



PALM DESERT
CALIFORNIA

2025
Annual Report

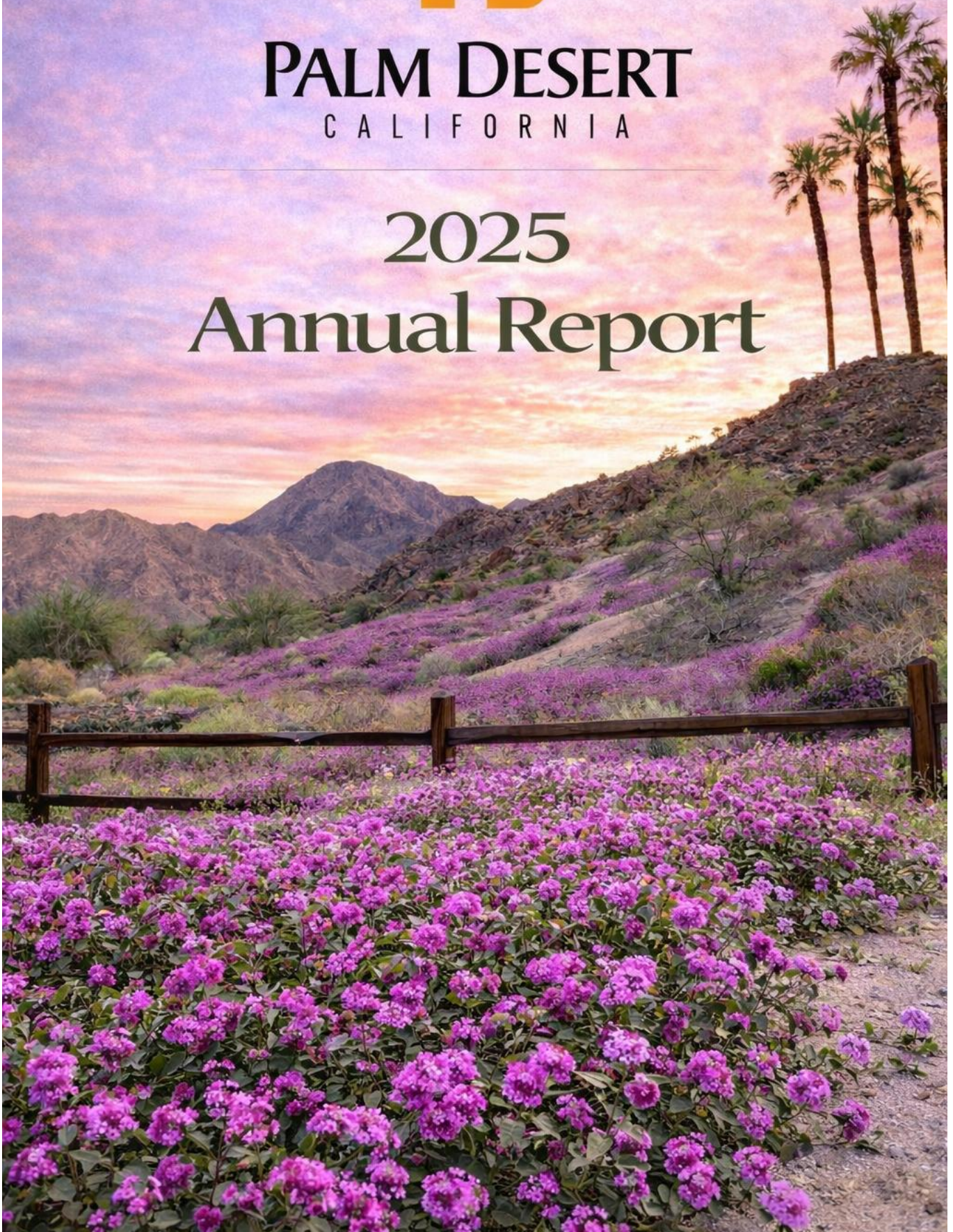


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City of Palm Desert

Evan Trubee, Mayor
Joe Pradetto, Mayor Pro Tem
Jan Harnik, Councilmember
Gina Nestande, Councilmember
Karina Quintanilla, Councilmember

City Manager

Chris Escobedo

Assistant City Manager

Richard Cannone

2025 City Council Goals

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

Goal Focus

Position Palm Desert as a regional center for higher education, workforce development, and innovation, with an emphasis on artificial intelligence, entrepreneurship, and business growth.

Year in Review

This year, staff focused on advancing opportunities to expand artificial intelligence education and innovation programming. Efforts centered on maintaining continuity at the Entrepreneur Resource Center (ERC), coordinating with higher education partners, and preparing for future policy decisions tied to contract and lease timelines.

Cal State University, Palm Desert Campus & Innovation Hub
Strengthening entrepreneurship today, preparing for AI-driven workforce growth.

Higher Education Artificial Intelligence Entrepreneurship

Supported the Entrepreneur Resource Center	Expanded AI & Innovation Pathways	Positioned for Council Decisions
 Partnership Secured Through 2027 • CSUSB Contract & Lease Maintained	 AI Education Integration • Courses & Training with CSUSB	 ERC Future Planning • CSUSB Expansion Proposal
 Programs Delivered • Mini-MBA & Startup Training	 Regional Collaboration • UCR Palm Desert AI Programs	 AI Certification Pathway • Program Design Ahead
 Infrastructure Issues Resolved • Prevented Campus Delays	 Startup & Workforce Focus • Business Skills & Development	 Council Review • Contract or Lease Decision

Boosting Startups, Preparing for AI Jobs, Leading Innovation in the Valley.

Key Progress

Entrepreneur Resource Center Partnership

- Partnered with California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB) to continue ERC operations at the former PD iHUB through February 2027.
- Supported ERC programming, including a Mini-MBA in Entrepreneurship and a three-day Business Startup Training serving local entrepreneurs, small businesses, and students.

AI and Innovation Programming

- Initiated discussions with CSUSB on integrating artificial intelligence coursework, training, and educational programs at the ERC to support startup development and workforce readiness.
- Met with University of California, Riverside (UCR) Palm Desert Campus representatives to explore alignment with existing AI-focused programs that could benefit Palm Desert businesses.

Long-Term Partnerships

- Engaged CSUSB leadership on the future of the ERC beyond the current contract term. CSUSB expressed interest in continuing the partnership and expanding AI offerings, with a proposal anticipated in Q1 2026.
- Began coordination with regional partners, including the Palm Desert Chamber of Commerce, to increase awareness of AI and entrepreneurship resources.

