

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: March 27, 2025

PREPARED BY: Nick Melloni, AICP, Principal Planner

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON THE HILLSIDE OBJECTIVE DESIGN STANDARDS
PROJECT CASE NO. ZOA25-0001

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Receive an update on the Zoning Ordinance Amendment related to establishing Hillside Objective Design Standards.
2. Provide input on the proposed considerations for the Hillside Objective Design Standards.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

On May 21, 2024, the City of Palm Desert entered into a professional services agreement (Contract No. A47670) with John Kaliski Architects (Consultant), of Los Angeles, California, to assist in the preparation of objective design standards (ODS) for the Downtown area and Hillside areas. At this time, the scope of Hillside ODS is the primary focus and the Downtown ODS will continue at a future time.

The Santa Rosa Mountains and its foothills, which are located in the south and south-western areas of the City of Palm Desert, have long been recognized by the city as important scenic resource areas. The city has enacted land use policies and development regulations to minimize impacts on the scenic characteristic of the hillside by requiring sensitive grading techniques, architectural design requirements, and discretionary council approval. These existing regulations related to design consist of subjective guidelines, which are open to wide interpretation among landowners, staff and decision makers, such as:

PDMC 25.10.050(2)(b) Architecture and landscape design which blends with the natural terrain to the greatest practical extent.

PDMC 25.10.050(2)(c) Retention and protection of undisturbed viewsheds, natural landmarks, and features including vistas and the natural skyline as integral elements.

To ensure future development of the hillside is given clear design parameters for stakeholders, the Development Services Department will work with JKA to prepare Objective Design Standards based on direction from the City Council, City Council Subcommittee for the Hillside ODS, Planning Commission, and public input. In this study session, JKA will provide an overview of the existing hillside setting, and considerations for City Council's input.

Legal Review:

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact to the General Fund related to this action.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Memorandum of Preliminary Assessment, Findings, and Considerations
2. Hillside ODS Study Session Presentation