

The Donald and Marilynn Wexler Residence, 1955

1272 East Verbena Drive

Palm Springs, CA 92262

Nomination Application For

City of Palm Springs

Class 1 Historic Resource



Prepared by

Steven Keylon

For the

Palm Springs Preservation

Foundation

FINAL August 5, 2021

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Cover illustration: Photograph of the Wexler Residence taken for *Los Angeles Times Home* magazine, 1958.
Photo by Richard Fish.

CLASS 1 HISTORIC RESOURCE NOMINATION

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INTRODUCTION

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation (PSPF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is “to educate and promote public awareness of the importance of preserving the historical resources and architecture of the city of Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley area.” In March 2021, the PSPF board of directors assigned the task of writing the Donald and Marilynn Wexler Residence Class 1 Historic Resource nomination to Steven Keylon. The owner’s letter of support is Appendix One.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Wexler Residence is a house architect Donald Wexler designed for himself and his wife Marilynn in 1954 and completed in 1955. The Wexler Residence is an important example of a custom modernist structure, designed by a master architect for himself and his family, and exhibits numerous character-defining features that place it within the historical context of Palm Springs Modern period.

DESIGNATION CRITERIA:

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 1 Historic Resource: Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070(C,1): A site, structure, building, or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided both of the following findings are met. Refer to the U.S. Department of the Interior National Register Bulletin “How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation” of potentially historic resources for further information.

The Wexler Residence has not previously been evaluated for Class 1 Historic Resource eligibility.

A summary of the evaluation contained in this nomination is as follows:

8.05.070 (C,1,a) paragraphs 2, 3, 4 & 5: The Wexler Residence is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses numerous distinctive characteristics that make up the modernist style, including lack of ornamentation, horizontality, expansive amounts of glass, use of natural materials, transparency, etc. As a residence artfully designed by architect Donald Wexler for himself and his family, it rises to the level of work by a master architect with high artistic values. Although minor modifications occurred over time, many were done by Wexler himself, or with his help, and it maintains the vocabulary and overall design intent of the original design created by a Master Architect.

Therefore, for its distinctive characteristics, as the work of a Master, and for its high artistic values, the Wexler Residence qualifies as a Class 1 Historic Resource under Criteria 2, 3, 4 & 5.

SUMMARY: This evaluation finds the Wexler Residence eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Resource under 8.05.070 (C,1,a) paragraphs 3, 4 & 5 of the local ordinance's seven criteria. Additionally, the Wexler Residence retains a high degree of architectural integrity (see Section 7, "Integrity Analysis").



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services

3200 East Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262

Phone 760 323 8245

Fax 760 322 8360

Historic Preservation Officer 760 322 8364 x8786

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION (HRD)

WHEN TO USE THIS APPLICATION:

Use this application if you are seeking Class 1 or Class 2 historic designation for a property or parcel or for historic district applications.

Use the MINOR ARCHITECTURAL APPLICATION FORM (MAA) if you are seeking approval for alterations to Class 1, Class 2, Class 3 or Class 4 historic sites. (Contact the Planning Department if you are unsure of the classification of your property.)

WHO MAY APPLY:

Any individual or organization may apply to the City for consideration of a request for historic resource designation. Applications must be signed and notarized by the owner(s) of record of the site, structure, building or object for which the designation is sought.

PROCEDURE:

1. For proposed historic sites or resources: Refer to Palm Springs Municipal Code ("PSMC") Section 8.05.070 for *Procedures and Criteria for the Designation of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources*. Visit: [www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05 "Historic Preservation"](http://www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/title_8/section_8.05_Historic_Preservation).
2. For proposed historic districts: Refer to Municipal Code Section 8.05.090 for *Procedures and Criteria for Designation of Historic Districts*. Visit: [www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/Title_8/section_8.05 "Historic Preservation"](http://www.palmspringsca.gov/government/departments/planning/municipal_code/Title_8/section_8.05_Historic_Preservation).
3. Complete all parts of the application and include related reports, mailing labels and back up information in support of the application. Denote "NA" for any line item that is not applicable.
4. Once the application is complete, contact the Planning Department and schedule a pre-application conference with the City's Historic Preservation Officer ("HPO").
5. Submit the completed application and related materials to the Department of Planning Services. A Planning Department case number will be assigned to the application.
6. Applications for historic site / resource or historic district designation are evaluated by staff in the City Planning Department who will prepare the application for consideration by the City's Historic Site Preservation Board ("HSPB") at a noticed public hearing. Applicants should plan on attending the hearing. City staff will schedule site visits for members of the HSPB to become familiar with the site prior to the public hearing. (Exterior review only, interiors are not subject to HSPB review.)
7. At the public hearing, the HSPB will evaluate the application and make a recommendation for City Council action. The City Council will consider the application and the HSPB's recommendation at a second noticed public hearing. The applicant should again attend that hearing.
8. The final action of the City Council to designate will be recorded on the property title with the County Recorder's office.

FOR HISTORIC SITE / RESOURCE APPLICATIONS. SEE CHECKLIST FOR CLASS 1 AND 2.
FOR HISTORIC DISTRICT APPLICATIONS. SEE CHECKLIST FOR HISTORIC DISTRICTS.



CITY OF PALM SPRINGS

Department of Planning Services
3200 E. Tahquitz Canyon Way, Palm Springs, CA 92262
Tel 760-323-8245 – FAX 760-322-8360

For Staff Use Only

Case Number: _____

In-Take Planner: _____

Date: _____

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION PLANNING / ZONING GENERAL INFORMATION FORM

TO THE APPLICANT: Complete all parts of this application. Denote "NA" for lines that are not applicable.

Project Information:

Applicant's Name: Palm Springs Preservation Foundation

Applicant's Address: 1775 East Palm Canyon Drive, Suite 110-195, Palm Springs, CA 92264

Site Address: 1272 East Verbena Drive APN: 507253009

Phone #: (760) 837-7117 Email: srk1941@gmail.com

Zone: _____ GP: _____ Section/Township/Range: _____/X/X

Description of Project:

The Wexler Residence was designed by architect Donald Wexler for himself and his family in 1954, and it was completed in 1955.

Note: For Historic District applications: on a separate page provide a list of all sites/parcels within the proposed historic district boundaries with the same information listed above.

Is the project located on the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians Reservation? Yes/No: _____
(Refer to the Land Status Map under Tribal Resources on the Planning Department home page)

Construction Date: 1955 – ☐ Estimated ☒ Actual (denote source, i.e. building permits)

Architect: Donald Wexler

Original Owner: Donald and Marilyn Wexler

Common/Historic Name of Property: The Wexler Residence

Other historic associations: N/A

Attach to this application any information, photos, drawings, newspaper articles, reports, studies, or other materials to fully describe the characteristics or conditions that support this application for historic designation.

Architectural Style: Mid-Century Modern/Post-and-Beam

Refer to the Architectural Styles chapter of Citywide Historic Context Statement, under Historic Resources on the Planning Department Home Page: www.palmspringsca.gov.

HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION APPLICATION (CONT.)

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 1 Historic Resource:

Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070(C,1): A site, structure, building, or object may be designated as a Class 1 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided both of the following findings are met. Refer to the US Department of the Interior National Register Bulletin "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" of potentially historic resources for further information.

Provide a written description of how the site qualifies as a historic resource per the following Findings. Please provide answers on a separate sheet or report.

FINDING 1: The site, structure, building or object exhibits exceptional historic significance and meets one or more of the criteria listed below:

- a. The resource is associated with events that have made a meaningful contribution to the nation, state, or community. ¹
- b. The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history.
- c. The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local history.
- d. The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction.
- e. The resource presents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age, or that possess high artistic value.
- f. The resource represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction, as used in evaluating applications for designation of historic districts, for parcels on which more than one entity exists.

FINDING 2: The site, structure, building or object retains one or more of the following aspects of integrity, as established in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. Provide a written description for each element as listed: Design; Materials; Workmanship; Location; Setting; Feeling; and Association. ²

Criteria for the Designation of a Class 2 Historic Resource:

Pursuant to the Palm Springs Municipal Code (PSMC) Section 8.05.070(C,1): A site, structure, building, or object may be designated as a Class 2 historic resource or a Contributing Resource in a proposed historic district by the Palm Springs City Council, provided the site, structure, building, or object exhibits significance and meets one or more of the criteria listed in Finding 1 above. A Class 2 historic resource is not required to meet the findings for integrity as described in Finding 2.

Criteria and Findings for Designation of Historic Districts:

In addition to the criteria listed in Finding 1, to be considered for designation as a Historic District, a defined area must:

- a. Contain contributing resources on a majority of the sites within the proposed district which individually meet the criteria in Finding 1. The defined area may include other structures, buildings, or archaeological sites which contribute generally to the overall distinctive character of the area and are related historically or visually by plan or physical development. *Provide a separate list by address and Assessor Parcel Number (APN) for each site/parcel that meets the criteria outlined in Finding 1.*
- b. Identify non-contributing properties or vacant parcels to the extent necessary to establish appropriate, logical or convenient boundaries. *Provide a separate list by address and APN number for each site/parcel within the proposed historic district that is considered non-contributing to the overall historic significance of the historic district.*

¹ NOTE: Unlike the National Trust criteria, the City's criterion does not consider "patterns of events". For consideration of "patterns of events", use Criterion "C", reflecting a particular period.

