



Staff Report

City Council

Item No. {{section.number}}.{{item.number}}

Meeting Date: April 2, 2025

From: Andrew Firestine, AICP, Director of Community and Economic Development

Title: Community and Economic Development Staff Review

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is presented for information, discussion and direction only.

BACKGROUND:

As a service organization, expenditure on staffing, including salaries and benefits, is one of the largest components of the budget. Therefore, a key component of the budget development process is to provide a comprehensive presentation on staffing throughout the City including the use of contracts and overtime, support services, etc. To meet this need, a series of special workshops have been scheduled over the upcoming weeks to conduct a department by department staffing review and to provide the Council with information on proposed changes and additions throughout the departmental budgets.

DISCUSSION:

The Community and Economic Development Department includes the following divisions:

- Economic Development
- Planning
- Building and Safety
- Code Compliance

The Economic Development Department was restructured in 2024, combining it with the Development Services Department to form a new department known as the Community and Economic Development Department. The restructuring and newly formed Economic Development Division supports a greater coordination of planning and economic development, particularly with respect to the entitlement process, housing, and business support, enhancing its ability to support Cathedral City's economic growth, business development, and housing initiatives.

The following table compares authorized staffing in the Community and Economic Development Department in FY13- 14 to the present. The table shows the staffing reflects

reductions made in June 2020 due to the COVID revenue reductions, the adopted FY22-23 budget and the current authorization for FY24-25. The FY13-14 numbers are from the printed budget, revised only to reflect organizational structure changes that have occurred in the interim:

	FY13-14	FY20-21 COVID	FY22-23 Adopted	Current FY24- 25 Authorized	Change from FY 13-14
Administration / Director	1	0	0	1	-
Planning	2.5	4	5	6	140%
Building and Safety	2	3	6	7	250%
Code Compliance	2	3	6	9	350%
Economic Development	1	1	1	1.5	50%
Total	8.5	11	18	24.5	182%

Department Administration

The Director of Community and Economic Development provides leadership and management support to each of the divisions and is responsible for their overall performance and work products. The Director is accountable for the department work plan in coordination with the City Manager's Office and the implementation of the City Council 5-Year Strategic Plan and is the staff liaison to the Planning Commission, Architectural Review Committee, and Historic Preservation Committee.

Function	Approx. %
Participate in City Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in weekly department head meetings • Attend regular meetings with ACM and other department heads to review, discuss, and coordinate current operations • For Council meetings, prepare agenda items, staff reports and supporting materials • Review Council agenda materials prepared by staff • Prepare, review and rehearse presentations in conjunction with City Manager's Office and other department heads • Provide follow-up after Council meetings • Respond to City Manager's Office on Council questions 	25
Staffing Commissions and Committees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural Review Committee • Historic Preservation Committee • Planning Commission • Review agenda materials prepared by staff 	10
Manage Activities of Divisions and Overall Department <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biweekly participation in Development Services Committee (DSC) meetings • Participate in meetings on land development projects • Run weekly division management meeting • Bi-weekly meetings with division managers to review current work activities and future work plans 	50

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address issues related to budgeting, personnel issues, resident or customer complaints, etc. • Coordinate monthly staff meetings 	
Community Relations and Public Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct preliminary meetings with prospective development applicants and businesses to provide high level input and direction, particularly large projects and those with economic development impact • Attend meetings with regional organizations, business groups, and others in support of planning and economic development • Listen to and coordinate responses to resident and customer complaints, concerns, suggestions and needs 	5
Special Projects and Department Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead special projects, particularly those with high importance and high urgency 	10

Economic Development

The Economic Development Division includes the following positions:

- Economic Development Manager
- Analyst II (50% shared with the City Manager)

The Economic Development Division operates within Cathedral City’s Community and Economic Development Department, aligning with the Economic Development Roadmap to foster business growth, workforce development, entrepreneurship, housing initiatives, and regional collaboration. This Division plays a critical role in creating a business-friendly environment, supporting existing and new businesses, and enhancing the City’s overall economic prosperity. This team is responsible for implementing strategic initiatives that support Cathedral City’s long-term economic vision.

