

**CULTURAL RESOURCES PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
CITY OF PALM DESERT
STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: March 26, 2025

PREPARED BY: Carlos Flores, AICP, Principal Planner

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A RECOMMENDATION THAT THE CITY COUNCIL
ACCEPT THE HISTORIC CONTEXT STATEMENT AND CERTIFY THE
CITY-WIDE HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend the City Council accept the Historic Context Statement and certify the City-wide Historic Resource Survey, as presented.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

On June 8, 2023, the City Council approved the Cultural Resources Preservation Committee (CRPC) 2023/2024 Workplan Goals, including the following goal that was also a part of the 2024/2025 CRPC Workplan:

- Establish a historic resources survey and a Citywide historic context statement.

On June 27, 2024, the City Council awarded a contract (Contract No. C47900) to Architectural Resources Group (“ARG”), a historic preservation planning and architecture firm, to complete a Historic Context Statement (Context Statement) and City-wide Historic Resources Survey (Survey). The contract scope of work tasks include:

- 1) Project kickoff and background review
- 2) Community Engagement
- 3) Drafting of Historic Context Statement
- 4) Reconnaissance Survey
- 5) Public presentation of findings

Per Palm Desert Municipal Code Section 29.30.040(B)(1), the CRPC is responsible for certification of survey findings. City staff is recommending the CRPC recommend the City Council accept the Context Statement and certify the Citywide Survey.

Task 1 and 2: Project kickoff, background review and Community Engagement

Tasks 1 and 2 of the project involved community outreach, and background research, including a kickoff meeting with the CRPC at its regular meeting of August 28, 2024. On December 10, 2024, City staff and ARG hosted a community outreach meeting to share updates on the project. The event provided residents with an overview of the project, showcased preliminary findings from the team’s research and reconnaissance survey, and introduced the draft historic context

statement. Attendees also had the opportunity to provide valuable feedback and ask questions about the survey process. A project page was created on the “Engage Palm Desert” website.

Task 3 and 4: Drafting of Historical Context Statement and Survey Findings Document

ARG has completed a draft Historic Context Statement and Survey Findings Document (Document) for CRPC review, to be presented at the meeting. The Document serves as a valuable information tool that can assist City staff, the public, and decision makers in understanding, identifying, evaluating, and protecting identified historical resources and guide local preservation planning and land use decisions. While the City and the Historical Society of Palm Desert have developed several well-researched lists of known historic properties such as the *2007 History and Tour of Palm Desert Historical Sites*, Palm Desert has not prepared a comprehensive citywide survey. The scope of this project is to establish a citywide historic context statement and conduct a survey of all properties in the city constructed through 1980 (up to 45 years of age by the time of this project’s completion in 2025) and preliminarily identify those that appear potentially eligible for local, state, or federal listing.

The Palm Desert Context Statement and Survey are intended to serve as a basis for the identification, evaluation, and documentation of historic resources within Palm Desert’s city limits. It is also intended to help inform future land use and planning decisions to ensure that the City’s historic, architectural, and cultural resources are duly recognized and appropriately managed. The Document is divided into six (6) sections:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) Methodology
- 3) Regulatory Environment
- 4) Historic Context Statement
- 5) Reconnaissance Survey Findings
- 6) Appendices including:
 - A. Survey Area Map (of the City)
 - B. Chronology Map - Identifies decade structures were constructed in the City
 - C. Reconnaissance Survey Findings Map
 - D. Preliminary Property List
 - E. Tract Development Summaries

Historic Context Statement

Per the Document, a Context Statement’s aim is *“to identify and describe broad historical patterns so that one may better ascertain how a community’s built environment and cultural climate came to be. Historic context statements are generally organized by context and theme: contexts cast the widest net and capture a broad historical pattern or trend. Additionally, within each context are one or more relevant themes that are represented through extant property types sharing physical and/or associative characteristics. Accompanying each theme is a list of associated property types and guidelines for establishing eligibility and assessing integrity under the theme.”*

Six contexts were identified in the Document and within each of these contexts are themes. The six (6) contexts are:

- The Palm Desert Area (Pre-1910)
- Early Development in Palm Desert (1910-1945)
- Palm Desert Planned Community Development (1946-1956)
- Palm Desert Diversified Development (1957-1966)
- Palm Desert Country Clubs and Incorporation (1967-1980)
- Architecture and Design (1910-1980)

Task 4: Reconnaissance Survey Findings

Per the Document, “a reconnaissance survey... informs the project team about a city’s patterns of development and major and minor physical components, as well as enables a street-by-street look at all of the city’s resources at once for effective comparative analysis. The reconnaissance survey provides the basis for the subsequent intensive-level survey... During the reconnaissance survey, a “windshield” inspection was conducted. The general age of buildings, property types, architectural styles, and levels of integrity were noted and compared. Based upon observations made during reconnaissance, the survey team added individual properties that appeared to be potential resources, as well as cohesive groupings of properties that appeared to be potential historic districts.”

A total of 237 resources were identified in the Survey phase as potentially eligible for designation, as identified in Appendix D, including: 207 individual resources and 30 groupings of resources (potential historic districts).

Task 5: Public presentation of findings

The CRPC meeting serves as the first step of the public presentation of findings for the project. Attachment 1 includes the Document and all associated appendices. ARG will provide a summary presentation during the meeting. Subsequent to the CRPC meeting, the Document will be presentation at a City Council meeting for final acceptance and certification.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Historic Context Statement and City-wide Resources Survey Document
 - a. Appendix A Survey Area Map
 - b. Appendix B Chronology Map
 - c. Appendix C Recon Survey Findings Map
 - d. Appendix D Preliminary Property List
 - e. Appendix E Tract Development Summaries