



CITY OF PALM DESERT

UDC
Installment 1:
Procedures

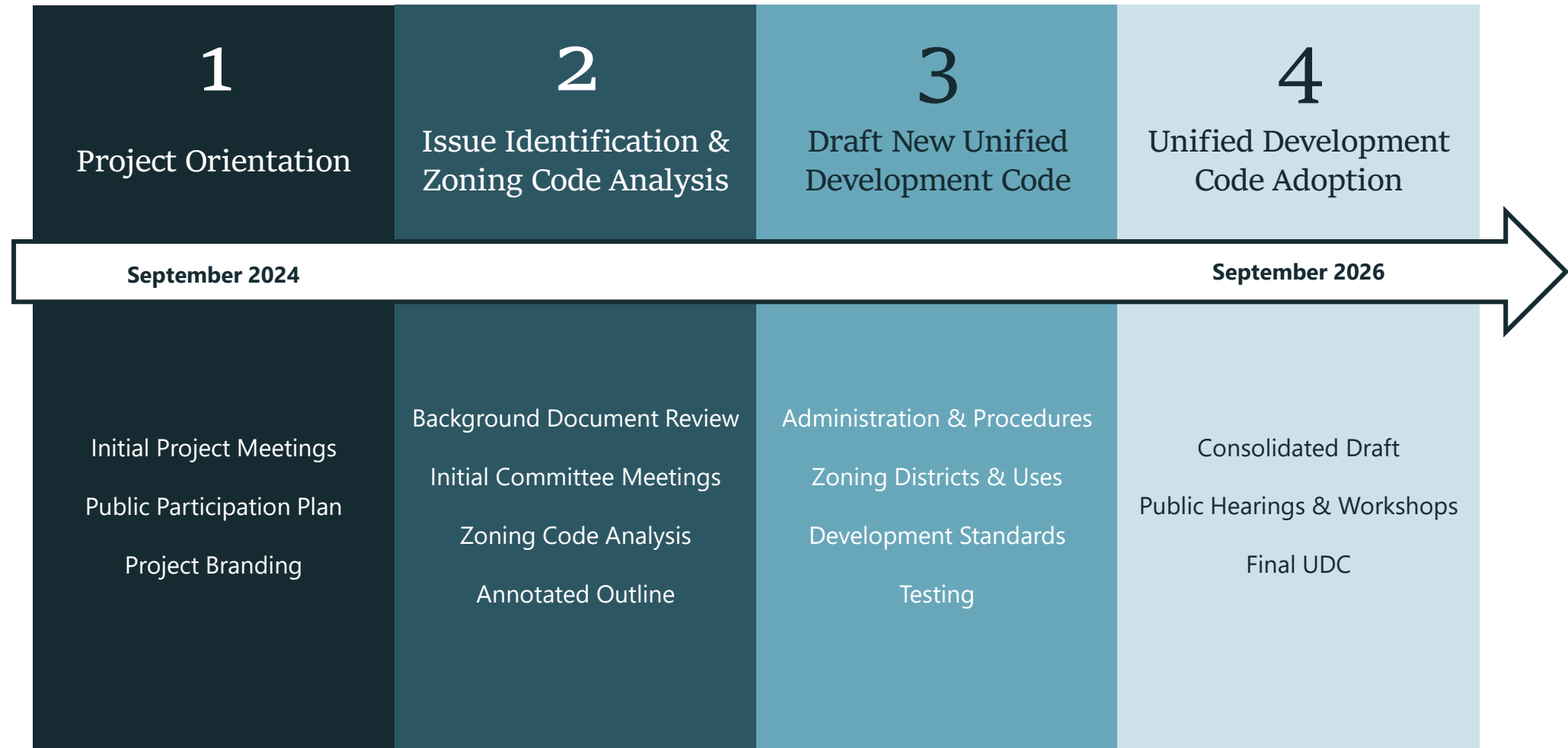
City Council
Joint Session
November 2025

