

**ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW COMMISSION  
CITY OF PALM DESERT  
STAFF REPORT**

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MEETING DATE: December 10, 2024

PREPARED BY: Carlos Flores, AICP, Principal Planner

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE A DESIGN REVIEW TO DEVELOP A  
146-UNIT RESIDENTIAL DETACHED DEVELOPMENT WITHIN  
UNIVERSITY PARK

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends the ARC determines that the requirements of the findings have been met based on the analysis and approves the Design Review

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:**

**Executive Summary:**

- **Case No.: MISC24-0049** (Related cases: TM 37506 and PP18-0005)

On November 18, 2018, the Palm Desert Planning Commission adopted Commission Resolution No. 2745 approving Tentative Tract Map 37506 and Precise Plan 18-0005 for a 174-acre, 1,069-unit residential subdivision within the University Neighborhood Specific Plan known as University Park. This approval included a Master Precise Plan document (Master Plan) that established architectural and landscape standards and design guidelines for the project, broken down over eight (8) distinct product types within five (5) planning areas. On November 14, 2024, the City Council approved Final Map 37506-3 for Planning Area 2 within University Park which included 146 single family detached residential units.

Per Section 4.1 of the Master Plan, if the home builder decides to deviate from the Master Plan, it requires approval from the Architectural Review Commission (ARC).

**Project Summary:**

The proposal is a request by Meritage (Applicant), for consideration of a Design Review to modify the approved architecture within an existing development, generally known as University Park (Original Approval). The Original Approval was for a Master Precise Plan and Tentative Map to subdivide ~174 acres and establish architectural and landscape design guidance for 1,069 dwelling units. The dwelling units were spread out over eight (8) distinct product types of different lot sizes within five (5) planning areas. This included 146 units within Planning Area 2 of 50' x 100' and 55' x 90' detached home units. The current proposal is for consideration to modify the architecture and landscape plans for these 146 Units, which is being referred to as "Meritage".

#### A. Property Description

The project site is within Planning Area 2 of the University Park Master Plan, as shown in Exhibit 1 below, and includes 146 single family, detached units measuring 50' x 100' and 55' x 90' in lot size.



#### B. Zoning, General Plan and Adjacent Uses

**Table 1 – Adjacent Land Use and Designations**

	Existing Uses	General Plan	Zoning
<b>Project Site</b>	Vacant	Town Center Neighborhood/University Neighborhood Specific Plan (UNSP)	Planned Residential – 18 (PR-18)
<b>North</b>	Existing/Future Residential	Town Center Neighborhood	Planned Residential – 22 (PR-22)
<b>South</b>	Future Residential	Town Center Neighborhood/ UNSP	Planned Residential – 18 (PR-18)
<b>East</b>	Vacant	Town Center Neighborhood/ UNSP	Planned Residential – 18 (PR-18)
<b>West</b>	Existing/Future Residential	Town Center Neighborhood/ UNSP	Planned Residential – 18 (PR-18)

### C. Project Description

#### Site Plan

The proposed site plan mixes a propose total of 48 units measuring 55' x 90' in lot size and 98 units measuring 50' x 100' in lot size, as shown in Attachment 1. The site plan is consistent with the approved Tract Map for 37506-3. The proposed unit mix provides variety throughout the site and includes identification of enhanced elevations for corner lots that would face multiple street elevations.

#### Architecture

The ARC's review of the project will focus on the revisions to the architecture and landscaping for the 146 units. The proposal includes six (6) single family home designs each with three (3) elevations. This includes three (3) designs for the 55' x 90' units and three (3) designs for the 50' x 100' units. Each home design has a corresponding Front Yard Typical planting plan. The three elevations proposed with each design includes "Modern Spanish", "Boutique" and "Contemporary", which are the three (3) elevation styles approved within the Master Precise Plan. Exhibit 2 below shows a sample of front elevations for the proposed designs.

