

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

MEETING DATE: April 8, 2025

PREPARED BY: Niko Romaidis, Planning Technician

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION TO APPROVE A DESIGN REVIEW FOR A HEIGHT, SETBACK, AND LANDSCAPE EXCEPTION FOR A PROPOSED WALL ON A VACANT PROPERTY LOCATED AT 77620 MOUNTAIN VIEW

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the ARC determines the findings have been met and approves the design review including exceptions for wall height, setback, and landscape at 77620 Mountain View.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

In 2011, the City of Palm Desert's Capital Projects Department (Capital Projects) installed underground retention chambers on Mountain View to help retain water during storm events. Following heavy storm events in 2023-2024, the City Engineer determined that the existing infrastructure does not have the capacity to contain larger storms. In April 2024, the City purchased a 1.01-acre, vacant property at 77620 Mountain View (APN: 637-300-023) to construct an above ground retention basin.

Palm Desert Municipal Code ("PDMC") Section 25.40.080 "Fences and Walls" requires a minimum setback of twenty (20) feet from the face of curb for fences and walls taller than five (5) feet. The Applicant is proposing a fence that does not comply with the height and setback requirements of the PDMC. The PDMC allows the Architectural Review Commission (ARC) to grant exceptions based on existing lot conditions and fence design.

Project Summary:

Capital Projects (Applicant) is requesting an exception to the fence height and setback requirements of the Palm Desert Fences and Walls Ordinance, PDMC Section 25.40.080. The Applicant is proposing to construct a 5' – 6" tall, block and steel wall (Wall) setback 11' - 0" from the face of curb at 77620 Mountain View to help screen the new basin from Mountain View.

PDMC Section 25.40.080 "Fences and Walls" requires a minimum setback of twenty (20) feet from the face of curb for fences and walls taller than 5 feet. The proposed Wall does not comply with the height and setback requirements of the PDMC, but the ARC may grant exceptions based on existing lot conditions and fence design if certain findings are met, per PDMC 25.40.080(E). This proposal is requesting an exception to the minimum setback of 20' - 0" from face of curb for walls taller than 5 feet.

A. Property Description

The project site is an existing vacant lot located at 77620 Mountain View, comprising of one parcel totaling 1.01-acres (45,003.5 square feet). The subject property is zoned R-E (Residential Estate).

B. Zoning, General Plan and Adjacent Uses

Table 1 – General Plan and Zoning

	Existing Uses	General Plan	Zoning
Project Site	Vacant	Rural Neighborhood	Residential Estate (R-E)
North	Single Family Residential	Rural Neighborhood	Residential Estate (R-E)
South	Single Family Residential	Rural Neighborhood	Residential Estate (R-E)
East	Single Family Residential	Rural Neighborhood	Residential Estate (R-E)
West	Single Family Residential	Rural Neighborhood	Residential Estate (R-E)

C. Project Description

The Wall will have a maximum height of 5'- 6" and will be composed of slump stone blocks and 11-gauge steel fence pickets, as shown in Figure 1 below. The wall will run a total length of 146' – 6" which includes a 26-foot-long double swinging gate. As proposed, the base of the wall will be comprised of a 2' – 2" high block wall made of 6" x 6"x 16" Angelus slump stone blocks with a 2" cap at the top and a 3-foot-high tube steel fence of 1x1 inch, 11-gauge fence pickets on top of the slump stone cap. The project proposes a 5' – 6" tall wall with decorative split face block pilasters with a width of 16", placed at intervals of every 15' – 6". The Applicant is proposing to place the wall 11 feet from curb face, which would be in line with the walls of the adjoining and surrounding properties. Figure 2 shows the proposed 11-foot setback from curb face.

