

## Coffman

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hotel that Mother Coffman built from scratch, had a significant marker on Palm Canyon Drive. And the marker was in the landscaping there at the entrance to Desert Fashion Plaza," Johns told the Palm Springs City Council at its June 17 meeting. "That marker commemorated the Desert Inn, and the role the hotel played in establishing Palm Springs as a resort destination. That marker, along with Nellie Coffman's star, have long been missing."

Coffman, along with other Palm Springs luminaries like Bob Hope, Frank Sinatra and Fred Waring, are part of the Palm Springs Walk of Stars, which honors key figures connected to Palm Springs. Roughly 50 of the stars were located on the sidewalk in front of the Desert Fashion Plaza mall.

Those stars will be either reinstalled or replaced when the new sidewalks in the renovated downtown are complete, city officials say.

"At the moment, no decision has been made specifically where the star will be relocated," said David Ready, Palm Springs City Manager. "Whether in the new area or other downtown locations."

Preservationists like Johns are asking the city to be mindful of these markers and to plan for them as landscape architects and other officials go through the process of designing the landscaping and sidewalks to accompany the new downtown and its central lawn area to become a park and event space.

"Ultimately, yes, this issue will have to be part of the event-center-area planning," Ready agreed.

"As you begin the process of conceptualizing the new downtown event space, I ask you to please include these elements in the design," Johns told the City Council.

The outdoor event space is planned as a roughly 50,000-square-foot public park across the street from the Palm Springs Art Museum. The tentative opening date for the park has been set as fall 2017.

"As you give direction tonight to the planners and designers of the event space, please direct them to include this historical element. And include Nellie Coffman and the Desert Inn into the plan," Johns said.

"If the original star for Nellie Coffman can be found, if the original marker can be located, then they should certainly be reinstalled prominently in our new downtown event space," he continued. "If they can't be located, then a new star and a new marker should be incorporated into the design."

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# Preservationists push for Coffman presence

## Downtown park, event space planned

By Skip Descant  
 The Desert Sun

It's not just the Aluminaire House and the gigantic statue of Marilyn Monroe that should be given a spot in the Palm Springs' new downtown park and event space, preservation-

ists say.

The "Mother of Palm Springs" deserves a spot of prominence, too, said Gary Johns, a vice-president of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation who also chairs the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board.

One of the city's most prominent early residents was Nellie Coffman, who opened the Desert Inn in 1909 at the corner of Tahquitz Canyon Way and Palm Canyon Drive. The early California Spanish Mediterranean-style hotel was the epicenter of life in Palm Springs. The hotel was demolished in 1966. Later, a Bank of America building took up residence on the site.

And today, the corner is part of a massive 14-acre redevelopment of downtown, where the former Desert Fashion Plaza mall was located. A giant crane that is being used to construct a new 155-room hotel is sitting about where Coffman's Desert Inn once operated.

"The Desert Inn hotel ... the

Please see **COFFMAN, 6A**

