

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: Palm Springs City Hall

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

The Architecture of Albert Frey

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

2. Location

Street & number: 3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way

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Not For Publication: Vicinity: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>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p> <p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ Date</p> <p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/city hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/city hall

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL: steel, aluminum, CONCRETE
BLOCK, 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.)

Summary Paragraph

Palm Springs City Hall is located just west of the Palm Springs Airport in the civic center portion of East Tahquitz Canyon Way. The initial phase was completed between 1952 and 1956. Between 1956 and 1965 there were two large additions to the rear of the building, and, in 1984, a new building was constructed behind City Hall. The original one-story edifice facing Tahquitz Canyon Way strongly reflects Albert Frey's philosophy of desert modern design with its terracotta-colored double-stacked concrete block construction, flat roof, deep overhangs of corrugated metal, and large windows. Distinctive angled cylindrical metal *brise soleils* shield the south facing office fenestration from the sun.¹ The tall, projecting council chamber features telescopically flared concrete block walls fronted by a concrete circular disk supported by posts. In contrast, the freestanding City Hall entrance canopy is of corrugated metal with an open center that matches the diameter of the council chamber disk. Palm Springs City Hall is in excellent condition and, as viewed from Tahquitz Canyon Way towards its primary elevation, retains a high level of historic integrity.

¹ Brise-soleil: "A screen, usually of louvers, placed on the outside of a building to shield the windows from direct sunlight." Francis D. K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995), 227.

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Narrative Description

Palm Springs City Hall (1952-1956) was one of Clark, Frey and Chambers' most important public buildings. Although the architectural firm of Williams, Clark & Williams later designed the large building at the rear, the initial phase was primarily the design work of Albert Frey, according to historian Joseph Rosa.

The one-story flat-roofed building is divided into two distinct sections, a symmetrical office portion with a wing extending from the rear of the main entrance, and a large council chamber that projects outward toward Tahquitz Canyon Way (**Figure 2**). The primary construction material is sandblasted terracotta-colored concrete block, and in this case every two rows are aligned—or double-stacked—so that the appearance from a distance is of offset squares.

The office portion exhibits a low horizontal profile with the flat roof extending southward to form deep eaves. The portion connecting the offices to the council chamber becomes a covered walkway sheltered by a series of distinctive angled cylindrical metal *brise soleils* painted sage green (**Figure 3**). Each *brise soleils* shades floor-to-ceiling glazing of the offices (**Figure 4**). Their cylindrical design appeared the following year in 1953 at Frey House I where they shaded the round windows of the architect's second story bedroom. Corrugated metal exterior ceilings that are light blue in color—a typical Frey design characteristic—distinguish the walkways and entrance canopy.

The projecting council chamber is taller than the office portion, differing substantially in its design (**Figure 5**). The flared walls of the concrete block chamber appear telescopically stepped toward the north (**Figure 6**). As such, the chamber seems windowless when viewed from the west, south, or east. Each flared elevation actually contains a north-facing window that provides light for the interior. An unusual detail of the council chamber is its exterior corner treatment consisting of projecting concrete blocks cut at a diagonal at every other paired row. This element catches light and shadow, giving dynamism to the composition. It is a distinguishing detail that would appear in more elaborate form at the firm's Tramway Gas Station of 1965.

What makes the composition so extraordinary is the design of the freestanding entrance canopies of City Hall and the council chamber. The former is a flat-roofed square of corrugated metal supported by posts; an open circle punctures the center (**Figure 7**). The words "Palm Springs City Hall" are written across the fascia. The single flagpole that originally centered the opening has been replaced by landscaping beneath the oculus. In contrast, the council chamber canopy consists of a circular concrete disk supported by posts with a diameter equal to the void of City Hall's entrance canopy (**Figure 8**). Classical *tholos* buildings of ancient Greece inspired the freestanding disk.² On its fascia are the words "The People Are The City."

² Tholos, also known as a beehive tomb: "a stone-built subterranean tomb of the Mycenaean civilization consisting of a circular chamber covered by a corbeled dome and entered by a walled passage through a hillside." Francis D. K. Ching, *A Visual Dictionary of Architecture* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1995), 248.

