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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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Steel Development House Number 2
other names/site number 3125 North Sunny View Drive; Palm Springs Historic Site Preservation Board # 43

2. Location

street & number 3125 North Sunny View Drive not for publication
city or town Palm Springs vicinity
state California code CA county Riverside code 065 zip code 92262

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
 Wayne Clark 30 JAN 2012
Signature of certifying official Date
State Historic Preservation Officer California State Office of Historic Preservation
Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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:)
 Edson H. Beall 3-20-12
Signature of the Keeper 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

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC - single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC - single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT - midcentury modern

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: concrete

walls: steel

frame: steel

roof: steel

other: doors, sliding glass/screen frames: steel

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Steel Development House Number 2 is one of seven all-steel homes—all clustered in the same neighborhood—created by the architectural team of Donald Wexler and Ric Harrison, the structural engineer Bernard Perlin, and the builder Alexander Construction Company. The house is primarily composed of steel and glass on a concrete foundation with *no structural wood* and represents a unique synthesis of off-site prefabrication and on-site assembly. This 1400-square-foot single-story house is located in the historic Racquet Club Estates district of Palm Springs and sits on a one-quarter-acre residential lot. It was the second of three original models that were started in 1961 and opened to the public in March 1962. The house was little altered through the years and underwent a modest restoration in 2001. The house exemplifies simple yet elegant concepts in midcentury modern design plus the novel use of steel construction, demonstrating the possibilities for rapidly-assembled and affordable homes for the middle class that were designed to withstand the harsh desert environment. The property has excellent integrity in all aspects, and appears much as it did as built.

Narrative Description

Steel Development House Number 2 is located in a northern residential section of Palm Springs called the Riviera Gardens subdivision of the Racquet Club Estates. The house sits on a one-quarter-acre lot (approximately 100 x 100 feet); to the north and the south are two additional steel houses and behind (to the west) there is a 3-acre vacant lot fronting Indian Canyon Drive, beyond which are the San Jacinto Mountains.

From the street, the carport, entryway, and roofline of Steel Development House Number 2 are visible; masonry walls 6-feet high extend on either side of the house to the property lines. The outer dimensions of the main part of the house are 36 x 36 feet (not including entryway); the carport/entry/breezeway dimensions extend the total length of the building by 48 feet, bringing the east/west length to 84 feet, sitting perpendicularly to Sunny View Drive. The exterior color of the house is beige, the exposed steel frame is chocolate brown, and the roof plane is brilliant white.

The massing of the house is low and linear with a pinwheel-like layout: namely, a central core from which radiates four distinct elements: living areas on the north and south sides, sleeping areas to the west (at the back), and the carport to the east (at the front). The structural elements of the house are exposed, reflecting its assembly. Long steel beams under the roofline stretch the length of the house, ending in vertical steel posts. These beams frame the outer steel panel walls and the floor-to-ceiling glass. The northeast corner of the house features a "spider-leg"—an upside-down L-shaped element that visually carries the line of the horizontal beam out from the house and down. This long horizontal line spanning living and carport areas visually lengthens what is actually a very compact house.

The roof is a flat plane laid across the central core and steel frame; the white color contrasts sharply with the dark brown trim, making the roof appear to "float" over the house. Notable to the house is the lack of decoration or trim. The roof has an imperceptible tilt enabling rainwater to be funneled through a system of channels and drains built into the roof panels and vertical framing.

Steel Development House Number 2 is fronted by a distinctive low green rock wall constructed of Utah quartzite, a feature shared by the other steel houses and acts to differentiate the public front yards from the more private patio areas next to the house. At the northeast corner of the front yard beyond the carport are a series of round patio slabs (called "helicopter pads") connected by large round stepping stones that flow up from the sidewalk to the house, creating pedestrian access separate from the driveway to the south. A large pool is located on the south side of the house behind the high masonry wall. On the north and west sides of the house (in the private areas of the lot), three additional "helicopter pads" are located, representing outdoor living areas.

The lot is xeriscaped and features agave, pencil cactus, desert spoon, Madagascar palms, and other succulents; ocotillo; and Mexican bird of paradise. There is no grass lawn; ground cover is either rock or decomposed granite. Clusters of tall Mexican fan palms are located on either end of the front lot. A high hedge in front of the carport functions to mask the owner's vehicle from view of the street. The pool area is mostly concrete pavement with plant beds on the periphery. The pool is diagonally positioned on the lot to align with the lights of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway cars that ascend and descend the face of the nearby mountain.

The floor plan of the house consists of 1400 square feet, with an entryway, two living areas on either side of the house (north and south), an open kitchen in the center, two bedrooms, two baths, a hallway running the length of the central core, and a laundry nook. Load-bearing elements are minimal, allowing large interior rooms and extensive use of fixed and sliding glass panels, melding the inside of the house with the outside. The two living areas communicate with the side

yards facing north and south through the continuous plate glass. Privacy of these outside living areas is maintained by means of the high masonry walls that separate front from back and the back yard from adjacent houses.

The two living areas allow complete flexibility in the designation of living/dining/family room. As noted previously, all structural elements of the house are steel. One exception to the all-steel nature of the house is nonstructural drywall lining the major living areas which aids in acoustical properties—although many inner walls and ceilings such as those in the kitchen, hallway, and bathrooms are steel. The flooring throughout the house is terrazzo tile. Consistent with modernist ideals, decorations and finishings such as baseboards, door trim, etc., are absent from the house.

In 1999, the original pool was removed and replaced with a modern pool and spa, and the current masonry wall separating the front yard from the pool area was erected; these had no impact on the house itself. At some point (details unknown), one-half of the carport had been enclosed to create an additional room; this was later removed (dates unknown, as no permits were pulled). Steel Development House Number 2 underwent a modest restoration in 2001 by the firm of O'Donnell and Escalante in consultation with the original architect Donald Wexler.¹ The house was basically unaltered but had been allowed to fall into disrepair. In this renovation, the kitchen was rebuilt following the original configuration, the yard was re-landscaped, and the current three-color exterior paint scheme was adopted.

Between 2007 and 2008, the current homeowner revised the front landscaping: removing overgrown shrubbery and trees that were obstructing the view corridor of the house, adding a large helicopter pad and the round stepping stones to enhance pedestrian access to the house, and rebuilding the green rock wall that had presumably been removed. The north sideyard was also re-landscaped; this consisted of removing an unsightly metal storage shed (not original to the house), removing shrubbery, replacing a chain-link fence with a masonry wall, and planting low-maintenance succulents.

Integrity

The steel house project was placed in a windy, remote tract at the northernmost edge of Palm Springs. This area of land in the early 1960s was inexpensive and, as the project dealt with a highly experimental style of construction for affordable housing, its *location* therefore reflected its objective. One of the unique *design* aspects of the steel house system is the versatility of space created within. The placement of load-bearing elements allows for variations in room size and number—the house can be highly customized in order to meet the needs of varied family units. The exterior appearance is highly influenced by the positioning of the house on the lot, the roofline, the entryway, and the carport. Although the house appears very different from its neighbors, the distinctive decorative rock walls of each steel house visually unifies the neighborhood.

The overall design of the house is responsive to the *setting*. The prominent features of the desert environment include wind, heat, and sun. The tensile and sheer strength plus the nondeteriorating properties of steel make it an ideal medium for desert architecture. The wide roof overhangs regulate the intrusion of sun into the living areas. The large expanses of glass allow a visual communication with the surrounding desert and mountain views. Over time, as the surrounding area was built up, it became desirable to add high masonry walls around the private areas and thus "frame" the view. Hence, the features of the lot have evolved with the surroundings in order to preserve the original feeling of the house with its setting.

The defining *materials* of Steel Development House Number 2 are steel and glass. These elements exist unaltered. The renovation of the house in 2001 fundamentally addressed issues of normal wear and tear. In retrospect it is fortunate that no steel components were removed, altered, or damaged over the years, as refabrication would have been impractical. The skills reflected in Steel Development House Number 2 resided not at the building site but at the factory. Virtually every component of the house was prefabricated for assembly at the site and each piece arrived in a finished state (with the exception of drywall in certain interior sections). Hence, the *workmanship* is manifested in the engineering and tooling of the steel components: every piece had to fit perfectly in order to be bolted together: there was no allowance for trimming, fitting, or shaping the steel components by the site crew.

Steel Development House Number 2 clearly evokes the *feeling* of its genre—midcentury modernism, or more specifically, desert modernism. The massing of the house is low, rectilinear, and starkly unadorned, consistent with the ideals of modernism and true to its roots in the International movement. Indoor and outdoor spaces are merged by means of large expanses of glass windows and sliding glass doors, with an outdoor living area corresponding to each indoor area. The postwar era of the 1950s and early 1960s was one of economic expansion, technological advances, experimentation, and optimism; increasing purchase power and leisure time for the middle class allowed for second homes in resort areas such as Palm Springs. Steel Development House Number 2 reflects this *association* with its era.

¹ Barbara Lamprecht, "Three Classic Houses" in *Architectural Record*, 191(11): November 2003, pages 158-163.

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)

Property is:

- 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1962

Significant Dates

1962

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Donald Wexler AIA - architect

Ric Harrison AIA - architect

Alexander Construction Co. - builder

Period of Significance (justification)

Construction was completed in 1962.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

Steel Development House Number 2 is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C at the local level of significance because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of Midcentury Modernism as adapted for desert living, and in addition introduced a novel concept of housing construction that merged the "kit assembly" with the "preassembled module" approaches—all using prefabricated steel components. The Steel Development Houses represented environmentally sensitive, affordable, rapidly assembled homes for the middle class that were practical, stylish, responsive to a harsh environment, and virtually indestructible. At the time of their completion, architectural publications highlighted the importance of this all-steel project.²

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

ARCHITECTURE

Steel Development House Number 2 embodies the characteristics of midcentury modernism. The architects Donald Wexler and Ric Harrison infused the design with visual features reminiscent of Wexler's previous association with Richard Neutra, a modernist architect who was a disciple of the International or Bauhaus movement.

Donald Wexler AIA, a graduate of University of Minnesota, came to Palm Springs in the early 1950s after working with Richard Neutra in Los Angeles. At the time, Wexler and his partner Ric Harrison were collaborating with Bernard Perlin of the Calcor Corporation on a steel-panel system manufactured by Calcor for the rapid and inexpensive construction and expansion of schools. U.S. Steel Corporation approached the group in 1958 with a proposal to sponsor a project that would apply the steel system to residential housing. The partnership included Wexler and Harrison, Perlin, and the builders George and Robert Alexander. 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.