Next Steps

- Continue collaboration with CSUSB on AI-focused classes, trainings, and an entrepreneur certification program at the ERC.
- Coordinate with CSUSB, UCR, and regional partners to increase participation in AI and innovation programs.
- In Q1 2026, seek City Council direction on extending CSUSB's ERC operating contract and evaluating lease extension or relocation options ahead of the February 2027 lease expiration.

North Sphere Development, Infrastructure Planning, and Electrification

Goal Focus

Support continued growth in the Northern Sphere by coordinating infrastructure, utilities, and long-range planning to remove barriers to residential and commercial development.

Year in Review

The Northern Sphere remains the City’s most active growth area, with significant entitlement activity and ongoing residential and commercial construction. Over the past year, staff advanced key infrastructure solutions, secured long-term electrification capacity, coordinated water and sewer improvements, and aligned planning efforts to support sustained growth.

Work also included adopting the Circulation Element update, evaluating long-term park opportunities within the University Neighborhood Specific Plan (UNSP), and formal agreements to address utility transmission constraints.

North Sphere Development & Infrastructure

Coordinating utilities, housing, and long-range planning to support Palm Desert's fastest-growing area.



Electrification & Utilities



Residential & Commercial Growth



Planning & Regional Facilities

Infrastructure & Electrification Capacity	Active Residential & Commercial Growth	Planning & Regional Facilities Alignment
 <p style="background-color: #FFC300; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;"> ✓ Cook Street Substation Reserved Jan 8, 2026 </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Long-Term Electrical Capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Council-approved funding & reservation agreement with IID ✓ Transformer procurement & substation development advancing ✓ Water & Sewer Coordination <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ CFD and private financing options evaluated ✓ Monterey Crossing sewer upgrades in plan check 	 <p style="background-color: #006633; color: white; padding: 2px; display: inline-block; margin-bottom: 5px;"> ✓ Significant residential and commercial activity across the Northern Sphere </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Residential Construction Underway <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Agate ✓ Millennium ✓ Meritage (Phase 3) ✓ Explorer ✓ Palm Villas at Millennium (Phase 1) ✓ Commercial Projects Moving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Monterey Crossing permits processed ✓ Utility sequencing coordinated 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Circulation Element Adopted <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Portola Interchange incorporated ✓ Regional Park Direction Established <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple park concepts evaluated • 22-acre and 28-acre options reviewed ✓ UNSP Updates Advancing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft updates coordinated with Interestwest • Park designation integrated

Securing Infrastructure. Supporting Growth. Planning for Long-Term Community Needs.

Key Progress

Infrastructure and Utilities

- Continued coordination with Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and property owners to advance transformer procurement and substation development necessary to support future electrification.

- City Council approved funding and a reservation agreement with IID for the Cook Street Energy Substation on January 8, 2026, securing long-term electrical capacity for the Northern Sphere.
- Engaged with developers and the Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) to address water and sewer capacity constraints, including evaluation of Community Facilities District (CFD) formation and private financing options.
- Monterey Crossing developer submitted sewer capacity improvement plans to CVWD, which are currently in plan check. Upon approval, the developer will pursue a cost-sharing consortium among affected property owners to fund required upgrades.

Development Activity

- Construction and inspections continued for major residential projects, including Agate, Millennium, Vitalia, Meritage (University Park Phase 3), Explorer, and Phase 1 of Palm Villas at Millennium.
- Approved additional single-family entitlements, including Catavina (546 lots) and Portola Springs (156 lots), with construction permits and inspections progressing.
- Processed commercial construction permits for Monterey Crossing projects, while coordinating with utility providers to address infrastructure timing constraints.

Planning, Circulation, and Regional Facilities

- Goebel Partners facilitated continued Unified Development Code (UDC) Subcommittee meetings to streamline development standards for the Northern Sphere and citywide.
- City Council approved the Circulation Element update, including incorporation of the Portola Interchange as part of its evaluation of Northern Sphere impacts.
- Conducted multiple City Council study sessions evaluating potential regional park options within the UNSP, including consolidated mixed-use park concepts, a dedicated 22-acre park site, and a potential CSUSB campus location.
- Following Council direction to pursue a park site within the UNSP, staff presented a 28-acre park proposal to the Parks and Recreation Commission after evaluating opportunities for a larger contiguous park area.
- Draft updates to the University Neighborhood Specific Plan advanced in coordination with Interwest, inclusive of park planning considerations.

Next Steps

- Review and finalize draft updates to the University Neighborhood Specific Plan, including designation of a park area, for City Council consideration.
- Continue coordination with IID and pursue formation of a Community Facilities District to support the North Sphere Electric Substation.
- Maintain ongoing coordination with CVWD, Southern California Edison, IID, and developers to address infrastructure capacity and sequencing.
- Continue construction activity and permit processing for approved single-family and multi-family developments, including Catavina, Portola Springs, Meritage, and Explorer communities.

Mall Redevelopment/Experience-Based and Family-Friendly Activities

Goal Focus

Support the redevelopment of the mall properties into a vibrant, experience-driven, and family-friendly destination that strengthens economic vitality and community engagement.

Year in Review

This year, staff focused on laying the groundwork for comprehensive mall redevelopment by addressing ownership coordination challenges, advancing the required Specific Plan framework, and positioning the City-owned Sears property for future sale or redevelopment. Efforts centered on maintaining momentum despite market and financial constraints affecting the private property owner.

Reimagining the Mall Site
Positioning a legacy retail center for experience-driven and family-friendly redevelopment.

Comprehensive Site Planning Underway	City-Owned Sears Building Positioned	Market Engagement & Redevelopment Interest
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Owner Coordination Ongoing<ul style="list-style-type: none">Full-site redevelopment discussionsResidential opportunity evaluated (north 10 acres)Specific Plan Framework Advancing<ul style="list-style-type: none">City requiring unified planningPartnership models explored to address financial constraints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Due Diligence Completed<ul style="list-style-type: none">Property appraisalSite surveyLead & asbestos reportsSurplus Land Act Process<ul style="list-style-type: none">Notice of Availability issuedOne proposal received	<ul style="list-style-type: none">ICSC Outreach Conducted<ul style="list-style-type: none">Direct tenant engagementInterest Identified<ul style="list-style-type: none">Experience-driven usesRetail & entertainment concepts

Groundwork Completed. Market Interest Confirmed. Council Direction in March 2026.

