

Mid-Year Update on City Council Goals

September 25, 2025



Cal State University, Palm Desert Campus / Artificial Intelligence, Business Innovation, and Entrepreneurship Hub

Continue advocacy and strategic planning for a Cal State University, Palm Desert Campus, fostering opportunities in AI, business innovation, and entrepreneurship to drive workforce development and regional growth.

CURRENT CONDITIONS



The City contracts with CSUSB School of Entrepreneurship to operate the Entrepreneur Resource Center (ERC). The contract and building lease extend through February 2027.



The ERC provides aspiring and existing entrepreneurs with innovation and technology-based ventures with services such as training, programming, mentoring, and access to financial resources.

MID-YEAR UPDATE



Facilitating solutions to the infrastructure coordination between CVWD and CSUSB to avoid delays in campus development.



Staff met with UCR-Palm Desert Campus representatives to learn about their programs and offerings focused on advancing the use of AI in Palm Desert and Coachella Valley businesses.



Meeting scheduled with CSUSB to discuss the integration of AI classes, educational programming, and training at ERC.

North Sphere Development, Infrastructure Planning, and Electrification

Ensure the North Sphere has the infrastructure needed to support its growth, including essential services, public amenities, and enhanced public spaces. Address energy transmission challenges to remove barriers to development and support long-term housing and economic expansion.

CURRENT CONDITIONS



The North Sphere, defined as north of Frank Sinatra Drive, continues to experience the highest level of entitlement and construction activity on vacant land.



The City has coordinated with SCE, IID, and CVWD to identify existing infrastructure deficiencies throughout the development process.



The City continues to work with three consulting firms (Goebel Partners, Interwest, and Fehr & Peers) to receive guidance on streamlining development within this area.

MID-YEAR UPDATE



Continued coordination with IID and property owners to secure transformer procurement and complete substation development necessary for future electrification.



Engaged with developers and CVWD to address funding model concerns for water infrastructure, including exploration of CFD and private loan options.



Staff held meetings with CSUSB to evaluate the feasibility of constructing a regional sports park on the campus. An initial concept plan and appraisal were obtained to help scope the project.



Construction and inspections were completed on several single-family and multi-family residential projects, including Agate Apartments, Millennium Apartments, Vitalia Apartments, the Meritage community, and the Explorer Community.

Mall Redevelopment/Experience-Based and Family-Friendly Activities

Support the redevelopment of the mall properties into a vibrant destination that enhances economic vitality and community engagement. Encourage a mix of experience-driven and family-friendly uses.

CURRENT CONDITIONS



The Shops at Palm Desert (mall site) needs significant redevelopment, including reimagining of the primary mall structure and surrounding older big box buildings.



The City currently owns the 88,000-square-foot former Sears building located within the mall site.



To support revitalization efforts, the City is requiring all property owners to collaborate in developing a comprehensive Specific Plan for the entire site.

MID-YEAR UPDATE



Staff met with the owners of the mall site to discuss options for repurposing the entire site and exploring various land use opportunities. The owner is currently facing financial challenges in funding the design and entitlement process for a Specific Plan.



Staff submitted an exemption request from the SLA to the California Department of Housing and Community Development, seeking approval to proceed with the sale of the Sears building. A response from HCD is expected in September 2025.



Staff attended the ICSC conference and met with various entertainment and experience-based businesses interested in Palm Desert, specifically the mall site. Other tenants expressing interest in the mall site include an experiential retail store, a furniture store, gyms, and theaters.

Update to the Development Code/ Fire Prevention by Design

Ensure a comprehensive update of the Development Code that enhances clarity, efficiency, and flexibility for residents and businesses. Modernize regulations to support economic growth, streamline permitting, and improve public safety while integrating best practices in fire prevention design.

CURRENT CONDITIONS



Working with Goebel Partners to update the development regulations and create a new Unified Development Code (UDC).



The City is committed to proactive fire risk reduction through a comprehensive strategy by incorporating fire safety into the planning, design, construction, and regulatory review process.

MID-YEAR UPDATE



Conducted stakeholder outreach with the Architectural Review and Planning Commissions and the development community.



City adopted the updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) maps to inform residents of newly identified wildfire risks and encouraged implementation of mitigation measures, including vegetation management and fire-safe landscaping.



Initiated the transition to an in-house Fire Marshall model, which will enhance the City's ability to apply fire prevention best practices during permit review, project design, and code enforcement.

Crime Prevention Technology

Expand the use of technology-driven public safety solutions to enhance crime prevention and law enforcement effectiveness. Implement tools such as real-time data analysis, automated license plate recognition, and security cameras.

CURRENT CONDITIONS



The City has made significant investments in crime prevention technology, including the deployment of 113 Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) cameras.

MID-YEAR UPDATE



City Council approved expansion of the ALPR network with the addition of 44 new cameras, for a total of 157.



Phase one of the expansion will focus on El Paseo, where camera locations have been coordinated with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department.



Permitting and median access planning are underway in collaboration with the Public Works Department to support installation.

Assessment of City Medians and Rights of Way

Conduct a comprehensive review of City medians and rights-of-way to improve maintenance efficiency, aesthetics, and functionality. Focus on enhancing landscaping, addressing aging infrastructure, and ensuring cost-effective, long-term upkeep.

CURRENT CONDITIONS



Staff initiated a project to create an updated and cohesive landscape design for medians citywide as part of a five-year phased implementation plan.

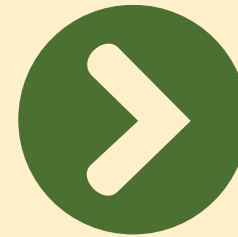


The Landscape Master Plan Development Project was awarded to Hermann Design Group in Nov. 2024.



The goal of the project is to construct or update every landscaped median in the city over a five-year period. Medians are being assessed and prioritized based on visibility, condition, and cost.

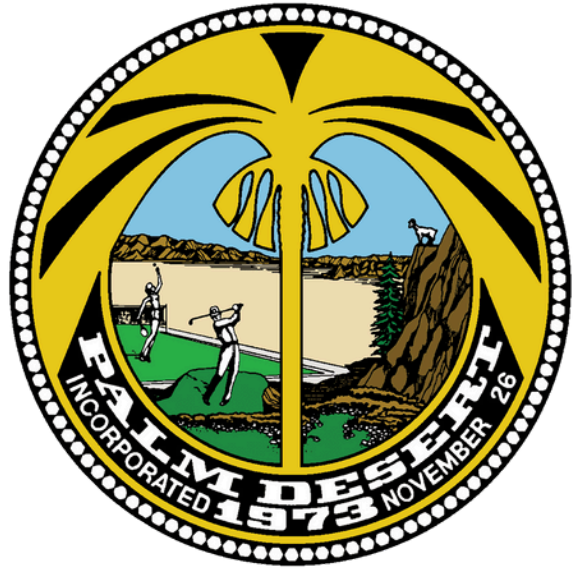
MID-YEAR UPDATE



Preliminary investigation was completed, including the review of existing plans and current drone aerial imagery.



A draft Landscape Master Plan was presented to the Architectural Review Commission to ensure alignment with Palm Desert's goals and aesthetic standards.



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Questions or comments?