² NOTE: Refer to the U.S. Department of the Interior Bulletin for "How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property".

**CITY OF PALM SPRINGS
PLANNING DEPARTMENT APPLICATION
HISTORIC RESOURCE DESIGNATION**

CLASS 1 AND CLASS 2

APPLICANT'S REQUIRED MATERIAL CHECKLIST

The following items must be submitted before a **Historic Resource Designation** application will be accepted. Please check off each item to assure completeness. Provide twelve (12) hard copies and one (1) PDF copy of the following materials unless otherwise noted:

	Applicant Only	City Use Only
Application Information:		
• General Information form (1 copy)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Notarized letter from property owner consenting to Historic Designation (1 copy)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Ownership and Address History ("Chain of Title") (1 copy)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic Resource Report:		
The following items shall be included in a historic resources report describing the site, structure, buildings, or objects eligible and appropriate for designation per PSMC 8.05.070.		
• Photographs of the exterior of the proposed site, structure, buildings or objects.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Aerial photo of the site/resource (from Google Maps or equal).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Information on the architect, designer, and/or developer.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Date and method of construction. Provide copies of building permits.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• A detailed assessment of the character defining features describing materials, architectural details/style, landscape elements, or other relevant descriptors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Evaluation of the site relative to the Criteria and Findings for Designation of Class 1 and Class 2 Historic Resources.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional Information:		
• Site Plan: 8-12" x 11" or 11" x 17"	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Public Hearing labels per PSZC Section 94.09.00.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
• Any other documentation or research as may be necessary to determine the qualifications of the site, structure, building, or objects.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Applicants are encouraged to review the bulletin from the U.S. Department of the Interior titled "How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation". (National Register Bulletin 15 (<http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/>)).

Statement of Significance

Summary

The Donald and Marilynn Wexler Residence was designed by architect Donald Wexler in 1954 and completed in 1955. The custom residence is a prime example of the Mid-century Modern style and has added significance as the longtime home of one of Palm Springs' most important architects.

Location

The Wexler Residence is located at 1272 Verbena Drive, Palm Springs, California, 92262. (Lot 12, Desert Sands, as shown by map on file in Book 18, Page 74 of Maps, Records of Riverside County, California.). See Appendix 2.

The Architect

Born in South Dakota, architect Donald Allen Wexler (1926-2015), FAIA grew up in Minneapolis. After graduation from high school, he served in the Navy during World War II, and upon discharge after the war, on the GI Bill, Wexler was educated at the University of Minnesota, getting his Bachelor of Architecture in 1950.

In Lauren Weiss Bricker's essay on Donald Wexler in *Shade and Steel: The Architecture of Donald Wexler*, she observes that, "Wexler was a member of the first generation of American architects trained along modern lines. So thoroughly engrained in modernism were the Minnesota graduates that in 1943, Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus and later head of the Graduate School of Design at Harvard University, observed that graduates of Minnesota's program coming to study at Harvard were among 'the best we have.'"¹

Upon graduation he moved to Los Angeles where he worked as a draftsman for architect Richard Neutra, whose influence can be seen in Wexler's work. Though Neutra rarely interacted with the younger members of his staff, it was this experience that profoundly shaped the young architect. According to architectural critic Esther McCoy,

Neutra was the perfect teacher. In watching him work, we learned in a few weeks what would have taken years if we had been left to fumble our way to it. This is the only quick way to learn and, I believe, the only effective way to teach.²

In Patrick McGrew's 2011 Palm Springs Preservation Foundation book *Donald Wexler: Architect*, he writes that Wexler never experienced the "sometimes demanding reputation for which Neutra was known," and that Wexler "continues to hold his first mentor in high esteem." Quoting Donald Wexler, "I admire him as I do Frank Lloyd Wright, Mies van der Rohe, and the other truly great contributors to our built environment. Neutra would compliment our good work, and it was there that I learned what a genius is."³

Wexler worked in Neutra's office for nine months, primarily working on a public housing project, Elysian Park Heights, being created by Neutra and his partner Robert Alexander, in collaboration with landscape architect Garrett Eckbo. In apprenticeship with Richard Neutra, Wexler observed the general skills needed to run a private practice, which would serve him well in just a few years.

With the idea that he might spend six months in Palm Springs, Wexler began working as a designer in the office of architect William F. Cody in September 1952. There, he met architect Richard A. Harrison, who was working there as a draftsman. Harrison had graduated with a degree in architecture from USC in 1951 and began working for Cody that July.

In February 1953, having completed the apprentice requirements, Wexler & Harrison formed a partnership, and opened their own office with their pooled resources—\$250.⁴ Over the years Wexler & Harrison would design homes, residential subdivisions, schools, banks, and offices. One of their most important projects were the innovative Steel Development Houses, a proposed forty-home subdivision for the Alexanders. Collaborating with Bernard Perlin of the Calcor Corporation, Wexler & Harrison had earlier developed a steel-panel system for Calcor which would allow for the rapid and inexpensive construction and expansion of schools. In 1958, based on that project's success, U.S. Steel Corporation approached the group with a proposal to sponsor a project that would apply the steel system to residential housing. The project became known as the Steel Development Houses (or the U.S. Steel Homes) and was placed in the northern edge of Palm Springs, with the plan for a 38-house tract. Ultimately, only seven houses were built.

In 1961, Wexler & Harrison agreed to amicably dissolve their partnership, each opening individual offices.

As sole proprietorship, Donald A. Wexler, AIA, would go on to be known for pioneering the use of steel in residential design. Wexler's designs for public buildings, including the dramatic Palm Springs Airport, served as both soaring and practical models for other municipalities to emulate. Other significant projects from the 1960s include the Union 76 Gas Station, the Palm Springs Medical Clinic, Canyon Country Club, and the Dinah Shore Residence. Later important projects include the Desert Water Agency, the Bank of Palm Springs, Hope Square Professional Building in Rancho Mirage, and the Larson Justice Center in Indio.

Both Richard Harrison and Donald Wexler are the recipients of stars on the Palm Springs Walk of Stars in recognition of their achievements in Architecture. These stars are only one of many honors and awards received for their extraordinary work within the architectural profession.

In 2011, the Palm Springs Art Museum organized the exhibition "Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler," an overview of his career, which was accompanied by an exhibition catalogue, written by Sidney Williams and Lauren Weiss Bricker.

Many structures designed by Wexler (or Wexler & Harrison) have been designated Class One Historic Resources, including the Steel Development Houses, The Kirk Douglas residence, and the Royal Hawaiian Estates. Steel Development House #2 has also been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Wexler became a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in March 2014.

Donald Wexler died June 25, 2015.



The caption for this 1958 photo, which ran in the “Los Angeles Times Home” magazine: “Front exterior shows motor court with carport at right. Screen of textured wood to match the house has colorful panels; planting is hardy natives.”

The Wexler Residence, 1955

The Wexler Residence, designed in 1954 and completed in 1955, was created by architect Donald Wexler as his own private residence, and himself and his wife raised three children in the house. The post-and-beam home was originally a two-bedroom, two-bathroom home with carport, but Wexler designed the home to be flexible, with a plan for later additions as his family grew. The house was built by Leonard Wolf, a locally recognized home builder/contractor and City Councilman.

As Patrick McGrew wrote in his book *Donald Wexler: Architect*, “Nothing defines an architect’s personal architectural philosophy more than the home he builds for himself and his family. Within the limitations of budget constraints, if the resulting house isn’t exactly what he had in mind, the architect can blame no one but himself.”⁵

The Architecture

Designed using the post-and-beam type of construction (here a post and double-beam, which would become a Wexler signature), the flat-roofed, L-shaped structure has a concrete slab foundation. The original 1954 design included a living room, den, kitchen with adjacent breakfast area, and carport. The design is primarily based upon an 8' grid (with one 7'-0" variation in the Primary Bedroom).

Because Wexler intended from the beginning to modify and enlarge the home over time, the post-and-beam construction allowed for non-bearing moveable interior partitions (walls), meaning all room configurations, minus the kitchen and bathrooms, were flexible.

Deep overhangs shielded the floor-to-ceiling glass, both fixed and sliding. Throughout the home, walls stop at the double-beams, and above these, fixed clerestory windows were placed between the beams, adding further transparency. Walls inside and out were clad in T1-11 plywood, a new material, which further emphasized the indoor/outdoor relationship. T1-111, which had just been introduced by U.S. Plywood, is a rough-textured plywood with incised vertical lines. Wexler, who would continue to be open and interested to new and innovative materials, used the new material extensively, after being encouraged to do so by a representative from U.S. Plywood. Though the plywood was initially inexpensive, Wexler learned the hard way that in the harsh desert climate, plywood would need to be painted every several years, and it was prone to warping and buckling. Originally, the house was painted throughout a medium warm gray, with very deep olive-green beams.

Influenced by his time with Richard Neutra, one interior plywood-covered wall seemingly projects through a panel of glass out into the landscape. A device utilized by many modernist architects, including Albert Frey, it succeeded in the creation and definition of outdoor spaces, joining the house with the site. Wexler's elegantly simple composition of intersecting planes—plywood or glass—shaded by deep overhangs, reflects the lessons he had learned during his time in Neutra's office.

