

PROTECTING THE PAST

In a city where the past lives, preservation hardly stands in the way of progress. In fact, preservationists suggest close links between past and present and often must dispel the myth that conserving the region's distinctive heritage creates a bad environment for local business. Architecture and design enthusiasts around the world embrace the style that flowered here half a century ago — inspiring cultural and architectural tourism that brings media attention and tourist dollars. “The key,” says Palm

historically significant structures under threat and working to counter those threats,” he says. “We are now much more proactive in our approach.”

The designation of Palm Springs' first neighborhood historic district, Royal Hawaiian Estates — a 12-building, 40-unit, Polynesian-inspired complex designed by Wexler & Harrison in 1960 — provides a case in point. In addition to helping apply for historic district status, the foundation authorized grants of \$1,200 and \$500 to begin the restoration of architectural elements,

Plans to renovate the Welwood Murray Memorial Library, a cultural landmark designed by John Porter Clark and completed in 1940, were returned to Palm Springs' architectural advisory committee after gaining input from preservationists.

In light of similar input, the city is rethinking a plan to reconfigure the parking lot and hardscape of the Albert Frey-designed City Hall, one of the few city government buildings of the era serving its original purpose. “We are fortunate to have a Historical Site Preservation Board



From the restoration of iconic structures to the revitalization of a Salton Sea legend, the valley puts stock in its rich heritage.

Springs Mayor Steve Pougnet, “is to strike a balance between preserving that which makes our community unique and allowing for continued growth and development.”

The Coachella Valley has long had a generally preservation-sensitive community, but only recently has the movement developed a clear direction, says Ron Marshall, president of the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation. “Too often, preservation is reactive — identifying

called tiki apexes, which were removed from the property's outrigger beams in the 1990s. “The restoration of these elements is an apt symbol of our mission to go on the offensive and to actively promote the return of what has been lost,” Marshall says.

As interest in preservation gains momentum (the foundation's membership has grown from 200 to 1,200 over the past two years), Marshall says the group deepens its relationship — and, arguably, clout — with city officials.

that works very hard,” Pougnet says, “and a group of dedicated preservationists that, while I may not agree with them in every case, I deeply respect.”

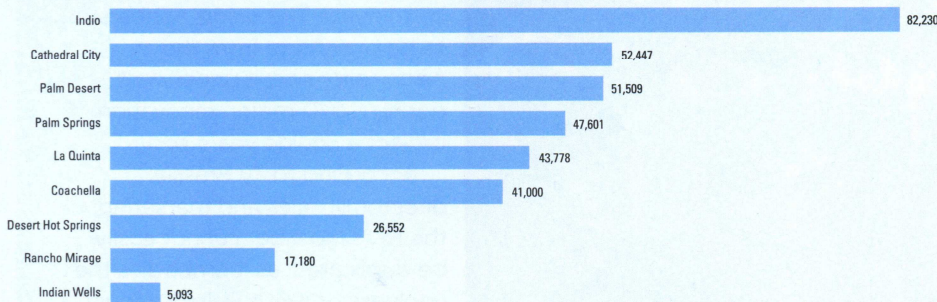
Some of the most impressive preservation initiatives unfold beyond Palm Springs' borders. Sunnylands, the pink-walled Walter Annenberg estate in Rancho Mirage, has begun major renovations, as well as an expansion with the Annenberg Center scheduled to welcome visitors in November 2011. The nine-hole golf course, completed in 1965, and the A. Quincy Jones-designed house, finished a year later, are being restored with great sensitivity to the original intent while infusing sustainable features. The new center, nine-acre garden, and solar farm will undoubtedly draw tourists from around the world.

And as far away as the Salton Sea, the nearly \$4 million resurrection of Frey's North Shore Yacht Club is a testament to architecture's enduring power to re-energize a community. The club, which reopened on May 1, now serves as a museum, senior center, and community center.

— Alex Altman

POPULATION BY CITY

Coachella Valley Communities, 2009



Source: CA Department of Finance, U.S. Census Bureau