

# City of Palm Desert Staff Report

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**Meeting Date:** April 22, 2026

**Prepared By:** Bobby Keatinge, Associate Planner

**Department:** Development Services

**Subject:** Consideration of a request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to approve exterior paint for all buildings within the Sandpiper Circles 5-10 Historic District.

## Recommendation

1. Approve a Certificate of Appropriateness (CRPC-26-0003) for the repainting of all exterior surfaces within the Sandpiper Circles 5–10 Historic District using the proposed “Circle 4” color (Sherwin-Williams custom match), based on findings that the project is consistent with Palm Desert Municipal Code Section 29.60.090 and the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation.
2. Find the project exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301 (Class 1 - Existing Facilities), as the work consists of painting existing structures with no expansion of use.

## Executive Summary

The item before the Historic Preservation Committee is a request by the Sandpiper Owners Association (Circles 5-10) to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness to repaint all exterior building surfaces within the Sandpiper Circles 5-10 Historic District. The proposed work includes repainting existing exterior walls and architectural features using a single, unified color palette. The Committee is considering this request to determine whether the proposed color is appropriate and consistent with the City’s historic preservation standards.

Staff recommends approval of the Certificate of Appropriateness, finding that the proposed color is compatible with the district’s mid-century modern architectural character and consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. The action does not have a direct fiscal impact but has ongoing policy and operational implications, as it establishes a district-wide finish that will guide future maintenance and preservation decisions.

## Need for Action

The Sandpiper Circles 5-10 Historic District is a designated historic resource, and any exterior alterations, including changes to paint color, require approval through a Certificate of Appropriateness. The applicant has requested approval to implement a district-wide repainting program, necessitating review by the Historic Preservation Committee.

This item is being brought forward to ensure that the proposed paint color is evaluated for consistency with the district’s character-defining features and applicable preservation standards before work is undertaken.

## **Background**

The Sandpiper Circles 5-10 Historic District is a designated historic district recognized for its association with architect William Krisel and its representation of mid-century modern residential design in Palm Desert.

The applicant, Sandpiper Owners Association (Circles 5-10), has submitted a Certificate of Appropriateness application requesting approval to repaint all exterior building surfaces within the district. The proposed work includes repainting walls, gates, and shared architectural features, as well as minor surface preparation and repair. No changes to building form, materials, or architectural features are proposed.

The application includes documentation related to the proposed color selection, including physical evidence of underlying paint layers, archival photographs, and contextual information regarding mid-century modern design practices. The applicant has also provided information regarding its internal decision-making process; however, this information is provided for context only and is not determinative of the City's review.

Public notice for this hearing was provided in accordance with Palm Desert Municipal Code requirements. Public comments received prior to preparation of this report have been included in the project record.

## **Analysis**

The issue before the Historic Preservation Committee is whether the proposed district-wide paint color is consistent with the requirements of Palm Desert Municipal Code Section 29.60.090 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Exterior color is not a structural feature but contributes to the expression of architectural design, particularly in mid-century modern developments where color is used to emphasize form, materiality, and shadow. While the applicant has provided various sources of information regarding potential original colors, including physical evidence and historic photographs, these sources do not establish a definitive or singular original color for the district.

Accordingly, the evaluation focuses on whether the proposed color is appropriate within the architectural and historic context of the district rather than whether it represents an exact original finish.

Staff finds the project consistent with the applicable standards for the following reasons:

- The proposed color does not alter or obscure character-defining materials or architectural features and maintains a neutral, compatible palette consistent with mid-century modern design principles (Standard 5).
- The proposed color is compatible with the district and surrounding Krisel-designed developments, maintaining visual cohesion and reinforcing the architectural character of the area (Standard 9).

Alternative options considered include denial of the request or direction to pursue additional analysis to determine an original color. However, given the lack of conclusive evidence and the

appropriateness of the proposed color within the historic context, staff finds approval to be the most reasonable and implementable approach.

The Historic Preservation Committee's action on this item is final unless appealed to City Council.

## **Environmental Review**

The project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Section 15301 (Class 1 - Existing Facilities), as the work consists of painting existing structures with no expansion of use. Staff further finds that there are no unusual circumstances that would preclude the use of this exemption.

## **Legal Review**

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

## **Financial Impact**

The proposed action has no direct fiscal impact. The repainting work will be funded and implemented by the property owners association. The City may incur minor ongoing administrative costs associated with review of future Certificates of Appropriateness; however, these costs are typically absorbed within existing departmental operations.

## **Attachments**

1. Resolution 2017-30
2. Application
3. Public Notice
4. Public Comment