Steel Development House Number 2, along with two other model houses, was started in late 1961; the three were built concurrently. Materials for all three were delivered in five truckloads from Los Angeles. The most time-consuming activity was site preparation: grading, laying water/gas lines, and pouring and curing the concrete foundation that held an inlaid steel template. The nine-by-thirty-six-foot central core of the house, which includes the kitchen, two bathrooms, laundry room, central hallway, and mechanical runs (electrical, plumbing, and ductwork) was prefabricated in Los Angeles and delivered to the site as a single piece. The pre-assembled central core was first lowered onto the slab by a crane. Next, the steel frame was erected. The outer rooms were then assembled around the core using prefabricated wall modules—a unique steel panel "sandwich" consisting of an exterior layer of light-gauge galvanized steel, a hollow core with gypsum board and fiberglass insulation, and drywall facing the interior. These panels, 16 inches in width and three-and-one-half inches thick, were fit into the track template in the slab, interlocked, and bolted to the steel frame and to each other, providing both structure and shear support. Finally the roof, also light-gauge steel, was overlaid and bolted, supported both by the central core and the outer load-bearing steel frame and panels and was designed with deep overhangs for sun protection. The house made extensive use of glass: each major room features eight-foot-high sliding and stationary glass panels. Actual assembly could be accomplished in three days (excluding site preparation and interior finishing).³ Thus, unlike the Lustron house (which arrived totally in pieces as a kit and was assembled on site⁴), Steel Development House Number 2 represents a unique synthesis of off-site and on-site assembly.

The three model houses opened to the public in March of 1962, priced between \$13,000 and \$17,000—competitive with conventional wood-framed tract houses of the time.⁵ Shortly after the debut of the three models, Calcor was taken over by another company Rheemetal, who raised the price of the steel components to the builder. The Alexander Company built four additional production houses later in 1962. These later houses display subtle differences from the three models, including less interior use of steel and utilization of certain off-the-shelf components—presumably to cut costs. However, due to the rise in steel prices that decreased the builder's profit margin, the Alexander Company ultimately cancelled the

² Frank M. McKellar, "New All Steel Home System" in *Home Builders Journal*, August 1962, pages 2-3. See also "Record Houses of 1963" in *Architectural Record* 133: May 1963, pages 82-85.

³ McKellar, page 5.

⁴ Thomas Fetters, *The Lustron Home: The History of a Postwar Prefabricated Housing Experiment* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2002), pages 18-30.

⁵ Bromley Davenport, "Proving His Mettle" in *Atomic Ranch* 14: Summer 2007, pages 60-68.

project and the planned tract of 38 all-steel houses was never completed.⁶ The remaining lots in the tract were finished with conventional wood-frame ranch houses of an unremarkable design and the neighborhood was named the Riviera Gardens tract.

The genius of the Wexler/Harrison architectural approach was in the seamless adaptation of the existing steel panel system into a stylish interpretation of modernism for desert residences. These features include an indoor-outdoor flow of living areas, wide roof overhangs for sun protection, simplicity, and virtual indestructibility in a harsh environment. Details not apparent to the casual visitor include a rain water drainage system that was integrated into the roof panels and steel beam supports, the alignment of all plumbed rooms down the center of the house to maximize efficiency of mechanical runs, and the careful alignment of the house on the lot that considered the angle of sunlight throughout the year.

Although all of the steel houses share the identical footprint and standardized mass-producible components, each house is completely unique—appearing custom—due to site orientation, roof style, and carport/entryway/breezeway configuration. Repositionable nonload-bearing interior walls allowed changes to room size and number, including the allowance for a third bedroom.

Steel Development House Number 2 is an appropriate representation of the steel house project, its basic structure appearing unaltered from its original condition and reflecting the original plans of the architects and engineer with maximal use of steel components.

ENGINEERING

The concept of all-steel construction was not new in the late 1950s. The Aluminaire House designed by Albert Frey and Lawrence Kocher was featured at the 45th Annual Exhibition of the Architectural League in 1931.⁷ This was a concept house only. Various Case Study houses built after World War II made extensive use of steel construction, such as Pierre Koenig's Case Study Houses # 21 and # 22, Eames' Case Study House # 8, and John Entenza's Case Study House # 9.⁸ These were all one-of-a-kind and were never mass-produced.

The Lustron Corporation of the late 1940s successfully put into production a unique porcelain-enameled steel home kit for several years to help address the postwar housing shortage. Although approximately 2500 were built, the enterprise failed financially due to the very large up-front development/factory costs that required massive loans from the government that the corporation was unable to repay.⁹

In contrast, Wexler and Harrison adapted engineering technology that was already in use for school classroom modules. The result is a well-engineered low-maintenance house. The benefits of all-steel construction include:

- Robust performance in hot, sunny, windy environment
- No deterioration typical of wood materials (rotting, swelling, warping, and cracking in intense heat)
- Impervious to termites, dry rot, and fire
- Shear strength to withstand earthquakes
- Rapid heat dissipation after sunset
- Very low maintenance (one advertisement stated that the only required maintenance tool was a garden hose¹⁰)

The prefabrication of steel components shifted the majority of activity from the building site to the steel factory, thus minimizing labor costs. Additionally, there was no construction waste: virtually 100% of materials trucked to the site were used. This compares with the estimate of up to 40% of materials hauled away as scrap/waste after conventional wood construction. Although the insulation is not up to modern standards, it must be borne in mind that most Palm Springs houses were built as vacation homes (for use in the temperate winter season) and were not intended for year-round living.

A single library of prefabricated pieces could be assembled into a wide assortment of homes to meet the needs of the nuclear family. The Steel Development House system had the potential for large-scale production. The suspension of the

⁶ Patrick McGrew, *Donald Wexler: Architect*, Palm Springs Preservation Foundation Publication, 2010, pages 23-29.

⁷ Gloria Koenig, *Albert Frey 1903-1998 A Living Architecture of the Desert*, Peter Gössel, ed. (Köln, Germany: Taschen GmbH, 2008), pages 20-23.

⁸ Elizabeth Smith, *Case Study Houses - The Complete CSH Program*, Peter Gössel, ed. (Köln, Germany: Taschen GmbH, 2002), pages 88-129 and 274-319.

⁹ Fettes, pages 96-109.

¹⁰ McKellar, page 3.

program was a result of corporate changes within Calcor/Rheemetal and the builder's insistence that the homes be priced commensurately with his conventional wood-frame homes. In retrospect, this was an error, as a moderate premium in pricing for a steel house would have been recaptured many times over from the lower maintenance costs.

Developmental history/additional historic context information

Title deeds to determine ownership history were only available back to 1973. It is unknown if the homeowner in 1973 was the first to own Steel Development House Number 2.

???? to 1973	Stanley and Phyllis Dickens
1973 to 1982	Robert Lamm and Edward Legnini
1982 to 1989	Richard Griffin
1989 to 1990	John Konesky
1990 to 1993	GSL Financial Corporation (house was foreclosed)
1993 to 2000	Diane Reed and Jack Parks
2000	David Hollinghead
2000 to 2002	Kevin Lane and Matthew Rush
2002 to 2005	Joanne Fisk
2005 to present	Brian McGuire

In 2001, the Historic Site Preservation Board of the City of Palm Springs granted the enclave of seven steel houses Class 1 Historic Site status. The defining characteristics of the Class 1 designation were deemed to be the all-steel construction, the rooflines, the carports, the fenestration, the distinctive rock walls, and color palette.

Most of Donald Wexler's works as an architect were centered in Palm Springs and the Coachella Valley. After the Steel Development House program, the concept of steel prefabrication was further applied at Disneyworld, where Wexler was hired to develop a system of preassembled or "unitized" steel hotel rooms for the Contemporary Hotel (1968) that were literally slid into the superstructure of the building from the outside like drawers.¹¹ Other notable projects by Wexler after the Steel Development Houses included the post-and-beam Dinah Shore house in 1964 (Palm Springs), the Palm Springs Airport in 1965, the "Style in Steel" house in 1968 (Buena Park, Orange County CA), other custom homes, and numerous schools and public buildings throughout the Coachella Valley.

Donald Wexler, now 85 years old, still lives in Palm Springs, the town whose growth he influenced so profoundly. His last major works were an annex to the Palm Springs Unified School District Center (1998) and the District Headquarters and Operating Facility in Indio CA (1999).¹² He sold his practice in 2000 and donated his archives to California State Polytechnic University Pomona. Although he subsequently consulted with the WWCOT firm on the design of the Sanders/Krizman residence (2001) and the Tropicana Townhomes (2003), his active participation in the field of architecture has concluded.

More recently, Wexler's work in steel design is inspiring new projects in prefabricated modular steel home systems; these include Marmol-Radziner of Los Angeles, Lance O'Donnell of o2 Architecture in affiliation with Blue Sky Homes LLC, and Linda Taalman and Alan Koch (the IT House). These contemporary examples tend to cater more to the upscale custom home market; sadly the potential of mass production for the affordable housing market has yet to be realized.

In 2011, the life and work of Donald Wexler AIA were celebrated with an exhibit at the Palm Springs Art Museum.¹³ With the evocative title "Steel and Shade", the exhibit showcased the totality of Wexler's contributions, highlighting his seminal works in steel as a practical solution to the challenges of desert architecture. A notable feature of the exhibit was a complete full-scale replica of the front façade of a Steel Development House that served as entryway to the exhibit.

¹¹ Lauren Bricker, *Steel and Shade - The Architecture of Donald Wexler*, Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011, pages 32-33.

¹² *Ibid*, page 129.

¹³ *Ibid*, pages 5-131.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Bricker, Lauren and Sidney Williams. *Steel and Shade - The Architecture of Donald Wexler*. Palm Springs Art Museum, 2011.

Davenport, Bromley and Brian McGuire. "Proving His Mettle" in *Atomic Ranch* 14: Summer 2007.

Fetters, Thomas. *The Lustron Home: The History of a Postwar Prefabricated Housing Experiment*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2002.

Koenig, Gloria. *Albert Frey 1903-1998 A Living Architecture of the Desert*. Edited by Peter Gössel. Köln, Germany: Taschen GmbH, 2008.

Lamprecht, Barbara. "Three Classic Houses" in *Architectural Record* 191(11): November 2003.

