

Palm Springs Art Museum Purchases Historically Important Santa Fe Federal Savings and Loan Building in Downtown Palm Springs

Structure will be restored to original mid-century design and house the museum's architecture and design collections and provide future space for exhibitions



Santa Fe Federal Savings & Loan, 1960, Julius Shulman (1910 - 2009), photographer; E. Stewart Williams (1909-2005), architect, © J. Paul Getty Trust. Used with permission. Julius Shulman Photography Archive, Research Library at the Getty Research Institute (2004.R.10)

June 24, 2011 (Palm Springs, CA) – The Palm Springs Art Museum announced today that it has purchased the historic 1960 Santa Fe Federal Savings and Loan building in Palm Springs from Wessman Holdings LLC. The majority of the initial \$2.8 million raised for the project came from the Edwards-Harris Family Trust and Trina Turk and Jonathan Skow and funded the \$2.1 million purchase price. Additional amounts raised will be used to fully restore the building to its original mid-century modern design, based on the original E. Stewart Williams architectural working drawings, owned by the museum. In addition, images taken by the famous photographer Julius Shulman of the building (pictured at left) provides further documentation for a complete and accurate restoration. Both Williams and Shulman are represented on the Palm Springs Walk of Stars on the sidewalk directly in front of this iconic building. Marmol+Radziner Architects of Los Angeles, renowned for their restoration of two of the most

significant homes in Palm Springs, the Kaufmann House and the Ship of the Desert, will offer their services pro bono to produce architectural drawings and provide the expertise needed for the restoration.

The building, designed by renowned mid-century modern architect E. Stewart Williams, is located at 300 South Palm Canyon Drive and was originally designed to house the Santa Fe Federal Savings and Loan, which utilized the building until 1980. It then became the American Savings Bank and was then purchased by Sandy and John Wessman in 1997, when it briefly housed the offices of the Palm Springs International Film Festival. It later became the corporate offices of Wessman Holdings and Wessman Development and has been vacant for more than a year.

“We are thrilled to add this architecturally significant building to the museum’s collection,” said Steven Nash, Executive Director of the Palm Springs Art Museum. “This building will be devoted to architecture and design and provide excellent exhibition, program, and archive study space. The main museum building, also designed by E. Stewart Williams, has long needed additional space to support the growing architecture and design collections and archives. The addition of this important building will allow the museum to significantly expand our architecture and design programming.”

The building is a classic mid-century international style structure, and a Class I Historic Site. Situated in a prominent downtown location at the southeast corner of Palm Canyon Drive and Baristo Road, it is a glass pavilion with a lower level containing a vault, meeting space, storage space, kitchen, and restrooms with a total of more than 13,000 square feet. A prime example of mid-century modern design, the building will also provide a space for educational programming, community projects and provide a retail merchandise area that will supplement the current museum store.

The principal Palm Springs Art Museum building, on Museum Drive, is also a Class I Historic Site and the museum includes another historic structure as a part of its collection, Frey House II, perched on the San Jacinto mountain directly above the museum. The Santa Fe Federal Savings and Loan building joins the Frey House II as a stunning example of mid-century modern architecture in the museum's permanent collection.

"It is an honor and a privilege to help spearhead such an important expansion of the Palm Springs Art Museum," said Harold J. Meyerman, Chairman of the museum's Board of Trustees. "Not only is the building a historic landmark, but its location on Palm Canyon will help raise the visibility of the museum to visitors and residents and will become one of the museum's most important collection holdings."

"Adding this historically important building to the museum's collection reflects the growth of interest in architecture in our community," said Sidney Williams, former chair of the Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board, Curator of Architecture and Design and the museum liaison for the Architecture and Design Council (ADC). "The building's quality and location in Palm Springs, known worldwide as having one of the largest concentrations of modern architecture in the country, makes this an ideal site for educational programming in architecture and design. It will also allow the museum to offer architecture and design exhibitions, showcase the numerous important gifts and loans the museum has acquired, and enable the museum to pursue additional gifts."

About the Palm Springs Art Museum

The Palm Springs Art Museum's main facility is located in downtown Palm Springs in a 150,000 square foot architecturally-significant building and features compelling exhibitions and a robust permanent collection of modern, contemporary, Western and Native American, Mesoamerican and glass art in 28 spacious galleries and in its two outdoor sculpture gardens. The museum offers educational lectures, films and an assortment of programs and art workshops for all ages. For more information, call 760.322.4800 or visit www.psmuseum.org.

#