

CITY OF PALM DESERT

STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: June 12, 2025

PREPARED BY: Carlos Flores, AICP, Interim Deputy Director of Development Services
Vanessa Mager, Business and Community Outreach Coordinator

SUBJECT: STUDY SESSION: UPDATE ON THE DINING DECK PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive and file an update on the dining deck program.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Since 2020, the City of Palm Desert has monitored its outdoor Dining Deck Program (Program) that permits restaurant owners along El Paseo to build and utilize dining decks within city streets and public rights-of-way. The City Council has held multiple meetings since 2020 to discuss and act on the Program.

- In 2021, the Council took several actions to extend and refine its outdoor dining deck program along El Paseo. The Program was initially extended through June 2022, with direction to develop design guidelines approved by the Architectural Review Commission (ARC). Subsequent extensions pushed the Program through June 2024 and then to June 2026, along with the adoption of updated guidelines.
- In 2024 and 2025, the City held study sessions to discuss and move forward with implementing an annual lease fee and to plan for the El Paseo Street Rehabilitation project scheduled for Summer 2025. The most recent meetings discussed establishing the lease rate in October 2024 and awarding the rehabilitation project contract in May 2025.

City Council discussions and actions relative to the Program are outlined below:

Date	Topic/Action	Meeting Link
June 24, 2021	Extended Program through June 30, 2022, and provide direction to establish ARC approved dining deck guidelines	Link
June 9, 2022	Extended Program through June 30, 2024	Link
November 16, 2023	Extended Program through June 30, 2026, and adopted updated dining deck guidelines	Link
April 11, 2024	Study session to discuss annual fee	Link
May 23, 2024	Study session to receive direction on El Paseo Street Rehabilitation project going into Summer 2025 and move forward with annual lease rate	Link
October 24, 2024	Establish an annual lease rate for dining decks	Link
May 22, 2025	Award contract for El Paseo Street rehab project for Summer 2025	Link

Summary of Outreach Efforts

Over the last year, City staff has conducted outreach with all dining deck restaurant operators to discuss the following:

- Information on the impacts of the Summer 2025 El Paseo rehabilitation project (Rehab Project)
- Requirement to remove dining decks by June 1st
- Requirement for a new Temporary Use Permit (TUP) to construct and operate a dining deck after the Rehab Project is completed
- Updated dining deck guidelines that will need to be followed with the new TUP
- Annual lease rate that will be required for the new TUP
- Status update on state legislation allowing the sale of alcohol on dining decks, which is currently set to expire on July 1, 2026.

Additionally, City staff met with and received input on dining decks from SoCalGas who wanted staff and operators to be aware of:

- These decks might be near or above gas infrastructure
- SoCalGas needs access to their utility facilities for maintenance, inspections, excavation, repairs, and new connections. Cost of repairs would be borne by the private owner.
- Enclosing the deck above or adjacent to gas facilities is a concern for ventilation

As a part of the TUP process, Staff will work with applicants and SoCalGas to provide this information and add appropriate conditions of approval.

City staff will provide Council an update on the Program, including the current status of dining decks, next steps for the Program, and expectations of the dining deck guidelines in FY 2025-26.

Legal Review:

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

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund with this action.

ATTACHMENT:

1. Presentation