On top of Wexler's double beams, ceilings were 2 x 6 tongue-in groove, which allows for the post-and-beam houses of the period to exhibit their elegantly slender fascia profile. Originally Tropicool (built-up tar and white gravel), the roof is now sprayed urethane foam.

At the front of the house, a decorative geometric privacy screen was constructed of the plain plywood with a pattern of rectangular T1-111 panels floating in front. Those T1-111 panels were painted mustard, to harmonize with the warm gray and deep olive paint palette.

Floors were square asphalt tile.



The living room, 1958. Photo courtesy Gary Wexler.



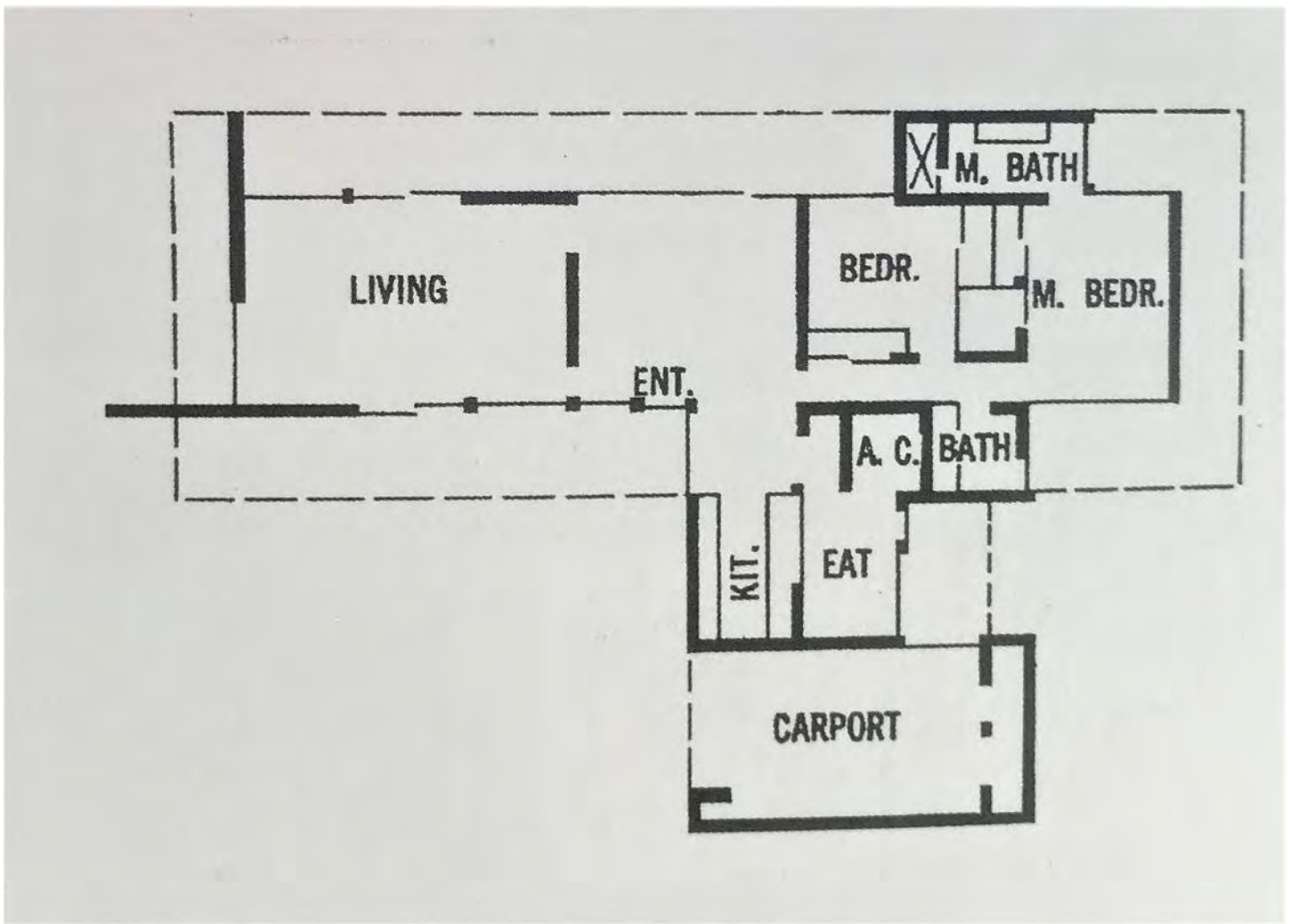
The dining area, 1958. Photo courtesy Gary Wexler.



The primary bedroom in 1958. Photo courtesy Gary Wexler.



The caption from the 1958 article in the “Los Angeles Times Home” magazine said “Lynn wanted [a] kitchen that would save time and steps, like the one beyond the pass-through at left. Christine Rains did the tile mural.”



The floor plan as designed, 1954. Note the entry opens onto a large den, with adjacent living room.

Character-Defining Features of the Wexler Residence

A period of significance has been established for the Wexler Residence: 1954-1989, the period in which Donald Wexler and his family lived in the house. During those thirty-five years, Wexler made several changes as the family's needs changed.

After the house was sold, a few more changes took place during its restoration in 2007-2008. Though outside the period of significance, those changes were sympathetic with the home's original design, and the work was done by architect Lance O'Donnell, in collaboration with Donald Wexler himself. Those changes will be identified as non-contributing, but do not negatively impact the historic character of the home.

The Wexler Residence is an exceptional example of a custom-designed Mid-century Modern house. It exhibits numerous extant character-defining features including:

- Flat-roofed one-story structure.
- Walls, interior and exterior, clad in T1-11 plywood siding.
- Post-and-beam construction (single post and double-beam, a Wexler signature).
- Walls of glass; large, fixed panels, sliding steel-framed glass doors; frameless clerestory windows.
- Flexible interior spaces.
- Kitchen open to dining area.
- Spun metal can lights on the underhangs and ceilings.
- Vertical wood decorative treatment on the front door.
- Open carport.
- Swimming pool and detached spa.
- Mature palm and Aleppo pine trees.
- Granite boulders and desert landscaping.

Non-Contributing Elements

- Terrazzo floors.
- Block wall on perimeter.
- Storage structure attached to carport.
- Vertical fluted obscure glass panels adjacent to front door (To the left of the door, glass panel was originally clear, with curtains hung for privacy. To the right of the door, the large panel was divided into three sections. The lower rectangular panel was obscure glass. Above was an operable single light steel casement window on the right, with fixed panel to the left. Both top windows were clear glass. This type of window configuration was used by Wexler and other designers of this period).

Bibliography

Attached is a list of books, articles, and other sources cited or used in preparing this application and other documentation that may be relevant.

Books

National Register Bulletin 15, How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. Washington, D.C.

Other Sources Consulted

- Historic Resources Group. City of Palm Springs Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings. Pasadena, 2015 (Final Draft, December 2018).
- Architectural Resources Group. City of Palm Springs Historic Resources Survey. San Francisco, 2004.
- Historic Site Preservation Board. Inventory of Historic Structures. Palm Springs, 2001.
- www.newspapers.com (Desert Sun and Los Angeles Times).

- City of Palm Springs (Planning and Building Departments).
- Ancestry.com.
- Palm Springs Historical Society.
- Riverside County Assessor's Office.

BACKGROUND / HISTORIC CONTEXT

The relatively short history of Palm Springs can be organized into several distinct periods, as defined by the Historic Resources Group's *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*. These include the following:

- Native American Settlement to 1969
- Early Development (1884-1918)
- Palm Springs between the Wars (1919-1941)
- Palm Springs During World War II (1939-1945)
- Post-World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969)

It is within the context of the period “Post-World War II Palm Springs” that the Wexler Residence will be evaluated. The following context statement is edited from Historic Resource Group's *Citywide Historic Context Statement & Survey Findings*: **Post-World War II Palm Springs (1945-1969):**

This context explores the post-World War II boom and related development that left Palm Springs with what many consider the most extensive and finest concentration of mid-20th century Modern architecture in the United States. Hollywood film stars and Eastern industrialists were joined in the postwar decades by ever-increasing numbers of tourists. The growing prosperity of the postwar years and the rise of the car culture created a leisured, mobile middle class that sought, in Palm Springs, the “good life” that had previously been available only to the wealthy. This surge of visitors and seasonal residents—by 1951 the city's winter population swelled to almost 30,000 from a permanent population of 7,660—coincided with the peak of Modernism's popularity.

The population growth accelerated in the 1950s, bringing a demand for civic necessities such as schools, libraries, museums, a city hall and police headquarters, offices, stores, and housing. Palm Springs' growth as a tourist destination brought a demand for inns, resorts, and tourist attractions. Tourism also introduced a demand for affordable second homes for a growing middle class; the construction and financing methods for building such mass-produced housing tracts were already developing in suburban areas of larger cities, including nearby Los Angeles, and found a ready market in Palm Springs. Though Palm Springs was a smaller municipality, this economic climate provided many opportunities for locally based architects, as well as several Los Angeles architects, to explore and develop a wide range of architectural types and ideas, sometimes influenced by sophisticated global design trends. These conditions and the architects' talents lead to the development of an exceptional group of Modern buildings which later came to be identified as “Palm Springs Modernism” or “The Palm Springs School.”