#### **Exhibit 2 – Meritage Home Designs**



The Master Plan identified four (4) home designs for each type of unit, each with three (3) elevations. The home designs included: two (2) "Modern Spanish" designs, "Boutique", and "Contemporary".

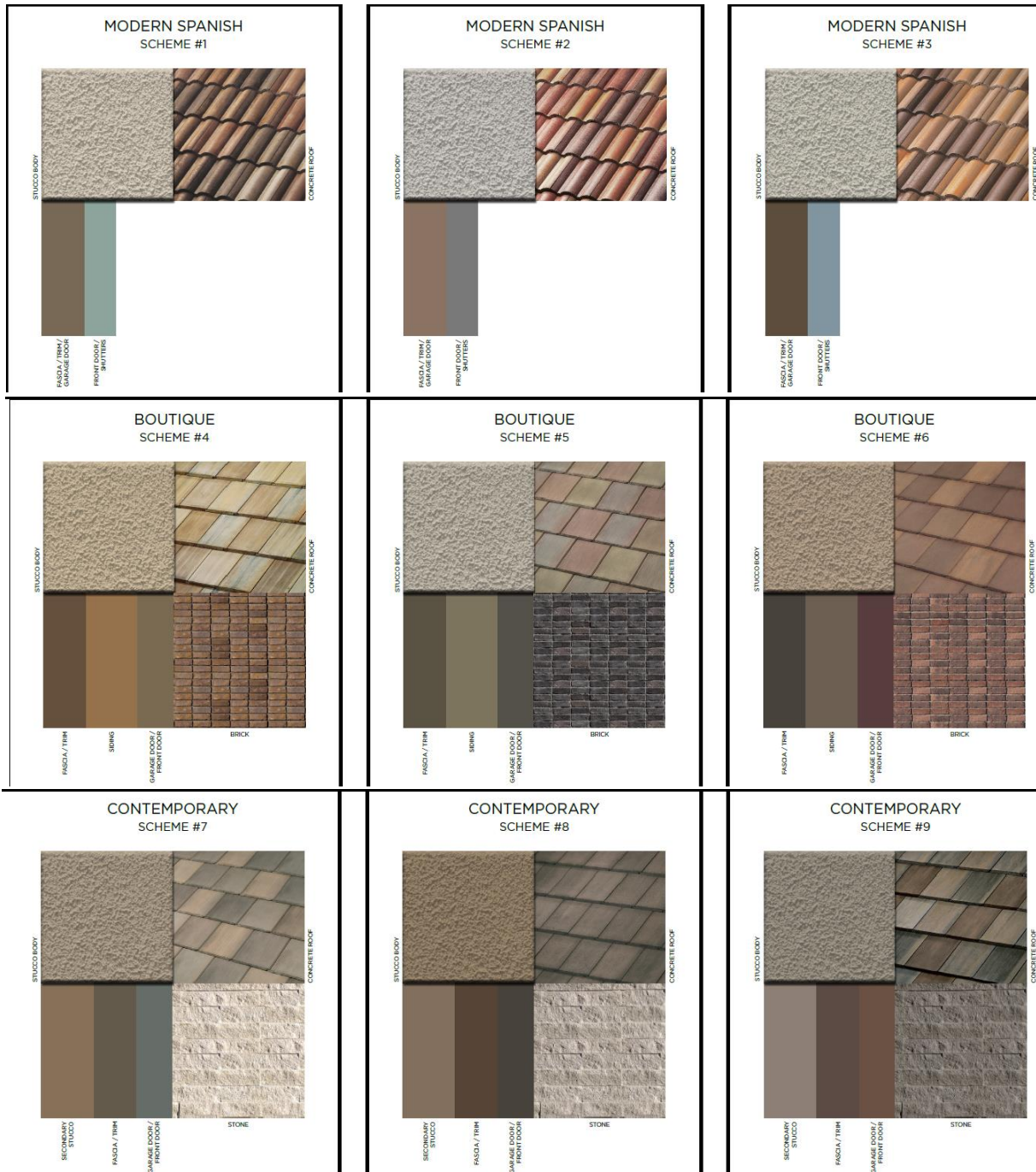
Attachment 3 provides segments from the Master Plan including:

- Front elevations for the Master Plan approved home designs for Planning Area 2
- Narrative and design elements of the architectural styles
- Landscape guidelines

The Meritage proposal changes the architecture from the Master Plan by removing one “Modern Spanish” design and revising the architecture on each home design. The new designs are to be reviewed for their compatibility with the Master Plan.

