSPD.

City of Palm Springs. Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings. Prepared by Historic Resources Group for the City of Palm Springs, December 2018.

Culver, Lawrence. *The Frontier of Leisure: Southern California and the Shaping of Modern America.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Cody, Catherine, Jo Lauria, and Don Choi. *Master of the Midcentury: The Architecture of William F. Cody.* New York: Monacelli, 2021.

de Crinis, Mona. "Cahuilla Territory," *Me Yah Whae* Fall/Winter 2021-2022, accessed December 2024, https://www.aguacaliente.org/documents/Cahuilla_Territory.pdf.

Desert Sun, various dates.

General Land Office. *Plat for Township 4 South, Range 6 East, San Bernardino Meridian, California*. [map]. San Francisco: Surveyor's General Office, 1856, 1915.

General Land Office. *Plat for Township 5 South, Range 6 East, San Bernardino Meridian, California*. [map]. San Francisco: Surveyor's General Office, 1856, 1914.

Historical Society of Palm Desert. Various collections.

Kellogg Anderson, Fran. *Within These Walls: History of the Marrakesh Country Club.* n.d.

Keylon, Steven. *The Design of Herbert W. Burns.* Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011.

Keylon, Steven. "The Glamorous Gardens of Tommy Tomson: Part One." *Eden* 18, no. 4 (Fall 2015), 12-19.

Keylon, Steven. "The Glamorous Gardens of Tommy Tomson: Part Two." *Eden* 19, no. 1 (Winter 2016), 8-17.

Keylon, Steven. *The Modern Architecture of Hugh Michael Kaptur.* Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2019.

Kray, Ryan M. "Second-Class Citizenship at a First-Class Resort: Race and Public Policy in Palm Springs." PhD diss., University of California, Irvine, 2009.

Leuschner, Luke. *Marrakesh Country Club: Historic District Nomination.* 2025.

Leuschner, Luke. *Landmark Nomination for Robert K. Overpeck Residence,* January 22, 2022.

Leuschner, Luke. "Palm Desert: A Sellable Dream on Forsaken Land, Part I." *The Hourglass,* Fall 2021.

Leuschner, Luke. "Palm Desert: A Sellable Dream on Forsaken Land, Part II." *The Hourglass,* Winter 2022.

Limelight-News, various dates.

McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2019.

McCoy, Esther. *Five California Architects.* New York: Reinhold, 1960.

McKenney, J. Wilson. *Desert Editor:…the Story of Randall Henderson and Palm Desert*. Georgetown, California: Wilmac Press, 1972.

National Park Service. National Register Bulletin 24*: Guidelines for Local Surveys*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1977, rev. 1985.

National Park Service. National Register Bulletin 16B*: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form:* https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/upload/NRB16B-Complete.pdf.

Ortner, Vyola J. and Diana C. du Pont. *You Can't Eat Dirt: Leading America's First All-Women Tribal Council and How We Changed Palm Springs*. Palm Springs, CA: Fan Palm Research Project, 2011.

Palm Desert Post, various dates.

Price, Steven. *Pink Jewel of the Desert: The Architecture of Marrakesh Country Club.* Palm Desert, CA: Marrakesh Country Club, 2018.

Rover, Hal, Kim Housken, and Brett Romer. *Images of America: Palm Desert*. Historical Society of Palm Desert, 2009.

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

Sun Spots, various dates.

United States Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management. General Land Office Records. Accessed December 2024, https://glorecords.blm.gov/default.aspx.

University of California, Santa Barbara Library Geospatial Collection.

Upton, Dell and John Michael Vlach, ed.. *Common Places: Readings in American Vernacular Architecture*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Weiss, Bricker and Sidney William. *Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler.* Heidelberg, Germany: Kehrer Verlag, 2011.

Welter, Volker M. and Walter S. White. *Walter S. White: Inventions in Mid-Century Architecture*. Santa Barbara: Art, Design & Architecture Museum, University of California Santa Barbara, 2015.

West, Jim. *Palm Desert: An Architectural Tour into Modernism.* 2016.