



PALM SPRINGS PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

April 8, 2009

The Honorable Steve Pougnet
Mayor of Palm Springs
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Subject: LA SERENA VILLAS

Dear Mayor Pougnet,

It has become clear to us that the only sure path to the eventual restoration of La Serena Villas is the Class 1 historic designation of that property, consistent with the city's Historic Site Preservation Board's original recommendation. Your decision regarding this matter on April the 15th will have a long-term impact on the Tennis Club neighborhood and similar historic properties such as the Orchid Tree Inn.

We were recently apprised of a negative report by LSA Associates (dated December 15, 2008) regarding La Serena Villas. As expected, this "expert" opinion validated the customers' financial interests (in this case the Kor Group and Duet Real Estate LP). Obviously, we could hire an expert who would refute the contentions made by the LSA Associates report and offer an opposing opinion. Taking a more constructive approach, we asked Mr. Lance O'Donnell of o2 Architecture to make an assessment regarding the "restorability" of La Serena Villas. The topic of restorability was the primary focus of previous discussions among council members.

As you know, Mr. O'Donnell's firm specializes in the restoration of historic properties and his professional expertise and integrity are well known to the council. Mr. O'Donnell was also personally involved in the early stages of the La Serena Villas restoration, has intimate knowledge of the property and recently made a thorough visit of the site. Please take time to read the attached assessment of the restorability of the La Serena Villas especially the concluding paragraph which states in part, "***In 2005 this property was well on its way to becoming a fully restored collection of eleven uniquely scaled bungalows—seamlessly integrating into the fabric of the Tennis Club neighborhood. Today there is little that has occurred to prevent anyone, with proper commitment, from completing the rehabilitation and restoration of the property.***"

Sincerely,

Ron Marshall
President

Copy to (w/attachment):

Council Members G. Foat, L. Weigel, R. Hutcheson and C. Mills

City Clerk (Attn: Mr. J. Thompson)

Historic Tennis Club Neighborhood Organization (Attn: Mr. F. Tysen and Mr. B. Wachs)

Advocates for Better Community Development (Attn: Mr. J. Hildner)



April 02, 2009

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Subject: Preliminary Constructability/Restorability Report for the property formally known as "La Serena Villas" 339 S. Belardo Road, Palm Springs, CA.

Dear Mr. Marshall:

At your request o2 Architecture (formally O'Donnell + Escalante Architects [O+E]) has completed a preliminary constructability/restorability report for La Serena Villas" 339 S. Belardo Road, Palm Springs, CA. As the Architect of Record for the renovation of this property--I was hired by The KOR Group in August 2003--it was my direct responsibility to work closely with all involved stakeholders. This included the Owner, Brad Korzen; Owner's representative, Jim Jackson/Charlene Aspray; City Planning Department, Doug Evans and Kathy Marx; City Building and Safety Department, Gary Ford; City Engineering, Marcus Fuller; Tennis Club Neighborhood Association; Interior Designer, Kelly Wearstler (KWID); D.W. Johnston Construction, Gregg Thompson; O+E's Mechanical/Plumbing/Electrical/Structural consultants.

BACKGROUND

This renovation project began with two distinct objectives. First, to assess existing conditions of all building systems (Mechanical/Plumbing/Electrical/Structural). To this end, a "Report of Existing Conditions" (Report) was prepared by the D.W. Johnston Construction. Second, to determine, from an operational and aesthetic standpoint, what were the essential building elements in order to successfully add to the overall Viceroy property. After working for several months on the Report and Renovation Plans we received approval to pull a Demo Permit, from the Planning Department, on January 9th 2004. In this Demo Authorization Letter the City's Planner, Kathy Marx, among other things, stipulated that "...The renovation shall comply with the Secretary of the Interior standards for the treatment of historic structures regarding restorations". This statement was consistent with our teams overall vision and set the tone for the work. The work proceeded with minor lead paint and asbestos remediation, the removal of all interior wall and ceiling finishes, window and door removal and replacement of all necessary underground systems (electrical, gas, water and sewer).

At the completion of demo our team assessed the now exposed foundation, wall/ceiling/roof framing, and the underside of roofing. Working closely with Gary Ford (City's Field Inspector) and our Structural Engineer, Concord Consulting Group, we implemented a building by building rehabilitation plan. Also, architectural, interior and landscape construction documents were completed and approved by the City.

By spring of '05 we had completed one "model" unit and had systematically completed various systems upgrades on all others units. Due to changes in Owner priorities no further work was completed or requested.

EVALUATION

On Tuesday March 31, I requested access and was allowed to visually inspect the property. It was obvious nothing, save boarding up window and door openings and painting, had been done since 2005. The buildings and grounds were almost exactly in the same condition as when we last worked on them. The only exception was two buildings (of the 11 total) where we began roof tile repairs. The repairs were never completed and due to exposure the roofing paper and sheathing have been damaged. The damaged roof area is approximately 5% of the overall area on the two buildings.

The lack of additional damage is directly attributable to the complete absence of running water both inside the building and out and the "substantially intact" exterior cladding and roofs. What's more, the completed unit appears to be in pristine condition and only used as overflow storage of bulky items, such as furniture.

CONCLUSION

In 2005 this property was well on its way to becoming a fully restored collection of eleven uniquely scaled bungalows—seamlessly integrating into the fabric of the Tennis Club neighborhood. Today there is little that has occurred to prevent anyone, with the proper commitment, from completing the rehabilitation and restoration of the property. To be sure, rehabilitation and restoration work of this kind is never without challenges. However, thorough documentation and planning has already occurred leaving little risk of discovering unknowns which can often make the difference between a historic project's success or failure.

Respectfully,



Lance C. O'Donnell, AIA
Principal
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