Figure 1: Wall Plans

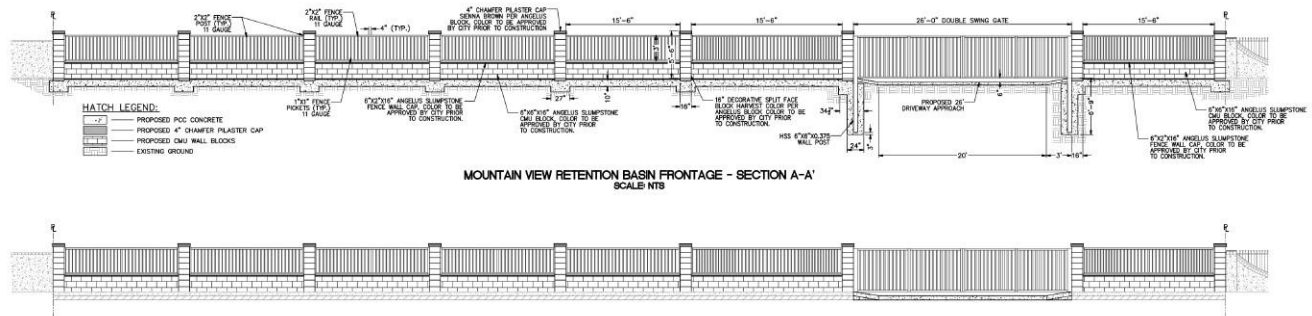
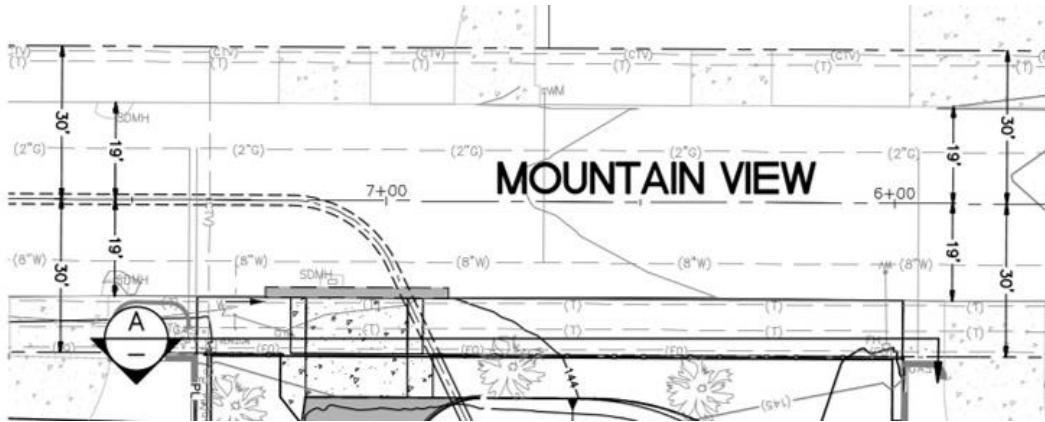


