

**CITY OF PALM DESERT
PLANNING COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: July 8, 2025

PREPARED BY: Carlos Flores, AICP, Interim Deputy Director of Development Services

SUBJECT: CONSIDER APPROVING REVISED PAD ELEVATIONS FOR THE PALM COMMUNITIES HOUSING PROJECT (PP22-0003/TPM 38366, AMENDMENT 1)

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt Resolution No. 2893 entitled, “A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF PALM DESERT, CALIFORNIA, TO APPROVE AMENDMENT NO. 1 TO PP22-0003/TPM 38366. A REVISION TO AN APPROVED PAD ELEVATION FOR AN APPROVED MULTI-FAMILY AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AT THE NORTHWEST CORNER OF GERALD FORD DRIVE AND THE EXTENSION OF TECHNOLOGY DRIVE (APN: 694120028)”

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

Note: This project was presented at the June 3, 2025 Planning Commission meeting. Due to a lack of quorum, the item was continued until June 17, 2025. Due to a lack of quorum, the June 17, 2025 Planning Commission was cancelled. This project is being presented at a special meeting of the Planning Commission on July 8, 2025.

On October 13, 2022, the City Council of the City of Palm Desert, California, approved Precise Plan 22-0003 and Tentative Parcel Map 38366 (PP22-0003) for a 241-unit, multi-family affordable housing development community consisting of 10 three-story apartment buildings, one (1) two-story community building with two (2) on-site manager’s units, outdoor recreation areas, landscaping, and associated parking areas on a 10.49-acre site on the northwest corner of Gerald Ford Drive and the extension of Technology Drive (now named Zenith Drive), Assessor’s Parcel Number 694-120-028. The project is surrounded by a vacant property designated for a future park to the north, single family homes to the west, multifamily apartments to the east, and single family homes to the south. The City Council staff report packet with background, analysis, and attachments can be found at the link here: [filestream.ashx\(escribemeetings.com\)](https://filestream.ashx(escribemeetings.com))

On October 13, 2022, the City Council, adopted Resolution No. 2022-85, approving PP22-0003. The approval included approving a preliminary precise grading plan which established pad elevations for the project, including pad elevations for each individual apartment building (Attachment 2).

Project Request

On March 4, 2025, Kimley Horn (Applicant), on behalf of Palm Communities, submitted precise grading plans (PGP) for staff review in compliance with the City of Palm Desert Municipal Code and Resolution No. 2022-85. The PGP was reviewed with the preliminary PGP approved for PP22-0003 where it was found that two (2) of the apartment buildings were proposed on a pad elevation higher than the approved elevation.

The Applicant requests to raise the pad elevations for Building 2 and Building 3, as identified in the original approval. The Applicant, who also serves as the engineer of record, stated that the final engineering drawings, once completed, indicate that an increase in pad elevations is necessary to accommodate emergency overflow management for stormwater onto Gerald Ford Drive. The City Engineer has reviewed the request and determined that it is technically acceptable. However, the final approval authority rests with the Planning Commission.

Building No. (Phase)	Approved Pad Height (feet)	Proposed Pad Height (feet)	Pad Change (feet)
Building 2 (Phase 1)	173.08	174.42	.62
Building 3 (Phase 1)	173.30	174.42	1.12

Building 2 and 3 are proposed to raise elevations by 0.62 feet and 1.12 feet, respectively, to an elevation of 174.42' for both (Exhibit B, Attachment 1). The Applicant has stated that the increase in elevation to accommodate the design for the emergency overflow management for stormwater onto Gerald Ford Drive, as outlined in Attachment 3. Exhibit 1 below provides a site plan showing, in blue, the two (2) buildings proposed for pad elevation increases. The proposed raised elevations are located on the northern part of the project abutting the vacant property proposed as a future park.

