



# Staff Report

## City Council

Item No. {{section.number}}.B

**Meeting Date:** December 11, 2024

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

**Title:** Code Compliance Division Updates

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

There is no specific recommendation, this staff report and presentation are intended to provide updates from the Code Compliance division. City Council may elect to provide feedback on specific focal areas of the presentation that may guide and inform future presentations and actions.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Code Compliance division is comprised of nine (9) staff, including a code compliance manager, an analyst, an administrative assistant, and six (6) code compliance officers. The Code Compliance division is responsible for the investigation and enforcement of the City's municipal regulations, including those contained in Title 5, Business Regulations, and Title 13, Code Enforcement and Remedies pertaining to public health, safety, and welfare, public works, business activities and consumer protection, building standards, land-use, and municipal affairs.

Through a study session presentation to the City Council on May 8, 2024, the Code Compliance Division provided updates on changes in its operations to create standardized operating procedures, modifications to operational hours, training, caseload, and current and emerging enforcement trends. At the time of the presentation, the highest-ranking complaint requests were those related to common property maintenance, illegal sidewalk vendors, inoperable vehicles on public property, landscape maintenance, and vehicle parking on landscaping.

### **DISCUSSION:**

The December 11, 2024 Code Compliance Division update to the City Council is intended to continue the prior discussion, providing current information on the current caseload and priority areas. The City has seen a continued reduction in open cases. In 2023, the Division had approximately 1,500 open cases, which was reduced to 975 in May 2024 and is currently around 850. The demand for code compliance services, as reflected in complaints received by the City and new cases, has remained constant. The reduction in caseload comes through

more efficient case management as a result of training and standardized operating procedures, which in turn has the effect of producing greater responsiveness to the community and creating greater opportunities for proactive code compliance work and expansion into new areas, as identified below and as will be detailed in the presentation.

The City's efforts to curb illegal sidewalk vending have led to substantial reductions in vendor complaints. Staff continues to respond to complaints when they are received, but the overall effect of the campaign has been the City is not supportive of vendors who are operating without proper permits. The City continues to promote channels for businesses to obtain permits and licensure. The Division has also effectively implemented a shopping cart impoundment program, securing and impounding abandoned carts across the City through sweeps.

Since May 2024, cannabis odor complaints have emerged as a significant source of complaints. The Code Compliance Division has created an action plan to track complaints and to identify their potential sources and has both conducted inspections of existing cannabis businesses based on complaint data and has coordinated with planning, building, and fire staff on their inspections of new cannabis businesses. The Code Compliance Division has sought input from other cities and engaged with the private sector to increase its understanding of the industry that will support regular, proactive inspections of cannabis facilities to uphold the Cathedral City Municipal Code requirements and the cannabis conditions of approval requiring odor mitigation.

The Division continues to manage the City's STVR program and is in the process of implementing streamlining processes to improve the permitting process, including payment through the web portal.

In the last six months, the Code Compliance Division has continued to explore emerging technologies in code compliance that present new opportunities to detect and initiate code compliance processes, which may help create expanded community outreach and awareness of code violations and more efficient investigations, leveraging the code compliance resources to create more impact within the community. The presentation will touch on these, and they will be expanded further in the January strategic planning work session together with other goals for the upcoming year, including further coordination with planning and business licensing staff on the enforcement of land use conditions of approval and business licensing; the advancement of initiatives on community pride, including community clean-up events; and updates to the Cathedral City Municipal Code and fee schedule related to code compliance, including abandoned and vacant buildings and trespassing.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT:**

None at this time

#### **FIVE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN:**

E-13 – Keep the City Council apprised of changes to the Code Enforcement program.

F-2 – Prioritize updating the zoning code regarding residential parking and paving provisions; research and give recommendations on enabling parking prohibitions in front of mailboxes.

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F-11 – Implement a code compliance program that proactively identifies and responds to code compliance complaints.

F-12 – Develop and implement initiatives to proactively monitor the City's commercial corridors to address visual blight and nuisance issues associated with vacant and underutilized properties and non-compliant commercial strips and centers

**ATTACHMENTS:**

None

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