

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

DRAFT

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Oasis Commercial Building

Other names/site number: Oasis Office Building

Name of related multiple property listing:  
The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 101 South Palm Canyon Drive

City or town: Palm Springs State: CA County: Riverside

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property <u>meets</u> <u>does not meet</u> the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p><b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____</p> <p><b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____</p> <p><b>Date</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Business

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Business

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL: steel, aluminum, CONCRETE,  
STONE: granite, GLASS

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Oasis Commercial Building is located on the southwest corner of Tahquitz Canyon Way and South Palm Canyon Drive in the heart of downtown Palm Springs. Designed by E. Stewart Williams and completed in 1955, the International Style two-story, steel-framed reinforced concrete building was clearly influenced by Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye in France. Ground floor shops are deeply recessed beneath the projecting second story, which is supported by piloti. The upper floor contains offices and a full-width loggia facing the busy street. A pleasant courtyard centers the composition. As relates to integrity, while most of the ground floor shops have seen innumerable tenants, their storefronts and footprints have not markedly changed. The interior of the northwest portion of the building has been extensively remodeled from a former drug store to a contemporary restaurant although its façade has only been slightly altered. The overall building exhibits historic integrity sufficient to convey its significance. The noncontributing resource is the remaining tower and commercial wing of the original Oasis Hotel designed by Lloyd Wright in 1923. While clearly differentiated from the 1955 Oasis Commercial Building, the older tower is attached to the newer elevator shaft that is connected by a bridge to the commercial building.

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## Narrative Description

Inspired by modernist architect Le Corbusier's Villa Savoye in France, the Oasis Commercial Building is rectangular in plan with its second story raised above the ground, supported by piloti. The building is of reinforced concrete construction painted white on a smooth exterior surface. It is a striking example of the International Style on such a busy corner.

Angled, floor-to-ceiling plate glass windows facing Palm Canyon Drive enclose ground floor shops that are deeply recessed beneath the second story to provide welcome shade to pedestrians. Centering the building is an interior courtyard open to the sky that offers respite for shoppers and a pleasant setting for al fresco dining. Natural rock cladding covers ground floor walls around the courtyard and exterior elevations, serving to soften the straight lines of the composition. Natural rock also frames rectangular display windows on north and south elevations. This integration of natural materials from the local environment with modern design precepts is a hallmark of Williams' architectural philosophy.

The upper level consists of numerous office spaces a number of which face an open walkway surrounding the courtyard below. A corrugated metal balustrade supported by narrow posts encloses a full-width loggia facing the main thoroughfare. The upper unit occupying the north end of the building was originally the architectural offices of Williams, Williams and Williams. The space is marked by a wall of grey mosaic tiles next to the entrance.

Multi-paned steel casement ribbon windows punctuate north, south, and west elevations with the latter two shaded by slatted metal awnings. At the rear of the building are recessed store entrances with adjacent display windows framed by natural rock veneer. A passageway provides access between the south end of the building and the original Oasis Hotel tower. Above the passageway is a bridge connecting the newer building to an elevator shaft abutting the older tower. Accenting the west elevation at the north end is a dramatic exterior staircase.

In a unique approach to historic preservation, the Palm Springs City Council chose to designate only the second story of the Oasis Commercial Building as a local landmark in 2010.<sup>1</sup> As a result, while the upper office floor appears relatively unchanged there have been some alterations to the ground floor area, particularly the outdoor spaces around the north end of the building. A fence of multicolored posts encloses restaurant patios in the courtyard and adjacent to the sidewalk on the north side of the building. A fence also encloses the patio at the adjacent Starbucks store. In addition, some of the windows and entrances of the large restaurant space have been modified. Unfortunately, few building permits documenting these alterations were located by the city.

Nonetheless, despite these changes, overall integrity of design, materials, and workmanship remains high. Although the restaurant occupies the space of a former drugstore, it and the

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<sup>1</sup> Known as a City of Palm Springs Class One Historic Site.

