



The Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board recommended The Alley receive a historic designation. OMAR ORNELAS/THE DESERT SUN

Board: The Alley is historic

By Xochitl Peña
The Desert Sun

PALM SPRINGS — In a rare move, the Palm Springs Historical Site Preservation Board pushed through the historical designation of The Alley despite the owner's opposition.

During its regular meeting Tuesday, the board approved 4-1 a recommendation to the City Council that the store at 343 S. Palm Canyon Drive receive a Class 1 Historic Site designation.

Roxann Ploss voted no because of the owner's concern.

"I'm still very sensitive to the fact that Mr. Marek does not approve this designation," she said.

The owners Nancee and Will Marek did not attend Tuesday's public hearing, but did send an email to Craig Ewing, director of Planning Services, briefly outlining the issue.

"We are not looking to change anything on the building, but don't want to limit our

options by a historical landmark designation," read the email.

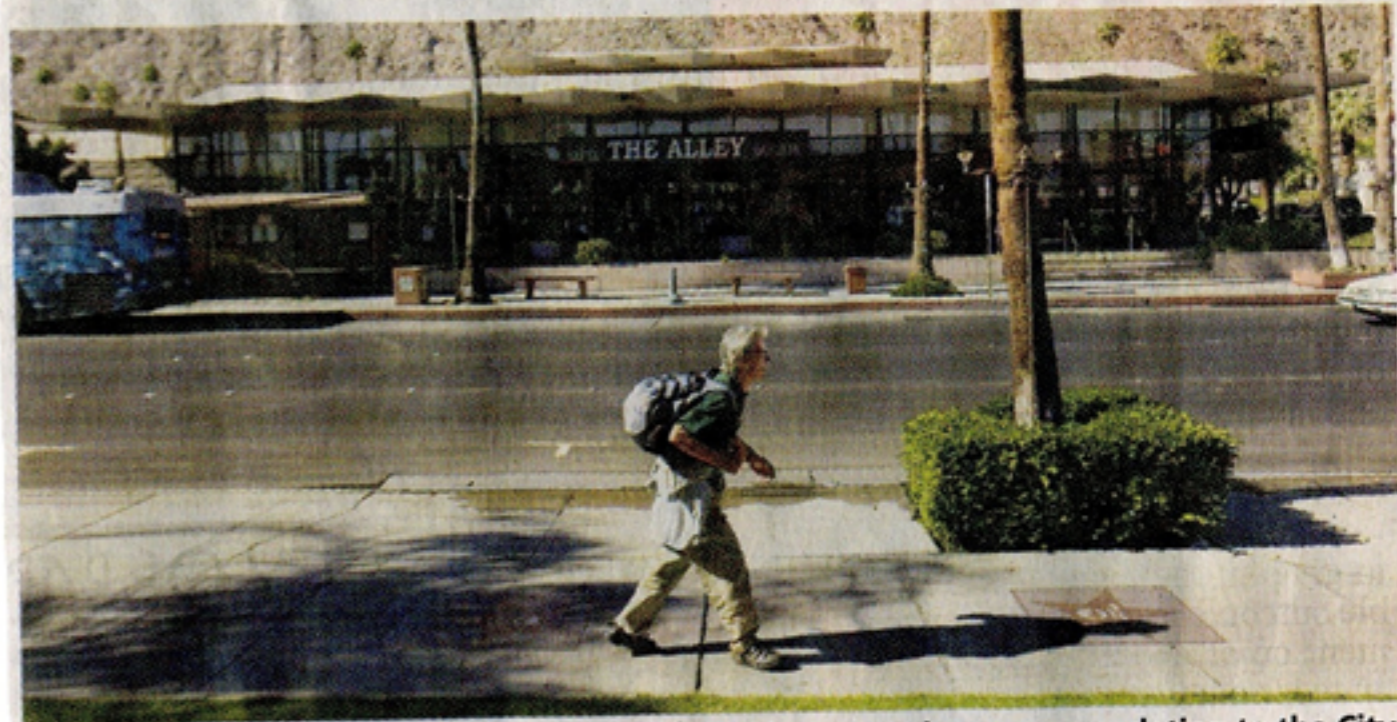
The request for the designation came from the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, a nonprofit organization separate from the board.

In its application for historical designation, the foundation touted the design of the building by Charles Luckman and William Pereira, "nationally prominent practitioners of Modernist architecture."

The building, a former J. W. Robinson's Department Store, is also representative of the "Modern Period" from 1925 to the 1960s.

"One of the city's better known commercial buildings, the structure is a prime, largely intact example of the significant modernist architecture for which Palm Springs is widely known," stated the application prepared by Ronald Marshall, president of the foundation.

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Alley

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While it's "unusual" for the owners of an historic site to oppose the designation, it has happened, said Sheila Grattan, vice chair of the city's preservation board.

Will Marek said his main concern is the designation will affect the property value because it restricts renovation.

"I just think it might depress the value of the property because no one can make any changes," he said.

Tom DeLeeuw, chair of the preservation board, sent the Mareks a letter in September dispelling any myths associated with historical designations.

It let them know that such a designation actually increases a property's value and that exterior changes are allowed, but must go through a design review process first.

Marek said he planned to do a bit more homework on the subject by talking to his lawyer and real estate agent, before it goes to the City Council for final approval.

Since 1984, approximately 70 sites in the city

have been designated as a Class 1 Historic Site.

The board's role is to nominate and recommend to City Council, potential sites and districts for historical designation in order to preserve the city's culture and promote its history.

Grattan said the board doesn't like to go against the owner, but knows there will be some benefit for them as well.

If approved she said people may want to stop by to see the building then decide to shop.

"This is a great marketing tool for The Alley," Grattan said.