McGrew, Patrick. *Donald Wexler: Architect*. Palm Springs Preservation Foundation Publication, 2010.

McKellar, Frank M. "New All Steel Home System" in *Home Builders Journal* August 1962.

"Record Houses of 1963" in *Architectural Record* 133: May 1963.

Smith, Elizabeth. *Case Study Houses - The Complete CSH Program*. Edited by Peter Gössel. Köln, Germany: Taschen GmbH, 2002.

Stern, Michael and Alan Hess. "Donald Wexler" in *Julius Shulman: Palm Springs*. New York: Rizzoli and Palm Springs Art Museum, 2008.

Wills, Eric. "Palm Springs Eternal" in *Preservation* 60(3): May/June 2008.

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University California State Polytechnic University
- Other
- Name of repository: Donald Wexler Archives

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1/4 acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>11</u>	<u>542149</u>	<u>3746524</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

- Lot 2 of Tract No. 2085, Parcel 501031013-0, City of Palm Springs, County of Riverside, State of California.
- 3125 North Sunny View Drive, Palm Springs CA 92262

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The boundary of the nominated property is defined by the legal size and dimensions of the lot referenced above. The house is bordered by a high masonry wall on the north, west, and south sides, and abuts Sunny View Drive on the east side.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Brian W. McGuire
organization (property owner) date 5 October 2011
street & number PO Box 1613 telephone (805) 491-1410
city or town Thousand Oaks state CA zip code 91358
e-mail bmcguire98443@roadrunner.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

See attached

Photographs:

See attached

Property Owner:

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name Brian W. McGuire
street & number PO Box 1613 telephone (805) 491-1410
city or town Thousand Oaks state CA zip code 91358

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 18 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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

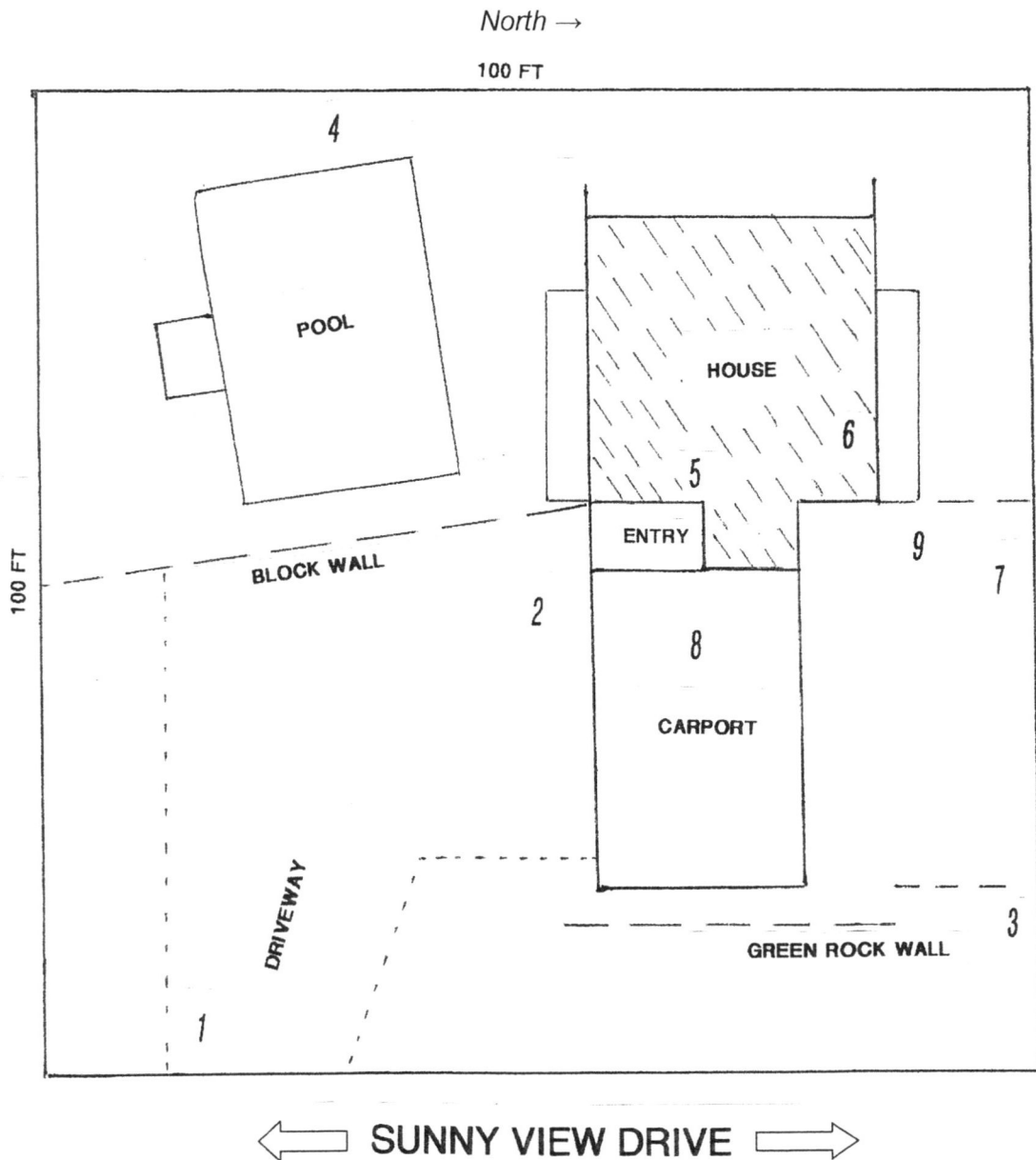
Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property
Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 1

DESCRIPTION

Figure 1: Sketch Map of Steel Development House Number 2

Numbers in italics correspond to the photographs, positioned at the vantage point of photographer.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

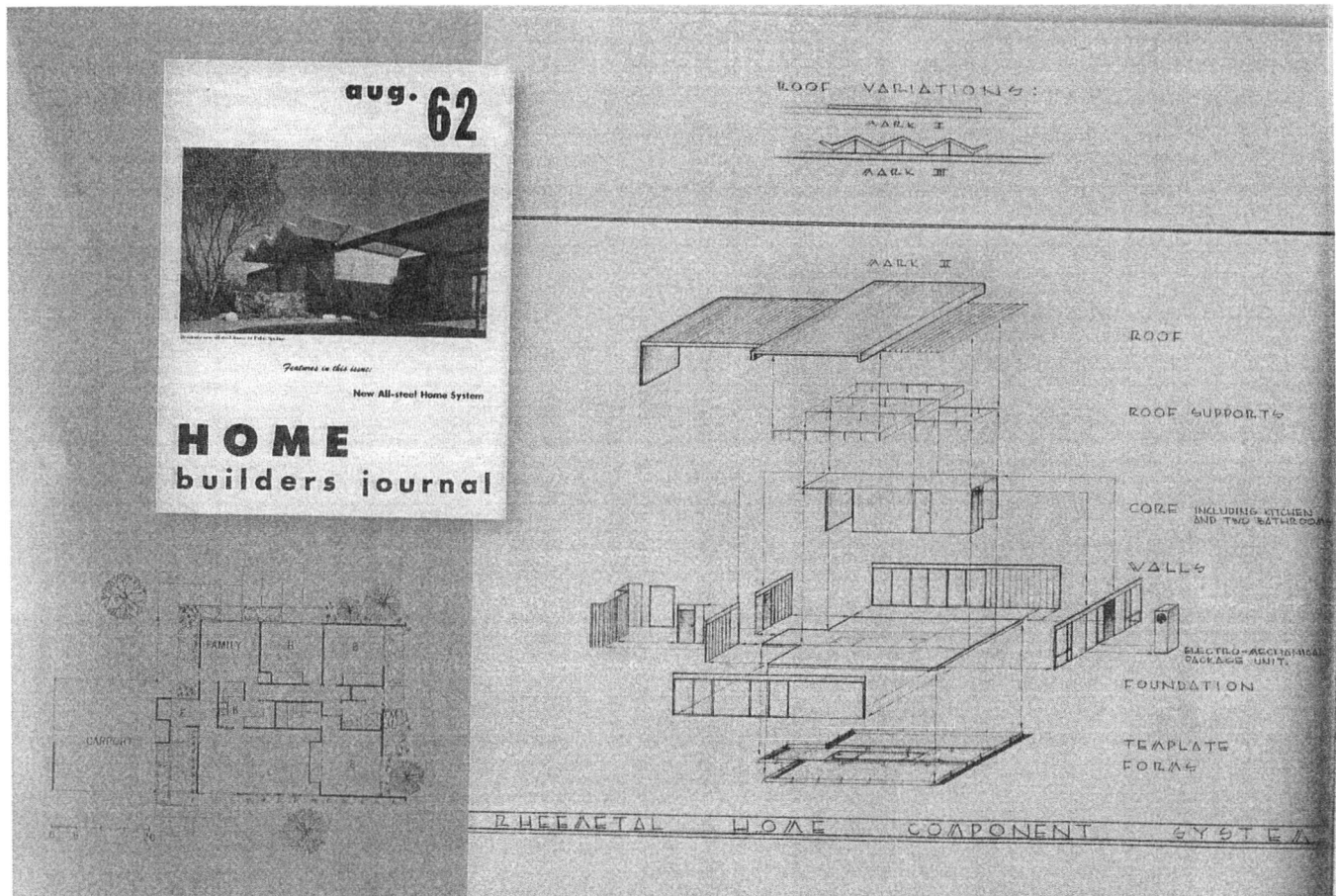
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 2

DESCRIPTION

Figure 2: Construction drawings featured in the August 1962 edition of *Home Builder's Journal* showing basic floor plan and how the various steel components were assembled on the concrete slab. Floor plan in lower left illustrates the 3-bedroom version. Reproduced from Palm Springs Preservation Foundation publication *Donald Wexler: Architect* 2010.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Steel Development House Number 2