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building's other ground floor spaces remain commercial. Similarly, the building's second story units remain offices. As a result, integrity of association and feeling is retained. Situated on a prominent corner in the center of town, the property's integrity of location and setting remains unchanged. This remains true even with the presence of the 1923 Oasis Hotel tower and commercial wing on the south end of the property because these original elements existed when the Oasis Commercial Building was erected in 1955. As a result, the building is able to convey its architectural significance, retaining the characteristic physical features associated with the work of E. Stewart Williams, namely, the integration of natural materials expressing the local environment into his modern architectural designs.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**  
1955  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**  
1955  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**  
N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**  
Williams, E. Stewart  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Oasis Commercial Building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of mid-century commercial architecture as interpreted by E. Stewart Williams. In addition, the property meets *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Submission registration requirements for commercial buildings in association with the historic context “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” The period of significance corresponds with the building’s date of construction, 1955.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Oasis Commercial Building exemplifies the distinctive characteristics of the commercial buildings E. Stewart Williams’ designed in the mid-1950s. Specifically, Williams adapted the International Style to the environment of the Coachella Valley by integrating natural materials into the design. As is consistent with the International Style, the Oasis Commercial Building rejects historical references with emphasis placed on form following function. The flat-roofed, steel-framed building features a rectangular second-story volume with smooth exterior surfaces and ribbon windows. The upper story supported by piloti shelters a deeply recessed ground floor area with extensive storefront glazing. Consistent with Williams’ design philosophy that modern architecture should also express the local environment, he clad much of the ground floor in natural rock sourced from the nearby mountains of the Coachella Valley.

The Oasis Commercial Building is significant within the oeuvre of E. Stewart Williams and fits within the historic context presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Architecture as environmental expression in the greater Coachella Valley, 1946-1976.” The property is a key example of the commercial building property type that maintains sufficient integrity to be readily identifiable as the work of E. Stewart Williams. As a result, the property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of commercial buildings associated with master architect E. Stewart Williams.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

As indicated in *The Architecture of E. Stewart Williams* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- Other

Name of repository: Palm Springs Art Museum, Architecture and Design Center

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1.35 acres

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_  
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.822761                      Longitude: -116.547121

### Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Property is located at 101 South Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, Riverside County, California at the southwest corner of West Tahquitz Canyon Way and South Palm Canyon Drive. The property fronts 204 feet of South Palm Canyon Drive and 274 feet of West

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Tahquitz Canyon Way. Its legal description is 1.35 ACRES M/L IN LOT 1, 2 & 3 MB 009/4  
APN 513-143-009

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Oasis Commercial Building.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Peter Moruzzi/Architectural Historian  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: 2018 Griffith Park Blvd., #114  
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90039  
e-mail petermoruzzi@gmail.com  
telephone: (213) 706-0151  
date: February 2016

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Oasis Commercial Building  
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs  
County: Riverside  
State: CA  
Photographer: Peter Moruzzi  
Date Photographed: January, February 2016

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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 13 East elevation, camera facing southwest
- 2 of 13 East elevation, camera facing west
- 3 of 13 East elevation, camera facing southwest
- 4 of 13 East elevation, camera facing southwest
- 5 of 13 Center courtyard, camera facing west
- 6 of 13 Oasis commercial building on right (south elevation), original Oasis Hotel tower on left (north and east elevations), camera facing west
- 7 of 13 South elevation, camera facing northeast
- 8 of 13 West elevation, camera facing northeast
- 9 of 13 Exterior staircase, west elevation, camera facing east
- 10 of 13 North elevation, camera facing southeast
- 11 of 13 Second story veranda surrounding center courtyard, south elevation, camera facing north
- 12 of 13 Detail, metal awning, west elevation, camera facing northeast
- 13 of 13 Detail, piloti, natural rock, metal framed door, custom door handle, camera facing northeast

**Index of Figures; Photos by Julius Shulman, 1953**

- Figure 1 East elevation, looking northwest
- Figure 2 Left, original Oasis Hotel Tower, east and north elevations; Oasis Commercial Building, south and east elevations
- Figure 3 West and north elevations, looking southeast