ABOUT THE PROJECT



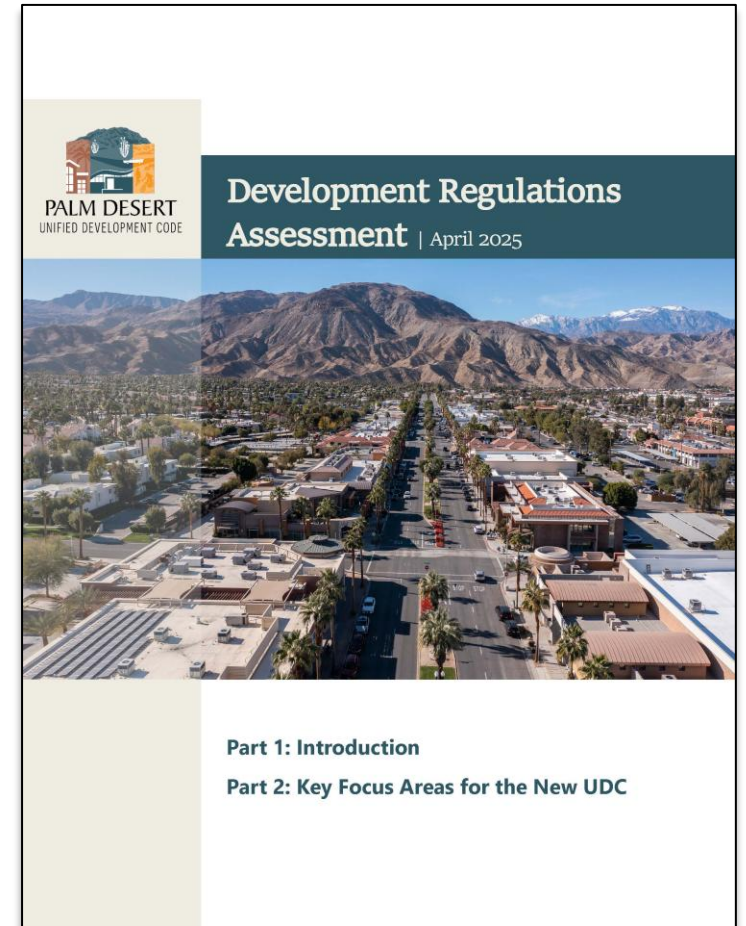
PALM DESERT
UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE

PROJECT TIMELINE



KEY FOCUS AREAS

- 1. Streamline the Development Review Process**
- 2. Enhance the Development Standards**
- 3. Fine-Tune the Zoning Districts**
- 4. Clarify the Land Use Regulations**
- 5. Create a More User-Friendly Code**



Streamline the Development Review Process

CONSOLIDATE & REORGANIZE PROCEDURES

For each application/entitlement:

- Organize requests by type
- Evaluate thresholds for various types of review
- Recalibrate common review procedures
- Clarify specific procedures
- Establish objective review criteria

Article 8: Administration and Procedures
8.2 Summary Table of Review Procedures | 7 A.G. Required Improvements for Subdivisions04F

Table 8.1
Summary of Development Review Procedures

KEY: R = Review and Recommendation D= Review and Decision A= Appeal ✓ = Required <> = Public Hearing Required