Key Progress

Site Planning and Owner Coordination

- Continued coordination with mall ownership to explore long-term redevelopment concepts for the full site and advance preparation of a comprehensive Specific Plan.
- Worked with mall ownership to evaluate opportunities to move a residential project forward on approximately 10 acres in the northern portion of the site.
- Researched potential partnership models to assist mall ownership in overcoming financial challenges associated with funding the Specific Plan and entitlement process.

City-Owned Sears Building

- Completed a property appraisal, site survey, and lead and asbestos surveys for the City-owned Sears building.
- Issued a Notice of Availability as required by the Surplus Land Act and received one proposal.

Market Outreach and Uses

- Conducted outreach to experience-based and entertainment-focused tenants through participation in the International Council of Shopping Centers conference.
- Identified interest from potential tenants, including experiential retail, fitness uses, furniture retail, and theaters, indicating continued market demand for redevelopment of the mall site.

Next Steps

- Continue coordination with mall ownership to move development of the mall's Specific Plan forward.
- Return to City Council in March 2026 to review options for the sale or redevelopment of the City-owned Sears building, consistent with Surplus Land Act requirements.

Update to the Development Code/ Fire Prevention by Design

Goal Focus

Modernize the City’s development regulations to improve clarity, efficiency, and flexibility while integrating fire prevention by design to enhance public safety and support long-term economic growth.

Year in Review

This year, staff advanced a comprehensive update to the City’s development regulations by developing a new Unified Development Code (UDC) and strengthening the City’s approach to proactive fire risk reduction. Efforts focused on stakeholder engagement, drafting key code sections, and operational improvements that integrate fire prevention standards early in the development review process.

Modernizing Development Regulations & Fire Safety
Streamlining development standards while strengthening fire prevention and life safety protections.

Unified Development Code Underway	Fire Prevention by Design Strengthened	Advancing Toward Adoption & Integration
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Comprehensive Code Consolidation<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Zoning, subdivision, grading unified✓ Stakeholder Engagement<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ ARC, Planning Commission, development community✓ Public survey conducted✓ Draft Sections Presented<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Regulations Assessment Report delivered✓ Administration & Procedures section drafted and reviewed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ 2025 Building Standards Adopted<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ California Fire Code✓ Wildland-Urban Interface Code✓ Effective January 1, 2026✓ Updated Fire Hazard Severity Maps<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Improved wildfire risk awareness✓ Enhanced defensible space standards✓ In-House Fire Marshal Implemented<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Onsite integration in development review✓ Early code compliance coordination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Draft Code Sections Advancing<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public review & refinement underway✓ Planning Commission & Council Consideration<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal adoption pathway established✓ Fire Inspection Integration<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Transition toward in house inspection services

Clearer Regulations. Stronger Fire Protection. Smarter Development Review.

Key Progress

Unified Development Code

- Advanced development of a new Unified Development Code to consolidate zoning, subdivision, grading, and related regulations into a modern, streamlined framework aligned with the City’s long-term vision.
- Conducted stakeholder outreach with the Architectural Review Commission, Planning Commission, and members of the development community, along with an online public survey.

- Completed an in-depth assessment of existing development regulations and presented the Draft Regulations Assessment Report during a City Council study session.
- Prepared and presented the draft Administration and Procedures section of the UDC to the City Council Ad Hoc Subcommittee and City Council for refinement.
- Continued Subcommittee review meetings to refine draft sections and advance the code framework.

Fire Prevention by Design

- Adopted the 2025 California Building Standards Code, including the California Fire Code and Wildland-Urban Interface Code, effective January 1, 2026, strengthening fire prevention and life safety standards.
- Adopted updated Fire Hazard Severity Zone maps to inform residents of wildfire risks and support mitigation measures such as vegetation management and fire-safe landscaping.
- Implemented an in-house Fire Marshal model, with Fire Marshal services now provided onsite to strengthen early integration of fire prevention standards during permit review, project design, and code enforcement.

Next Steps

- Advance additional draft sections of the Unified Development Code through public review and refinement.
- Bring draft UDC sections forward for Planning Commission consideration and City Council adoption.
- Complete integration of fire inspection services within the Development Services Department to support in-house commercial, industrial, and residential inspections.

Crime Prevention Technology

Goal Focus

Expand the use of technology-driven public safety solutions to enhance crime prevention, situational awareness, and law enforcement effectiveness.

Year in Review

This year, the City significantly expanded its investment in crime-prevention technology, with a primary focus on the Automated License Plate Recognition (ALPR) network and improving real-time operational capabilities. Staff coordinated closely with the Riverside County Sheriff's Department (RSO), Flock Safety, and internal departments to advance deployment while managing permitting, utility coordination, and access constraints.

Crime Prevention Technology
Expanding real-time tools to support proactive policing and public safety.

ALPR Cameras Real-Time Data Law Enforcement Operations

ALPR Network Expansion	Operational Integration	Next Phase Enhancements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">157 total cameras approved144 cameras installed13 cameras in final permitting (El Paseo)Coordinated deployment with RSO and Flock Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Real-time monitoring & Investigations<ul style="list-style-type: none">ALPR data integrated with RSO operationsCoordinated response workflows<ul style="list-style-type: none">Electronic citations implemented <p>Technology supporting officers in the field.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Complete El Paseo phase<ul style="list-style-type: none">Install and activate remaining 13 camerasAdvanced analytics under evaluation<ul style="list-style-type: none">Real-time crime analysisFuture technologies assessed<ul style="list-style-type: none">AI body cameras, real-time crime centerTools, Drone as First Responder

Improves situational awareness, supports proactive enforcement, and strengthens regional public safety coordination.

Key Progress

ALPR Expansion and Deployment

- City Council approved the expansion of the ALPR network by 44 cameras, increasing the system from 113 to a planned total of 157 cameras citywide.
- Finalized and submitted a coordinated deployment plan with Flock Safety and RSO.
- Installed 144 ALPR cameras to date, with the remaining 13 cameras currently in permitting for the El Paseo phase.

- Identified El Paseo camera locations in coordination with RSO to maximize coverage and public safety outcomes.
- Continued coordination with Public Works on permitting, median access, and utility requirements to support efficient installation and activation.

Operational Enhancements

- Continued integration and use of ALPR data in partnership with RSO to support real-time monitoring, investigations, and coordinated response.
- Riverside County Sheriff's Department implemented electronic citations, improving efficiency in the field and ensuring timely, accurate citation data and faster processing.

Next Steps

- Complete the El Paseo ALPR phase by securing permits and installing, activating, and validating the remaining 13 cameras.
- Continue coordination with RSO and internal departments to refine alert, response, and reporting workflows as additional cameras come online.
- Explore integration of ALPR data with real-time crime analytics tools to enhance proactive enforcement.
- Evaluate additional public safety technologies, including AI-enabled body camera analytics, real-time crime center enhancements, and Drone as First Responder capabilities.

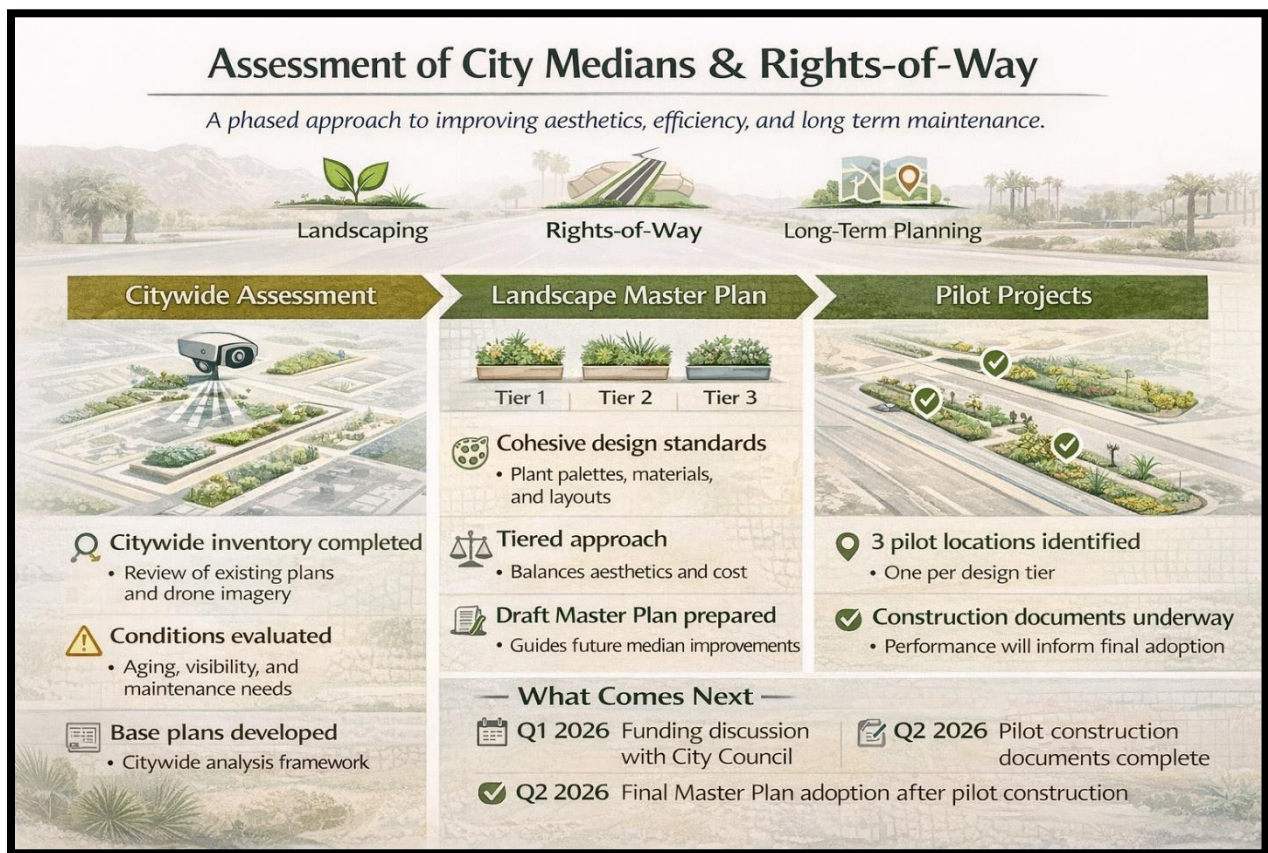
Assessment of City Medians and Rights of Way

Goal Focus

Conduct a comprehensive review of City medians and rights-of-way to improve maintenance efficiency, aesthetics, and long-term functionality through a cohesive, cost-effective landscape strategy.

Year in Review

This year, staff advanced a citywide effort to modernize median landscaping by developing a phased Landscape Master Plan. Work focused on creating a consistent design framework, prioritizing aging and high-visibility medians, and positioning the City for efficient long-term maintenance and capital planning.



Key Progress

Landscape Master Plan Development

- Initiated the Landscape Master Plan Development Project and awarded a professional services agreement to Hermann Design Group.
- Completed preliminary investigations, including review of existing plans and drone aerial imagery, and developed base plans for citywide analysis.
- Conducted design coordination meetings to establish plant palettes, materials, and tiered design concepts.

- Prepared a draft Landscape Master Plan intended to guide future median construction and rehabilitation citywide.

Stakeholder Review and Refinement

- Presented the draft Landscape Master Plan to the Architectural Review Committee to ensure consistency with Palm Desert's aesthetic goals.
- Conducted a City Council study session to receive policy direction and feedback.
- Updated the plan based on input and presented refinements to the Active Transportation Subcommittee.

Pilot Project Identification

- Identified three pilot locations representing each landscape design tier to be constructed prior to final plan adoption.
- Directed the consultant to begin preparing construction documents for the pilot projects.

Next Steps

- Conduct a City Council study session in Q1 2026 to discuss project funding.
- Complete construction documents for the three pilot locations in Q2 2026.
- Complete the final Landscape Master Plan in Q2 2026 and return to City Council for approval following construction of the pilot designs.

2025 Department Highlights

Capital Projects Department

Department Role

The Capital Projects Department delivers the City's most complex and high-impact public infrastructure investments. The department manages projects from early feasibility and design through construction, inspection, and closeout, supporting transportation safety, public facilities, sustainability, and long-term asset management across the City.

Year in Review

This year was a high-delivery period for the Capital Projects Department, with significant emphasis on completing construction, advancing major facility projects, and expanding sustainable infrastructure. Staff successfully managed a large and diverse portfolio of projects while continuing to prepare the next generation of capital improvements.

Capital Projects: What Was Delivered
Major facilities, safer streets, and sustainable infrastructure—citywide.

Public Facilities Transportation Sustainability Asset Management

Public Facilities & Community Assets	Transportation Safety & Mobility
<ul style="list-style-type: none">New Library Facility advancedFire Station 102 improvements underwayCahuilla Hills Park construction initiatedOffice space upgrades delivered	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Major street rehabilitation completedSafety upgrades at intersections and crosswalksWalk and Roll Phase 2 advanced
Sustainability & Resilience	Next Wave of Projects In The Works
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Solar carports installed at multiple City facilitiesStormwater and drainage system assessedBridge preventative maintenance completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Fire Stations 33 & 71 designWalk and Roll Phase 3New traffic signalsParkview demolitionAdditional park and facility projects

Multiple major projects delivered across Palm Desert

Capital Projects delivered high-impact infrastructure while preparing the next wave of investments.

Major Outcomes Delivered

Public Facilities and Community Assets

- Completed schematic design and awarded a Progressive Design-Build contract for the new Library Facility.
- Completed Phase 3 of Office Space Improvements and advanced planning for future office space upgrades.
- Awarded construction contracts for Cahuilla Hills Park Improvements and initiated related construction activities.

- Advanced Fire Station 102 improvements, including Gerald Ford Drive street improvements tied to the project.

Transportation Safety and Mobility

- Completed major roadway rehabilitation projects, including El Paseo Street Rehabilitation, Eldorado Drive Rehabilitation, University Park Drive Improvements, and the 2025 Slurry Seal Program.
- Completed multiple safety-focused projects, including High Visibility Crosswalks, installation of retroreflective traffic signal backplates, and new traffic signal installations at Vitalia Way and Gerald Ford Drive.
- Completed design and awarded construction for Walk and Roll Phase 2 and advanced planning for future Walk and Roll improvements.

Sustainability and Infrastructure Resilience

- Constructed solar carports at Parkview Office Complex, Desert Willow, City Hall, the Aquatic Center, and the Artist Center.
- Completed the Stormwater and Drainage Infrastructure Assessment to support long-term flood control and infrastructure planning.
- Completed bridge preventative maintenance projects to extend the useful life of critical transportation assets.

Next Six Months Outlook

Over the next six months, the Capital Projects Department will focus on completing major construction already underway while advancing design for the next phase of public safety, facility, transportation, and park improvements.

Key priorities include completing Fire Station 102, Cahuilla Hills Park Improvements, Walk and Roll Phase 2 bike lane improvements, Gerald Ford Drive street improvements, and several housing authority site and roof replacement projects. In parallel, staff will complete or advance design for Fire Stations 33 and 71, Walk and Roll Phase 3, new traffic signals at Mesa View/Highway 74 and Monterey/Magnesia Falls Drive, Haystack Channel improvements, and future office space upgrades.

Additional efforts will include demolition of the Parkview Office Building, construction of solar carports at the Desert Willow overflow parking lot, award of construction contracts for Baja Park Improvements and the Larkspur Lane mid-block crossing, and continued preparation of projects to maintain a strong capital delivery pipeline.

City Manager's Office

Department Role

The City Manager's Office provides executive leadership and organizational oversight under the policy direction of the City Council. The department supports City operations through strategic coordination, workforce management, communications, legislative compliance, and long-term organizational capacity building, including oversight of Human Resources, Public Affairs, and the City Clerk's Office.

Year in Review

This year, the City Manager's Office focused on strengthening organizational effectiveness, workforce development, and operational resilience while advancing major funding, compliance, and transparency initiatives. Efforts focused on employee engagement, leadership development, grant acquisition, and modernizing internal processes.

City Manager's Office:

Leadership, Governance & Organizational Capacity


Strengthening organizational effectiveness, transparency, and long-term resilience.



Leadership





Workforce



Governance



Strategic Funding

LEAD & ALIGN	DEVELOP THE WORKFORCE	GOVERN WITH TRANSPARENCY	BUILD LONG-TERM CAPACITY
 <p>Organizational Leadership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Conducted 12+ skip-level meetings to assess culture and morale ✓ identified improvements in training, documentation, and communication ✓ Strengthened regional partnerships through MOUs with COD and DSUSD 	 <p>Human Resources & Talent</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 34 recruitments completed; 32 promotions ✓ 31 new hires and 8 interns onboarded ✓ Internship partnership with College of the Desert launched ✓ Evaluation process updated "Exceptional Teammate" model 	 <p>Governance & Compliance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Records Management Policy updated ✓ Council and appointed body minutes consistently presented ✓ Citywide AI Guidelines, adopted; staff training delivered ✓ 3,700+ vote-by-mail ballots collected 	 <p>Strategic Funding & Initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ \$7.7M secured in competitive grants ✓ \$20M+ in applications advanced ✓ Surplus Land Act compliance progressed for mall site redevelopment
<p>✓ What's Next</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Advancing emergency management training, implementing Workday HRIS, finalizing labor negotiations, modernizing Boards and Commissions resources, completing Surplus Land Act clearance, and ensuring compliance with new state public meeting requirements. 			

Major Initiatives and Accomplishments

Organizational Leadership and Culture

- Conducted more than a dozen skip-level meetings across the organization to assess morale and culture, identifying strengths in staff dedication and service as well as opportunities for improved training, documentation, and communication.

- Negotiated new Memoranda of Understanding with College of the Desert and Desert Sands Unified School District to enhance emergency operations center and sheltering capabilities.

Workforce Development and Human Resources

- Completed 34 recruitments, promoted 32 employees, and onboarded 31 new hires and 8 interns.
- Launched an internship partnership with College of the Desert and expanded employee development opportunities.
- Revised employee evaluation processes to include supervisor evaluations and incorporate the City's "Exceptional Teammate" model.
- Delivered professional development and training on de-escalation, leave administration, retirement planning, performance evaluations, and supervisory best practices, including partnership with CJPIA for a supervisor academy.
- Facilitated employee engagement initiatives, including wellness programs, challenges, and appreciation events.
- Achieved IBCCES Autism Recertification, with more than 80% of City employees completing required training.

Governance, Compliance, and Transparency

- Coordinated the biennial update to the City's Records Management Policy and Records Retention Schedules.
- Ensured City Council and appointed body meeting minutes were consistently presented for approval at the next regular meeting.
- Led development and adoption of Citywide Generative Artificial Intelligence Guidelines and delivered staff training on responsible AI use in City operations.
- Supported election operations by collecting more than 3,700 vote-by-mail ballots at the City Hall drop-off location.

Strategic Funding and Initiatives

- Secured \$7.7 million in competitive grant funding year-to-date and advanced applications totaling more than \$20 million for major capital and regional infrastructure projects.
- Advanced Surplus Land Act compliance efforts to position the mall site for future redevelopment opportunities.

Next Six Months Outlook

Over the next six months, the City Manager's Office will complete implementation of monthly emergency management training, finalize Surplus Land Act clearance actions related to the mall site, and advance several organization-wide workforce initiatives. Key efforts include launching the Spring 2026 internship program, completing labor negotiations, and implementing the City's new Human Resources Information System (Workday). The department will also modernize Boards and Commissions resources through a consolidated public website, implement new state requirements for public meeting accessibility and disruption management, and continue staff training to support compliance and operational effectiveness.

Development Services Department

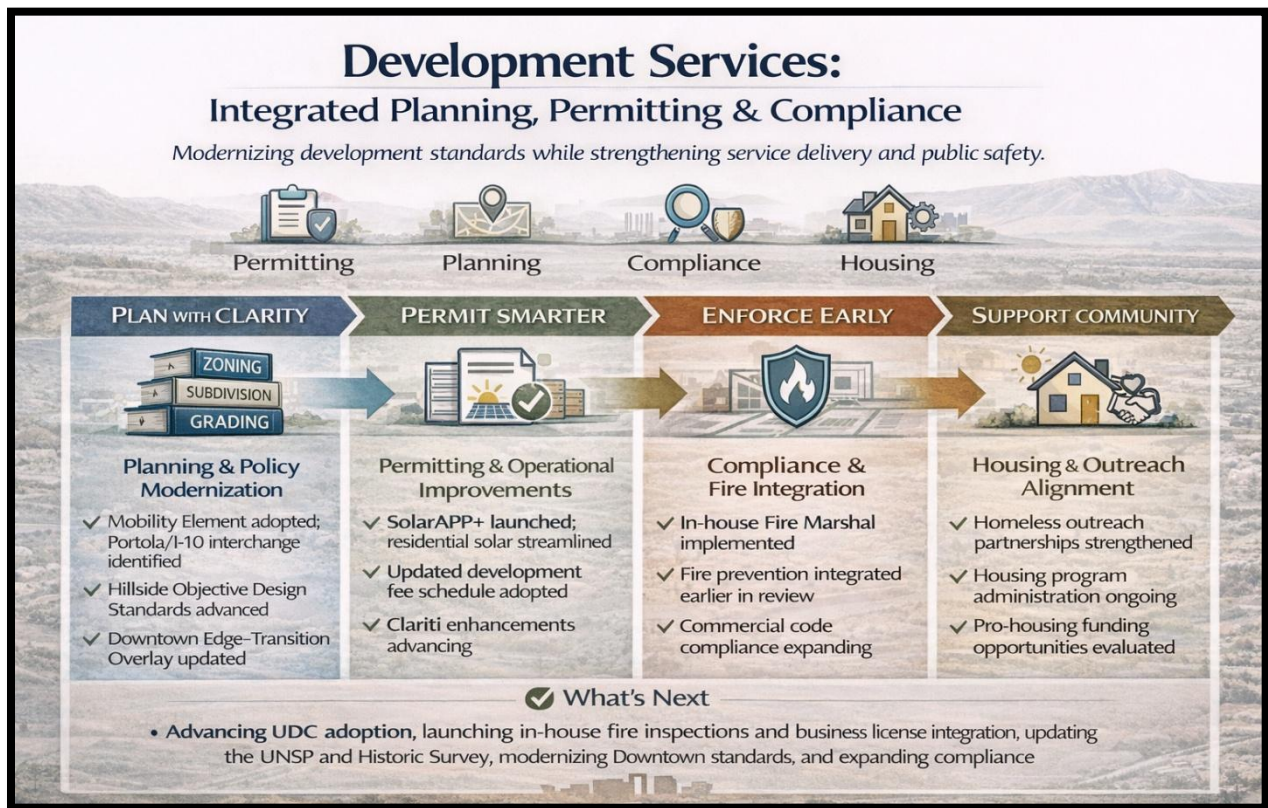
Department Role

The Development Services Department serves as the City’s central hub for shaping the built environment through coordinated planning, permitting, compliance, and regulatory services. The department supports sustainable growth, public safety, housing delivery, and economic vitality through an integrated approach that spans development review, policy implementation, and operational enforcement.

The department includes Development Services Center, Planning, GIS, Historic Preservation, Cannabis Compliance, Code Compliance, Engineering, Housing, Homelessness and Supportive Services, Short-Term Rentals, Business Licenses, and Building and Safety.

Year in Review

This year, Development Services advanced major policy updates, strengthened fire and regulatory integration, modernized permitting systems, and improved development fee and compliance structures. Staff balanced continued development activity with modernization of code frameworks, operational improvements, and expanded housing and outreach initiatives.



Major Initiatives and Accomplishments

Planning and Policy Modernization

- Adopted the General Plan Mobility (Circulation) Element update on December 11, 2025, aligning transportation policies with state requirements and identifying the Portola Avenue and Interstate 10 interchange as a long-term priority.
- Advanced Hillside Objective Design Standards through City Council public hearing and ordinance introduction, strengthening clear and objective hillside development criteria.
- Approved the Downtown Edge–Transition Overlay zoning amendment, updating density standards, allowing single-family homes by right, and aligning zoning with the General Plan.
- Continued advancement of the Unified Development Code to modernize and consolidate development regulations.

Permitting and Operational Improvements

- Implemented SolarAPP+ in October 2025, streamlining residential solar photovoltaic permitting and improving turnaround times.
- Adopted updated Development and Regulatory Services fees on October 27, 2025, establishing a revised fee schedule to ensure cost recovery and compliance.
- Transitioned Fire Marshal operations to an in-house model in December 2025, housed within the Building and Safety Division to strengthen coordination and early integration of fire prevention standards in development review.

Housing, Compliance, and Community Support

- Realigned homelessness outreach services through partnerships with Coachella Valley Rescue Mission and City Net, increasing access to housing assistance, shelter referrals, and supportive services.
- Continued implementation of housing-related programs and administrative actions to support compliance and service delivery.

Next Six Months Outlook

Over the next six months, Development Services will advance regulatory modernization, expand in-house compliance capabilities, and complete several major planning initiatives that shape long-term growth and community character. Key efforts include launching commercial code compliance and in-house fire inspection services, implementing Business License and Fire Fee integration within the Clarity system, advancing Phase 2 of the Historic Resources Survey, and updating the University Neighborhood Specific Plan with park allocation. Staff will also finalize and present the Unified Development Code for adoption, bring forward a comprehensive Downtown Zoning Update, initiate a Tobacco Grant compliance and education program, identify impediments to development with targeted ordinance recommendations, present a public area view analysis, and continue pursuing pro-housing funding and certification opportunities.

Economic Development Department

Department Role

The Economic Development Department supports business expansion, investment, and community vitality by providing financing resources, workforce support, and technical assistance. The department focuses on retail recruitment and business attraction while managing real estate transactions, business partnerships, public art, waste and recycling compliance, events and sponsorships, and community engagement and communications initiatives.

Year in Review

This year, Economic Development advanced major housing and real estate initiatives, strengthened business support and sustainability programs, and expanded community-facing events and partnerships. Staff balanced complex real estate transactions with regulatory compliance, placemaking efforts, and regional leadership in food recovery and environmental programs.

Economic Development: Delivering Citywide Impact

Housing, business growth, sustainability, and community engagement.



Housing & Real Estate



Business Support



Sustainability



Community & Arts

Build the City	Support Business	Lead on Sustainability	Activate Community
<p>Housing & Redevelopment</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 130-unit housing project advanced 33 affordable units at Desert Willow Lot E ✓ Surplus Land Act completed Marrakesh, Wallaroo, Alessandro ✓ Parkview site cleared Library project enabled 	<p>Business Support & Investment</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Invest Palm Desert funding secured Papa Dan’s reconstruction ✓ Market intelligence 2025 Brokers Report ✓ Inclusive tourism supported Autism Certification reimbursements 	<p>Sustainability & Compliance</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 807 tons of food diverted ✓ 2.47 million meals delivered ✓ SB 1383 enforcement launched ✓ Turf reduction completed ✓ Plastic reduction campaign delivered 	<p>Community, Arts & Events</p>  <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Veterans Day event reimagined ✓ Student art showcased publicly ✓ Civic engagement programs delivered ✓ Major events coordinated
<p>✓ What’s Next</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing Surplus Land Act actions, real estate decisions, economic branding, website modernization, and strategic property reuse. 			

Major Initiatives and Accomplishments

Housing, Real Estate, and Redevelopment

- Entered into a Purchase and Sale Agreement with Blieu for Desert Willow Lot E, enabling construction of a 130-unit multi-family development, including 33 affordable housing units.
- Completed the Surplus Land Act process for the Marrakesh, Wallaroo, and Alessandro sites, positioning multiple properties for future redevelopment opportunities.

- Cleared tenants from the Parkview building in preparation for the future library construction project.

Business Support and Investment

- Secured Invest Palm Desert funding to support the reconstruction of Papa Dan's.
- Presented the 2025 Brokers Report to City Council, providing insight into market conditions and commercial real estate trends.
- Processed Autism Certification reimbursements for Palm Desert businesses, supporting inclusive tourism and customer service.

Sustainability, Compliance, and Environmental Leadership

- Began mandated enforcement of commercial organics recycling and edible food generator requirements in compliance with SB 1383.
- Diverted more than 807 tons of edible food from landfills, resulting in the delivery of over 2.47 million meals to food-insecure families and establishing Palm Desert as a regional leader in food donation and recovery.
- Completed the Desert Willow Mountain View Turf Reduction Project.
- Launched an educational campaign on SB 1053, the statewide plastic bag ban, including distribution of reusable bags at City events.

Community Engagement, Arts, and Events

- Partnered with the McCallum Theatre to transition the City's Veterans Day event into the inaugural Veterans Day Eve Celebration.
- Hosted the 38th Annual Student Art & Essay Contest at UCR Palm Desert Center (relocated from City Hall) and showcased award-winning student artwork in the public right-of-way.
- Coordinated Civic Engagement Day, Civic Academy programs, HOA community events, and major special events, including the Run Travis Run 5K.
- Retained a new vendor for the El Paseo Courtesy Cart Program and deaccessioned outdated public art assets.

Next Six Months Outlook

Over the next six months, Economic Development will focus on advancing major real estate actions, strengthening the City's economic identity, and completing key compliance and modernization initiatives. Priorities include completing Surplus Land Act processes for additional City-owned properties, seeking City Council direction on the future of the Entrepreneur Resource Center, finalizing a repurposing strategy for the Sheriff's Substation, and issuing requests for proposals for property sales. Staff will also complete the migration and launch of the new City website, finalize construction waste management procedures, and develop a comprehensive Economic Development marketing and branding strategy to support business attraction and investment.

Finance Department

Department Role

The Finance Department oversees all financial operations of the City, ensuring sound fiscal management, transparency, and accountability. Core responsibilities include budgeting, financial reporting, cash and debt management, purchasing, payroll, and compliance. The department also includes the Information Technology Division, which supports City operations through secure, reliable, and innovative technology systems.

Year in Review

This year, Finance focused on maintaining fiscal stability, advancing major system modernization efforts, and strengthening transparency and internal controls. Staff successfully managed multiple budget cycles, audits, and policy updates while continuing implementation of a new enterprise resource planning system to support long-term operational efficiency.

Finance:
Fiscal Stewardship & Systems Modernization
Ensuring transparency, accountability, and long-term financial stability.

Budget & Policy Financial Reporting Systems & Technology Housing Support

Fiscal Stewardship & Budgeting	Financial Reporting & Transparency
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ FY 2025-26 Budget adopted✓ Midyear adjustments approved with no use of reserves✓ Reserve Policy analysis completed✓ Travel Policy updated	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ ACFR and audits filed with no findings✓ GFOA & CSMFO awards received✓ Monthly Procurement Report launched

Financial Stability
Sound fiscal management across City operations

Systems Modernization & IT	Housing & Partner Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Workday ERP milestones achieved✓ Clariti permitting system launched✓ Procurement processes strengthened	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Housing Authority operations transitioned✓ Financial coordination for housing programs ongoing

✓ **What's Next**

- ERP system launch, year-end close and audits, budget/ development, and long-term capital planning.

Major Initiatives and Accomplishments

Fiscal Stewardship and Budget Management

- Adopted the FY 2025–26 Annual Budget and Five-Year Capital Improvement Program and approved the midyear budget adjustments without the use of reserves.
- Completed a comprehensive Reserve Policy analysis and presented recommendations to City Council.

- Updated the City's Travel Policy to reflect best practices and changing cost conditions.

Financial Reporting and Transparency

- Filed the FY 2023–24 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR), Measure A, Palm Desert Recreation Facilities Corporation, and Single Audits with no findings.
- Received the GFOA Certificate of Achievement for the FY 2023–24 ACFR and the CSMFO Award for Operating Budget Excellence for the FY 2024–25 Budget Book.
- Received the GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for FY 2025–26, including Special Honors for policy presentation.
- Created a Monthly Procurement Report to enhance contract transparency and oversight.

Systems Modernization and Technology

- Met key milestones in the implementation of the Workday ERP system for Human Resources and Payroll.
- Collaborated with Development Services to successfully launch the Clariti permitting system.
- Began transitioning contract administration responsibilities to the Procurement team to improve efficiency, monitoring, and risk management.

Housing and Partner Agency Support

- Selected and awarded a contract to National CORE for Palm Desert Housing Authority operations.
- Supported housing-related financial coordination and compliance activities across departments.

Next Six Months Outlook

Over the next six months, Finance will advance citywide system modernization while completing critical financial reporting and budget development milestones. Key priorities include configuring and testing the Workday Finance and HR modules in preparation for a citywide launch, completing FY 2024–25 year-end close and audit activities, and submitting required financial reports for state and professional award consideration. The department will also prepare and present the FY 2026–27 Annual Budget and a 10-Year Capital Improvement Program, update reserve and budget policies, and continue collaboration with Development Services to support housing programs and long-term fiscal planning.

Library Services Department

Department Role

The Palm Desert Library serves as a welcoming community space that supports lifelong learning, cultural enrichment, and personal well-being. Through collections, programs, partnerships, and services, the Library fosters connection, curiosity, and access to resources for residents of all ages.

Year in Review

This year, Library Services focused on expanding and diversifying programming, improving the relevance of collections and space use, strengthening community partnerships, and enhancing customer service. These efforts resulted in increased attendance, greater awareness of library offerings, and improved patron experience.

Library Services:
Connecting Community Through Learning
Programs, collections, and partnerships that serve all ages.

Learning Programs Partnerships Service

Programs & Partnerships	Collections & Access	Staff & Volunteers
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Expanded and diversified library programs✓ Increased attendance and patron satisfaction✓ Partnered with 20+ community organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Outdated materials removed and collections rebalanced✓ Relocated collections to better match patron needs✓ Established ongoing collection maintenance schedule	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Expanded the volunteer program✓ Launched first staff training day for customer service✓ Enhanced in-person, phone & email interactions

What's Next
Expanding access and engagement for every stage of life.

Spring programs Summer Reading Program Student Success Card with DSUSD Homebound services via Zip Books Zip Books & deliveries

Major Initiatives and Accomplishments

Programs, Partnerships, and Community Engagement

- Significantly expanded the quantity and diversity of library programs, resulting in increased attendance and improved patron satisfaction.
- Strengthened partnerships with more than 20 community organizations, including groups serving older adults, arts organizations, and local businesses.

- Improved the quality and consistency of social media and newsletter communications, leading to increased followers, higher engagement, and greater awareness of library services and programs.

Collections and Service Improvements

- Completed a comprehensive collection maintenance project to remove outdated and damaged materials, rebalance collection size, and relocate collections within the building.
- Established an ongoing schedule to maintain the collection and ensure continued relevance.
- Refined the library card mailing process to improve efficiency and reduce wait times for new cardholders.

Staffing and Volunteer Support

- Expanded the library volunteer program to increase community involvement.
- Planned and implemented the first Library staff training day focused on customer service, strengthening in-person, phone, and email interactions with patrons.

Next Six Months Outlook

Over the next six months, Library Services will continue to expand access and engagement through seasonal programming and targeted service enhancements. Priorities include delivering a robust spring programming schedule, implementing the 2026 Summer Reading Program, launching a Student Success Card program in partnership with Desert Sands Unified School District, and expanding services for homebound residents through Zip Books and direct delivery to retirement communities.

Public Works Department

Department Role

The Public Works Department is responsible for maintaining and improving the City's infrastructure and public spaces. This includes City facilities, streets, sidewalks, traffic systems, landscaping, parks, fleet, and public rights-of-way. The department also leads select capital improvement projects and supports City operations through equipment, maintenance, and service delivery.

Year in Review

This year, Public Works focused on improving traffic safety, maintaining City facilities and public spaces, and advancing major infrastructure and mobility initiatives. Staff balanced day-to-day service demands with project delivery, grant-funded improvements, and long-term system upgrades.

Public Works:
Infrastructure and Community Services
Keeping Palm Desert safe, functional, and well-maintained.

Traffic & Safety Parks & Facilities Operations & Equipment

Safer Streets and Mobility

- ✓ New traffic signals and roundabout improvements completed
- ✓ Citywide striping and school zone upgrades delivered
- ✓ **\$6.5M+** secured for Vison Zero and traffic system modernization

Well-Maintained Public Spaces

- ✓ Parking lot rehabilitation at multiple City facilities
- ✓ Clubhouse repainted and restrooms renovated
- ✓ Park restroom facilities refreshed citywide

Reliable Operations

- ✓ New street sweeper and graffiti removal truck procured
- ✓ Equipment upgrades improving response times and service delivery

What's Next

Traffic system upgrades, median landscape planning, park improvements, wayfinding, bus stop enhancements, and continued community engagement.

Major Initiatives and Accomplishments

Traffic Safety and Mobility

- Completed the Cook Street and Market Place Drive traffic signal installation and Dinah Shore roundabout improvements, enhancing traffic operations and safety.

- Secured \$5.68 million in federal funding for Vision Zero implementation and \$885,000 from SCAG for Advanced Traffic Management System replacement.
- Completed citywide striping and school zone improvements to support pedestrian and traffic safety.

Facilities, Parks, and Public Spaces

- Completed parking lot rehabilitation at Entrada del Paseo, Desert Willow, Historical Society, and Presidents' Plaza III.
- Repainted the Desert Willow Clubhouse and renovated lobby restrooms.
- Refreshed and improved multiple park restroom facilities across the City.

Operations and Equipment

- Procured key Public Works equipment, including a new street sweeper and graffiti removal truck, to improve service efficiency and response times.

Next Six Months Outlook

Over the next six months, Public Works will focus on completing several high-visibility infrastructure and facility improvements while advancing traffic system upgrades and park enhancements. Priorities include finalizing the Median Landscape Master Plan, completing design of the Advanced Traffic Management System and traffic signal hardware updates, and delivering improvements at the Aquatic Center, Civic Center Park playground, Presidents' Plaza III, and key community facilities. Staff will also advance wayfinding and bus stop improvement projects, complete citywide striping and school zone upgrades, and continue community engagement and concept planning for future park improvements.