Exhibit 3 below provides a sample of the proposed color and material board mix for all of the homes, separated by architectural style.

### Exhibit 3 – Color and Material Board





### Landscaping

The proposal includes front yard typical planting plans for each of the five (5) home designs. The project includes a plant list of trees and shrubs to be used for all the home designs. The homes combine a palette of trees, shrubs, and ground material in the front yard to complement existing and future perimeter landscaping surrounding the project. The plant palette includes Palo Breas, Palo Verdes, Mulga Trees, Century Plants, Smooth Agave, Red Yuccas, and other desert compatible plant species. The Master Plan provides a framework of requirements for front yard landscaping throughout the University Park development.

### **Zoning Ordinance Summary:**

The project is found to be in conformance with development standards set in the Master Precise Plan and all corresponding underlying zoning and Specific Plan. No changes to site plan are proposed as part of this project.

### Findings

Pursuant to Palm Desert Municipal Code (PDMC) Section 25.68, the Architectural Review Commission is the designated authority to approve architectural modifications under a design review. In making a determination on a design review application, the ARC must make findings per PDMC 25.68.040:

- A. That the proposed development conforms to any legally adopted development standards.

*The proposed modifications do not affect the project's conformance to development standards.*

- B. That the design and location of the proposed development and its relationship to neighboring existing or proposed developments and traffic is such that it will not impair the desirability of investment or occupation in the neighborhood; and that it will not unreasonably interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring existing or proposed developments and that it will not create traffic hazards or congestion.

*The project has been previously reviewed and evaluated under the California Environmental Quality Act. The proposed modifications to the project architecture will not create new impacts that have not been previously analyzed by the original project's Precise Plan, Specific Plan, Environmental Assessment, and Tract Map. The project is designed to be a part of the University Park community and is designed to be compatible with the rest of the project.*

- C. That the design and location of the proposed development is in keeping with the character of the surrounding neighborhood and is not detrimental to the harmonious, orderly, and attractive development contemplated by this title and the General Plan of the City.

*The proposed project blends well with the surrounding neighborhood by incorporating similar design, color, and materials as approved in the Master Precise Plan. The project continues the use of modern Spanish, boutique, and contemporary designs as outlined*

*in the Master Precise Plan which will be utilized throughout the entirety of the University Park development. The proposed project is consistent with the architecture and landscape design guidelines as outlined in the University Park Master Precise Plan.*

- D. That the design and location of the proposed development would provide a desirable environment for its occupants, as well as for its neighbors, and that it is aesthetically of good composition, materials, textures, and colors.

*The proposed design utilizes durable finishes and features a quality contemporary style characterized by modern forms, smooth stucco exterior finishes, and desert-compatible colors.*

- E. That the proposed use conforms to all the requirements of the zone in which it is located and all other applicable requirements.

*The project has been previously reviewed and approved and found to comply with applicable design requirements. The project will require compliance with all conditions of the original project approval.*

- F. That the overall development of the land shall be designed to ensure the protection of public health, safety, and general welfare.

*The site plan and grading plan have been reviewed to confirm the design provides protection of the public's health, safety, and general welfare. The site is adequately serviced by utilities and the grading plan was reviewed in accordance with City requirements. The project provides setbacks from adjacent properties that meet the standards of the original approval.*

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Plot Plan
2. Architecture Plans
3. Preliminary Front Yard Typical Landscape Plans
4. Master Precise Plan Segments