

# CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

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MEETING DATE: August 28, 2025

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

SUBJECT: PROVIDE DIRECTION ON CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS  
PROCESS FOR HISTORIC PROPERTIES

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## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Provide direction on the Certificate of Appropriateness process for historic properties.

## **BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:**

A Certificate of Appropriateness application is required for any modifications to properties, structures, or buildings that meet, or may potentially meet, certain historical criteria. The City of Palm Desert Municipal Code (PDMC) Chapter 29.60 governs the Certificate of Appropriateness process.

Currently, Chapter 29.60 grants final approval authority for Certificate of Appropriateness applications to City staff, the Cultural Resources Preservation Committee (CRPC), or the City Council, depending on the scope of the project. However, it lacks clarity and consistency regarding which body has jurisdiction over specific scopes, including demolitions and modifications to landmarks. Additionally, the CRPC is the only City committee with final approval authority, which is inconsistent with the terminology established in February 2023 that reserves “board” or “commission” designations for bodies with final approval authority.

## **Policy Considerations**

### **1. Staff Review with CPRC Referral**

- All Certificate of Appropriateness applications would first be reviewed by staff.
- Staff could either approve the application directly or refer it to the Cultural Preservation Review Committee (CPRC) for a recommendation.
- Final action would rest with the City Council.
- **Estimated Timeline:**
  - 1–2 weeks (staff-level approval).
  - 4–8 weeks depending on CPRC meeting schedule and City Council agenda availability.

### **2. Tiered Review Process (Minor vs. Major Applications)**

- Establish clear definitions distinguishing minor from major Certificate of Appropriateness applications.
- Authorize staff to approve minor applications directly, streamlining the process.
- Designate the City Council as the approval authority for major applications, with the CPRC providing a recommendation.
- **Estimated Timeline:**
  - **Minor applications:** 1–2 weeks (staff-level approval).

- **Major applications:** 6–10 weeks (CRPC review plus City Council consideration).

City staff will present background information, examples of similar processes in other cities, and potential options. A formal amendment to Chapter 29.60 is expected to be brought forward at a future date.

**Legal Review:**

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

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The is no financial impact with this action.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Presentation – will be provided as supplemental material prior to the meeting