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The initial phase of the building's construction was completed in 1952 by the firm of Clark, Frey and Chambers with small additions by the firm continuing until 1956. That year, a 17,000 square foot office addition appeared at the rear northwest portion of the building designed by the firms of Clark, Frey & Chambers, and Williams, Williams & Williams. In 1965, a 9,700 square foot office addition designed by Williams, Clark & Williams was completed at the rear, center portion of the building. In 1972, the firm of Williams and Williams was responsible for a modest 1,710 square foot rear addition. A substantial remodel of City Hall was undertaken in 1984 that included the construction of a 14,000 square foot office building at the rear, northeast half of the original building with a covered walkway connecting the two elements. The architectural firm of Williams, Clark & Williams was responsible for the design of the new building, a noncontributing resource within the property boundary. Although sharing some materials with the original City Hall such as double-stacked terracotta colored concrete block, the new building is differentiated by its full-width east-facing covered walkway with square posts and canopy fascia of a much larger and more prominent thickness than the 1952-1956 portion of City Hall. Other interior rooms at City Hall have been remodeled for new uses.

While cognizant of the noted alterations to and at the rear of the original building, the primary south-facing elevation of Palm Springs City Hall is able to convey its architectural significance because this portion of the property retains the essential physical features associated with the work of Albert Frey. These features include sandblasted double-stacked terracotta-colored concrete block, a flat roof, deep overhangs with fascia of corrugated metal, corrugated blue-colored metal ceilings for walkways and the main entrance canopy, distinctive *brise soleils* of angled metal cylinders, large expanses of glazing, and projecting concrete blocks with corners cut at a diagonal at every other paired row. The building's only historical reference is that of a Greek *tholos*. In sum, as viewed from Tahquitz Canyon Way, the integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, feeling, and association of the original 1952-1956 exterior portion of Palm Springs City Hall remains high.

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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

1952-1956

Significant Dates

1952
1956

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Frey, Albert
Clark, John Porter
Chambers, Robson
Williams, E. Stewart
Williams, Roger

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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.)

Palm Springs City Hall 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 civic architecture associated with the modern movement as interpreted by Albert Frey for the desert environment of the Coachella Valley. In addition, the property meets *The Architecture of Albert Frey* Multiple Property Submission registration requirements for civic buildings in association with the historic context “Desert Modern Design in the Coachella Valley, 1934-1965.” The period of significance corresponds with the building’s original construction in 1952 to the completion of its first phase in 1956.

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

Although a joint venture of Clark, Frey, and Chambers, the design of Palm Springs City Hall is attributed primarily to Albert Frey by scholar Joseph Rosa as noted in the Multiple Property Documentation Form. The building exemplifies the distinctive characteristics of Albert Frey’s approach to modern design in the desert. It is constructed of double-stacked sandblasted terracotta-colored concrete block, has a flat roof, utilizes corrugated metal for the deep eaves and main entrance canopy, and has large windows that are—in this case—distinctively shaded by grids of angled metal cylinders. Applied ornamentation is absent. The sole historical reference is a *tholos* reinterpreted by Frey in concrete as the symbolic entrance to the council chambers. The rear office building designed by the firm of Williams, Clark and Williams in 1984 is a noncontributing resource.

Palm Springs City Hall exemplifies the distinctive characteristics of civic architecture associated with architect Albert Frey. The importance of the building and its significance within the “Desert modern design in the Coachella Valley 1934-1965” historic context are presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form. Palm Springs City Hall is a key example of the civic building property type that maintains sufficient integrity to be readily identifiable as the work of master architect Albert Frey. The property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of civic architecture associated with Albert Frey and is the work of a master architect.

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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 Albert Frey* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

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

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately nine acres

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

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

1. Latitude: 33.823876 Longitude: -116.511383

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

The nominated property is located at 3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, Riverside County, California northwest corner of East Tahquitz Canyon Way and El Cielo Road. The property fronts approximately 530 feet of East Tahquitz Canyon Way. Its legal description is 9.41 ACRES IN POR LOT 16 MB 014/652 SD P APN: 502-150-005.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with Palm Springs City Hall, 3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way.