Name of Property

Riverside California

County and State

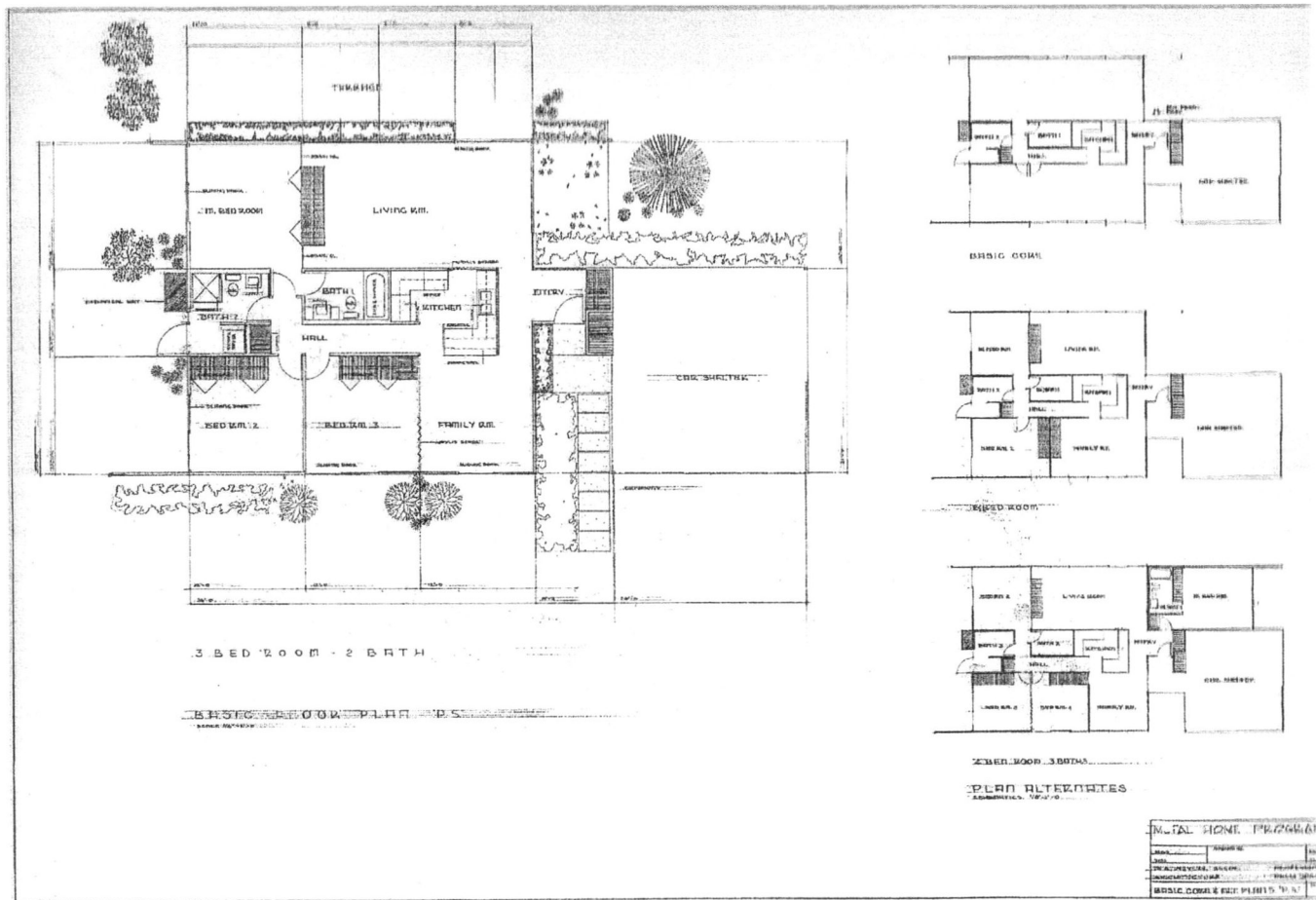
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 3

DESCRIPTION

Figure 3: Series of floor plans illustrating the 2-, 3-, and 4-bedroom versions of the steel houses. Central core is clearly visible in drawings. The 2- and 3-bedroom versions could be built on the standard foundation template; the 4-bedroom version (never built) required an extended foundation. Reproduced from Palm Springs Art Museum exhibit publication *Steel and Shade* 2011.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Steel Development House Number 2

Name of Property
Riverside California

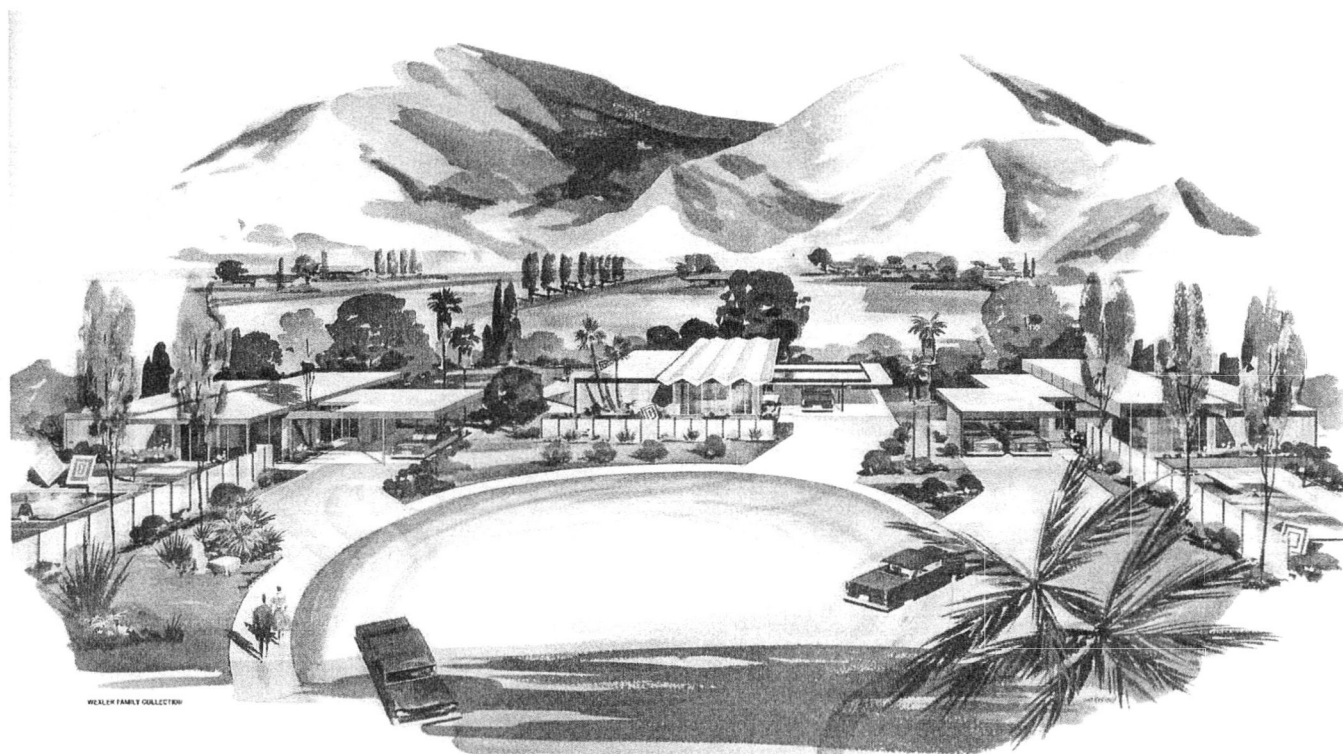
County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 4

DESCRIPTION

Figure 4: Architect's concept sketch of the steel house site, showing all 3 roofline variations. House at left represents Steel Development House Number 2, with the exact lot orientation, roofline, and carport configuration. This orientation was unique, with the house turned sideways relative to the street, orienting the glass walls to the side yards rather than front and back, maximizing both privacy and outdoor living spaces. Reproduced from Palm Springs Art Museum exhibit publication *Steel and Shade* 2011.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

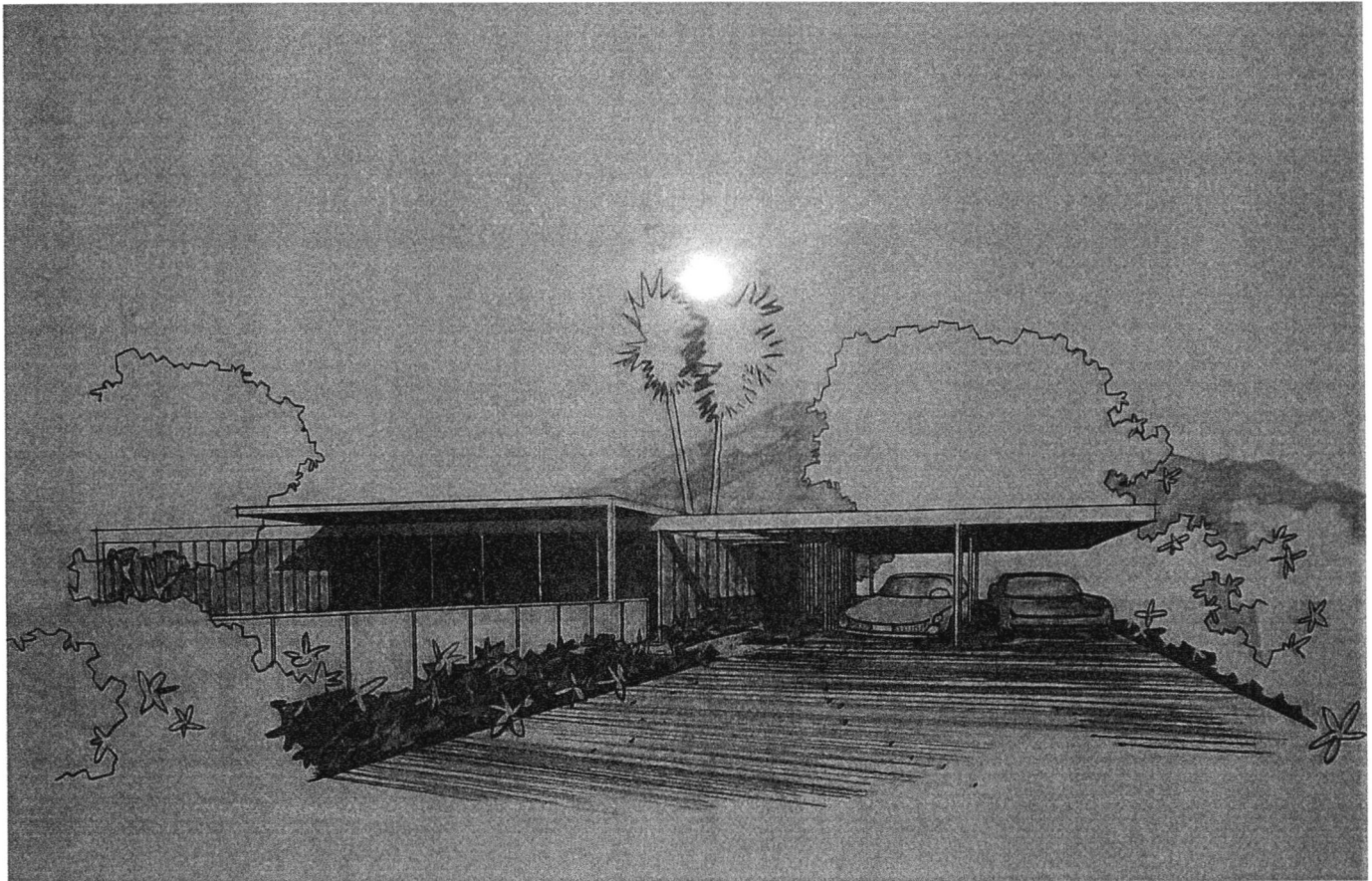
**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property
Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 5

