

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: August 22, 2024

PREPARED BY: Carlos Flores, AICP, Principal Planner

SUBJECT: STUDY SESSION: REGULATIONS FOR EXTERIOR LIGHTING AND
ILLUMINATION ON COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

RECOMMENDATION:

Provide feedback on updating Palm Desert Municipal Code Chapter 24.16, Outdoor Lighting Requirements, for exterior lighting and illumination on commercial buildings.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

City of Palm Desert commercial businesses utilize a variety of lighting designs to attract customers to their respective businesses. Palm Desert Municipal Code (PDMC) Chapter 24.16, Outdoor Lighting Requirements, provides the regulations for outdoor lighting but does not capture the full extent of designs proposed by business and property owners. Multiple commercial businesses have installed lighting fixtures that require code interpretations or objective standards be applied to determine permissibility and process. The PDMC has a definition for “Decorative lighting” but no guidance on standards or process for installation of such lighting. City staff seeks clearer, subjective standards and process for alternative lighting designs to avoid using objective standards, provide a clarity for business owners, and establish guidelines for City enforcement.

City staff are seeking direction on permissibility and process for the following:

- Building façade tube lighting. City staff recommends requiring a Design Review application for any proposed tube lighting and for these to be discouraged. The City’s Architectural Review Commission has typically rejected proposals for tube lighting.
- Window framing lighting. City staff recommends for these to be prohibited unless it is holiday lighting.
- String lights. City staff recommends for these to continue to be allowed if they are lighting a useable area (outdoor patio, walkway) or highlighting an architectural feature.

Based on the feedback provided, City staff will prepare a policy document or zoning ordinance amendment.

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney’s office.

ATTACHMENT:

1. Presentation