The desert climate and casual lifestyle all but demanded unconventional design, and clients were more accepting of, even sought out, a more adventurous style in the resort atmosphere of Palm Springs than they would have in their primary residences. In the two decades after the war, Palm Springs was transformed with new commercial and institutional buildings, custom homes, and a large number of housing tracts.

EVALUATION:

CRITERION 2 – Significant Persons - The resource is associated with the lives of persons who made a meaningful contribution to national, state or local history:

The Wexler Residence was designed by architect Donald Wexler, FAIA, as the primary residence for he and his family, at the beginning of what would be a long career of architecture in the Coachella Valley—and beyond. Upon his death, the New York Times wrote that Donald Wexler was the “architect who gave shape to Palm Springs,” continuing that his “innovative steel houses and soaring glass-fronted terminal at the Palm Springs International Airport helped make Palm Springs a showcase for midcentury modernism.” Wexler’s fifty years as an architect helped define what is now known as the Palm Springs School of Architecture, leaving a indelible imprint on the entire Coachella Valley.

While his work was published nationally at the time (particularly for his innovations using steel), in recent years Donald Wexler has attained a heightened national recognition and significance. He was the focus of a 2009 documentary “Journeyman Architect” followed by an exhibition at the Palm Springs Art Museum in 2011. That same year “Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler,” by Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sidney Williams, was published by the Museum. In 2012, Steel House Number 2 (by Wexler & Harrison) was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, and in 2019, the Wexler Residence was added to the National Register, in a nomination prepared by Peter Moruzzi. In Palm Springs, there have been multiple Wexler-designed structures that are now Class One Historic Resources. The residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 2.

ARCHITECTURE (Criteria 3 – 6)

CRITERION 3 - The resource reflects or exemplifies a particular period of national, state or local

history: The Wexler Residence, completed in 1955, exhibits many stylistic markers which place it directly in the historic context of Palm Springs’ “Post-World War II Palm Springs” period. The custom-designed private residence represents a prime example of significant Post-war architecture for which Palm Springs is internationally known. Some examples include the post-and-beam architecture, the long, low, horizontal feeling, open floor plan and open carport, and landscape using native plant materials, which root it to its site. The interior walls which project out into the landscape was another distinctive feature and was a device Wexler presumably picked up while working for Richard Neutra, who began using this detail beginning in the 1920s, as a device to blur the distinction between indoors and outdoors. Walls of glass, whether fixed or sliding, and frameless clerestory windows, contributed to the overall successful indoor/outdoor relationship. As such, the residence may be viewed as an important component of the historic trends that have come to define Palm Springs’ image as a center of important Modern architecture, i.e., an historic trend that exemplifies a particular period of the national, state or local history. The residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 3.

CRITERION 4 - The resource embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction: The Wexler Residence is eligible under the theme of Modern architecture because it possesses distinctive characteristics that embody the Mid-century Modern Style such as expression of structure, use of organic materials, and use of innovative materials. Wexler experimented here with T1-111, which was a new building material. Always eager to try new and innovative materials, he would later learn that wood was not the best material for the desert. The house is post-and-beam construction, but here Wexler experiments by utilizing a single post with double beams. While it adds a somewhat decorative interest, Wexler's reason was that he believed it would minimize the warping of the beams in the harsh desert climate. Post-and-beam construction also facilitated the open floorplan Wexler wanted, which also would facilitate interior changes and reconfiguration of rooms, as his family grew. Though the post-and-beam method of construction is one of the oldest modes of architecture, it enjoyed a resurgence after it popularized in the *Arts & Architecture Magazine's* Case Study Houses after World War II. It was used by nearly all the modern architects and architectural designers working in the Coachella Valley in the postwar period. The post-and-beam style became a symbol of forward-thinking modernist architecture in the desert communities and has become an iconic and instantly recognizable representation of the Palm Springs School of Architecture from the period. Additionally, the Wexler Residence is eligible under this criterion because it represents an important example of building practices in Palm Springs at Mid-century. The Wexler Residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 4.

Criterion 5: That (a): represents the work of a master builder, designer, artist, or architect whose individual genius influenced his age; or (b): that possesses high artistic value.

5a: Work of a Master: A master is a figure of generally recognized greatness in a field, a known craftsman of consummate skill. The property must express a particular phase in the development of the master's career, an aspect of his work, or a particular idea or theme in his craft. A property is not eligible as the work of a master, however, simply because it was designed by a prominent architect. For example, not every building designed by Frank Lloyd Wright is eligible under this portion of Criterion 5, although it might meet other Criteria.

The Wexler Residence exemplifies Donald Wexler's early residential work—as well as being his own long-time residence. Many design elements that would become signatures of the period are present—flat-roofed, post-and-beam construction (here, the post and double-beam), simple materials, an open and flexible floor plan, the use of large glass areas for transparency and to maximize the indoor-outdoor relationship, lack of ornamentation, and simple geometry are displayed here. With its projecting planes helping to create and define outdoor spaces, those outdoor spaces contribute as much to the design as indoor spaces. Thin projecting overhangs shade the expansive walls of glass. All these combined are evidence of the architect's guiding principles, and are elements that Wexler retained throughout the years, contributing to his timeless designs. Wexler's impressive talent still inspires architects working today, most notably Lance O'Donnell, who

worked closely with Wexler on several projects, and his contributions to the Palm Springs School of Architecture will continue to inspire young architects of the future.

5b: Properties possessing high artistic values: High artistic values may be expressed in many ways, including areas as diverse as community design or planning, engineering, and sculpture.

The design of the Wexler Residence shows that even at this very early stage in his career, Wexler possessed a mastery of the modernist design principles that he would carry throughout his long career. Using the simplest and most humble of materials, Wexler utilized post-and-beam architecture to create a family home with flexible interior spaces capable of expansion over time, with planes projecting out into the landscape to define outdoor spaces and link the architecture with the landscape. This convergence of the interior and exterior spaces was a hallmark of the Mid-century Modern period. Extensive use of glass, both fixed and sliding/opening, protected from the harsh sun by deep overhangs, provides shelter from the harsh desert climate, and allowed for cross-ventilation, making the home a practical and happy refuge for the architect and his family for a generation.

As the work of a Master, and for its high artistic values, the Wexler Residence qualifies for listing as a Class 1 Historic Resource on the local registry under Criterion 5.

Criterion 6: That represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction. This Criterion was created to address the resources contained within a potential historic district and as such it does not apply to this nomination. Hence, the residence does not qualify under Criterion 6.

ARCHEOLOGY

Criterion 7: That has yielded or may be likely to yield information important to the national, state or local history or prehistory. The Wexler Residence is not likely to yield information important to the national, state or local history or prehistory. Hence, the residence does not qualify under Criterion 7.

SUMMARY: This evaluation finds The Wexler Residence eligible for listing as a Palm Springs Historic Resource under 8.05.070 (C,1,a) paragraphs 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the local ordinance's seven criteria.

Integrity Analysis (using U.S. Secretary of Interior Standards)

INTEGRITY

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. To be listed in the local registry, a property must not only be shown to be significant under the criteria, but it also must have integrity. The evaluation of

integrity is sometimes a subjective judgment, but it must always be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to its significance. Historic properties either retain integrity (that is, convey their significance) or they do not. The definition of integrity includes seven aspects or qualities. To retain historic integrity a property will always possess several, and usually most, of the aspects. The retention of specific aspects of integrity is paramount for a property to convey its significance. Determining which of these aspects are most important to a particular property requires knowing why, where, and when the property is significant. The following sections define the seven aspects and explain how they combine to produce integrity.

DESIGN

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property. It results from conscious decisions made during the original conception and planning of a property and applies to activities as diverse as community planning, engineering, architecture, and landscape architecture. Design includes such elements as organization of space, proportion, scale, technology, ornamentation, and materials. A property's design reflects historic functions and technologies as well as aesthetics. It includes such considerations as the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; textures and colors of surface materials; type, amount, and style of ornamental detailing. ***The Wexler Residence's essential characteristics of form, plan, space, structures, configuration, and style have survived largely intact. Similarly, the structural system; massing; arrangement of spaces; pattern of fenestration; and the type, amount, and style of detailing have survived primarily intact. The T1-11 plywood siding, used inside and out, is in exceptionally good condition. Though changes have occurred to the interior since construction, the changes were made following the concept that the home was designed for flexible interior spaces, as dictated by the needs of the occupants. The changes were designed in collaboration with Donald Wexler.***

MATERIALS

Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a period and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property. The choice and combination of materials reveals the preferences of those who created the property and indicate the availability of types of materials and technologies. ***The Wexler Residence's materials successfully represent the best of Mid-century Modern design, creating very stylish structures using the simplest materials: modest products such as plywood, steel, wood, and glass.***

WORKMANSHIP

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory. It is the evidence of artisans' labor and skill in constructing or altering a building, structure, object, or site. Workmanship can apply to the property as a whole or to its individual components. It can be expressed in vernacular methods of construction and plain finishes or in highly sophisticated configurations and ornamental detailing. It can be based on common traditions or innovative period techniques. Workmanship is important because it can furnish evidence of the technology of a craft, illustrate the aesthetic

principles of a historic or prehistoric period, and reveal individual, local, regional, or national applications of both technological practices and aesthetic principles. Examples of workmanship in historic buildings include tooling, carving, painting, graining, turning, and joinery. ***The Wexler Residence was designed and built using straightforward materials and modes of workmanship, typical of construction practices in mid-century Palm Springs. The home still exhibits those humble, honest principles, and has not been updated with inappropriate ornamental detailing.***

