

Residents lobby city for historic label

Royal Hawaiian Estates condominiums win consideration for proposed district

BY MARCEL HONORÉ

The Desert Sun

Some 15 residents and preservationists, wearing tropical shirts and leis, implored the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board on Tuesday to help make the Royal Hawaiian Estates condo complex the city's first historic residential district.

The board then voted 7-0 to discuss the matter at its next regular meeting.

Tuesday's vote potentially could reverse the board's 7-0 vote on Sept. 11 that had staff look at the 1960 Polynesian-styled complex as a possible historic site — not as a district as the condo owners originally had hoped.

Craig Ewing, Palm Springs' director of planning services, said there's little

distinction, technically, between a "district" and a "site."

However, some local preservationists hope the city will designate Royal Hawaiian Estates, at the southeast corner of S. Palm Canyon and Twin Palms Drive, as a district to set a precedent.

"We need a successful historic district to show it's a good thing for community pride," Palm Springs Preservation Foundation President Ron Marshall said after the vote Tuesday. "It's really the turning point in the life of a city."

However, there's still a debate among board members whether a condominium complex should be its own district.

"They're talking about making districts smaller than neighborhoods ... It

doesn't make sense to me," board member Sheila Grattan said after the vote. "Once you set that precedent, that would be the direction that people would want to go in."

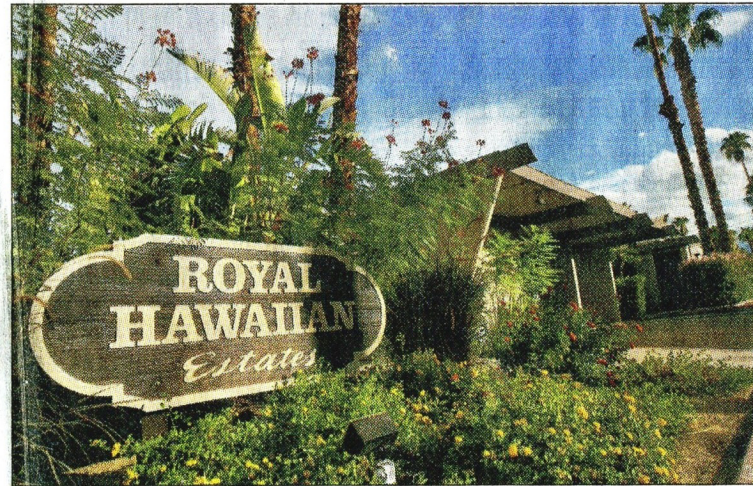
However, Grattan added that she voted in favor because she's "willing to listen to their arguments."

Much of the debate at Tuesday's meeting hinged on who exactly owns and controls the exterior structures at Royal Hawaiian Estates — an issue that's still being investigated.

If the condo building's exterior is found to be owned collectively by all residents, that would make it resemble a single entity, or a "site."

But if the exterior is owned separately, where each resident has a share of the structures, that would point more closely toward "district," officials said.

City officials recently uncovered Palm Spring's only designated historic business district, approved in 1986, in



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Royal Hawaiian Estates at 1774 South Palm Canyon Drive in Palm Springs.

the heart of Palm Springs. Royal Hawaiian Estates would be the city's first residential historic district if approved by the City Council, officials said.

The condo complex was designed by architects Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison with a distinctive "tiki" design throughout the complex, according to its official Web site.