A significant expansion of the Division’s role includes housing development support, ensuring that Cathedral City fosters a diverse mix of housing options, from market-rate to workforce and affordable housing. By integrating housing into economic development, the City can better align infrastructure investment, workforce needs, and business growth with residential development. Additionally, the Division has increased its direct engagement with small businesses, offering more personalized support, technical assistance, and access to funding opportunities to strengthen the local economy.

The Economic Development Division plays a critical role in advancing Cathedral City’s Economic Development Roadmap, focusing on:

- 1. Business Attraction, Retention, & Expansion**
 - a. Cathedral City is committed to attracting new investments, supporting business retention, and fostering a sustainable, growth-oriented economy. The Economic Development Division streamlines processes, provides business support, and develops incentives to strengthen Cathedral City’s economic base.
- 2. Workforce Development**
 - a. A skilled and adaptable workforce is essential for economic success. The Economic Development Division partners with educational institutions, workforce

development organizations, and businesses to create career pathways and employment opportunities for Cathedral City residents.

3. Entrepreneurship Support

a. The Economic Development Division fosters a supportive ecosystem for entrepreneurs and small businesses, ensuring access to funding, technical assistance, and growth opportunities.

4. Housing & Quality of Life

a. Ensuring a diverse and sustainable housing supply is critical to supporting business growth, workforce stability, and overall community development. The Economic Development Division is actively engaged in housing initiatives that align with the city’s economic objectives

5. Tourism & Regional Collaboration

a. Tourism is a key driver of economic growth in Cathedral City, attracting visitors and generating revenue through events, attractions, and regional partnerships. The Economic Development Division works to enhance Cathedral City’s presence as a premier destination.

This roadmap was shared at the January 25, 2025 City Council strategic planning work session and is attached for reference.

Function	Economic Development Manager	Analyst II
<p>Business Attraction, Retention, and Expansion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Facilitate site selection assistance for new businesses and investors •Strengthen relationships with developers, investors, and brokers •Conduct strategic analysis in support of business attraction, retention, and expansion •Develop and distribute business information packages •Provide technical support and funding opportunity guidance for local businesses •Collaborate with non-profit and regional organizations providing support for local and prospective businesses 	25	30
<p>Workforce Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Partner with workforce development organizations and educational institutions to align training programs with industry needs •Monitor labor force to identify workforce gaps and opportunities 	20	20

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with the Riverside County Economic Development Agency and other regional partners to expand workforce training programs • Address commuting trends and support programs that increase local employment opportunities • Support the development of affordable housing to meet the RHNA requirements to support workforce trends • Work with planning through Zoning Code Update to provide input on regulatory changes that support economic development 		
<p>Entrepreneurship Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and secure state and federal funding opportunities for local businesses • Implement economic diversification strategies to ensure long-term stability • Evaluate, create, and support new local economic development programs and initiatives • Collaborate with entrepreneurial organizations such as SBA, SBDC, CVEP, CET, CVWBC, and RIVCO to provide resources and mentorship opportunities • Provide support for key industries • Create educational materials and guides for small business owners • Provide direct support to businesses navigating regulatory challenges 	20	25
<p>Housing & Quality of Life</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the development of affordable and workforce housing to meet RHNA requirements. • Facilitate revitalization efforts for underutilized commercial spaces, including city-owned property • Enhance cultural, recreational, and community-driven initiatives that improve quality of life 	15	10
<p>Tourism & Regional Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner with Visit Greater Palm Springs and other regional tourism agencies. • Promote Cathedral City’s attractions and events such as the Mary Nutter Collegiate Classic and Hot Air Balloon Festival to maximize business exposure. • Develop and implement destination marketing campaigns to attract visitors and investors. • Strengthen regional collaboration efforts to maximize economic opportunities. • Help increase automotive industry participation with City Events. • Support City Council initiatives to facilitate high-quality private development. • Initiate a Small Business Roundtable or industry-specific task force for business support strategies 	20	15