LOCATION

Location is the place where a historic property was constructed or the place where a historic event occurred. The relationship between the property and its location is often important to understand why the property was created or why something happened. The actual location of a historic property, complemented by its setting, is particularly important in recapturing the sense of historic events and persons. Except in rare cases, the relationship between a property and its historic associations is destroyed if the property is moved. ***The Wexler Residence remains in its original location and therefore qualifies under this aspect.***

SETTING

Setting is the physical environment of a historic property. Whereas location refers to the specific place where a property was built or an event occurred, setting refers to the *character* of the place in which the property played its historical role. It involves *how*, not just *where*, the property is situated and its relationship to surrounding features and open space. Setting often reflects the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it was intended to serve. In addition, the way in which a property is positioned in its environment can reflect the designer's concept of nature and aesthetic preferences. ***The Wexler Residence was designed to conform to the existing character of the neighborhood, with a one-story, horizontal modern post-and-beam single family home. Though some of the smaller-scale plant material has changed, new planting is consistent with the drought-tolerant design of the original and doesn't negatively impact the setting. Therefore, the setting of the Wexler Residence continues to reflect Wexler's original as-designed relationship of site and structure.***

FEELING

Feeling is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period. It results from the presence of physical features that, taken together, convey the property's historic character. For example, a rural historic district retaining original design, materials, workmanship, and setting will relate the feeling of agricultural life in the 19th century. ***The Wexler Residence is sited in such a way as to take advantage of panoramic mountain views. The custom-designed post-and-beam home conveys the feeling of the Mid-century Modern period for which Palm Springs is internationally known. The Wexler Residence still conveys architect Donald Wexler's stylishly informal and contemporary design, which still blends well into this neighborhood. Accordingly, the residence retains its original integrity of feeling.***

ASSOCIATION

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property. A property retains association if it is the place where the event or activity occurred and is sufficiently intact to convey that relationship to an observer. Like feeling, association requires the presence of physical features that convey a property's historic character. For example, a Revolutionary War battlefield whose natural and man-made elements have remained intact since the 18th century will retain its quality of association with the battle. Because feeling and association depend on individual perceptions, their retention alone is never sufficient to support eligibility of a property for the National Register. ***The Wexler Residence is a fine example of a custom-designed home by architect Donald Wexler in the post-and-beam style - here the single post and double-beam, a design element Wexler often used in his later designs. Architectural signatures of the Mid-century Modern period such as flat roof, deep overhangs, interior walls that project out into the landscape, and large expanses of glass, allows one to recognize the home as a product of the Mid-century Modern movement of architecture for which Palm Springs is internationally recognized.***

INTEGRITY SUMMARY: This integrity analysis confirms that the site and structures of the Wexler Residence still possesses seven aspects of integrity. ***Though some modifications have been made on the interior of the home, the changes were designed using sympathetic materials, and in collaboration with Donald Wexler. Changes to the exterior, such as the enlargement of a picture window, were done sensitively and approved by Donald Wexler. In summary, the residence, which was the architect's own, still possesses a degree of integrity sufficient to qualify for designation as a Class 1 Historic Resource.***

APPENDICES

I Owner's Letter of Support

March 20, 2021

City of Palm Springs
Historic Site Preservation Board
3200 Tahquitz Canyon Way
Palm Springs, CA 92262

Dear Honorable Preservation Board,

As the current owners and stewards of The Wexler Residence, designed and built by Donald Wexler at 1272 East Verbena Drive, we are thrilled to support the Class 1 Historic Site designation of our property by the City of Palm Springs. We engaged the Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, primarily Vice President Steve Keylon, to advise and assist us with the preparation of all required nomination paperwork and are grateful for all their work on our behalf.

Please contact us with any questions or concerns at +1.917.561.0186.

Sincerely,



Joseph Mantello



Paul Marlow

II Assessor's Map and Aerial

LOT 12 MB 018/074 DESERT SANDS



III Chain of Title

Primary sources show the chain of ownership for the Wexler Residence (Lot 12, Desert Sands, as shown by map on file in Book 18, page 74 of Maps, Records of Riverside County) as follows (NOTE: Chain of title begins in 1989, early records describing the 1953 sale of the land to Donald Wexler were not available):

08-01-89	Estate of Marilyn Wexler to Donald A. Wexler.
08-31-89	Donald A. Wexler to Donald A. Wexler, as Trustee of Trust B under the Wexler Family Trust, established October 21, 1981.
03-02-93	Donald A. Wexler, Trustee of Trust B under the Wexler Family Trust, established October 21, 1981, to Bennett Puterbaugh, a single man.
08-14-97	Bennett Puterbaugh, a single man, to Bennett Puterbaugh, a single man and Marc Sanders, a single man, as joint tenants.
11-04-97	Bennett Puterbaugh, a single man and Marc Sanders, a single man as joint tenants to Steven Samiof and Misako Saiki Samiof, husband and wife as joint tenants.
06-13-01	Steven Samiof and Misako S. Samiof, husband and wife as joint tenants who acquired title as Misako Saiki Samiof to Gary A. Rust, an unmarried man.
05-12-04	Gary A. Rust, an unmarried man, to Christy L. Eugenis, a married woman as her sole and separate property.
05-24-05	Christy L. Eugenis, a married woman as her sole and separate property, to Wahoo-Cal Rentals, LLC, a California Limited Liability Company.
06-12-07	Wahoo-Cal Rentals, LLC, a California Limited Liability Company, to Alice M. Alioto, a registered domestic partner, as her sole and separate property and Daniel P. Giles, a single man, as joint tenants.
07-17-07	Kathleen A. Zucchi, registered domestic partner of Grantee, hereby grants to Alice M. Alioto, registered domestic partner of Grantor as her sole and separate property.
07-18-14	Alice M. Alioto, a single person, who acquired title as a registered domestic partner, as her sole and separate property, to Alice M. Alioto, a single person.
12-22-15	Kevin Singer, in his sole capacity as Court Referee in the Superior Court of California, County of Riverside, to Joseph Mantello, a single man.

IV Building Permits

Date	Owner	Permit Type	Description of Work
10-29-54	D. A. Wexler	Building	Building permit for a five-room dwelling. Frame and stucco. Tropicool roof. One car carport. Lot size 120x106; Height 15'; Front 25'; Side 12'; Side 12'; Rear 10'. Total value of work \$16,000. Leonard Wolf, contractor.
11-17-54	D. A. Wexler	Electrical	Temporary service.
11-23-54	Don Wexler	Plumbing	One bathtub; four gas outlets; one gas furnace; three lavatories; one laundry tray; one shower; one sink; two toilets; one water heater; one water piping.
12-16-54	Wexler	Electrical Installation	Thirty-six outlets; eight fixtures; one heater; one electric motor (less than ½ horsepower).
02-11-55	D. A. Wexler	Plumbing	One cesspool; one septic tank.
04-14-60	Don Wexler	Swimming Pool	Pool steel & setback; Hoams Construction.
06-14-60	Don Wexler	Building	Construction of a 15x40 foot gunite swimming pool; Hoams Construction.
05-06-62	Don Wexler	Plumbing	One cesspool; one sewer piping.
01-02-68	Don Wexler	Building	Dwelling addition: add 650 square feet. Add three bedrooms and bath.
01-09-68	Don Wexler	Plumbing	Two lavatories; one toilet; one shower; one water piping; one water heater.
01-25-68	Don Wexler	Electrical	Twenty-two outlets; ten light fixtures; one meter loop.
11-14-69	Don Wexler	Sewer	Two bathtubs; three lavatories; two toilets; one laundry tray; two showers; one sink; one dishwasher; one garbage disposal.
11-25-69	Don Wexler	Sewer	Sewer connection.
01-04-80; 02-04-80	D. Wexler	Roof	Re-roof with urethane foam, clean off-white paint. Circle Arrow Urethane.
11-06-81	Don Wexler	Building	Construct 5x7 foot gunite spa, per approved engineering specs and plans.
08-23-05	Stan Amy	Building	Construct a 6x9' storage shed attached to existing garage within the proper setback. Also install one steel tube to support guide wire for shade area. O'Donnell Escalante Architects.
12-14-09	Daniel Giles	Building	Construct approximately 66 linear feet of 5' high block wall, five feet from front property line.
03-22-10	Daniel Patrick Giles	Building	Construct approximately 66 linear feet of 5' high block wall (EASTSIDE).

04-05-17	Wexler House	Building	Clean off roof and install new fibertite roof system.
06-10-18	Joe Mantello	Building	HVAC change-out
07-10-18	Joe Mantello	Building	HVAC change-out, 3.5 ton unit on the ground.
08-06-19	Joe Mantello	Solar	New 10.56 kW DC roof mounted PV system with battery backup. Hot Purple Energy.
09-17-19	Paul Marlow	Building	24 PV panel array (10.56 kW) + battery backup.
11-20-20	Joe Mantello	Building	HVAC change-out, remove and replace.

V Supplemental Description



Marilynn and Donald Wexler in front of their new home, ca. 1955. Courtesy Gary Wexler.