Procedure	Code Reference	Notice		Pre-Application Conference	Review and Decision-Making Bodies					
		Published	Printed		Staff	Historic Prsvtn Comm.	Planning & Zoning Comm.	City Council	Board of Adjustment	
Development Permits										
Development Review	Minor	8.4			✓		D [1]		< A >	
	Major	8.4	✓	✓	✓		R	< R > [3]	< D >	< A >
Conditional Use Permit		8.4B	✓	✓	✓		R	< R > [3]	< D >	< A >
Single-Family Residential Review		8.4C					D			< A >
Temporary Use Permit		8.4D			✓ [2]		D			< A >
Subdivision Procedures										
Preliminary Plat		8.5A	✓	✓	✓		R		< R >	< D >
Final Plat		8.5B					R			< D >
Land Division or Combination		8.5C					D			< A >
Reversion to Acreage		8.5E	✓	✓	✓		R		< R >	< D >
Ordinance Amendments										
Rezoning		8.6A	✓	✓	✓		R	< R > [3]	< R >	< D >
Rezoning to Planned Development (PD)		8.6B	✓	✓	✓		R		< R >	< D >
Code Amendment (Text)		8.6C	✓	✓	✓ [4]		R		< R >	< D >
Historic Preservation Procedures										
Historic Landmark Designation		8.7A	✓	✓	✓		R	< D >		< A >
Historic District Designation		8.7C	✓	✓	✓		R	< R >	< R >	< D >
Certificate of Appropriateness		8.7D	✓	✓	✓		R	< D >		< A >
Certificate of No Effect		8.7D					D [5]			
Flexibility and Relief										
Variance		8.8A	✓	✓	✓		R			< D >
Minor Modification		8						As required for associated application		
Appeal		8.8C	✓	✓	✓			As indicated in table above		
Special Exception		8.8D	✓	✓	✓		R			< D >

Notes:
 [1] The Director may refer minor development review applications to the Planning and Zoning Commission.
 [2] A pre-application conference is required for some types of temporary use permit applications; see 8.4.D.
 [3] Applies only in historic districts or for designated historic properties.
 [4] Pre-application meetings are required only for text amendments proposed by an applicant, not staff.
 [5] HPC Chair (or designee) and Staff make the determination regarding a Certificate of No Effect.

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Article 8: Administration and Procedures
8.4 Development Permits | 8.4.B. Conditional Use Permit

Conditional Use Permit

based generally on the existing Section 402, but the current language has been rewritten to refer to the procedures and remove unnecessary material that is now covered in the common procedures.

Purpose⁶⁵⁹
 The conditional use permit procedure provides a mechanism for the City to evaluate proposed uses that are generally characterized by infrequency of use, high degree of traffic generation, and/or requirement of a large land area.⁶⁶⁰ This procedure is intended to ensure compatibility of such uses with surrounding areas and that adequate mitigation is provided for anticipated impacts.

Eligibility
 A conditional use permit is required for the establishment of certain land uses as specified in the 8.3.1 Table of Allowed Uses. Approval of a new conditional use permit is also required for modification or expansion of an existing conditional use.

Application Submittal and Review Procedure
 Section 8-4 identifies the applicable steps from 8.3, Common Review Procedures, that apply to review of conditional use permits. Additions or modifications to the common review procedures are noted below.

Conditional Use Permit

2	3	4	5	6	7
Application Submittal and Handling	Citizen Review Process	Staff Review and Action	Scheduling and Notice of Public Meetings	Review and Decision	Post Decision Actions
Submit to Director	Required	Staff report and recommendation	Written, published, and mailed notice required	Planning and Zoning Commission	Expiration after two years of inactivity

Pre-Application Meeting
 A pre-application meeting shall be held in accordance with 8.3.B, Pre-Application Meeting.

Application Submittal and Handling⁶⁶¹
 The conditional use permit application shall be submitted, accepted, and revised, and may be withdrawn, in accordance with 8.3.C, Application Submittal and Handling.

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⁶⁵⁹ New purpose statement.

⁶⁶⁰ This language is from ARS 9-462.01.C.1.

⁶⁶¹ Submittals removed to bin file for Administrative Manual.

