

THE PALM SPRINGS POST

October 5, 2021

Good morning. It's Tuesday, October 5. Expect partly cloudy conditions today after some morning rain. The high will be 90 degrees. First, some news you need to know

...



Construction continues at the new downtown Palm Springs park set to open on October 21.

New park set to open this month. What to name it remains undecided

The palm trees are planted, the grass is growing, and a stage is set at Palm Springs' newest park. One thing missing when it opens later this month, however, will be a name.

The city is planning an October 21 opening ceremony for the [1.5-acre park](#) along North Museum Drive. For now, it is being called "Downtown Park." But if Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (PSPF) efforts pay off, the park will be named after Nellie Coffman.

Coffman is considered the "mother" of Palm Springs. She is credited with being a driving force behind the original tourism industry in the city and helping to fuel the town's initial growth. The new park sits at the site of her Desert Inn, which began as a sanatorium in the early 1900s and later expanded to become a world-famous getaway for Hollywood celebrities. A Cathedral City middle school bearing her name opened in 1980.

If the park were to be named in Coffman's honor, it would be the culmination of a campaign dating back more than four years. During that time, members of the PSPF produced a pamphlet, wrote letters, and held meetings with city officials past and present. They also [commissioned a film](#) about the naming and dedicated a portion of the organization's [website](#) to the effort.

"The Desert Inn is the very reason Palm Springs and the surrounding Coachella Valley came into international consciousness over a century ago," the film begins. "That fame persists today and is directly attributable to the tenacity and fortitude of Nellie Coffman."



Nellie Coffman, known as the Mother of Palm Springs, with her sons. (Photo courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society)

Gary Johns, president of PSPF, said Monday the organization's efforts have so far paid off only in starting conversations about the naming. He remains hopeful the city will now move forward to honor Coffman as it has other female pioneers, such as Francis Stevens and Ruth Hardy, who both have city parks dedicated in their honor.

City Manager Justin Clifton said last week he plans to ask Palm Springs City Council members if they would like to have the issue on their agenda. That move would begin the official process of attaching a name to the park.

At a time when [naming city facilities](#) and [erecting monuments to city leaders](#) is under the microscope, it may be challenging to get anyone at City Hall to commit to naming the new park any time soon. But Johns remains hopeful his organization's efforts will see results.

"We got really good, strong feedback from these meetings," Johns said of conversations held with City Council members during the past four years. "We've kept up the advocacy."

Questions? Comments? Concerns? Reach our newsroom via email at editor@thepalmspringspost.com or visit our social media pages on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).