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 9, 2015

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.

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Photo Log

Name of Property Palm Springs City Hall
City or Vicinity Palm Springs
County Riverside
State California
Photographer Peter Moruzzi
Date Photographed February 2015

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

- 1 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0001.tif
Primary (south) elevation, camera facing northwest
- 2 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0002.tif
Primary (south) elevation, camera facing northeast
- 3 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0003.tif
South elevation, camera facing northwest
- 4 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0004.tif
South elevation beneath main entrance canopy, camera facing northeast
- 5 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0005.tif
South elevation, covered walkway, camera facing west
- 6 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0006.tif
South elevation, council chambers, camera facing north
- 7 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0007.tif
East elevation, council chambers, camera facing southwest
- 8 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0008.tif
Detail, corner of council chambers, camera facing northeast
- 9 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0009.tif
East elevation, camera facing west
- 10 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0010.tif
Rear (north) elevation, camera facing southwest
- 11 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0011.tif
Rear (north) elevation, camera facing southeast

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12 of 12 CA_Riverside County_Frey MPS_Palm Springs City Hall_0012.tif
Interior view, council chambers, camera facing northwest

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Figure 1 Palm Springs sketch map by Albert Frey. City Hall is indicated with arrow.

Figure 2 South elevation, looking northwest, 1958.

Figure 3 South elevation, looking west, 1958.

Figure 4 South elevation, covered walkway, camera facing west, 1958.

Figure 5 South elevation, council chambers, looking north, 1958.

Figure 6 East elevation, looking west, 1958.

Figure 7 South elevation, looking northeast, 1958.

Figure 8 Detail, council chambers entrance, looking southwest, 1958.

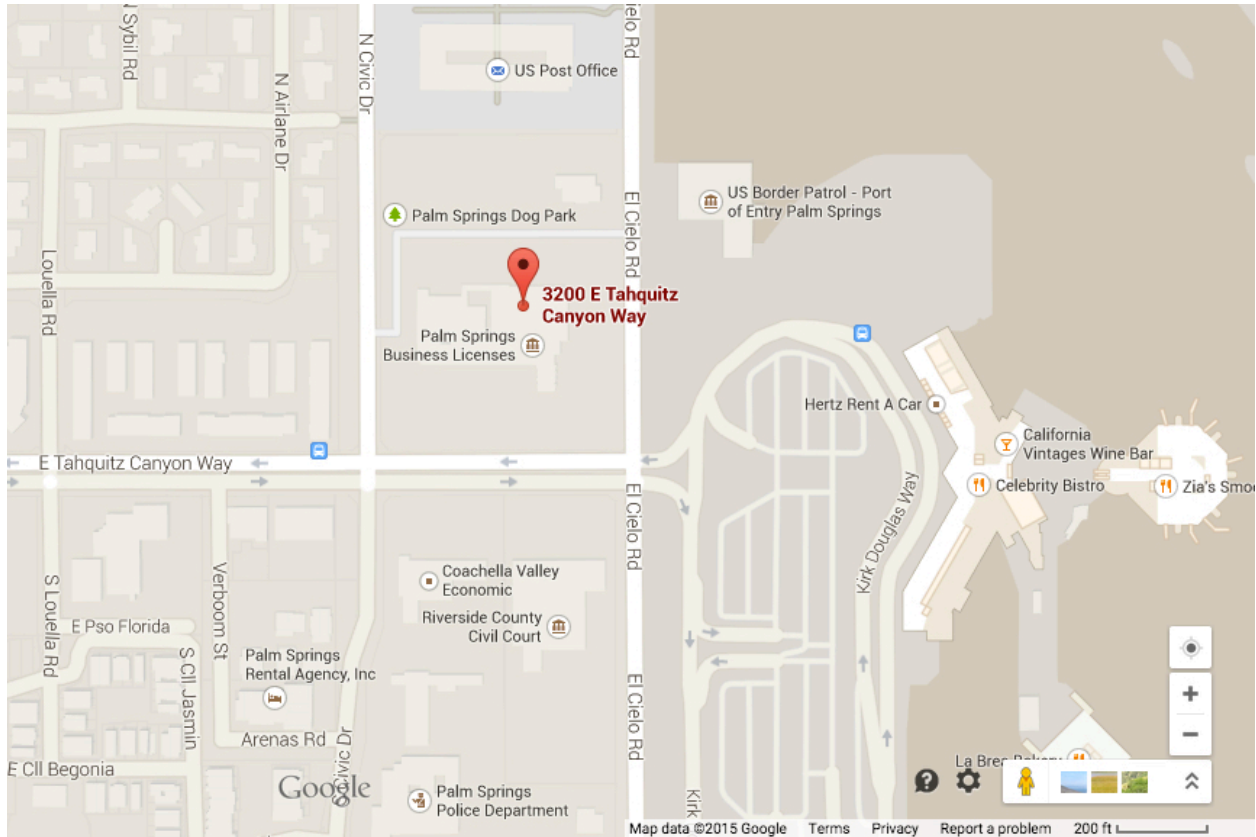
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Location Map