DESCRIPTION

Figure 5: Architect's sketch of Steel Development House Number 2. Palm Springs Art Museum and Donald Wexler Archives, California State Polytechnic University, Pomona.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

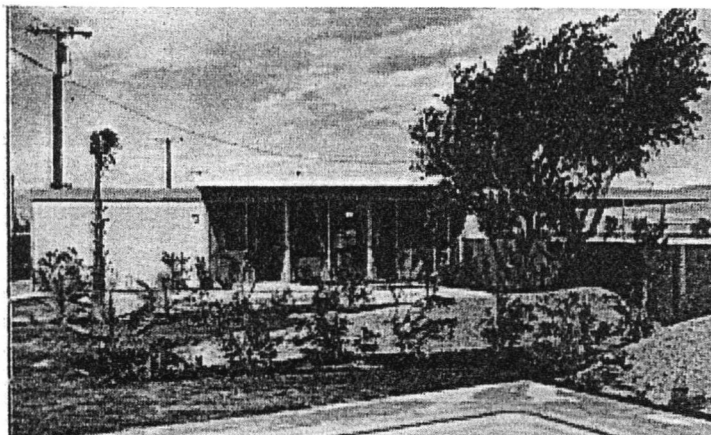
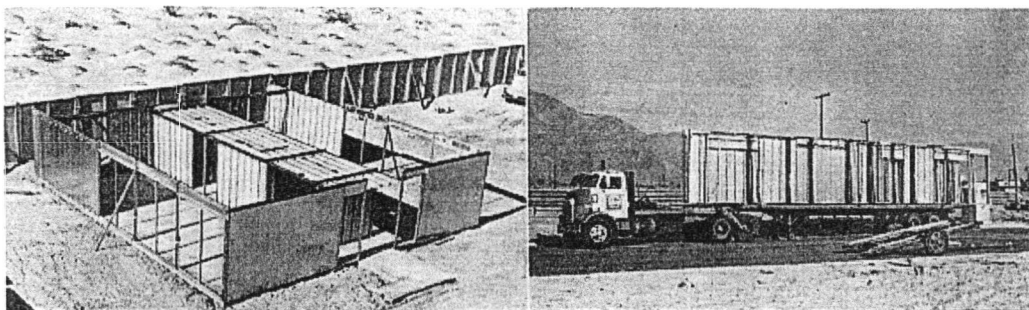
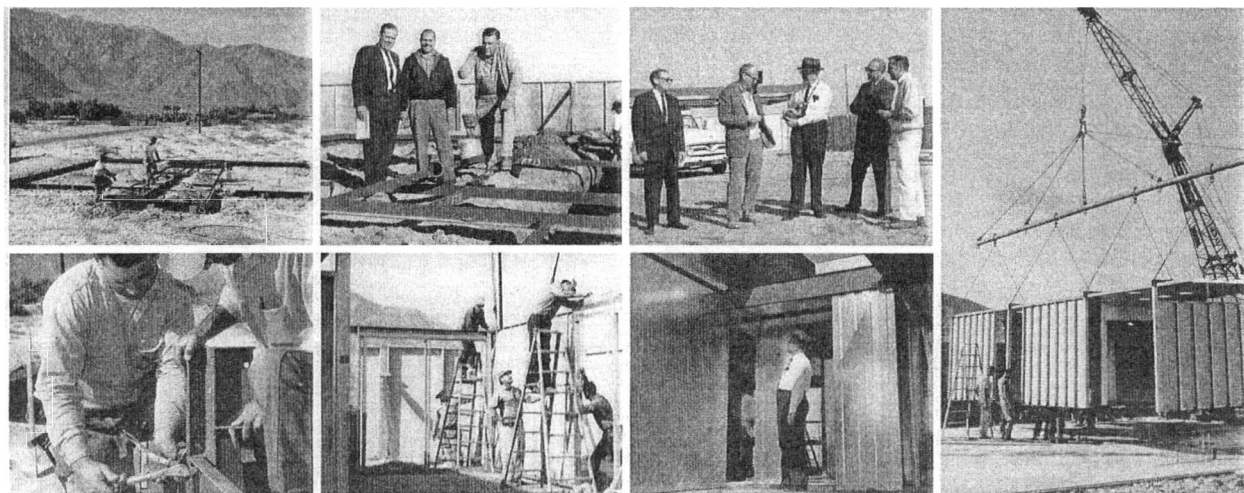
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property
Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 6

DESCRIPTION

Figure 6: (Top panel) Vintage photos of site preparation and assembly of the model houses. (Middle panel) One of the three models in construction; truck with steel components. (Bottom panel) Steel Development House 2 shortly after completion. Reproduced from Palm Springs Preservation Foundation publication *Donald Wexler: Architect 2010* and Frank M. McKellar, "New All Steel Home System" in *Home Builders Journal* August 1962.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

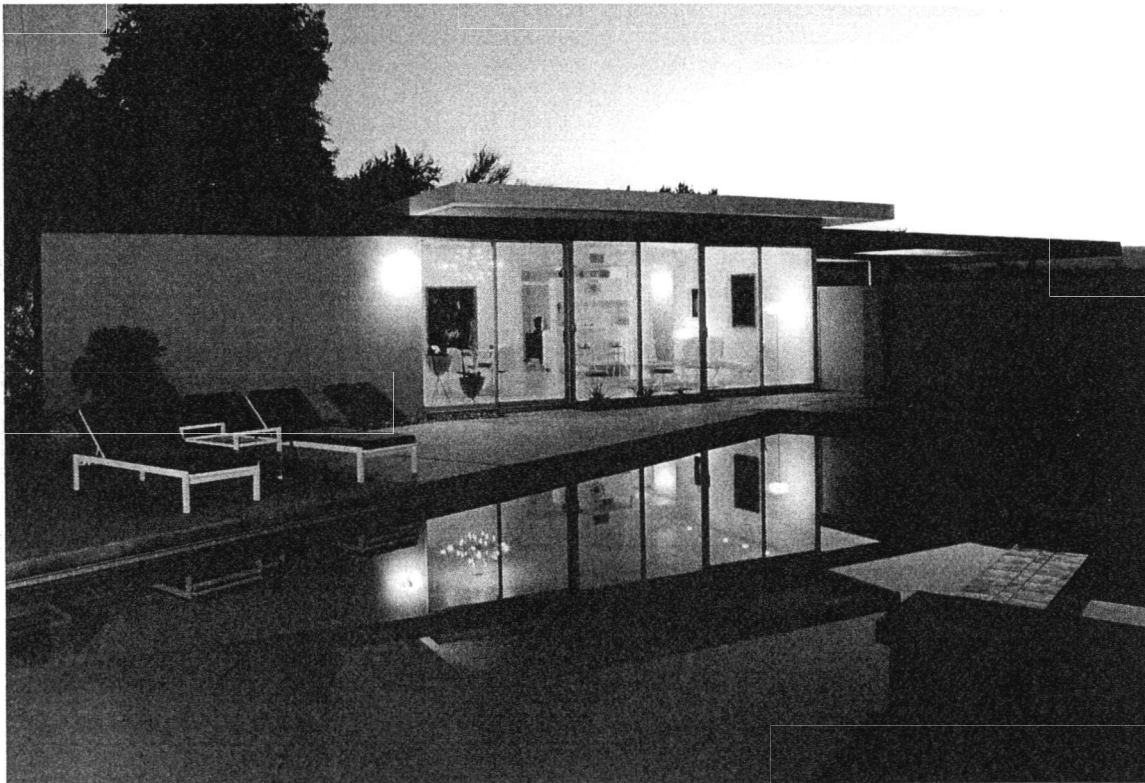
**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property
Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 7

DESCRIPTION

Figure 7: Photograph of south side of Steel Development House Number 2 and pool at dawn (courtesy of Jim Brown, editor, *Atomic Ranch*) that was featured in *Atomic Ranch* Summer 2006.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

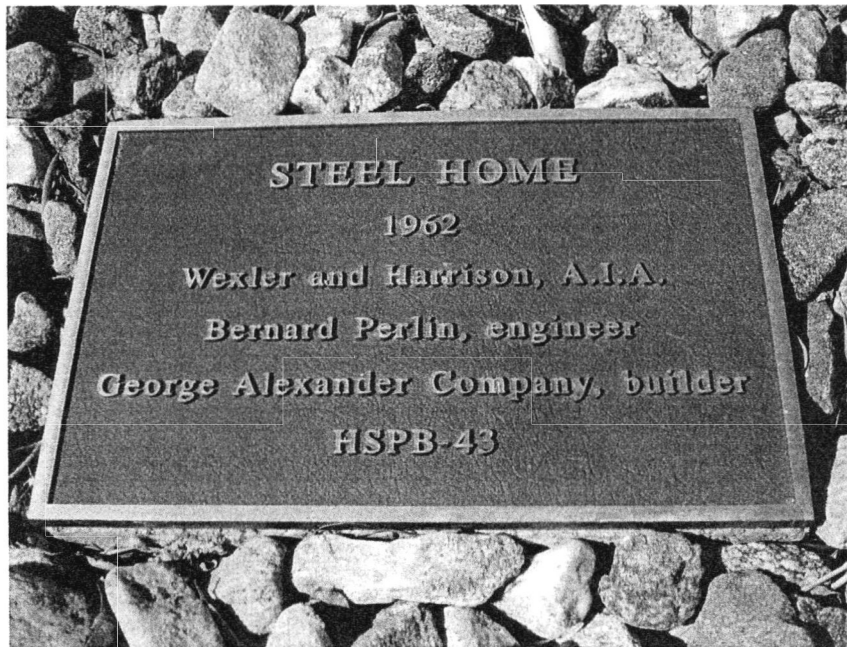
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property
Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation Page 8

DESCRIPTION

Figure 8: Plaque in front of Steel Development House Number 2 placed by the Historic Site Preservation Board of Palm Springs, granting the steel house enclave Class 1 Historic Site status. Photographed by homeowner Brian McGuire.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Steel Development House Number 2
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CALIFORNIA, Riverside

DATE RECEIVED: 2/03/12 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/27/12
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/13/12 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/20/12
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000125

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: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 3.20.12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

The property meets National Register Criterion C at the local level in the areas of Architecture and Engineering. The 1962 house is one of a small number of experimental all-steel residential designs by local architect Donald Wexler, reflecting the emerging tenants of mid-century, "desert modernism" in Palm Springs, California. While at least 6 additional properties were completed as part of this unique local development project, each featuring slightly different plans and details, the nominated property represents one of the most intact and well preserved of the extant all-steel residences. Although the current owner enthusiastically pursued individual listing, the potential exists for the additional all-steel residences to be listed either individually or as a potential district.

