

RE: Introduction of an Ordinance to Adopt a Notice of Exemption Under CEQA and Adopt a Zoning Ordinance Amendment to Implement Residential and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards

Dear Mayor Quintanilla, Mayor Pro Tem Harnik, and distinguished council members,

Lift to Rise would like to express our support for a Zoning Ordinance Amendment to Implement Residential and Mixed-Use Objective Design Standards (ODS) in the city of Palm Desert. Given the city's compliant Housing Element, Palm Desert maintains their efforts to provide affordable housing to residents and this ODS would be a great practice of streamlining affordable housing while earning points toward obtaining their prohousing designation, opening more funding sources for future developments.

Without these standards, the typical turnaround time for design approval can be a lengthy and costly process for developers; especially in cases where subjective design standards are inconsistent, and developers may be forced to revise their plans. If design standards are vulnerable to subjective judgement by the city council or planning commissions, it could prove difficult for developers to follow critical timelines.

Given the various amenities offered by the city, the standards included in the ODS are meant to be beneficial to residents and visitors. For example, the widened sidewalks and tree canopy standard will allow for safe walkable neighborhoods to minimize heat exposure while walking to bus stops, grocery stores, retail shops along the busy highway, or just taking a walk around neighborhoods with enough separation between pedestrians and vehicles. The standards addressing outdoor lighting will increase nighttime safety while benefiting residents that may enjoy utilizing community spaces on property for neighborhood gatherings. Residents across the city will benefit from these high-quality standards as these developments add assets to the entire community.

We are thankful to the city for utilizing practices allotted by the state that would streamline affordable housing through legislation such as SB 35, SB 330, and AB 2011. By creating this ODS, the potential to save developers time and money in their projects increases substantially. It also shows that the city is committed to the implementation of prohousing programs planned in their Housing Element meant to bring solutions to the local housing crisis.

Lift to Rise was formed to transform the systems that generate the supply of affordable housing, recognizing that the combination of low wages and high housing costs are the root causes of financial precarity among Coachella Valley residents.

That is why Lift to Rise and over 60 cross-sector partners, including the City of Palm Desert, have coordinated around a shared goal of reducing the regional housing cost burden at a population level through the production of 10,000 units of affordable housing in the Coachella Valley by 2028.

Together, we are operating off a shared Action Plan which spans 5 key strategy areas:

1. Aggregating a pipeline of community-prioritized projects across the valley,
2. Growing a regional Housing Catalyst fund to spur production,

3. Advocating at the local, state, and federal level for policies and regulatory changes that support housing production in our region,
4. Engaging and mobilizing residents and elected officials in support of affordable housing, and
5. Keeping residents housed through a coordinated eviction prevention strategy.

We stand ready as a collaborative to support the city to increase affordability. We thank the City of Palm Desert for joining us in this work thus far and urge the city council to continue to prioritize the production of affordable housing to ensure that all residents are healthy, stable, and thriving and urge you again prioritize affordability with this recommendation.

Thank you for your time.

Lift to Rise