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist in grant applications for infrastructure projects that support economic development • Promote Cathedral City at trade shows and business expos • Improve and expand gateway corridors and public spaces for enhanced economic activity • Utilize social media and digital platforms to promote business opportunities and success stories • Develop and distribute economic development marketing materials highlighting Cathedral City's business advantages 		
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Planning

The Planning Division includes the following positions:

- Deputy Director of Community and Economic Development
- Associate Planner (2)
- Assistant Planner
- Planning Assistant
- Administrative Assistant

The Planning Division is responsible for implementing and recommending land use policies including those within the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, the review of development applications for consistency with the City's codes, standards and policies relating to land use and preservation of the environment and advising the community and Council on current planning practices to maintain a safe and high-quality built environment for our community. The Planning Division also serves as the staff liaison to the Planning Commission, Architectural Review Committee and Historic Preservation Committee.

The services provided by the Planning Division are summarized in the table below. Many of the services are time sensitive, require close and continued collaboration with applicants, consultants, and other City departments. A significant, yet understated, portion of the Division's responsibilities is customer service to our residents and businesses on their everyday needs, such as business licenses, signs, home occupation permits, room additions, walls, fences and accessory dwelling units.

While the core functions remain the same, operationally, the Planning Division today is vastly different than the Planning Division at the beginning of the last budget cycle.

The Planning Assistant's primary responsibilities are customer service inquiries, handling of routine applications and permits, processing routine plan checks, and application intaking. The handling of these routine matters by the position allows the Assistant Planner, Associate Planners and Deputy Director to focus on matters of greater complexity and to focus on other Division initiatives and projects.

The Assistant Planner position processes development applications, such as conditional use permits, design reviews, variances and subdivisions. As the experience level increases the level of project complexity increases as well. The Associate Planner position handles the same types of applications, plus PUDs, general plan and zoning code amendments and projects of greater

complexity. Associate Planners are also generally assigned “advanced planning” items, which is to say updates to zoning codes, general plans, housing elements, as well as annual progress reports to the State on the general plan and housing element.

We are updating and modernizing our development code. It will be clear and predictable without ambiguity or confusion. The Division’s commitment to this endeavor is such that we have assigned the update to an Associate Planner as their primary assignment and limit all other assignments. The Deputy Director also handles development projects of greater complexity and manages the day-to-day operations of the Division, including managing project assignments, meeting with planning staff weekly, and training and mentoring.

An Administrative Assistant II position has been re-assigned primarily to the Planning Division. This position has also allowed the Division to transfer tasks and responsibilities to the Administrative Assistant. In the past, planners were responsible for administrative functions related to public hearings, from mailing out notices, to running packets for Planning Commission (PC), Architectural Review Committee (ARC) and Historical Preservation Committee (HPC) meetings as well as acting as the Planning Commission clerk while presenting projects to the various boards. This re-allocation of assignments has resulted in improved customer service to the PC, ARC and PC and has also provided growth and new skills for the Administrative Assistant position.

The Division has also elevated the importance of the Development Services Committee (DSC) which has led to greater collaboration. DSC meetings are now held twice a month to be more responsive to applicants and our timelines. The meetings often operate as a roundtable where members collaborate on project construction issues, improving coordination on plan checks and vetting out project and business inquiries.

The implementation of EnerGov has created efficiencies in the Division and improved customer service. Customers can submit applications via the CSS portal any time of the day or week, and staff process them electronically. Planners can electronically route projects for review via EnerGov and they are reviewed via Bluebeam. This is similar to a Sharepoint site in that multiple users can review and comment on the plans simultaneously. The marked-up plans can be sent back to the applicant, eliminating the need for separate memos or letters.