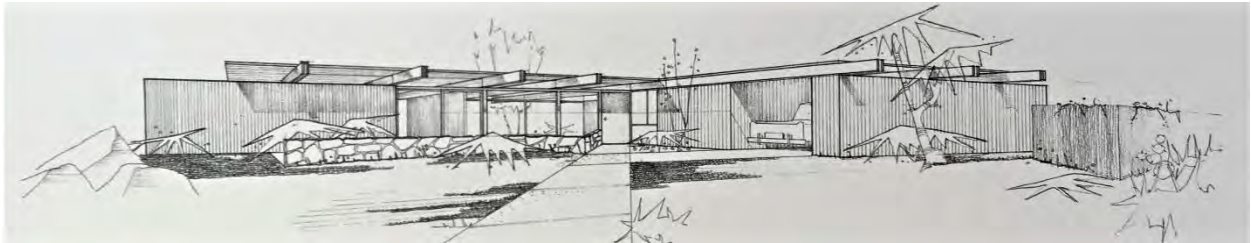
The Residence of Donald and Marilyn Wexler, 1955.

In 1952, while Wexler and Harrison were still working in Cody's office, after work one day they went for drinks at the Doll House. While there, they met a group of girls who were visiting Palm Springs from Los Angeles. One of the girls asked if Don would be interested in going on a blind date with a friend of theirs in Los Angeles. He later went on the blind date, and met his future wife, Marilyn Dawn Maidman.⁶

They were married on September 20, 1953, in Beverly Hills, and moved into a furnished apartment at 962 Parocela Place in the Warm Sands neighborhood of Palm Springs.⁷

When Marilyn got pregnant, Don got a \$15,000 GI Bill loan and bought an empty parcel on East Verbena near Ruth Hardy Park (then Tamarisk Park). With a very tight budget, he designed a 1,450 square foot two-bedroom, two bath, post-and-beam style home. With single posts and double beams (which were designed to withstand desert temperatures without warping) the style became a Wexler signature. Air conditioning was incorporated into the design.

Wexler designed and built the house quickly, with the intent that it would be completed by the time their son was born. Builder/contractor Leonard Wolf (later a city councilman) oversaw a crew of three people—unimaginable in today's complex construction industry, and the house was completed in four months. The Wexler's first son (of three), Glen, was born in September of 1955.⁸



Architect Donald Wexler's 1954 rendering of the home's primary façade. Courtesy Gary Wexler.



The Wexler Residence under construction, 1954. Courtesy Gary Wexler.

DESIGNED FOR FLEXIBILITY

While originally a two-bedroom, two-bathroom home with carport, Wexler designed the home with a plan for later additions as his family grew. When it was later featured in the *Los Angeles Times Home Magazine*, in an article titled “A House Designed to Expand from Within,” it was explained:

In planning their new home, AIA architect Don Wexler and his wife Lynn wanted a house that could be expanded without the cost of adding new foundations and roofing. So they designed their 1450-square-foot house with a living room, den, two bedrooms, two baths. Partitions were designed to be nonbearing so that new rooms could be created in all areas excepting the kitchen and bathrooms.⁹

According to Wexler’s son Gary, “he always liked to use new products. That’s why he got interested in steel.”¹⁰ For the Wexler Residence, all the walls, inside and out, were clad in a brand-new material called “Texture One-Eleven,” known now as T1-11. As Wexler later recalled, “That was an all-wood structure, in fact detail T1-11 plywood had just come out and a representative of U.S. Plywood asked me if I would use it on the house and I used a lot of it, all outside walls and walls on the inside. I learned a good lesson what the desert does to wood. It twists it, it shrinks it, it warps it and you have to take care of it. So, literally, it was a high maintenance house.”¹¹

give your homes new sales appeal with

Texture One-Eleven
EXTERIOR FIR PLYWOOD • EXT-DFPA

...the exciting new panel material
that combines line and texture

ONLY GENUINE TEXTURE ONE-ELEVEN
GIVES YOU ALL THESE FEATURES:

- Staggered edges create vertical joints
- Grooved grooves, textured surface
- 1/2" thickness leaves full 1/2" thick panel behind 1/2" deep groove
- FRA-impregnated for combined siding-shedding
- EXT-DFPA trademark assures 100% waterproof glue

LOOK FOR THIS EDGE BRAND ON THE PANEL

THE MODERN architectural trend toward using natural wood textures in dramatic small-scale patterns clearly predicts a great and growing demand for Texture One-Eleven.

In special "product preview" 167 of 179 architects interviewed voiced unqualified enthusiasm for this handsome new material. Builders who have used - and proved - Texture One-Eleven in demonstration homes report home buyers equally taken with its striking beauty.

Texture One-Eleven combines high style with the economy and dependability of industry quality grade-trademarked Exterior fir plywood (EXT-DFPA®), manufactured with 100% waterproof glue. Comes packaged in 8' and 10' lengths in two widths and groove patterns. Get the full story from your regular supplier or write Douglas Fir Plywood Association, Tacoma 2, Washington.

for striking, weatherwise exterior siding for dramatic, distinctive walls and ceilings for colorful contrasts with other materials for handsome schools and commercial buildings

©Texture One-Eleven is a registered grade trademark of Douglas Fir Plywood Association

Two-page ad in the June 1954 *Arts + Architecture* announcing “Texture One-Eleven”

Introduced in 1954 by U.S. Plywood, the material was called “Roughtex.” Rough sawn Douglas fir plywood was routed with widely spaced vertical grooves for interest. An advertisement in *Arts & Architecture* magazine touted its qualities:

Texture One-Eleven Exterior Fir Plywood: This new grooved panel material of industry quality, is in perfect harmony with trend toward using natural wood textures. Packaged in two lengths and widths; has shiplap edges; applied quickly, easily; immune to water, weather, heat, cold. Uses include: vertical siding for homes; screening walls for garden areas; spandrels on small apt., commercial buildings; inexpensive store front remodeling; interior walls ceilings, counters.

The T1-11 panels were painted a light putty gray, while the double beams were painted a deep olive green. In front of the house, the T1-11 and plywood privacy screen featured ochre accents.

Though no records were found in researching the home, the landscape is likely the unsubstantiated work of designer Antone Dalu, who designed the landscapes for most of the Wexler & Harrison projects in the 1950s.

Anthony Francis Dalu (1924- ; he later used the name “Antone;” friends called him “Tony”) began designing interiors in Los Angeles before moving to Palm Springs in the early 1950s, opening an office next door to Wexler & Harrison. In Palm Springs, he advertised or was featured in the *Desert Sun* and the *Villager*, offering his services for both interior design and landscape design. Architect Hugh Kaptur worked in the office of Wexler & Harrison in 1956-57, and recalls, “Tony Dalu was next door, in fact there was an adjoining door that opened up between their offices, that’s how I met Tony. He was incredibly talented...”¹²

Dalu’s landscape design celebrated the natural beauty of the desert, using masses of enormous boulders, decomposed granite, and relied primarily on desert plant materials. At the Wexler Residence, a pair of Mexican fan palms and magenta bougainvillea was planted calling attention to the front door. Around massive boulders placed near the asphalt driveway, desert plants such as ocotillo, cactus and yucca were planted. As Gary Wexler recalls, the east yard had red concrete pavers and a panel of dichondra (a green, perennial groundcover) in lieu of grass, studded with more large granite boulders. Along the street, Aleppo pines and more palms were planted.¹³