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ 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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Steel Development House Number 2

Name of Property

Riverside California

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs Page 1

PHOTOGRAPHS

Name of Property: Steel Development House Number 2
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: California
Photographer: Dan Chavkin
Date Photographed: September 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 10244 Oatfield Way, Camarillo CA 93012

Photo 1 of 9 (CA_RiversideCounty_SteelDevtHouse2_0001)
Southeastern elevation of house from Sunny View Drive.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property
Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs Page 2

Name of Property: Steel Development House Number 2
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: California
Photographer: Dan Chavkin
Date Photographed: September 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 10244 Oatfield Way, Camarillo CA 93012

Photo 2 of 9 (CA_RiversideCounty_SteelDevtHouse2_0002)
View of breezeway and entryway from carport.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Steel Development House Number 2

Name of Property

Riverside California

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs Page 3

Name of Property: Steel Development House Number 2
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: California
Photographer: Dan Chavkin
Date Photographed: September 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 10244 Oatfield Way, Camarillo CA 93012

Photo 3 of 9 (CA_RiversideCounty_SteelDevtHouse2_0003)

View of house from the northeast, with open carport on left. Green rock wall in foreground was constructed of Utah quartzite.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property
Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs Page 4

Name of Property: Steel Development House Number 2
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: California
Photographer: Dan Chavkin
Date Photographed: September 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 10244 Oatfield Way, Camarillo CA 93012

Photo 4 of 9 (CA_RiversideCounty_SteelDevtHouse2_0004)
 Southern elevation of the house. Note deep roof overhangs for sun protection.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property
Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs Page 5

Name of Property: Steel Development House Number 2
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: California
Photographer: Dan Chavkin
Date Photographed: September 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 10244 Oatfield Way, Camarillo CA 93012

Photo 5 of 9 (CA_RiversideCounty_SteelDevtHouse2_0005)
 Interior view of south-facing room showing 8-foot floor-to-ceiling fenestration.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Steel Development House Number 2

Name of Property

Riverside California

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs Page 6

Name of Property: Steel Development House Number 2
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: California
Photographer: Dan Chavkin
Date Photographed: September 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 10244 Oatfield Way, Camarillo CA 93012

Photo 6 of 9 (CA_RiversideCounty_SteelDevtHouse2_0006)

View from the living room (foreground) through the kitchen (right) and entryway (left), and into family room. The prefabricated central core of the house, running from left to right in this photo, included all plumbed rooms (kitchen, 2 bathrooms, laundry), ductwork above, plus an exterior utility cabinet (furnace, water heater, air conditioner), efficiently allowing all utilities to be routed in a straight line through the center of the house.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Steel Development House Number 2

Name of Property

Riverside California

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs Page 7

Name of Property: Steel Development House Number 2
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: California
Photographer: Dan Chavkin
Date Photographed: September 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 10244 Oatfield Way, Camarillo CA 93012

Photo 7 of 9 (CA_RiversideCounty_SteelDevtHouse2_0007)

Close-up of "spider-leg" feature on northeast corner of house. Common in many of Donald Wexler's designs, this was a motif adapted from his collaboration with Richard Neutra.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Steel Development House Number 2

Name of Property

Riverside California

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Photographs Page 8

Name of Property: Steel Development House Number 2
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: California
Photographer: Dan Chavkin
Date Photographed: September 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 10244 Oatfield Way, Camarillo CA 93012

Photo 8 of 9 (CA_RiversideCounty_SteelDevtHouse2_0008)

Visible in the roof of the carport (running horizontally) and barely perceptible on the outer wall of the house (vertically) are the 16-inch steel panels that are the basis of the unique system used in the construction.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Steel Development House Number 2
Name of Property
Riverside California
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

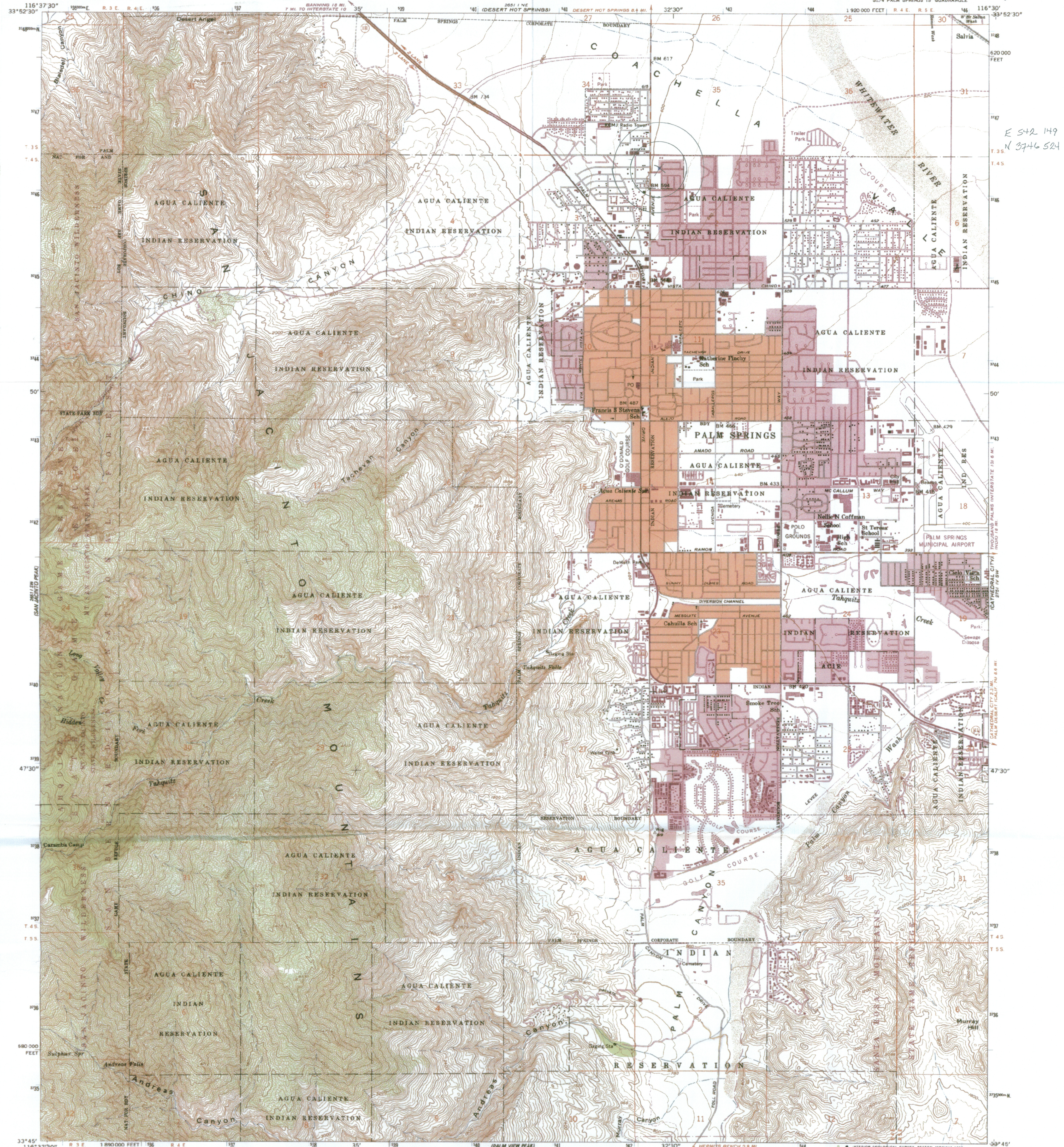
Section number Photographs Page 9

Name of Property: Steel Development House Number 2
City or Vicinity: Palm Springs
County: Riverside
State: California
Photographer: Brian McGuire
Date Photographed: August 2011
Location of Original Digital Files: 10244 Oatfield Way, Camarillo CA 93012

Photo 9 of 9 (CA_RiversideCounty_SteelDevtHouse2_0009)

Close-up of roofline on north side of house. Note two downspouts on each end of roof panel from drainage system built into the steel roof.



