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May 18, 2011

The Honorable Steven Pougnet
Mayor of Palm Springs
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Subject: Town & Country Center

Dear Mayor:

Last month I visited Palm Springs as a guest of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation. During the visit, I had the opportunity to tour the grounds of the historic Town & Country Center designed by Paul R. Williams and A. Quincy Jones in 1948.

I am very disappointed that the city of Palm Springs is pursuing a development plan that includes the demolition of such a valuable historic resource. As an architect and preservationist, I have seen many similar properties in far more distressed condition transformed into economically-contributing developments. The Town & Country Center is as relevant today with its mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly courtyard, as it was in 1948.

Additionally, concept of sending more than 50,000 square feet of building debris to a local landfill, the removal and replacement of a historic resource, and the modification of traffic patterns does not seem to be the most advantageous approach to take as an architect, preservationist, urban designer, and LEED-accredited professional. My understanding is that you have embarked on a highly-publicized sustainability campaign, if so; I would encourage you to consult with your Sustainability Commission on this matter.

Finally, the historical importance of Paul R. Williams cannot be overstated. Williams was an immensely talented architect and Palm Springs is fortunate to be the steward of such a fine example of his work. As the American Institute of Architects' first African-American member and fellow, Williams faced enormous social and professional challenges and still inspires architects to this day.

It would be my pleasure to speak with you in greater detail about this structure and the proposed project. If you would like to engage in a conversation, I can be reached at (317) 388-8850.

Sincerely yours,

Sanford E. Garner
President

CC: Palm Springs Preservation Foundation
Attn: Mr. Ron Marshall

Desert Sun
Attn: Ms. Mariecar Mendoza