Streamline the Development Review Process

CLARIFY DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

To ensure decisions are made at the appropriate level:

- Define the role of the ARC
- Combine Zoning Administrator and Director approvals
- Clarify opportunities for minor modifications



Streamline the Development Review Process

IMPROVE SUBDIVISION PROCEDURES

Build on the progress made by City staff:

- Ensure compliance with the Subdivision Map Act
- Reorganize procedures to align with zoning procedure format
- Consolidate redundant procedures
- Include additional mapping applications
- Expand and clarify dedication requirements



Create a More Use-Friendly Code

INCORPORATE GRAPHIC ELEMENTS

(2) Dimensional Standards

The following table is a summary of the district specific dimensional standards. Additional standards from Section 20.04.010 (Dimensional Standards) also apply.

Table 2-5: R3 District Dimensional Standards

Lot Dimensions (Minimum, only for lots created after the effective date)	
A Lot area	5,500 square feet (0.126 acres) [1]
B Lot width	50 feet [1]
Building Setbacks (Minimum)	
C Front build-to line	15 feet or The smallest front setback of abutting residential structures on the entire block face, whichever is less.
Attached front-loading garage or carport	10 feet behind the primary structure's front building wall
D Side	First floor: 6 feet Two or more floors: 10 feet [1] [2]
E Rear	25 feet [1]
Other Standards	
Impervious surface coverage (maximum)	45%
F Primary structure height (maximum)	35 feet
Accessory structure height (maximum)	20 feet

Notes:

- [1] See Section 20.04.110 (Incentives) for alternative standards.
[2] Legally established lots of record that are less than the minimum lot width may reduce the required setback up to 2 feet.

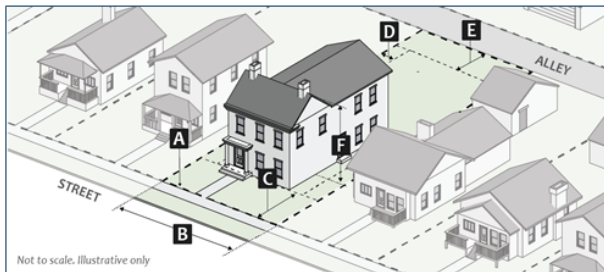


Figure 8: R3 Dimensional Standards

- In cases when ground-mounted mechanical equipment is visible from a public open space, public trail, public street, or adjacent property, the equipment shall be screened from view by a solid wall or fence or a vegetative screen that satisfy the following criteria:
 - The wall or fence shall be of a height equal to or greater than the height of the mechanical equipment being screened and shall be compatible with the architecture and landscaping of the development; or
 - The vegetative screen shall be planted along the full length of the equipment to be screened and shall be of a height equal to or greater than the height of the equipment to be screened at the time of planting.
- Screening of ground-mounted solar energy equipment is not required when it can be clearly demonstrated that required screening would reduce the efficiency or effectiveness of the solar energy equipment.

(3) Loading, Service, and Refuse Areas

- Outdoor loading, service, and refuse areas shall be integrated into the building design if possible, or shall be located where they are not visible from public open space, public trails, public streets, or from adjacent properties, to the maximum extent practicable.
- In cases when loading, service, and refuse areas are visible from a public open space, public trail, public street, or adjacent property, the loading, service, and refuse areas shall be screened from view by a solid wall or fence a minimum of eight feet in height that incorporates at least one of the primary materials and colors of the nearest wall of the primary building (but excluding unfinished CMU block) or a vegetative screen planted along the full length of the area to be screened and a minimum of eight feet in height at the time of planting. (See Figure 5-7.)

Figure 5-7: Screened Refuse Area



Figure 10-4.7-1: Multi-Building Developments

(c) Solar Access and Shading

To mitigate the sun's heat and maximize easterly breezes, buildings shall be sited according to the following standards:

- Buildings shall be oriented and grouped to reduce exposure to midday sun while maximizing northern and southern sun exposure to utilize consistent, glare-free interior daylighting.
- To maximize building solar access, buildings and blocks shall be oriented with east-west lengths equal to or greater than north-south building lengths, and east-west axis within 15 degrees of geographic east-west.
- Buildings shall be designed to provide shading for windows, entrances, and outdoor spaces – for example, by locating outdoor gathering spaces on the north and east sides of buildings under shade devices such as awnings, verandahs, or deep balconies.

