

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Property

\_\_\_\_\_  
County and State

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of multiple property listing (if applicable)

## SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 15000645

Date Listed: 9/28/2015

Property Name: Tramway Gas Station (The Architecture of Albert Frey MPS)

County: Riverside

State: CA

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

9-28-2015  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 6:    Historic Function:    COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store  
                  Current Function:    RECREATION AND CULTURE: Other: visitors center

\_\_\_\_\_  
The California State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

### DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file**
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**
- SHPO**

645

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

RECEIVED 2380  
AUG 14 2015

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Tramway Gas Station  
Other names/site number: Palm Springs Visitors Center  
Name of related multiple property listing:  
The Architecture of Albert Frey  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service


### 2. Location

Street & number: 2901 North Palm Canyon Drive  
City or town: Palm Springs State: CA County: Riverside  
Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets  
the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic  
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I  
recommend that this property be considered significant at the following  
level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local  
Applicable National Register Criteria:  
X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

	<u>13 August 2015</u>
<b>Julianne Polanco/State Historic Preservation Officer</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>California State Office of Historic Preservation</u>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Title :</b>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

  
Signature of the Keeper

9-28-2015  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE

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**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL: steel, aluminum, CONCRETE  
BLOCK, GLASS

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Tramway Gas Station is located at the northwest entrance to Palm Springs on Highway 111. It is a one-story former gasoline service station. Ovoid in plan, a prominent ribbed metal hyperbolic paraboloid shelters the desert modern building, which is constructed of sandblasted terracotta-colored concrete block. Floor to ceiling plate glass windows are on the northwest and southeast elevations. Closed for many years, it was rehabilitated for use initially as a sculpture gallery and later as the Palm Springs Visitors Center. It is in excellent condition. Although the interior has been gutted and new plate glass inserted into the primary elevation and former service bay openings, the overall building with its original roof and concrete block construction exhibits historic integrity sufficient to convey its significance. The noncontributing building is a freestanding restroom facility located near the southwest corner of the property. It is clearly differentiated from the Tramway Gas Station by its panels of frosted glass, clerestory windows, and more modern appearance.

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### Narrative Description

Since 1965, the first major building one encounters when entering Palm Springs from Highway 111 is the Tramway Gas Station. For the building, Frey chose a roof form that would come to



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symbolize mid-century design, the hyperbolic paraboloid (**Figure 2**). The original program for the service station was minimal: shelter for three gasoline pumps, an office, two storage rooms, a pair of restrooms, and three automobile service bays. These requirements were elegantly met in a compact ovoid building covered by a dramatically soaring roof.

Constructed of ribbed galvanized steel panels resting on steel beams, the roof is held aloft by only six steel pipe posts (**Figure 3**). The roof's downward sloping edges are anchored to stepped, triangular piers built of Frey's trademark sandblasted terracotta-colored concrete block. For the building, the concrete block is stacked so that every two rows are aligned giving the appearance of offset squares. As with Palm Springs City Hall, the gas station's piers feature corner treatments where the concrete blocks are cut at a diagonal at every other paired row. Floor to ceiling plate glass windows and doors face where the gasoline pumps were once located; plate glass faces the mountains at the rear.

The property was initially a gasoline service station for the Humble Oil Company with eight fuel pumps beneath the front canopy and three service bays at the rear. In 1987, the property was known as Express Gas. It was A & D Service in 1989 and Tramway Texaco in 1991. The property was then sold to a new buyer who closed the business and shuttered the building. It remained closed for many years. In 1999, the building was rehabilitated for use as a sculpture gallery, transforming to its use as the Palm Springs Visitors Center a few years later. In converting to its new uses, the interior was entirely gutted, including the removal of automobile service bays, small office, storage rooms, and restrooms. Plate glass windows were inserted into the service bay openings, a new concrete floor was poured, interior partitions were installed, and small storage areas delineated. A pair of new metal-framed glazed entry doors flanked by plate glass windows punctuates the primary (southeast) elevation. The former gasoline pumps were removed and replaced by landscaping. A solid wall now surrounds the property and a separate noncontributing restroom building was constructed near the southwest corner of the property. New concrete paths lead from the surface parking area to the restrooms and visitors center.