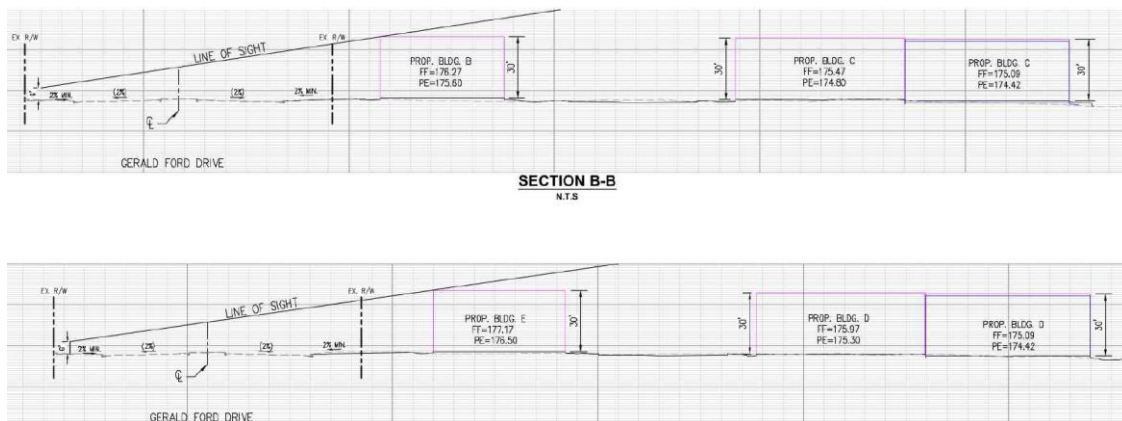
Exhibit 1 – Site Plan



Pursuant to Palm Desert Municipal Code Section 27.12.045(C): *“Where the property is subject to a tentative tract map or a final tract map that provides elevations for the property to be graded, the pad elevations shall conform to the applicable approved map. If the proposed elevations vary more than six inches from the elevations of the approved map, the revised elevations must be reviewed by the city engineer and approved through the director of development services. The director of development services may refer the request to a public hearing process for approval.”*

The City Engineer and Director of Development Services have both reviewed the request and recommend approval of the revised pad elevations, pursuant to a public hearing process. The Applicant has provided justification, including line of sight drawings, to confirm minimal view impacts to surrounding properties, Gerald Ford Drive, or Technology Drive.

Exhibit 2 – Line of Sight Drawings



Environmental Assessment/Environmental Review:

An application has complied with the requirements of the "City of Palm Desert Procedure for Implementation of CEQA" Resolution No. 2024-035, in that the Director of Development Services has determined that the project will not have a significant impact on the environment and that the project is categorically exempt pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15183. The proposed amendment No. 1 does not have significant environmental changes to the determination approved by Resolution 2022-85. Therefore, the proposed amendment does not require further environmental review pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15183 (Public Resources Code §21083.3) which provides that the project is consistent with a Community Plan, General Plan, or Zoning for which an EIR has been certified "shall not require additional environmental review, except as might be necessary to examine whether there are project-specific significant effects which are peculiar to the Project or its site. The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) prepared and certified by the City Council as part of the Palm Desert General Plan (SCH# 2015081020) and the proposed Project remains consistent with the development density and use characteristics considered by the General Plan EIR in the Town Center Neighborhood (TCN) land use designation.

Public Notice: Public Notification

Public noticing was conducted for this Special Planning Commission meeting per the requirements of the Palm Desert Municipal Code (PDMC). A public hearing notice was published a minimum of 10 days before the hearing date on Friday, June 27, 2025, in The Desert Sun newspaper. Notices were mailed to all property owners within 1,000 feet of the project site. No comments have been received to date.

Findings of Approval:

Findings of approval may be found in draft Planning Commission Resolution No. 2893, attached to this report.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution 2893
 - a. Exhibit B Revised Pad Elevations
2. Approved Preliminary Grading Plans
3. Applicant Justification
4. Public Hearing Notice