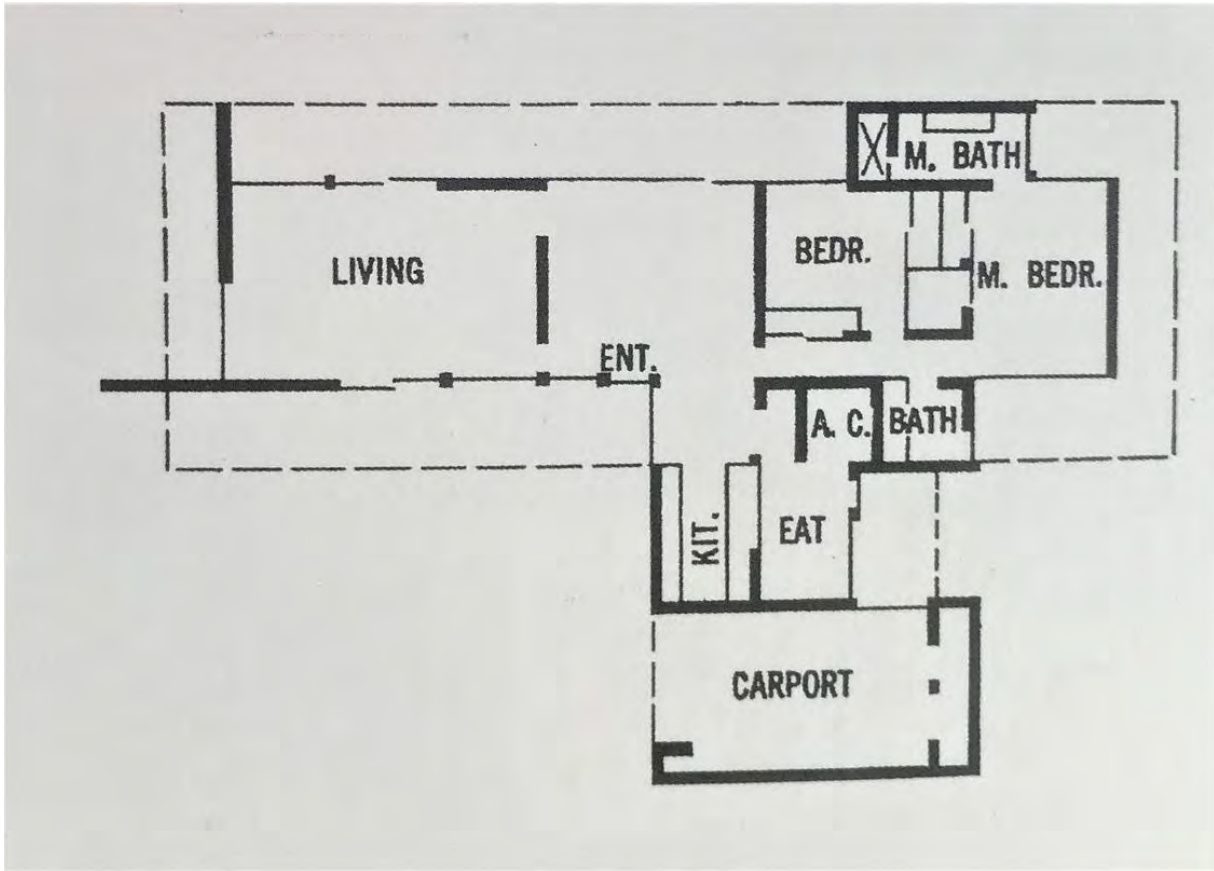
The Wexler Residence was considered such a success that architectural historian Patrick McGrew later opined that “the home compares favorably with the precedent-setting Case Study houses of the period. It reflects the influence this program had on the construction of new housing throughout the country.”¹⁴ This opinion was shared by famed photographer Julius Shulman, who remarked in 2006 that he found it unfortunate that the Wexler Residence hadn’t been included in *Arts & Architecture* magazine’s Case Study House program, which ran from 1945-1966. At the time, Shulman said, “This house demonstrates how design works today fifty years later...it’s magnificent, nothing has changed, nothing HAS to be changed. It works beautifully.”¹⁵

CHANGES OVER TIME

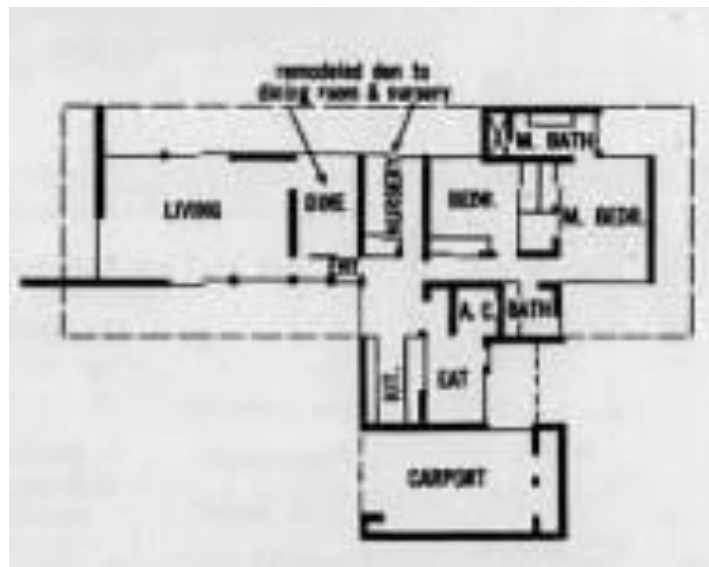
Because the home was designed to be easily expanded or modified, changes began taking place almost immediately as the family’s needs changed. As noted in the 1958 *Los Angeles Times Home Magazine* article, when son Gary was born in 1957, the den, which had been used by the Wexlers as their living and dining space (the living room originally had ping-pong tables in it) was divided into a nursery and small dining space.

Later, the small dining alcove adjacent to the kitchen was expanded out onto a patio.

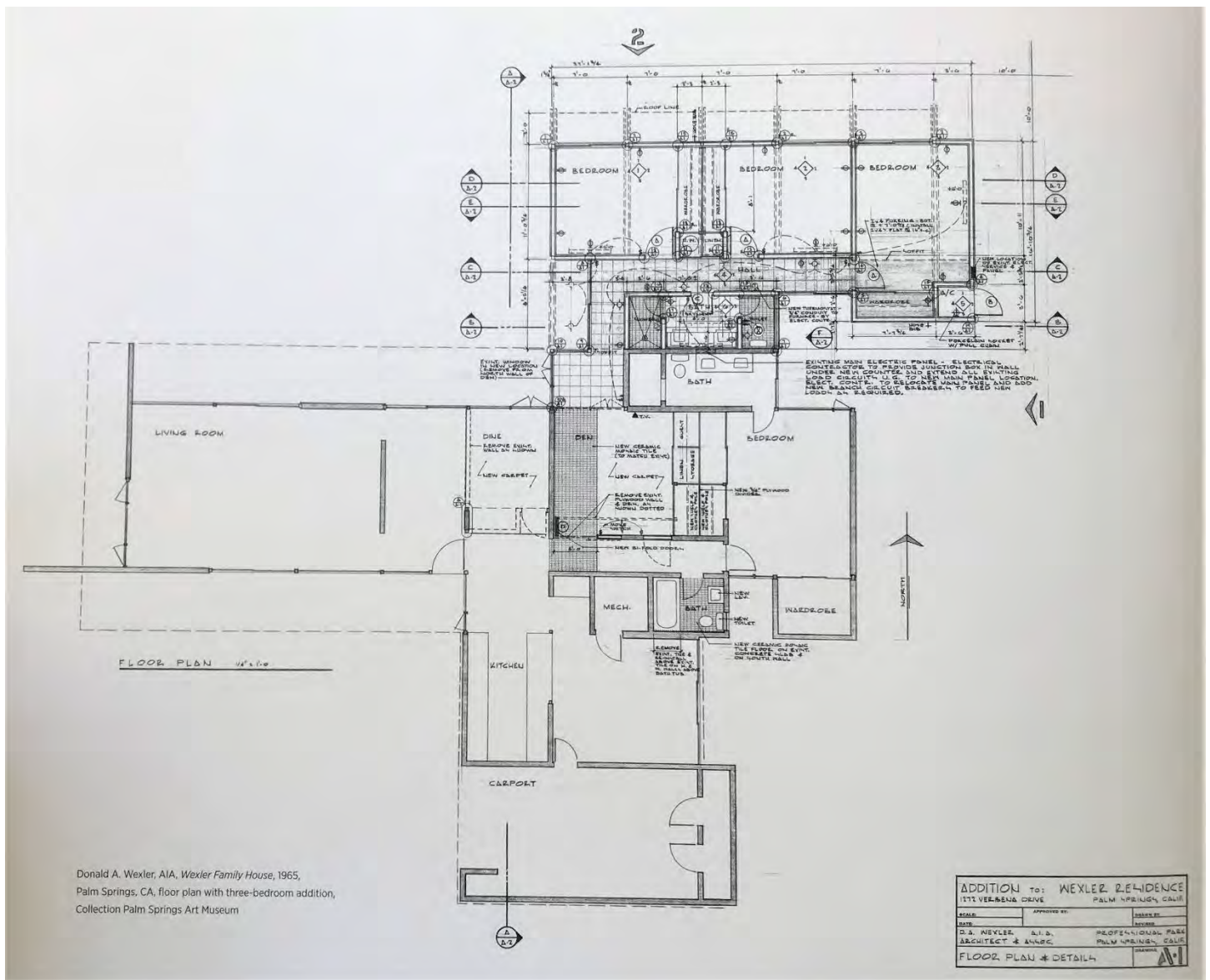
In the primary bedroom, a new closet was added on south facing wall, giving Marilyn more space. To do so, windows were removed.



The floor plan as designed, 1954. Note the entry opens onto a large den, with adjacent living room.



When son Gary Wexler was born, the den was divided into two parts, with a small nursery on one side, and a small dining area on the other.



The layout of the 1968 addition for the boy's bedrooms and bathroom. The dining area remained, but a second bedroom was repurposed as an open den space.

In 1960, Hoams Construction built a swimming pool in the rear garden.

The most extensive change came in 1968, when a new wing containing three bedrooms and bath was added to the north of the home. At that time, the nursery area was removed and the original second bedroom was turned into Donald Wexler's den.

After Donald Wexler sold the house, according to Gary Wexler, Dr. Gary Rust removed the primary bedroom's closet addition and restored the window configuration that had been blocked.¹⁶ Rust also added a glass privacy partition between the living room and the driveway at the front of the house. One of the large original Aleppo pines was removed. None of these changes show in the permit history.

In 2007, Daniel Giles (who owned the house jointly with Alice M. Alioto) bought the house and planned to rehabilitate it, overseen by architect Lance O'Donnell. Donald Wexler served as consultant to the project.

According to Gary Wexler, his father and O'Donnell had an extraordinarily strong mutual respect, and Wexler enjoyed working with O'Donnell.¹⁷

For the first phase, working with landscape architect William Kopelk, the old wood fences along Verbena Drive were removed and replaced by concrete block walls. Kopelk transformed the landscape, bringing in more granite boulders and refreshing the drought-tolerant landscape, while preserving most of the mature trees and the basic overall layout that had been established.