(3) Outdoor Gathering Spaces

(a) Definition

For purposes of this requirement, an outdoor gathering space is an open or partially open area intended for the benefit of residents, employees, or visitors to a site. The following shall not be counted toward any requirement of this section:

- Private yards;
- Public or private streets or rights-of-way; and
- Parking areas and driveways.



Figure 10-4.7-2: Outdoor Gathering Spaces

An aerial photograph of a city street, likely in Palm Desert, showing a mix of residential and commercial buildings, palm trees, and a clear view of the mountains in the background. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

WORKING DRAFT OF
INSTALLMENT 1:
ADMINISTRATION



PALM DESERT
UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE

OVERALL ORGANIZATIONAL MODELS

- [Sedona example]

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ORGANIZATION OF PALM DESERT PARTIAL DRAFT

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DRAFT SUMMARY PROCEDURES TABLE

The table below lists the development applications authorized in this UDC, including recommended or required pre-application activities and the role of City review and decision-making authorities.

Application Type	Sect. Ref.	Review and Decision-Making Bodies			
		Zoning Administrator	ARC	PC	City Commission
Site Development					
Certificates of Use and Occupancy		R/D			
Home-Based Business Permits		R/D			
Administrative Use Permits ³		R/D			
Conditional Use Permit ⁴		R		D*	A
Temporary Use Permit		R/D			
Use Determinations ⁵		R/D			
Minor Design Review ⁶		R/D	A		
Major Design Review		R	D*		A
Precise Plan ⁷		R		D*	A
Development Agreements		R		R*	D*
Signs					
Sign Design Review		R	D*		A
Comprehensive Sign Program		R	D*		A
Subdivision					
Lot Line Adjustment – Parcel Map		R/D			
Urban Lot Split – Tentative Map		R/D			
Urban Lot Split – Parcel Map		R/D			
Parcel Split – Tentative Map		R		D*	
Parcel Split – Parcel Map		R			D
Major Subdivision – Tentative Map		R		D*	
Major Subdivision – Final Map		R			D
UDC and Plan Amendments					
General Plan Updates		R		R	D*
Prezoning for Annexed Areas		R		R	D*

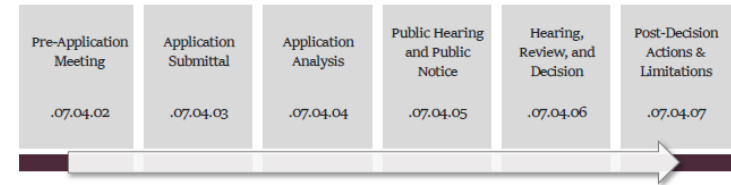
³ Zoning Administrator may refer an administrative use permit to the Planning Commission for review and approval.
⁴ As part of this update, Condominium Conversions will now be reviewed through the Conditional Use Permit process.
⁵ Zoning Administrator may refer requests for use determination to the Planning Commission for review and approval.
⁶ New, formalized process that allows the Zoning Administrator or their designee to review and approve minor design elements.
⁷ If required, design review by the ARC or objective design review by the Zoning Administrator must be approved before precise plan review by the Commission.

Application Type	Sect. Ref.	Review and Decision-Making Bodies			
		Zoning Administrator	ARC	PC	City Commission
Specific Plans		R		R*	D*
Zoning Map Amendment		R		R*	D*
Zoning Text Amendment		R		R*	D*
Flexibility and Relief					
Adjustments		R/D			
Reasonable Accommodation		R/D			A
Variances		R		D*	A

25.07.04 Common Review Procedures

.07.04.01 Purpose

This section describes the standard procedures and rules applicable to all development applications unless otherwise stated in this UDC. Common review procedures include six steps, as shown below, not all of which are applicable to every application. Application-specific procedures in §25.07.05: *Site Development*, through §**Error! Reference source not found.** *Error! Reference source not found.*, identify additional procedures and rules beyond those in this section.



