

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: November 13, 2025

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

SUBJECT: STUDY SESSION: UPDATE ON THE UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE
INCLUSIVE OF THE DRAFT ADMINISTRATION AND PROCEDURES
SECTION

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an update on the Unified Development Code, inclusive of the draft Administration and Procedures Section

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Palm Desert is working with Clarion Associates to assist in updating its development regulations and creating a new Unified Development Code (UDC), which will integrate and update or replace various existing City ordinances relating to zoning (Title 25), subdivision (Title 26), grading regulations (Title 27), and related topics such as landscaping and outdoor lighting. The UDC project intends to modernize regulations to better accomplish the City's long-term goals and vision. The new UDC will provide updated standards to implement the City's adopted and future plans, and to provide a strong foundation for future development in Palm Desert.

The study session will present an update on the UDC and the draft Administration and Procedures Chapter of the UDC. The Administration and Procedures Chapter describes the review and approval procedures for development applications in Palm Desert. This chapter outlines how development applications will be reviewed and approved under the new system. It introduces clearer, more objective review criteria and a more predictable process, making it easier for applicants to understand what's required and for the City to ensure consistent, streamlined, and fair decisions.

BACKGROUND:

On June 27, 2024, the City Council awarded a contract to Clarion Associates to develop a Unified Development Code for the City of Palm Desert (Contract No. C47890). On September 12, 2024, City staff and Clarion Associates introduced the UDC project by providing an outline of the intent of the project, a timeline, and an overview of the project phases, and seeking direction on the formation of an Ad Hoc Subcommittee to review public drafts of the various work products throughout the project. The Council directed staff to await the November 2024 election results before forming the subcommittee, ensuring continuity between City Council members. On December 12, 2024, the City Council appointed Mayor Harnik and Councilmember Pradetto to an Ad Hoc Subcommittee on the Unified Development Code.

Between September 2024 and February 2025, the City and Clarion conducted initial outreach for the project, which comprised several meetings to gather stakeholder input by meeting with City staff, City review bodies, including the Architectural Review Commission and Planning

Commission, and members of the development community to assist in identifying Development Code issues and values moving forward. An online survey was also provided for additional feedback. During this time, Clarion and City staff conducted an in-depth review of the City's existing development regulations.

On April 10, 2025, the City Council held a study session during which it received an update on the UDC and reviewed the Development Regulations Assessment Report. The Subcommittee met on June 18, 2025, to further review the Development Regulations Assessment Report and provided the Consultant direction to draft the Administration and Procedures Chapter first. On October 30, 2025, the Subcommittee met to review the draft Administration and Procedures Chapter.

The Consultant will provide a presentation that updates the UDC and presents the draft Administration and Procedures Chapter.

Legal Review:

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

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

This study session has no financial impact on the General Fund.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Administration and Procedures Chapter
2. Presentation (*to be distributed prior to the meeting*)