The building still serves as a landmark at the edge of the desert and expresses the pioneering spirit of this resort community. It is an emblematic billboard for Palm Springs modern design. As relates to integrity, aspects of the building's design, materials, workmanship, and association have been affected given that the former service station has been adaptively reused and now houses the Palm Springs Visitors Center. Following its rehabilitation, the subject building is able to convey its architectural significance because the property retains the characteristic physical features associated with the work of Albert Frey: sandblasted terracotta-colored concrete block stacked so that every two rows are aligned giving the appearance of offset squares, concrete block corner treatments cut at a diagonal at every other paired row, and floor to ceiling plate glass windows and doors. In addition, the soaring parabolic corrugated metal roof is a design element never repeated again by Frey. As such, the building, in its desert setting, continues to evoke the feeling of an engineering marvel associated with architect Albert Frey in its original location.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1965  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1965  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Frey, Albert  
Chambers, Robson  
\_\_\_\_\_



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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Tramway Gas Station is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance in the area of Architecture. The property embodies the distinctive characteristics of commercial architecture associated with the modern movement as interpreted by Albert Frey for the desert environment of the Coachella Valley. In addition, the property meets *The Architecture of Albert Frey* Multiple Property Submission registration requirements for commercial buildings in association with the historic context “Desert Modern Design in the Coachella Valley, 1934-1965.” The period of significance corresponds with the building’s date of construction, 1965.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

In his monograph on Albert Frey, scholar Joseph Rosa compiled a list of buildings and projects that Frey was responsible for designing as a firm partner or employee. The list does not include all of the works of his partnerships with Clark and Chambers; it includes only those works that were designed by Frey and not buildings designed by his partners. In the case of the Tramway Gas Station, Rosa writes in parentheses that the property was designed with Robson Chambers. Notwithstanding the collaborative design credit, the Tramway Gas Station exhibits the key architectural elements Rosa associates with Albert Frey. These include its sandblasted terracotta-colored concrete block construction, stacked arrangement of concrete blocks and diagonally cut corner treatments, ribbed metal roof, and large plate glass windows. Its hyperbolic paraboloid roof is unique, a form not repeated by Frey in any other of the buildings that he designed in his career.

Tramway Gas Station exemplifies the distinctive characteristics of commercial buildings associated with architect Albert Frey. The importance of the building and its significance within the “Desert modern design in the Coachella Valley 1934-1965” historic context are presented in the Multiple Property Documentation Form. Tramway Gas Station is a key example of the commercial building property type that maintains sufficient integrity to be readily identifiable as the work of master architect Albert Frey, in this case, in collaboration with Robson Chambers. The property meets National Register Criterion C because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of commercial architecture associated with Albert Frey and is the work of a master architect.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

As indicated in *The Architecture of Albert Frey* Multiple Property Documentation Form.

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University of California, Santa Barbara
- Other

Name of repository: Palm Springs Art Museum

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property one acre

### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 33.858367

Longitude: -116.558177

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The nominated property is located at 2901 North Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, Riverside County, California on the northwest corner of State Highway 111 and Tramway Road. The property fronts approximately 210 feet of State Highway 111 and 220 feet of Tramway Road. Its legal description is .97 ACRES M/L IN POR NW 1/4 OF SEC 3 T4S. APN: 504-040-001.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Tramway Gas Station, 2901 North Palm Canyon Drive.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Peter Moruzzi/Architectural Historian  
organization: \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number: 2018 Griffith Park Blvd., #114  
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90039  
e-mail petermoruzzi@gmail.com  
telephone: 213-706-0151  
date: December 30, 2014