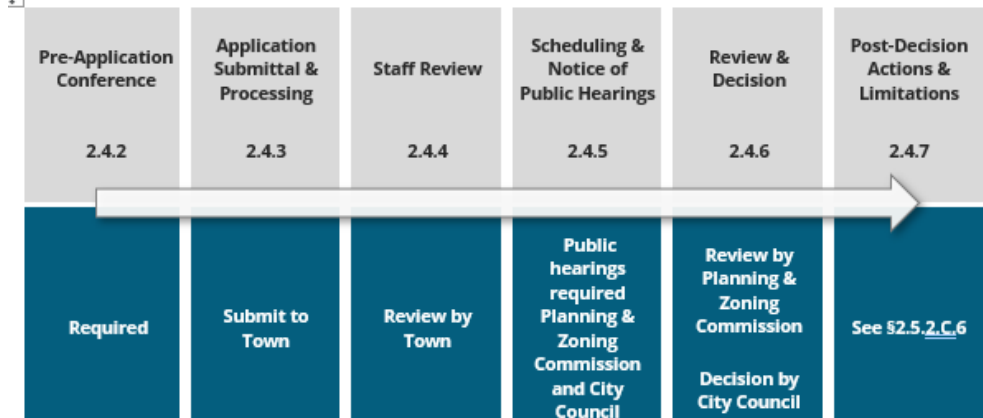
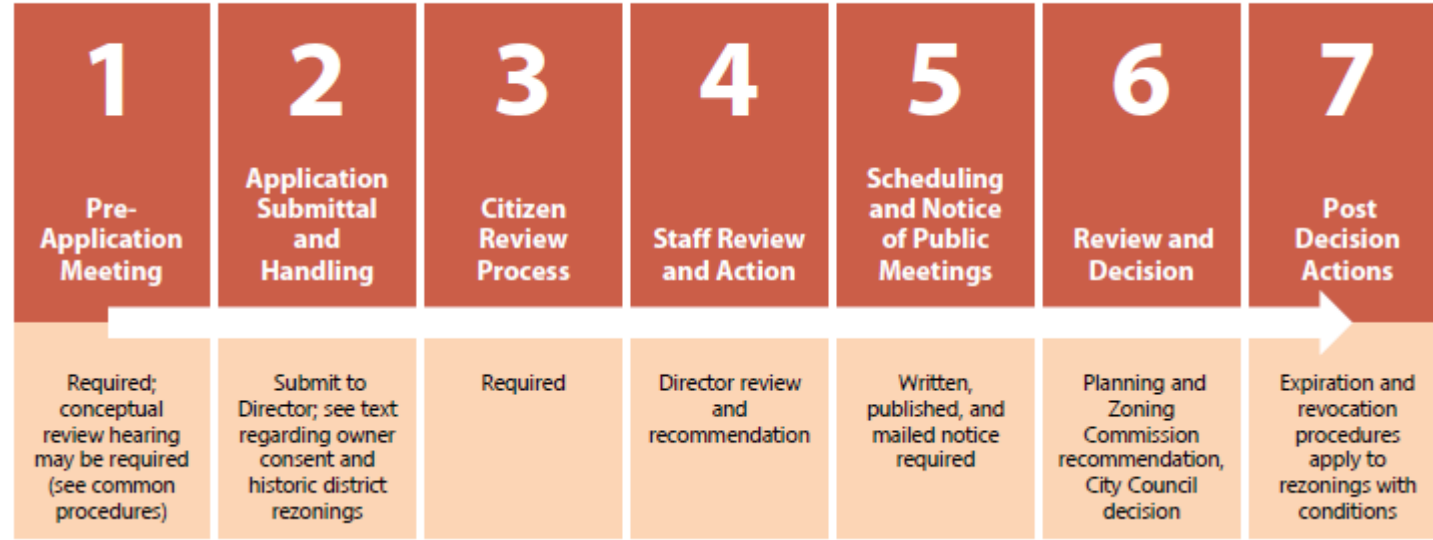
.07.04.02 Pre-Application Meeting

A. Purpose

The pre-application conference is intended to provide an opportunity for the potential applicant to meet with City staff to review applicable submittal requirements and review procedures associated with the proposed application request.

