

Comments regarding Item 10d on the Action Items Calendar for
Palm Desert City Council Meeting, April 11, 2024

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My name is Donald Zeigler and I wish to address the possible adoption of Item 10d that will set standards for multi-family and mixed-use housing development in the city. I see that it takes no account of the unique electrical power situation here. It utilizes language from the city's General Plan that was created in 2016 that was oblivious to global warming and the increased power demands on the grid since then. But it does include in its preamble that:

The below steps should be followed at the start of designing new projects.

1. Review the Palm Desert General Plan to understand the goals and policies for new development.

The Housing Element of Resolution 20-2022 that I addressed before was specifically targeted at standards for low-rent and subsidized housing managed by the city. Policy 12 in the 2022 Resolution says that the city should encourage new technologies and passive solar site planning for new housing that it manages. If this policy makes sense for housing managed by the city, why shouldn't it apply to new development of multi-family and mixed-use housing overall. As a resident of the valley, I find that adding new developments to our community that only add to the load on the grid is inexcusable. New developments should be adding surplus solar and battery power back to the grid as well as ensuring a safe home for residents in case of a power outage. Policy 12 could be used to do that if it were added to resolution that you are about to vote on.

My three minutes don't allow me to address the Energy Conservation paragraph in Resolution 2022-20, but I have provided it to you as well. Please just read it. It makes a better case than I ever could standing here for why you should add Policy 12 to the resolution that you are about to vote on.

Thank you.

Evaluation: The City continues to consider the placement of housing in proximity to jobs, and to encourage the housing of Palm Desert employees in projects. This was directly accomplished through a subsidy agreement at the Arc Village project, which provides for 5 units for Palm Desert employed households, and through the University Village Specific Plan, which places higher density residential lands in close proximity to job centers in the Portola/Gerald Ford/Cook/Fred Waring area. This policy continues to be a priority for the City, and will be carried forward into the 2022-2029 planning period.

Policy 12

Encourage energy conservation through the implementation of new technologies, passive solar site planning and enforcement of building codes. Please also see the Energy and Mineral Resources Element.

Program 12.A

The City shall maintain an Energy Conservation Ordinance which mandates conservation in new construction beyond the requirements of the California Building Code.

Responsible Agency: Planning Department

Schedule: Annual review with state General Plan report

Program 12.B

The City shall encourage Green Building techniques, recycling in demolition, and the use of recycled, repurposed and reused materials in all new affordable housing projects to the greatest extent possible.

Responsible Agency: Planning Department, Building Department, Public Works Department

Schedule: As projects are proposed

Evaluation: The Housing Authority has implemented energy conservation at multiple projects, including the Carlos Ortega Villas, which was constructed as a net-zero project, and with replacements of HVAC and water heating systems with high-efficiency systems at Housing Authority projects. In addition, solar installations were undertaken within the Desert Rose project. This policy continues to be important to the City, and will be carried forward to the 2022-2029 planning period.

Summary of Impact on Special Needs Populations

In summary, as described in the evaluation above relating to special needs programs, the City's implementation of its Housing Element during the previous planning period supported the housing needs of special needs households:

- City-owned housing communities continue to house senior residents in 7 projects totaling 366 units.
- City-owned housing communities continue to house physically and developmentally disabled residents, which have ranged from 91 to 188 residents in the last planning period.
- The City has actively participated in moving forward on the Arc Village project, which will result in 32 units for developmentally disabled residents, in addition to the funds expended to make improvements to Desert Arc educational and vocational facilities.

As shown in Table III-16, of 24,114 occupied housing units in Palm Desert, 67 (0.3%) lacked complete plumbing facilities, and 198 (0.8%) lacked complete kitchen facilities. Depending on overall conditions, these units could be considered substandard.

The Palm Desert Housing Authority manages the Housing Improvement Program (HIP), which is funded through CDBG. Currently, the emergency grant component is the only component that is funded. It assists homeowners with emergency health and safety repairs to their homes, such as roof repairs, water heater replacement, and ADA improvements. Four (4) households received emergency grants during the 2014-2021 planning period.

Environmental Constraints

The City is identified as Zones III and IV in the Uniform Building Code (UBC) for seismic activity. The UBC imposes certain standards for construction in these zones, which may add to the overall costs of housing. These standards, however, are necessary for the public health and safety, and are common throughout the Coachella Valley and California. None of the proposed sites occur on lands designated as Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones by the State. There are no active faults on any of the sites proposed for development of affordable housing units in the City. The standards required to protect the City's residents from seismic hazards are not considered a constraint to the provision of housing. There are no other environmental constraints to the development of housing.

Energy Conservation

In addition to the requirements of Title 24 of the Building Code, the City has enacted additional energy efficiency requirements, water conserving landscaping requirements, and has a number of energy conservation programs for residents. Although the cost of installation of energy efficient, "green" or similar products in a home or apartment may increase the initial cost, affordable housing providers in the Coachella Valley have indicated that the cost differential was becoming smaller as technologies improved; and that the long-term benefit to the home owners or renters was worth the added initial expense. These developers implement energy conserving construction to the greatest extent possible in their projects. Carlos Ortega Villas, an affordable senior housing project built in 2015, includes passive heating and cooling, solar panels for generating electricity, solar thermal panels for heating water, and water-efficient plumbing fixtures and landscape materials, with the long-term goal of having net zero energy usage.

SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS

This section of the Housing Element quantifies households with special housing needs, such as farmworkers, the homeless, and seniors living in the City. These households can have housing needs which may be more difficult to address, and which require special attention.

Farm Workers

Farm workers are employed in agricultural industries, including livestock, crops, and nursery products, and typically perform manual and/or hand tool labor-plant, cultivate, harvest, or pack field crops. The industry is supported by both year-round and seasonal workers who typically earn low wages, have difficulty obtaining safe and affordable housing, and have limited access-other