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

**Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

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## Photo Log

Name of Property      Tramway Gas Station  
City or Vicinity      Palm Springs  
County                  Riverside  
State                    California  
Photographer          Peter Moruzzi  
Date Photographed    February 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Trampway Gas Station\_0001.tif  
South elevation, camera facing north
- 2 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Trampway Gas Station\_0002.tif  
Southeast elevation, restroom building on left, camera facing northwest
- 3 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Trampway Gas Station\_0003.tif  
Northeast elevation, camera facing southwest
- 4 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Trampway Gas Station\_0004.tif  
North elevation, camera facing south
- 5 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Trampway Gas Station\_0005.tif  
Northwest elevation, camera facing southeast
- 6 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Trampway Gas Station\_0006.tif  
Main entrance, east elevation beneath canopy, camera facing southwest
- 7 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Trampway Gas Station\_0007.tif  
Detail, concrete block design, south corner, camera facing northwest
- 8 of 8      CA\_Riverside County\_Frey MPS\_Trampway Gas Station\_0008.tif  
Interior view, camera facing northwest

## Index of Figures

- Figure 1    Palm Springs sketch map by Albert Frey. Tramway Gas Station is indicated with arrow.
- Figure 2    Southeast elevation, looking northwest, circa 1966.
- Figure 3    Northeast elevation, looking south, circa 1966.

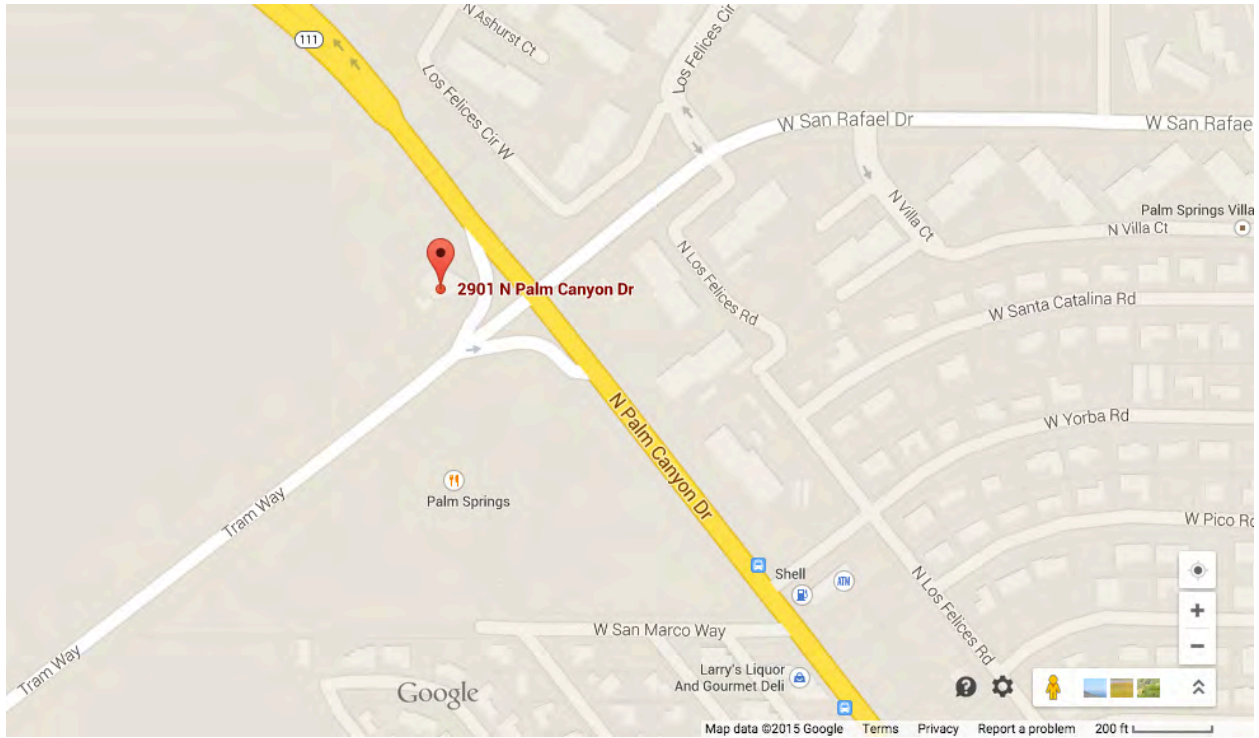
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### Location Map