DRAFT PROCESS FLOWCHART

Figure 8-11: Rezoning (Zoning Map Amendment)



DISCUSSION

Any questions or comments about:

- **New organizational approach (by type of process)?**
- **New common procedures approach, to use in drafting the full chapter?**
- **Use of pre-application conferences?**
- **Use of neighborhood meetings?**
- **Role of ARC versus PC?**
- **Other?**

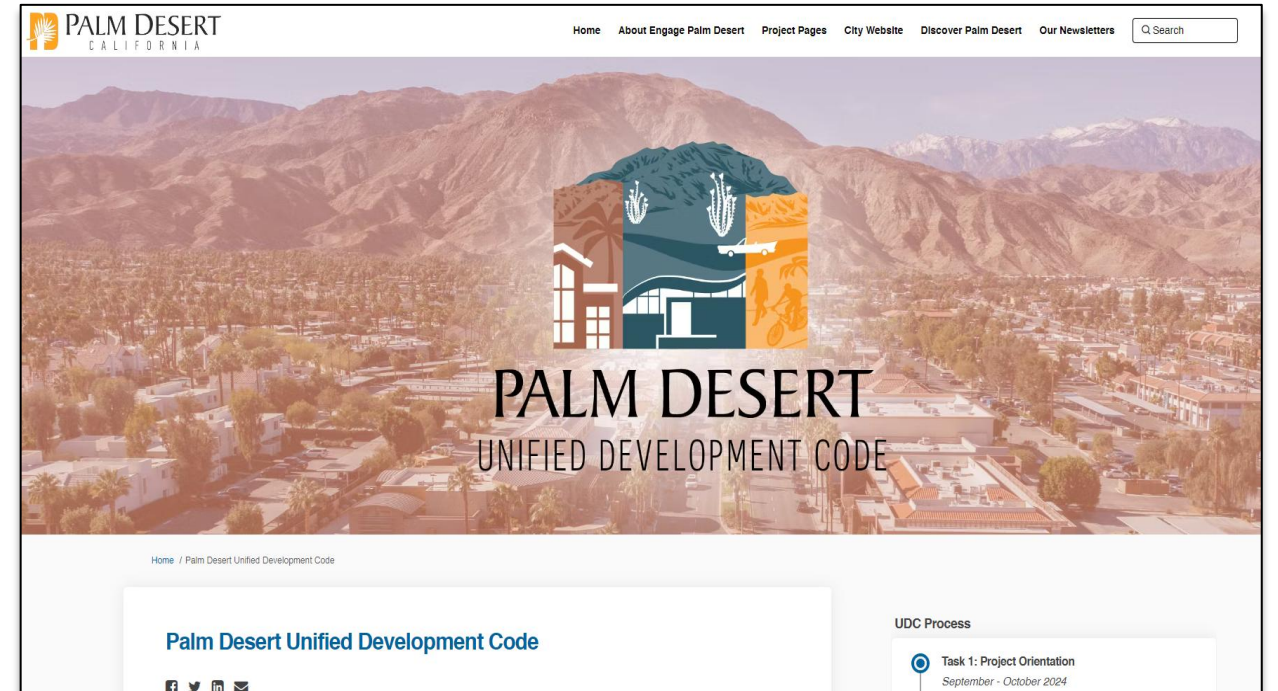
NEXT STEPS



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LISTENING TO THE PUBLIC

Put Installment 1 on the project website in December



<https://www.engagepalmdesert.com/development-code>



CITY OF PALM DESERT

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