For the restoration/rehabilitation of the house itself, the primary objective was to unify all the ceiling and floor planes. Because the house had been modified at different times over the years, flooring wasn't cohesive. When the 1968 addition was built, lowered ceilings hid ductwork, so ceiling planes were inconsistent. Those false ceilings and ductwork were removed, and air conditioners removed from on top of the roof. To accommodate central heat and air, the floors were jackhammered for trenches to place all the ductwork and returns in the concrete slab. With that complete, terrazzo was poured throughout most the home, making them consistent throughout.

In the living room, the window next to the T1-11 indoor-outdoor wall was enlarged, which now framed a mature olive tree. In the area originally planned to be an expandable den, a portion of wall was removed, which created a visual link to the floating wall that separated the living room from the entry. This minor change resulted in better sightlines in the central portion of the house.



Next to the T1-11 indoor/outdoor wall, there was originally a comparatively small, fixed panel of glass. In the black and white photo at left, you can see this in the glass panel to the left of the Womb Chair.

In the late 2000s rehabilitation, that window opening was enlarged. In the color photo of the house today, on the right, you can see the enlarged glass pane, with the T1-11 wall and large boulder outside.

The biggest modification came to the 1968 wing for the boy's bedrooms. The space, planned for flexibility, had been designed as three smallish bedrooms with a bathroom. The space was changed to have two larger bedrooms with a shared bathroom. The original boy's bathroom was expanded into the master bedroom.

When the renovations were completed, Donald Wexler walked through the house marveling at how unified it all had become and remarked that he loved how it all turned out.

The Palm Springs Modern Committee awarded the house the *Residential Restoration of the Year Award* for 2009.

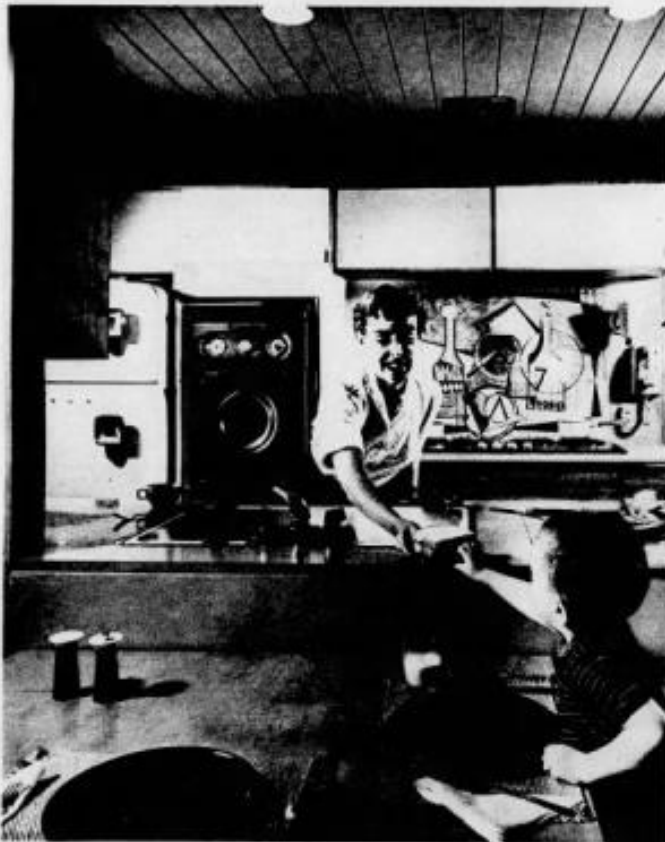


Richard Fish photographs

Five-month-old Scotty, above, enjoys having a room of his own, made possible by the expandable plan. And here, at right, is that room. Addition of an inexpensive partition converted the former den into the baby's room pictured and the dining room

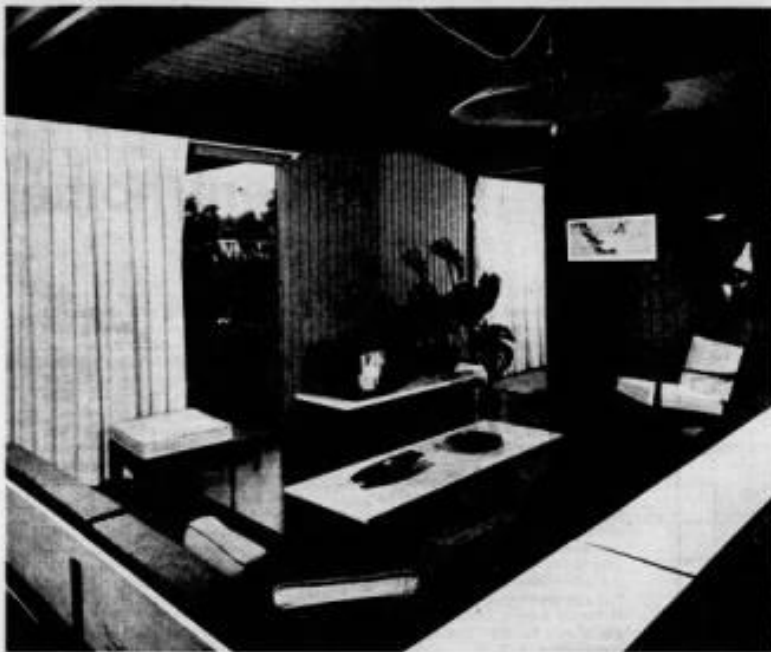


A house



Lynn, above, wanted kitchen that would save time and steps, like the one beyond the pass-through at left. Christine Rains did the tile mural. Below, the dining room; area was once part of den





Don, below, wanted an economical, expandable house, designed one with nonbearing partitions so new room areas could be created as desired. At left, the living room, with its furniture moved from the former den. Floor is asphalt vinyl, walls are wood.



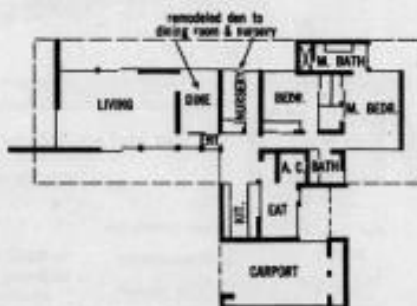
designed to expand from within

IN PLANNING their new home, AIA Architect Don Wexler and his wife Lynn wanted a house that could be expanded without the cost of adding new foundations and roofing. So they designed their 1450-square-foot home with a living room, den, two bedrooms, two baths. The living room was left unfurnished and the den used as a living area. Partitions were designed to be nonbearing so that new rooms could be created in all areas excepting the kitchen and bathrooms.

When son Scotty was born five months ago and the Wexlers needed an extra bedroom, they added a partition to the den, creating a bedroom and a dining room. Cost was about \$350. Furniture from the den was moved into the living room, which has asphalt tile flooring, wonderful view windows and low-upkeep features which increase its practicality.



On the plan at right note that the master bedroom has a private dressing room and bath, overlooks the garden. Former den or family room has been divided as indicated to make the nursery and a dining room.



Front exterior, above, shows motor court with carport at right. Screens of textured wood to match the house has colorful panels; planting is hardy natives.

VI Contemporary Images

PRIMARY ELEVATION:









REAR ELEVATION:





WEST ELEVATION:





EAST ELEVATION:





INTERIOR:



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- ¹ *Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler*, Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sidney Williams, Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011, 13.
- ² *Vienna to Los Angeles: Two Journeys*, Esther McCoy, Arts + Architecture Press, 1979, 11.
- ³ *Donald Wexler: Architect*, Patrick McGrew, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 18-21.
- ⁴ Richard A. Harrison application for membership, AIA.
- ⁵ *Donald Wexler: Architect*, Patrick McGrew, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 18-21.
- ⁶ Telephone interview with Gary Wexler, April 28, 2021.
- ⁷ Wexler & Harrison had established their own architectural practice in February 1953. At the time the Wexler Residence was being designed in 1954, Wexler & Harrison were also busy designing three custom residences: two houses on Lilliana Drive for developer Joseph Pawling, and the Howard/Leeds Residence (later known as the Kirk Douglas Residence) in Old Las Palmas.
- ⁸ Telephone interview with Gary Wexler, April 28, 2021.
- ⁹ "A House Designed to Expand from Within," *Los Angeles Times Home* magazine, February 9, 1958, 22.
- ¹⁰ Telephone interview with Gary Wexler, April 28, 2021.
- ¹¹ "Journeyman Architect: The Life and Work of Donald Wexler," Design Onscreen documentary, 2009. Directed by Jake Gorst.
- ¹² Interview with Hugh Kaptur, October 4, 2018. Despite searching, no death date was found for Dalu, and I had no success finding relatives. There are no know archives of his work.
- ¹³ Telephone interview with Gary Wexler, April 28, 2021.
- ¹⁴ *Donald Wexler: Architect*, Patrick McGrew, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation, 2011, 18-21.
- ¹⁵ *Steel and Shade: The Architecture of Donald Wexler*, Lauren Weiss Bricker and Sidney Williams, Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011, 70. The quote comes from an interview with Julius Shulman and Donald Wexler conducted by Christina Patoski.
- ¹⁶ Telephone interview with Gary Wexler, April 28, 2021.
- ¹⁷ Ibid.