

palm springs

Group against parking plan at city hall

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Local preservationists recently expressed their dismay with a plan to park cars in front of Palm Springs City Hall, saying the move would block views of a “world-renowned modernist icon” that have been undisturbed for decades.

The new parking layout, approved by the City Council this past January, “replaces a view of great architecture with a view of unsightly car grills” Palm Springs Preservation Foundation President Ron Marshall wrote in an Aug. 23 letter to Mayor Steve Pougnet.

“The proposed reconfiguration blocks sight lines that have been in place for more than fifty years,” Marshall wrote.

Visitors presently park to the east and west of City Hall, but not directly in front of its main entrance facing south on Tahquitz Canyon Way — a busy Palm Springs thoroughfare.

The new layout is part of a plan to repair City Hall’s badly cracked parking lot and replace most of its turf with drought-tolerant landscaping. The plan is still in the design phase and won’t go to bid for at least a couple of months, City Manager David Ready said.

City Hall is among Palm Springs’ more than 50 designated historic Class One properties. The building largely was inspired by a 1955 trip that co-architect Albert Frey took around the world, according to a Palm Springs Preservation Foundation booklet on city architecture. The trip renewed Frey’s “understanding of form and function,” it stated.

Marshall’s letter contended the new layout first should have gone before the Historic Site Preservation Board, which reviews proposed changes to the city’s designated historic properties and their sites.

Ready said Wednesday that Marshall’s argument “may very well have merit,” and “there’s no harm” in having the Historic Site Preservation Board review the proposed changes.

However, the final authority to approve the parking layout rests with the City Council, Ready said.