Function	Dep Director	Assoc Planner	Assist Planner	Plan Assist	Admin Assist
Development and Entitlements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Preliminary application review •Conditional use permits •Design review (administrative and ARC) 	20	40	60	10	10

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General plan amendments/change of zones • Zoning ordinance text amendments • Development Services Committee 					
Plan Review and Building Permits <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercial tenant improvements • New residential • Residential remodels and additions • Pools, patio covers, and block walls 	--	10	10	25	--
Public Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer service support over the counter, phone, and email • Zoning confirmation letters • Public records requests • ABC licenses 	5	5	10	50	15
Administrative Permits and Licensing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cannabis licenses • Business licenses and home occupation permits • Special use permits • Sign permits • Dance permits, sexually oriented business permits, Christmas tree lots 	--	--	5	10	10
Commissions and Committees <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural Review Committee • Planning Commission • Historic Preservation Committee 	15	5	10	--	50
Special Projects and Department Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology and innovation • Zoning code update • General Plan Annual Progress Report • Housing Element Annual Progress Report • Website maintenance • General administration 	10	40	5	5	15
Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personnel • Staff meetings • Training/Development • Reports 	50	--	--	--	--

The percentages allotted in the table for each function and position may vary based on current applications and projects.

Building and Safety

The Building and Safety Division includes the following positions:

- Chief Building Official
- Plans Examiner
- Building Inspector II
- Permit Technician II (2)
- Permit Technician I/II (vacant)
- Office Assistant II

The Building and Safety Division oversees the adoption, administration, and enforcement of model codes at the local level. Responsibilities include reviewing permit applications, collecting project-related fees, issuing building permits, and conducting plan reviews and inspections for all new construction and alterations. The Division also provides damage assessment for disasters, coordinates with the Code Compliance Division on illegal structures and unpermitted construction and educates the public on permit requirements to ensure safe, accessible, and compliant construction in Cathedral City.

Best practice in the plan review and inspection disciplines is to provide the public with a clear schedule for turnaround times, including first and subsequent reviews and projected next-day inspection requests. The Division offers a 10- or 15-day turnaround for initial reviews, depending on the project type. With a team consisting of one Plans Examiner, a Building Inspector II, a Chief Building Official, and HR Green (for contract inspections), along with the implementation of EnerGov and Bluebeam plan review software, the Division has consistently met or exceeded all turnaround times by 50 percent while maintaining next-day building inspections

The Division has a vacant Permit Technician I/II position. With the efficiencies produced by EnerGov and the implementation of web-based services and electronic plan review, this position is not needed in its current form. At the same time, the City has realized a sustained demand for permits and inspections and has relied upon a full-time contracted building inspector since 2023, first under Willdan and currently under HR Green. A prior consultant, JAS Pacific, provided building inspection services prior to 2023 on at least a part-time basis. The vacant Permit Technician I/II position is proposed to be reclassified as a Building Inspector I/II so the City can reduce its use of contracted building inspection services to on-call only.

Each role within the Division is described below and how they play an integral part ensuring the safety, integrity, and compliance of buildings within a jurisdiction.

The Office Assistant II is the first point of contact for customer service by phone and foot-traffic for all of city hall. The position researches and responds to public records requests, processes and issues garage sale permits, processes invoices, researches and prepares building permit data for the division's monthly report. The position responds to inspection requests, permit inquiries, and plan-review status inquiries made by the public, contractors and applicants in support of Division staff. The Office Assistant II has extensive knowledge of Division services together with broad knowledge of the City's organizational structure and operations and can distribute inquiries without hesitation.

Permit Technicians (Permit Techs) are the first point of contact for developers, contractors, and homeowners seeking building permits. Once applications are submitted, Permit Techs review submittals for completeness and facilitate coordination between applicants and other division staff on the permitting process. Once a permit is issued, the Permit Techs provide further support through the maintenance of records in accordance with the Building Code and local records retention schedules.

The Plans Examiner position plays a critical role in ensuring construction documents comply with building codes by reviewing architectural and engineering plans for compliance with building codes, zoning laws, and other regulations. The Plans Examiner also works closely with architects, engineers, and contractors to address code violations and to suggest modifications. Their role is to also help avoid construction of unsafe or non-compliant designs, leading to potential structural failures, fire hazards, or other safety risks.

The Building Inspector position ensures that construction projects adhere to approved plans and applicable codes during and after construction. The Building Inspector conducts inspections at various stages of construction, with their main objective to observe and document. The position verifies compliance with structural, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, and accessibility standards (handicap); identifies and documents code violations and require corrections before progressing a project or occupying a building; and educates contractors and property owners on best practices for safe and compliant construction.