Latitude: 33.858367

Longitude: -116.558177



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### Sketch Map/Photo Key



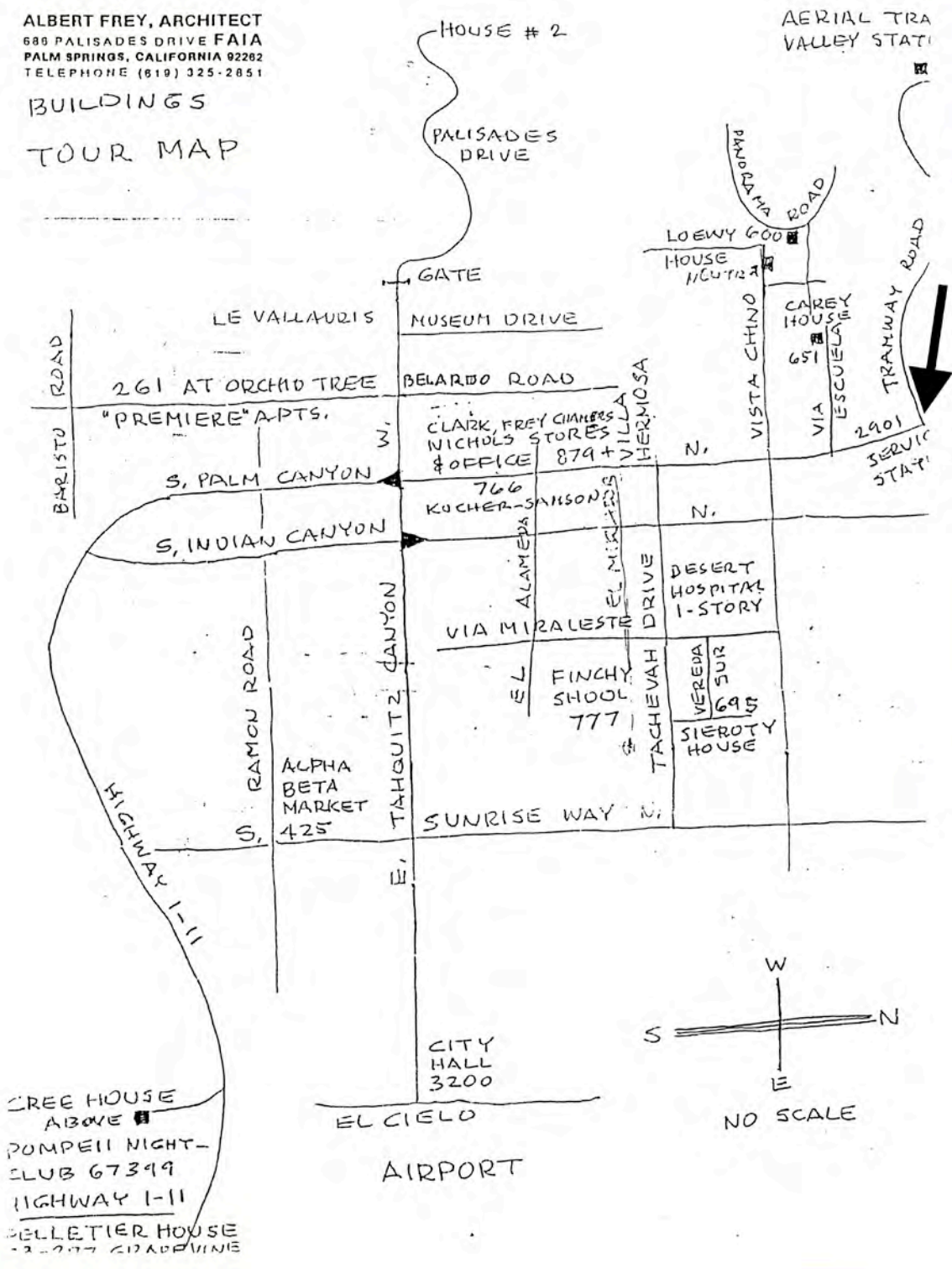
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Figure 1. Palm Springs sketch map by Albert Frey. Tramway Gas Station indicated with arrow.





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**Figure 2.** Southeast elevation, looking northwest, circa 1966. Photo courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.



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**Figure 3.** Northeast elevation, looking south, circa 1966. Photo courtesy Palm Springs Historical Society.