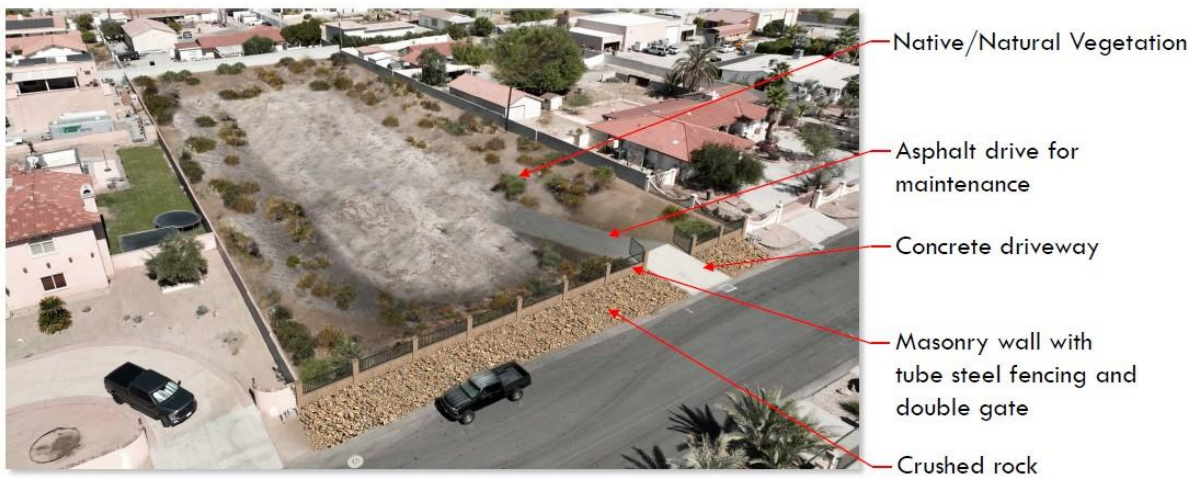
Figure 2: Setbacks



Site Plan

The project is a vacant lot located adjacent to a public street (Mountain View), surrounded by existing single family residential homes. Figure 3 below shows a rendering of the proposed site upon completion, including the basin and native vegetation.

Figure 3: Project Rendering



Bird's Eye View: Looking North-East (vegetation at full maturity)

Landscape

As a result of feedback from the community outreach meetings, landscaping within the fenced area is proposed to remain in its existing natural condition with no additional landscaping proposed. Landscaping within the setback area is proposed to be all cobblestone ground cover with no additional landscaping installed.

Public Input

Community outreach meetings were held on November 21, 2024, and March 20, 2025, by the Capital Projects department to gather feedback from residents on the project. At the meeting held on November 21, 2024, residents communicated their preference for the fence materials and design to be as currently proposed for the project and that landscaping remains in its existing natural state. At the meeting held on March 20, 2025, residents expressed their approval of the proposed fence and requested that landscaping within the setback be completely ground cover.

Per PDMC 25.40.080(E)(iii), *property owners adjacent to the proposed exception shall be informed of the application at least 10 days prior to the ARC meeting.* Notices were sent to seven (7) adjacent property owners on March 28, 2025, informing them of the application. An updated notice was sent to property owners on April 3, 2025, to make a correction on the first notice due to an error on the meeting date. Both notices are provided as Attachment 2. No comments have been received as of the date of this report.

Zoning Ordinance Summary:

Section 25.40.080(E) of the PDMC requires ARC approval for all fence and wall exceptions. The subject fence is 5' – 6" tall, setback at 11 feet and constructed out of blocks and steel. At a setback of 11 feet, the PDMC permits a maximum fence height of 3' – 6", made from either block, stucco, or wrought iron material. Furthermore, all fences adjacent to a public street must provide undulation or a pilaster at least every 30 linear feet. The proposed wall requires approval of an exception by ARC as it does not meet the required setbacks for a wall of this height and requests alternate landscaping within the setback area. ARC may approve a wall exception subject to the following findings:

Findings

1. That unusual circumstances exist which make the literal interpretation of the standards impractical or contrary to the purpose of the ordinance codified in this section.

The property is currently zoned R-E; however, the proposed use for the property is a retention basin rather than for residential uses. The wall design and materials comply with the PDMC, and it is located to match the setbacks of the surrounding neighbors. Increasing the setback would not only reduce the retention capacity, but it would also create an unusual and non-harmonious look.

2. The exception shall not result in damage to adjacent properties.

The exception would not result in damage to adjacent properties. As constructed, the height and setback of the fence do not impair visibility to adjacent driveways. Additionally, the fence does not adversely affect scenic vistas for surrounding properties as surrounding mountain views will still be visible from all surrounding properties. The proposed landscaping within the setback is in

response to feedback from community outreach with the remaining area to stay in its currently natural condition which aligns with characteristics of this zone.

3. Property owners adjacent to the proposed exception shall be informed of the application at least 10 days prior to the ARC meeting.

A notice was sent out to all property owners adjacent to the project site on March 28, 2025, at least 10 days prior to the meeting. As of the date of publishing this report, no public comments have been received.

4. Exceptions for nonconforming materials, including wood and vinyl fences, shall be based on architectural merit and compatibility with the home's architectural style.

The project is not proposing any non-conforming material.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Project Plans
2. ARC Notice