The Chief Building Official (CBO) leads the Building and Safety Division, ensuring effective enforcement and implementation of policy. The CBO position oversees permitting, plan review, and inspections while interpreting and enforcing building codes to maintain public safety and compliance. Additionally, as a division-manager, the CBO manages staff, coordinates with other city or county departments on regulations, and stays updated on code changes, laws, and best practices to enhance safety and efficiency.

Services provided by the Building and Safety Division are summarized in the table below.

Function	Building Official	Plans Exam	Building Inspector II	Permit Tech II	Office Assist
Plan Check <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-house; residential new SFD, ADU, alterations, minor tenant improvements • Research, codification • Code interpretation 	15	85	5	5	5
Permit Issuance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expedited Permits • Solar App+ • New Construction • Alterations (Commercial and Residential) • Addressing 	5	--	--	70	10
Inspections <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building Permits 	5	5	90	--	10

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Investigations (Assist Code Compliance) •Disaster Assessment (fire, floods, vehicle vs building) •Business License •Title 25, New Mobile Homes •Accessibility (disabled access features) 					
Public Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Public interaction (phone, foot traffic) •Energov/EPL login/education •Public records requests •Public complaint assessment •Building division common email 	15	5	5	15	60
Special Projects and Department Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Technology and innovation •Policy •Website maintenance •General administration (data, reports, personnel etc) 	60	5	--	10	15

Code Compliance

The Code Compliance Division includes the following positions:

- Code Compliance Manager
- Analyst I
- Code Compliance Officer II (2)
- Code Compliance Officer I (2)
- Code Compliance Officer I/II (2 vacant)
- Administrative Assistant

The City’s Code Compliance Division is responsible for ensuring compliance with applicable statutes or ordinances and managing programs that will maintain and improve property values and the quality of life within the community. The Division places an emphasis on public relations, education, and voluntary compliance with the law. By implementing new methods of enforcement, with an increased emphasis on education, the Division has been able to provide the residents of Cathedral City with a healthier, safer, and more attractive place to live, work, and play.

Services provided by the Code Compliance Division are summarized in the table below. Schedules were adjusted in 2023 to eliminate swing shifts and holiday assignments to focus officer time during normal business hours to more effectively manage staff time. This has been made possible due to reductions in short-term vacation rental (STVR) permits and efficiencies created in the administration and enforcement of the STVR program. Code compliance officers have an established rotation where one officer remains scheduled to work weekend shifts. Schedule adjustments and overtime has been authorized for special enforcement assignments,

such as cannabis odor detection, on an as needed basis.

Function	Code Manager	Analyst I	Code Compliance Officer II	Code Compliance Officer I	Admin Assistant
General Code Enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property maintenance and landscape enforcement • Abandoned/inoperative vehicle abatement • Sidewalk repair • Shopping cart impoundment • Illegal dumping • Sidewalk vendors 	5	5	40	60	40
Title 25 and Mobile Home Park Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research of new State Law • Development of Policy and Procedure • Inspections within Parks • Meetings with Park Management 	5	5	5	--	--
Cannabis Enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of Cannabis Programs • Routine Inspections of Cannabis Businesses • Research and Development • Attending Cannabis Training and Education 	5	25	10	5	--
STVR Program Administration and Enforcement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovery of illegal STVRs • Inspections of permitted STVR properties • Customer Service and Assistance with Permits 	5	20	5	5	--

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative Hearings and Court Appearances 					
Public Assistance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Customer service support over the counter, phone, and email Public records requests In-Person Flag Down Meetings 	20	20	25	15	30
Special Projects and Department Initiatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technology and innovation Research and Development General Administration Public Events Continued Education Training 	60	25	15	15	30

FISCAL IMPACT:

The original published budget for the Community and Economic Development Department (all divisions, including the Economic Development Division) for FY 24-25 was \$5,643,050. The total amended budget for the Community and Economic Development Department (all divisions, including the Economic Development Division) FY 24-25 reflecting amendments through December 31, 2024, is \$6,271,436.

FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:

N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Presentation Staffing and Budget Analysis Community and Economic Development Department
2. Economic Development Roadmap 2025