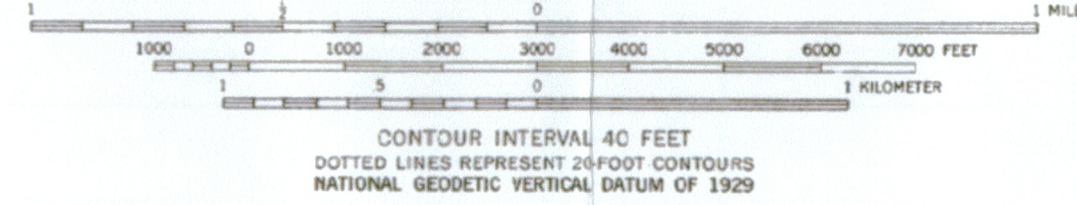
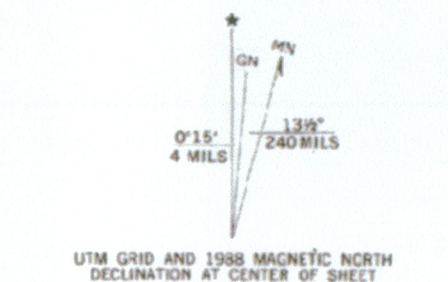


E 542 149
N 3746 524

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
Aerial photographs taken 1955. Advance field check 1957

Polycyclic projection
10,000-foot grid based on California coordinate system, zone 6
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 11, shown in blue 1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move
the projection lines 80 meters east as shown by dashed
corner ticks

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries
of the National or State reservations shown on this map



CONTOUR INTERVAL 40 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 20-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
State Route	

PALM SPRINGS, CALIF.
SE/4 PALM SPRINGS 15 QUADRANGLE
33116-G5-TF-024

1957
PHOTO-REVISED 1988
DMA 2651 | SE-SERIES V895



November 25, 2011



California State Parks
Attn: Office of Historic Preservation,
Mr. Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA, State Historic Preservation Officer
Department of Parks and Recreation
P.O. Box 94296
Sacramento, CA 94296-0001

RE: National Register of Historic Places Nomination for Steel Development House Number 2

Dear Mr. Donaldson,

We are writing to express our enthusiastic support for the National Register nomination of Steel Development House Number 2 (1962) located at 3125 North Sunny View Drive in the city of Palm Springs. Collectively, the Steel Development Houses represent an important chapter in the history of American modernist architecture and the subject house possesses a high degree of integrity and, by extension, is a fine representative of this unique collection of modernist residences. Locally, Steel Development House Number 2 was formally designated a historic site by the city council of Palm Springs in May of 2001.

We have read the nomination submitted by Mr. Brian McGuire and find it a compelling and scholarly assessment of the architectural and historic provenance of this important residence.

As the appreciation for modernist post-war housing, and the work of architect Donald Wexler, FAIA in particular, continues to mature, it is important that this residence be recognized and celebrated at both the state and national level.

The Palm Springs Preservation Foundation 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." We currently have over 1,600 members throughout California and the nation.

If you have any questions, or if I can be of further assistance, please don't hesitate to contact the foundation at (760) 837-7117.

Sincerely,

Ron Marshall
President



DEPARTMENT OF ARCHITECTURE & URBAN DESIGN

1317 Perloff Hall
Box 951467
Los Angeles, CA
90095-1467

310 825-7857
310 825-8959 fax
www.aud.ucla.edu



1 December 2011

California State Park s
Attn: Office of Historic Preservation
Milford Wayne Donaldson , FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer
PO Box 94296
Sacramento, California 94296-0001

Dear Mr. Donaldson:

I am writing to support with the greatest enthusiasm the nomination of Donald Wexler's 'Steel Development House Number 2 , Palm Springs, for the National Register of Historic Places. I am happy that the eligibility category is now set at 50 years and that this building qualifies for that exactly. Many people still question whether a house 'only 50 years old' should qualify as an IMPORTANT building but I believe that recent scholarship and thinking about "Mid-Century Modern" structures have established definitively that buildings so relatively 'young' are indeed significant and worth saving. The crucial factor here is that structures of this age are especially vulnerable to 'modification' by unknowing owners and hence lose their architectural integrity. Aside from its intrinsic architectural distinction in all areas of form and function , the remarkable thing about this building is its UNALTERED integrity and authenticity – a tribute to its succession of enlightened and committed owners. I recommend the building for inclusion without qualification.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas S. Hines". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Thomas S. Hines, UCLA Professor of History and Architecture, Emeritus



PALM SPRINGS
ART MUSEUM

December 19, 2011

California State Parks
Attention: Office of Historic Preservation
Milford Wayne Donaldson FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer
PO Box 94296
Sacramento CA 94296-0001

Dear Wayne:

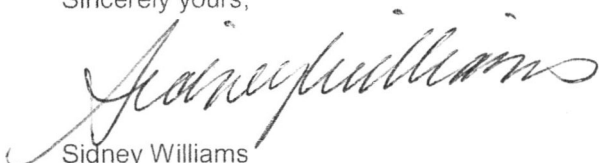
I understand that "Steel Development House Number 2" is under consideration for National Register status and I would like to offer my support for its nomination. This house, one of seven built by the Alexander Construction Company, designed by Donald Wexler and Richard Harrison reflects the optimism and forward thinking that was typical of the post-war period when the population was rapidly expanding. In collaboration with Bernard Perlin, structural engineer, the architects developed a unique system of interlocking steel panels for the walls and roof that were ideal for the harsh desert climate.

The off-site pre-fabrication and then on-site assembly allowed for an efficiency of construction that should have been the leading example in the desert community. Unfortunately the price of steel and some management decisions halted the build-out to the thirty-five houses originally planned for the development.

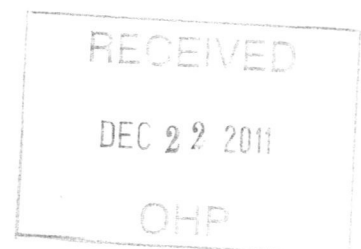
Since 1962, the seven homes and Number 2 in particular, have had numerous owners, but the clarity of the design and construction combined with the durability of the steel, made the passage of time kind to these homes. In Number 2 changes have been made to the exterior landscaping, but the integrity of the house has been maintained flawlessly.

Wexler and Harrison's steel houses have been widely recognized for their masterful design, use of steel and glass, and sensitivity to the desert environment. The understanding of materials, engineering, and sustainability, before that term was widely used, was exceptional for its time and especially relevant today. To recognize this well-preserved example of a steel house on the National Register would be entirely fitting.

Sincerely yours,



Sidney Williams
Curator of Architecture and Design



Michael Stern

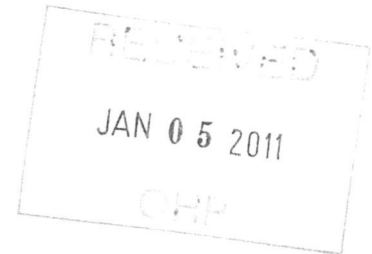
PO BOX 4759 PALM SPRINGS, CA 92263

CURATOR AND AUTHOR

Telephone
760-898-3403

E-Mail
M.STERN@MINDSPRING.COM

December 29, 2011
California State Parks
Attention: Office of Historic Preservation
Milford Wayne Donaldson FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer
PO Box 94296
Sacramento CA 94296-0001



Re: Steel Development House Number 2

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter in support of the nomination to the National Register for Historic Places for Steel Development House Number 2.

Donald Wexler, Architect and Bernard Perlin, Engineer, orchestrated a sincere example of American innovation and ingenuity in this steel house project. An early and efficient melding of pre-fabrication and on-site construction contributed to the quick and efficient, yet utterly solid, construction of this house.

The house is perfect in its ability to withstand the elements of the desert, notably wind and heat. The lack of columns inside the home create a spatial fluidity that is a trademark of Don Wexler's work. Rooms effortlessly flow into one another with clever touches that seek to expand the experiential size of the space, which is 1400 square feet.

This home was built in a manner that exudes the inventiveness of its creators. It is a masterpiece of proportion and construction, and is one of the most solidly built homes that I have ever experienced. The construction innovations seen throughout the home are vivid examples of the desire of the architect to reach beyond the common and move into the realm of pushing boundaries to achieve the desired results of livability, engendering feelings of optimism and pleasure for those that live in and experience the house, all the while giving homeowners an unusual comfort level of durability and solidity in the unique and challenging environment that is the Southern California Desert.

This house qualifies for recognition for the innovations which are liberally placed throughout the house and the fine design standards that the house incorporates. Donald Wexler is an architect who expounds the "honesty of modernism" philosophy in which the structural elements of a project become the decorative elements as well, altogether creating a practical and simple design that is laden with both creativity and comfort.

This house is one of the finest examples of Mid-Century Modern architecture to be found in America. Its seeming simplicity hides an intricate and complex plan that generates a unique environment for living. This house is one of the foremost projects that has helped to bring enormous attention to Palm Springs spectacular collection of Mid-Century Modern architecture, and is one of the keystones in the preservation movement that exists there. It has already been recognized with Class 1 Historic Site status by the City of Palm Springs, and national recognition seems absolutely appropriate for this landmark property.

If you have any further questions of any kind, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely yours,

Michael Stern
Curator and Author
Julius Shulman: Palm Springs

JIM JENNINGS ARCHITECTURE

49 RODGERS ALLEY SAN FRANCISCO CA 94103



December 30, 2011

California State Parks
Attention: Office of Historic Preservation
Milford Wayne Donaldson FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer
1725 23rd Street
Sacramento CA 95816

RE: Steel Development House Number 2

I am writing to urge you to approve the application to add 3125 North Sunny View Drive, Palm Springs, CA, also known as Steel Development House Number 2, to the National Register of Historic Places.

Having taught, lectured, and practiced architecture in California for the past 35 years, and having received recognition for my own work over those years (including an Award for Architecture from the American Academy of Arts and Letters), it is my professional opinion that Steel Development House 2 would be a significant addition to the Register. It would also preserve in perpetuity an important page in the rich history of architecture in America.

The fundamental expression of modernism in American architecture has been the application of materials for their inherent characteristics as materials rather than using them simply to duplicate what was built before. Steel Development House 2 is a historically significant example of this.

Steel is a material that has enormous tensile strength. It is also a material that gains other structural characteristics by how it is shaped. In the case of Steel Development House 2, thin steel sheets are bent into wide "U" shapes and joined together to make structural walls. Although very light and thin, they provide all the support normally associated with masonry or wood framing. Walls that are not solid are made of large panels of glass.

Another important expression of modernism is the use of modern manufacturing techniques in the production of architecture. Bringing the precision of the factory to bear on the unique anomalies of a specific site is a goal that has been aimed at for over a hundred years. Again, Steel Development House 2 is a historically significant example

of a successful attempt to do this. The manufacture, fabrication, delivery and assembly of this building was accomplished with great efficiency and without adjustments at the site.

Finally, there is the utopian ideal of using the methods of mass production to provide an architecture that would be more accessible to more people. That was the goal of the Steel Development House project, the success of which Steel Development House 2 is evidence. Changes in business arrangements after completion of the initial phase cannot diminish the historic significance of this accomplishment.

As an architect, I have been inspired and influenced by its innovation. I have also been inspired by its beauty. Because what must be said about Steel Development House 2 is that its importance is so multi-faceted, from its highly inventive use of material to its exploitation of the capabilities of manufacture and assembly, it is easy to overlook how exquisitely elegant this little house really is.

I strongly recommend that you approve this application.