PROCESSES  
MANAGEMENT  
SYSTEMS





























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Visitor Information



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Tramway Gas Station

MULTIPLE NAME: Architecture of Albert Frey MPS

STATE & COUNTY: CALIFORNIA, Riverside

DATE RECEIVED: 8/14/15      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/09/15  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/24/15      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/29/15  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000645

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT       RETURN       REJECT      9-28-2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Meets Registration Requirements*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept C

REVIEWER J. Gabbart

DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

1725 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, Suite 100  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816-7100  
(916) 445-7000 Fax: (916) 445-7053  
calshpo@parks.ca.gov  
www.ohp.parks.ca.gov

**RECEIVED 2280**

AUG 14 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

August 13, 2015

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Fl.  
Washington D.C. 20005

Subject: **The Architecture of Albert Frey MPS  
Riverside County, California  
National Register of Historic Places Nominations**

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find **The Architecture of Albert Frey Multiple Property Submission** consisting of the Multiple Property Documentation Form and ten associated individual nominations to the National Register of Historic Places. On August 7 in Sacramento, California, the California State Historical Resources Commission unanimously approved the MPS and found ten individual properties eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance.

**The enclosed eight disks contain the true and correct copy of the nominations for THE ARCHITECTURE OF ALBERT FREY MULTIPLE PROPERTY SUBMISSION. Disk 1 includes the Multiple Property Documentation Form, correspondence, and ten associated individual nominations for Carey House, Fire Station #1, Frey House II, Kocher-Samson Building, Loewy House, North Shore Yacht Club, Palm Springs City Hall, Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station, Sieroty House, and Tramway Gas Station to the National Register of Historic Places. Disks 2 through 8 contain photographs in this same order.**

The resources are eligible under Criterion C because they embody the distinctive characteristics of residential, commercial, civic, or religious architecture associated with architect Albert Frey. Frey's architecture helped define desert modernism in the Coachella Valley. Desert modernism is the adaptation of modern architectural concepts to the climatic extremes of the Coachella Valley while embracing the area's unique natural setting of mountains and open vistas. The geographical area of the MPS is Riverside County, California.

The first ten properties nominated under this MPS are as follows, in alphabetical order. Period of significance is the date of construction, indicated in parentheses.

- Carey House: 651 West Via Escuela, Palm Springs (1956)
- Fire Station #1: 227 North Indian Avenue, Palm Springs (1955)
- Frey House II: 686 Palisades Drive, Palm Springs (1964)
- Kocher-Samson Building: 766 North Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs (1934)
- Loewy House: 600 Panorama Road, Palm Springs (1946)

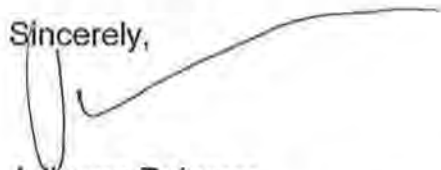
- North Shore Yacht Club: 99-155 Sea View Drive, Mecca (1958)
- Palm Springs City Hall: 3200 East Tahquitz Way, Palm Springs (1952-1956)
- Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station: 1 Tram Way, Palm Springs (1963)
- Sieroty House: 695 East Vereda Sur, Palm Springs (1941)
- Tramway Gas Station: 2901 North Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs (1965)

The MPS, including the MPDF and ten associated properties, is nominated on behalf of a group of private individuals. In its role as representative of the City of Palm Springs, a Certified Local Government, the Historic Site Preservation Board did not comment on the nomination.

Eleven letters of support were received, including a letter from the City of Palm Springs in support of the three city-owned properties. A letter of objection is on file from Mount San Jacinto Winter Park Authority, owner of Palm Springs Tramway Valley Station and governing body of Palm Springs Aerial Tramway. The Authority, a public agency and public corporation of the State of California, was created by the Mount San Jacinto Winter Park Authority Act Ch.1040 of the Statutes of 1945, as amended by Ch.70 of the Statutes of 1947 and Ch.1004 of the Statutes of 1951, of the State of California.

If you have any questions regarding this nomination, please contact Amy Crain of my staff at (916) 445-7009.

Sincerely,



Julianne Polanco  
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure