

MEMORANDUM

January 30, 2026

To: City of Palm Desert

Attention: Rosie Lua, Carlos Flores

Re: City of Palm Desert Hillside Residential Design Standards Comments

On November 26, 2025, John Kaliski Architects (JKA) submitted a draft of the City of Palm Desert Hillside Residential Design Standards for input and comments. The Design Standards document was reviewed by City staff and discussed at the December 15, 2025 Planning Commission meeting and the January 8, 2026 City Council meeting.

JKA has implemented Staff, Commissioner, and Councilmember comments into a revised document dated January 2026, also attached to this memorandum. The revisions to the November 25, 2025 document are as follows, **in red**.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

| DECISION-MAKER COMMENT | DOCUMENT REVISION |
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| <p>Staff: <i>Ensure consistency between the values in Section 1.1. and the standards in Chapter 2. Implement maximum building area recommended at the 9/23/25 Joint Study Session.</i></p> | <p>1.1 Applicability & Exceptions The design standards of this policy shall only apply to single-family housing developments located in the Hillside Planned Residential (HPR) Palm Desert zoning designation. This policy does not apply to multi-family developments, mixed-use developments, or single-family developments outside of the HPR zone. The design standards are also not applicable to non-residential development.</p> <p>If a property owner can demonstrate that an existing building pad in the HPR zone was approved by the City or County before incorporation of the City of Palm Desert, a residential building and accessory structure(s) may be built on a previously approved building pad without a public hearing. The total area of buildings shall be limited to 35 percent of the existing building pad area or a maximum of 3,150 2,625 square feet, whichever is less. The total building square footage may be increased up to 50 percent of the existing building pad area and a maximum of 6,300 5,250 square feet, whichever is less, with Architectural Review Commission approval, appealable to the Planning Commission.</p> <p>The Planning Commission, upon the recommendation of the Architectural Review Commission, may approve a precise plan of design through a public hearing process that modifies the standards of this Section. Said precise plan shall take into consideration any and all circumstances of the project including, but not limited to, viewshed, existing and proposed topography, landscape and site improvements, color, texture, profile, and components of buildings and structures on the lot with the exception that no building pad shall be approved that exceeds 14,520 square feet in size and the total area of buildings on a lot shall not exceed 6,300 5,250 square feet in size.</p> |

CHAPTER 2: HPR DESIGN STANDARDS

| DECISION-MAKER COMMENT | DOCUMENT REVISION |
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| <p>Planning Commission: <i>Consider requiring the provision of a survey by a licensed surveyor with each application that confirms the elevation of major and minor ridgelines as noted in Figure 1, Ridgeline Map.</i></p> | <p>No revision to document. Staff to determine if this should be incorporated into applicant submittal requirements.</p> |
| <p>JKA revision, proofreading.</p> | <p>Standard 2.1.1. Grading. No grading, inclusive of cuts and fills, in excess of one cubic yard of earth per four square feet of total building pad area shall be permitted without the prior written approval of the Director of Development Services. The Director may approve grading up to two additional cubic yards per four square feet of lot area per lot after making all of the following findings.</p> |
| <p>Staff: <i>Ensure consistency between the values in Section 1.1. and the standards in Chapter 2. Implement maximum building area recommended at the 9/23/25 Joint Study Session.</i></p> | <p>Standard 2.2.7. Building pad area at new building pads. The maximum area permanently disturbed by grading for a new building pad shall not exceed 9,000 7,500 square feet.</p> <p>Standard 2.2.8. Building pad area at existing building pads. An existing building pad that is less than 9,000 7,500 square feet may be added to such that the maximum area permanently disturbed by grading shall not exceed 9,000 7,500 square feet.</p> |
| <p>Planning Commission: <i>Consider distinct allowances for guardrails vs. fences or walls to ensure provisions for safety where changes in level occur.</i></p> | <p>Standard 2.2.11. Fences and walls, location. Fences and walls shall only be located on building pads. Notwithstanding this requirement, retaining walls, guardrails, and other City requirements are permitted at any location on a lot.</p> |
| <p>Planning Commission: Section 2.3 Trees & Plants. <i>Consider adding plants that attract migratory butterflies native to the locale.</i></p> <p>Response to above PC comment from TODO (landscape consultant): Desert Milkweed is added for the Monarch caterpillars. The mallows - Desert Globemallow and Rosy Apricot Mallow - are known to host Painted Lady Butterfly larvae. Many plants on the list are nectar plants for Monarchs, while the Desert Lavender and buckwheats are known to provide nectar to the adult Painted Ladies. Gray Hairstreak Butterflies and Queen Butterflies also use the plants in our list for laying eggs and nectar in Palm Desert.</p> | <p>Shrubs and perennials, species. Where shrubs and perennials are planted, utilize species from the following list. All other shrub and perennial species are prohibited.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Perennials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Desert Sand Verbena. Abronia villosa. ii. Desert Milkweed. Asclepias subulata. iii. Wild Marigold. Baileya multiradiata. iv. Interior California Buckwheat. Eriogonum fasciculatum v. poliofolium. v. Whitestem Paperflower. Psilotrophe cooperi. vi. Desert Globemallow. Sphaeralcea ambigua. vii. Rosy Apricot Mallow. Sphaeralcea ambigua var. rosacea. b. Shrubs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. White Bursage. Ambrosia dumosa. ii. Shadscale. Atriplex canescens. iii. Brittlebush. Encelia farinosa. iv. Flattop Buckwheat. Eriogonum fasciculatum v. poliofolium. v. Desert Lavender. Hyptis emoryii. vi. Chuparosa. Justicia californica. vii. Creosote Bush. Larrea tridentata. viii. Paperflower. Psilotrophe cooperi. ix. Jojoba. Simmondsia chinensis. |

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| <p>City Council: Standard 2.3.10. Synthetic turf. <i>Discourage the use of synthetic turf in standard 2.3.10.</i></p> | <p>Standard 2.3.10. Synthetic turf. Synthetic turf is highly discouraged, but if incorporated, the total area of synthetic turf within the boundaries of a building pad shall not exceed 500 square feet. Use of synthetic turf at any location outside of the area of an approved building pad is prohibited.</p> |
| <p>Staff: <i>Ensure consistency between the values in Section 1.1. and the standards in Chapter 2. Implement maximum building area recommended at the 9/23/25 Joint Study Session.</i></p> | <p>Standard 2.4.2. Main and accessory structures, maximum area. The total area of a dwelling unit and associated above-grade accessory structures, including carports and garages on any one lot, shall not exceed 35 percent of the building pad area or 3,150 3,200-square feet, whichever is less.</p> |
| <p>Planning Commission: <i>Consider adding language to the document that reinforces that the color of structures should blend with the color of the existing hillside land and landscape.</i></p> | <p>2.6 COLORS AND MATERIALS The following earth-toned and desert-hued colors, intended to blend with the color of the existing hillside landscape, represent a range of compliant colors that are annotated with a HEX color code. Applicants shall use these HEX color code numbers to identify compliant colors from their chosen manufacturer of a color or material that most similarly matches the colors provided in this Section. All colors and materials selected by an applicant will be reviewed and approved for match with the compliant colors and materials of this section by the Director of Development Services or their designee. Existing structures do not need to comply with the colors and materials of this Section if an existing color or material is replaced in-kind.</p> |
| <p>Planning Commission: <i>Clarify that existing colors and materials at existing structures are grandfathered and may be repainted and replaced in-kind.</i></p> | |
| <p>Planning Commission: Standard 2.6.1. Primary wall color, painted or integral color. <i>Consider reducing the number of light colors allowed to reduce the contrast between the colors of the hillsides and the primary color of structures.</i></p> | <p>Standard 2.6.1. Primary wall color, painted or integral color. Removed #F3E6CE and #F0EADC.</p> |
| <p>Planning Commission: Section 2.6.5. Roof materials and colors for roof slopes 2:12 and greater. <i>Consider allowing standing seam metal roofs and provide standard color allowances for this type of installation.</i></p> | <p>Standard 2.6.5. Roof materials and colors for roof slopes 2:12 and greater. The following roof materials are allowed on roofs with a slope of 2:12 and greater. The roof color shall match one of the compliant colors noted in Standard 2.6.1.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Clay tiles. Composite shingles and tiles that simulate shake, slate, concrete, and clay. Concrete tiles. Metal roofing and standard seam metal roofing that matches one of the compliant colors noted in Standard 2.6.1. Slate and stone. |
| <p>Planning Commission: Section 2.6.6. Roof materials and colors for roof slopes less than 2:12. <i>Consider allowing standing seam metal roofs and provide standard color allowances for this type of installation.</i></p> | <p>Standard 2.6.6. Roof materials and colors for roof slopes less than 2:12. The following roof materials are allowed on roofs with a slope less than 2:12. The roofing color shall match one of the compliant colors noted in Standard 2.6.1 or be covered in gravel.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Built-up roofing (BUR). Thermoplastic olefin roofing (TPO). Ethylene Propylene Diene Monomer roofing (EPDM). Modified Bitumen roofing. Metal roofing and standard seam metal roofing that matches one of the compliant colors noted in Standard 2.6.1. |

CHAPTER 3: HPR COMPLIANCE CHECKLIST

All revisions to the standards in Chapter 2: HPR Design Standards have been repeated in the compliance checklist.

CHAPTER 4: GLOSSARY

No revisions were made to the Glossary.