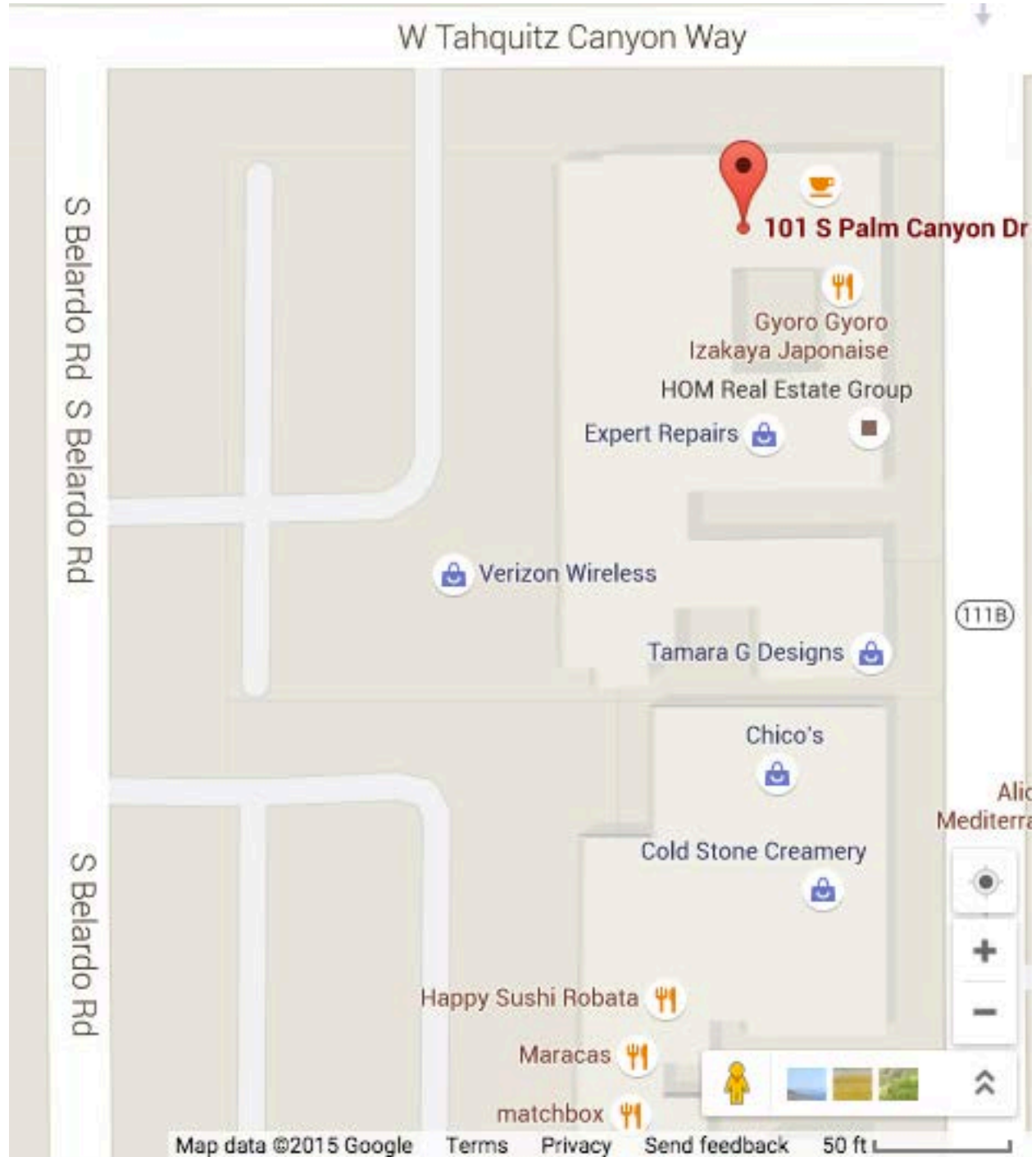
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### Location Map

Latitude: 33.822761

Longitude: -116.547121



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### Sketch Map/Photo Key



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**Figure 1. East elevation, looking northwest, 1953**



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**Figure 2. Left, original Oasis Hotel tower, north and east elevations; Oasis Commercial Building, south and east elevations, 1953**



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**Figure 3. West and north elevations, looking southeast, 1953**



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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.