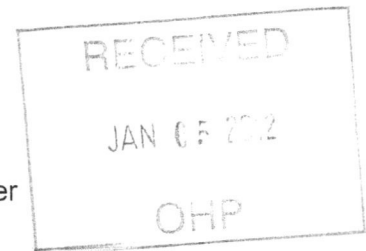
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Jennings". The signature is stylized with a wavy line for the first part and a more complex, looped structure for the second part.

Jim Jennings AIA

January 02, 2012

California State Parks
Attention: Office of Historic Preservation
Milford Wayne Donaldson FAIA State Historic Preservation Officer
PO Box 94296 Sacramento CA 94296-0001



Re: Letter of support: Steel Development House Number 2

In a recommendation such as this it seems natural to extol the numerous virtues of steel construction as an ideal, yet experimental mid-century building material, for a hot and arid environment like Palm Springs. Or one could recount the rigorous modernist aesthetic, rendered in steel and inspired by the architect, Don Wexler's mentor and first boss Richard Neutra and how he balanced Neutra's sensibilities with his own pragmatism garnered from his depression era upbringing.

However, Steel Development House Number 2's greatest contribution to the depth and breadth of historical mid-century architecture in this Southern California region is its unchanged integrity. As a Palm Springs based architect I have had the unique pleasure to personally assist with restorations on all but two of the original seven Steel Homes. Steel House Number 2 is in pristine condition, unchanged from the original design and with its modest roofline (the most elemental of the three Steel House roof types) makes it an ideal candidate for recognition.

Of particular note is why Steel Development House Number 2 has remained in such unspoiled condition. It is my strong assertion the condition of the home rests largely in what we often come to think of today as the "new" phenomenon of sustainability. Beyond Steel House Number 2's durability (inorganic materials like steel will last forever in a dry desert environment) it has a seamless indoor/outdoor relationships that maximize environmental opportunities and views; the use of planar systems that allow forthright, beautiful use of minimal materials; deep overhangs and cantilevers that naturally temper the extreme climatic conditions of the desert southwest.

Simply stated Steel House Number 2's basic planning make it effortless for the occupant to maximize the social, economic, environmental, and aesthetic efforts that modernism set out to resolve. Steel House Number 2 is now a beacon for the kind of architecture most valued in our community. This I believe is the truest compliment any building or architect could hope for.

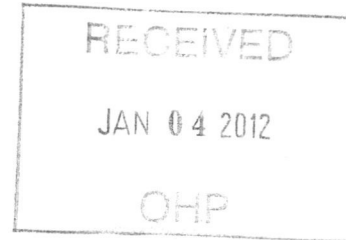
Please, feel free to contact me if I can be of assistance in any way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lance O'Donnell".

Lance Christopher O'Donnell, AIA
o2 Architecture
1089 N. Palm Canyon Drive, Suite B
Palm Springs, CA 92262
lance@o2arch.com
760.778.8165 p.

Alan Hess
architect
4991 Corkwood Lane
Irvine, CA 92612
949 551 5343
alan@alanhess.net



Jan 3, 2012

California State Parks
Attention: Office of Historic Preservation
Milford Wayne Donaldson FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer
PO Box 94296
Sacramento CA 94296-0001

re: Steel Development House Number 2

Dear Mr. Donaldson:

I strongly support the nomination of Steel Development House Number 2 by architect Donald Wexler. This and the other Steel Houses are excellent pieces of design by a noted architect which usefully addressed a significant architectural issue, namely, the application of modern pre-fabricated technology and steel to the challenge of cost-effective housing.

I write as a historian and architect. I have discussed the Steel Houses in two of my books (**Julius Shulman: Palm Springs**, Rizzoli, 2008, and **Palm Springs Weekend**, Chronicle Books, 2001), as well as in the filmed documentaries **Journeyman Architect: Donald Wexler** (2009) and **Desert Utopia** (2011), both produced by DesignOnScreen Foundation. I am also the author of sixteen other books on mid-twentieth century architectural history.

The Steel Houses hold an important place in the history of modern prefabricated housing, a role that has only come to light in the past decade or so. Almost since the birth of Modernism in the late nineteenth century, many architects have intently investigated ways to apply modern materials (such as steel) and mass-production methods to produce well-designed and affordable housing. Frank Lloyd Wright's Usonian houses, Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion house, and Walter Gropius and Konrad Wachsmann's General Panel system are but a few of these attempts.

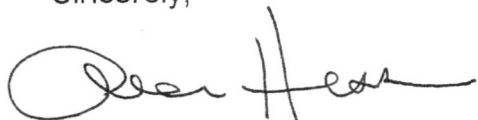
Donald Wexler's solution to this issue, seen in the Steel Houses, is exceptional because his designs were thoroughly developed to the point of practical fabrication and actual

construction by a major home builder; they were much more than theoretical proposals or one-off models. Besides being examples of building fabrication, they are excellent examples of Modern design as well. Their designs incorporate open plans, steel and glass enclosures, indoor and outdoor spaces, and well-balanced light -- all fundamental Modern concepts -- with great sophistication. The rediscovery and restoration of many of these houses in the last several years attests to their success as notable Modern designs.

Donald Wexler's architectural career in the mid-twentieth century has been rightfully highlighted in the last few years. Though his name was not widely recognized until fairly recently, current historians have been able to look at his work, reassess it, and establish the significance of his contributions. Certainly the quality of his other designs, from schools to commercial buildings to custom and tract houses, support the idea that the Steel Houses reflect the hand of a master designer.

Thank you for your consideration of this nomination.

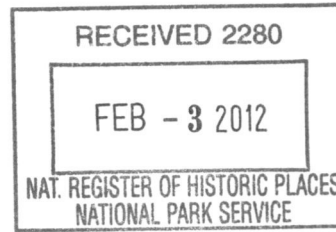
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Alan Hess". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Alan Hess

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

1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816-7100
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January 30, 2012

Ms. Carol Shull, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service 2280
1201 I (Eye) Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Subject: **Steel Development House Number 2
Riverside County, California
National Register of Historic Places Nomination**

Dear Ms. Shull: *Carol*

Enclosed please find the **Steel Development House Number 2** nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. On January 20, 2012 in Chico, California, the California State Historical Resources Commission unanimously found the property eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level of significance,

The property is one of seven all-steel homes created by the architectural team of Donald Wexler and Ric Harrison, the structural engineer Bernard Perlin, and the builder Alexander Construction Company. The 1,400 square foot house is primarily composed of steel and glass on a concrete foundation with no structural wood. It is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C at the local level of significance because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of Midcentury Modernism as adapted for desert living, and in addition introduced a novel concept of housing construction that merged the "kit assembly" with the "preassembled module" approaches — all using prefabricated steel components. Its period of significance is 1962.

The property is nominated by its owner, Brian McGuire. Seven letters of support are included with the nomination. If you have any questions regarding this nomination, please contact Amy Crain of my staff at (916) 445-7009.

Sincerely,

Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures



Paul Lusignan/WASO/NPS

04/04/2012 01:25 PM

To

cc

bcc

Subject Fw: Steel Development House 2 (plain text)



"Crain, Amy"

<ACrain@parks.ca.gov>

04/04/2012 01:07 PM

To "Paul_Lusignan@nps.gov" <Paul_Lusignan@nps.gov>

cc

Subject RE: Steel Development House 2 (plain text)

The house being proposed for NRHP designation - 3125 North Sunny View - is an appropriate representation of the Steel Development Houses for the following reasons:

This was the second of three original models that were started in 1961 and opened to the public in March 1962. The first model is currently unrestored, greatly altered, and in lamentable condition; the third model is virtually invisible from the street and is rarely available for public viewing.

The four production units built later in 1962 contain subtle differences from the models, including less interior steel and more off-the-shelf components such as aluminum sliding glass/screen doors rather than the cast steel in the originals, possibly to cut costs. 3125 North Sunny View reflects the original plans, with maximal use of steel components.

3125 North Sunny View is one of the least altered of the seven houses through the years, facilitating an accurate and complete restoration in 2001.

3125 North Sunny View is continually made available by the owner to the public for tours, events, and photo shoots; it features an excellent view corridor from the street and exemplary maintenance.

Thank you!

Amy H. Crain
State Historian II
Registration Unit
California State Office of Historic Preservation
1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95816-7100
PHONE (916) 445-7009

**Steel Development House 2
Palm Springs, Riverside County
Staff Report**

Steel Development House 2 is one of seven all-steel homes created by the architectural team of Donald Wexler and Ric Harrison, the structural engineer Bernard Perlin, and the builder Alexander Construction Company. The 1,400 square foot house is primarily composed of steel and glass on a concrete foundation with no structural wood.

Steel Development House 2 is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C at the local level of significance because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of Midcentury Modernism as adapted for desert living, and in addition introduced a novel concept of housing construction that merged the "kit assembly" with the "preassembled module" approaches — all using prefabricated steel components. Its period of significance is 1962. The Steel Development Houses represented environmentally sensitive, affordable, rapidly assembled homes for the middle class that were practical, stylish, responsive to a harsh environment, and virtually indestructible.

The massing of the house is low and linear with a pinwheel-like layout, a central core from which radiates four distinct elements: living areas on the north and south sides, sleeping areas to the west (at the back), and the carport to the east (at the front). The structural elements of the house are exposed, reflecting its assembly. Long steel beams under the roofline stretch the length of the house, ending in vertical steel posts. These beams frame the outer steel panel walls and the floor-to-ceiling glass. The northeast corner of the house features a "spider-leg" — an upside-down L-shaped element that visually carries the line of the horizontal beam out from the house and down. This long horizontal line spanning living and carport areas visually lengthens what is actually a very compact house.

The roof is a flat plane laid across the central core and steel frame; the white color contrasts sharply with the dark brown trim, making the roof appear to "float" over the house. Notable to the house is the lack of decoration or trim. The roof has an imperceptible tilt enabling rainwater to be funneled through a system of channels and drains built into the roof panels and vertical framing. The lot is xeriscaped and there is no grass lawn; ground cover is either rock or decomposed granite. The pool is diagonally positioned on the lot to align with the lights of the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway cars that ascend and descend the face of the nearby mountain.

The property is nominated by its owner, Brian McGuire. Seven letters of support are on file. Staff supports the nomination as written and recommends the State Historical Resources Commission determine that Steel Development House 2 meets National Register Criterion C at the local level of significance. Staff recommends the State Historic Preservation Officer approve the nomination for forwarding to the National Park Service for listing in the National Register.

Amy H. Crain
Historian II
January 5, 2012