



August 12, 2008

Mr. Larry Hochanadel, Chair
City of Palm Springs Planning Commission
3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Dear Chairman Hochanadel,

I would like to express the foundation's deep concern about an action before the city's Planning Commission regarding the Santa Fe Savings and Loan Building (1957).

Firstly, the Baristo Lofts project, in its latest four-story incarnation, looms over the Santa Fe bank building diminishing and adversely affecting that building's intended context.

Secondly, while we have no issue with "adaptively re-using" the Santa Fe bank building as a restaurant, we do object to the proposal to add outdoor seating. The most striking architectural feature of this modernist building is that it appears to "float" above the ground. The current outdoor seating design ties the building to the ground with a giant slab of concrete. We can only conclude that the developer is using the threat of marginalizing this important architectural feature as a bargaining chip to stampede the commission into approving the less offensive portions of the project.

Finally, it was irresponsible and irregular of the previous city council to tie the Class I historic designation of the Santa Fe bank building to the Baristo Lofts project. That action was wholly for the benefit of the developer and not for the citizens of Palm Springs. The public outcry over the council's decision is well-documented and we are now faced with a situation where this important building is effectively being held "hostage" to the changing whims of a developer.

Short of rejecting the proposal outright, we recommend the proposed taller structure allow space and "breathing room" in deference to the Santa Fe bank pavilion. A sufficient distance between structures is critical, as is a profile for the Baristo Lofts building that steps away from the Santa Fe bank building. We also ask that the Planning Commission recommend to the city council that the Class I historic designation of the Santa Fe bank building be allowed to proceed unfettered on its' own merits.

In 2005, as part of the foundation's education program, I had the privilege to release a tribute journal to architect E. Stewart Williams. Understandably, we have a special interest in ensuring that this building remains intact as one of the city's most valuable architectural resources. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or foundation board member Mr. Ron Marshall at (760) 808-6988 or email pspfrom@yahoo.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "William Kopelk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

William Kopelk, President
Palm Springs Preservation Foundation