Latitude: 33.823876

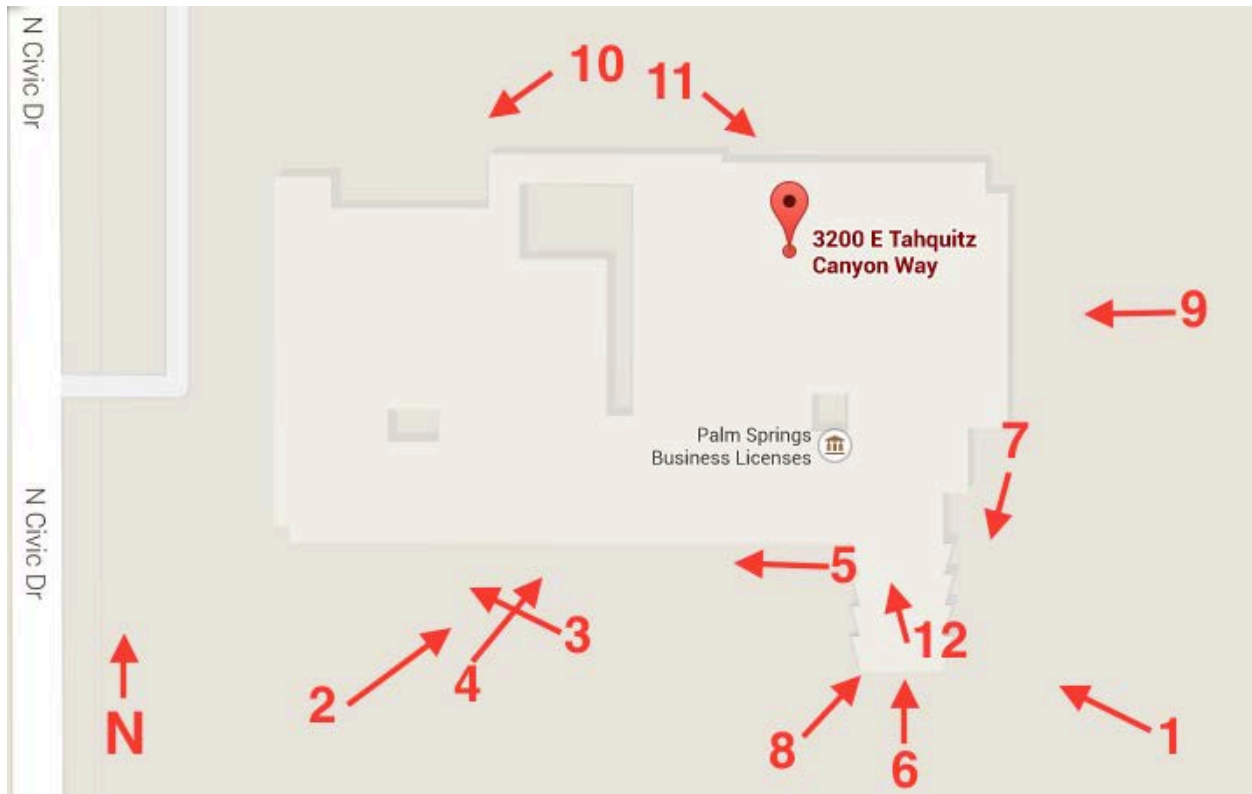
Longitude: -116.511383



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Sketch Map/Photo Key



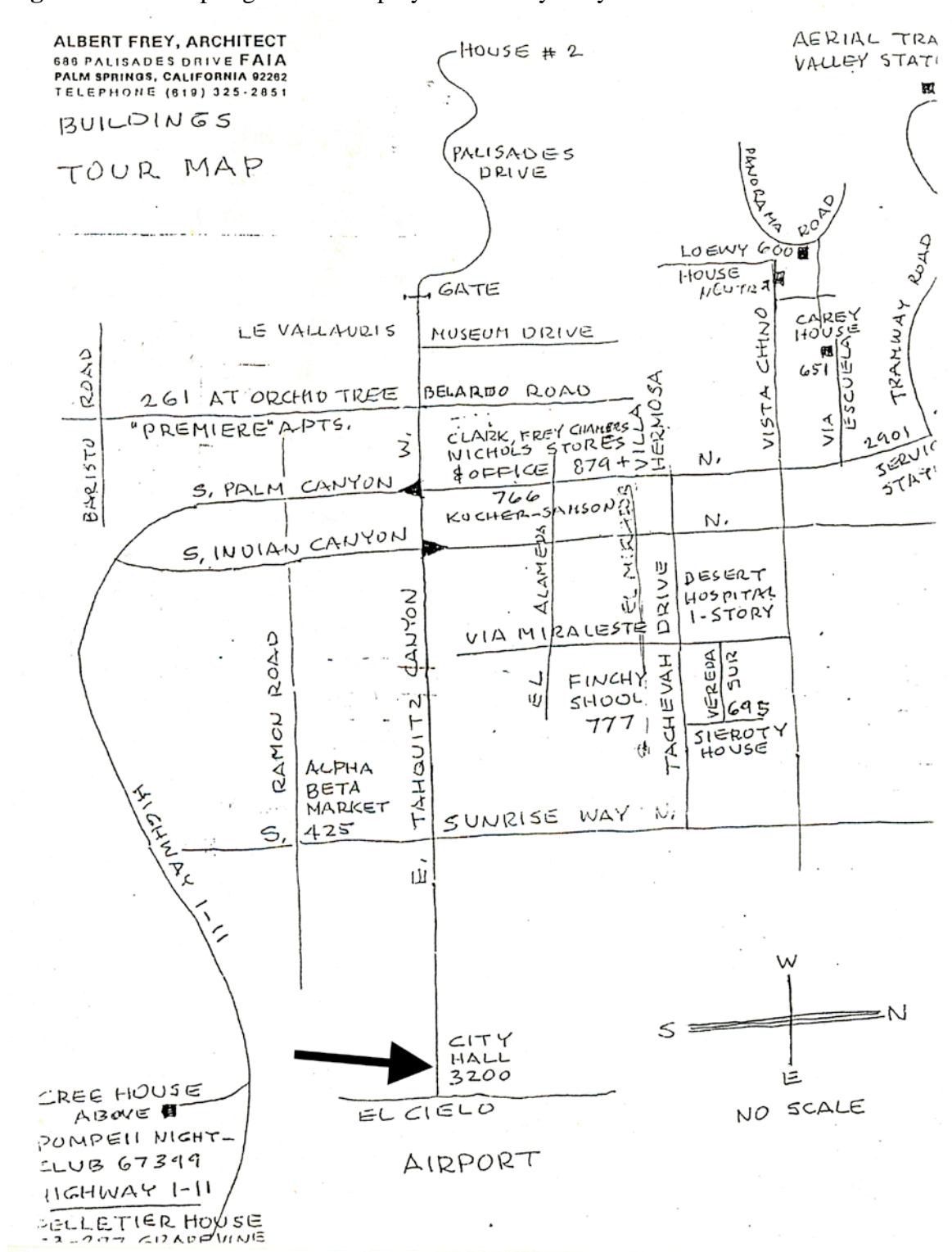
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain 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.

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Figure 1. Palm Springs sketch map by Albert Frey. City Hall is indicated with arrow.



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Figure 2. South elevation, looking northwest, 1958.



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Figure 3. South elevation, looking west, 1958.

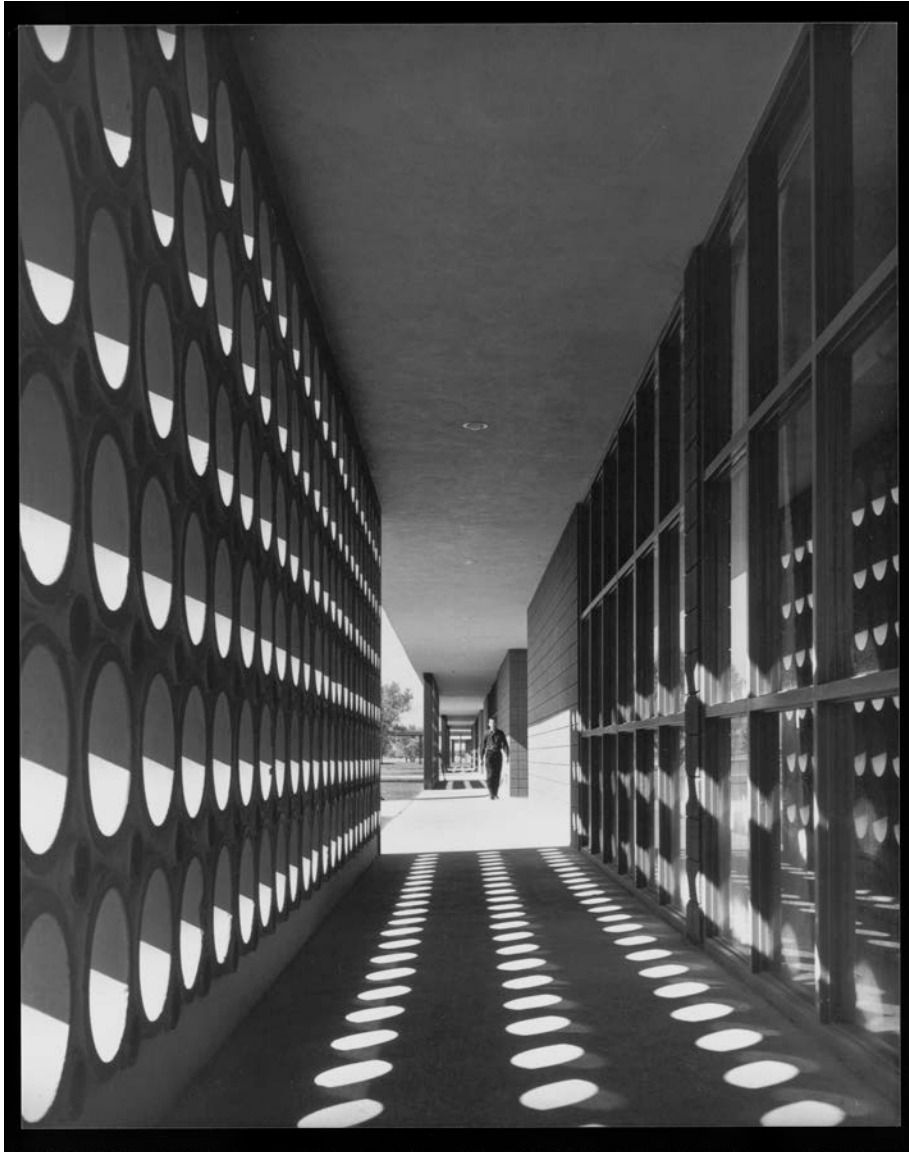


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Figure 4. South elevation, covered walkway, camera facing west, 1958.



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Figure 5. South elevation, council chambers, looking north, 1958.



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Figure 6. East elevation, looking west, 1958.



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Figure 7. South elevation, looking northeast, 1958.



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Figure 8. Detail, council chambers entrance, looking southwest, 1958.



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