

## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Cynthia Schultz, AICP, Associate Planner | City of Cathedral City

**FROM:** Brent Gibbons, AICP, Principal | Mintier Harnish

**CC:** Michael Gibbons, Hannah Woolsey | Mintier Harnish

**DATE:** April 25, 2025

**RE:** Public Outreach Summary: Cathedral City Development Code Update

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In November 2024, the City of Cathedral City initiated a comprehensive update of its Zoning Code and Subdivision Ordinance. With support from Mintier Harnish, the City aims to create a modern Development Code to streamline the development review process, all while ensuring consistency with the 2040 General Plan and identifying incentives to keep the city as a place where people want to live, shop, play, and develop housing.

Effective zoning codes and subdivision ordinances rely on input from the community and decision makers. As a part of this update, City Planning staff and Mintier Harnish have facilitated a robust and inclusive community engagement strategy. This memorandum summarizes the engagement events and activities completed as of March 2025, as well as feedback received from the public and stakeholders through this process.

### Engagement Events

As of April 2025, engagement for the Development Code update has consisted of four main types of outreach. These outreach types are detailed below.

#### Modernizing the Development Code Seminar

The Mintier Harnish Team presented a seminar for the City Council, Planning Commission, and City staff on modernizing the Development Code. This seminar took place on Wednesday, February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025, and was based on the UC Davis Extension course taught by two of the Project Team members, Brent Gibbons, AICP, and Martha Miller, AICP. The seminar addressed topics related to updating the Development Code, particularly focusing on how zoning shapes the appearance and function of all land uses in a community. The practice of how communities use zoning regulations to achieve development goals continues to evolve, and many cities and counties look to code updates to achieve their development objectives. The Project Team discussed how to transform the



City's existing Zoning Code into a more understandable, streamlined, legally defensible, and effective planning implementation tool. Following the seminar, Planning Commissioners were sent a follow-up questionnaire to provide further direction regarding recommended or requested changes to the Zoning Code and Subdivision Regulations, as well as any feedback related to community outreach and public engagement that might benefit residents. The following topics were discussed at the seminar:

- Methods for making the development code consistent with the 2040 General Plan policies and programs;
- State-of-the-art development code structure, format/style, and graphic design for creating easy-to-use documents;
- Zoning districts: How many, what types, when to use overlays and combining designations;
- Implementation of specific plans and their relation to the zoning regulations;
- Development standards: Type, specification, and performance approaches, graphic support and representation;
- Design guidelines and objective standards, form-based ordinances, and hybrid ordinances;
- Content-neutral sign regulations, nonconforming uses, and other controversial regulatory issues;
- Methods to provide streamlined processes meant to stimulate economic development and reflect market conditions; and
- Steps to faster, effective, and thorough development permit review procedures.

### Community Open House #1: What is Zoning and How You Make a Difference



The project's first Community Open House was held on Thursday, March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at the Cathedral City Senior Center. The subject of this open house was "What is Zoning and How You Make a Difference." Attendees were provided with an overview of the Development Code Update project, including an introduction to important concepts in zoning, such as design standards, allowable uses, development standards, and administrative procedures, as well as project objectives and timeline. Attendees were encouraged to ask questions and share their thoughts with Project Team members on the materials provided.



The main activity portion of the event consisted of "Assets," "Issues," and "Opportunities" mapping posters, where attendees were asked to write assets, issues, and/or opportunities in the city on sticky notes to place on a map of Cathedral City. Additionally, City Planning staff facilitated a "Mobile Planning Counter" station, where attendees could ask staff questions about the City's current Zoning Code, specific projects, or ideas. Comments and feedback collected at this event will give the Project Team guidance on how to draft the Updated Code.

## Development and Design Walking Tours

On Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, and Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Project Team facilitated a series of walking tours to engage community members and gather public perspectives on the built environment in the City. Jim Heid from UrbanGreen, an experienced infill developer and development advisor, joined the Project Team to help facilitate the tours and provide attendees with an understanding of building and site design, as well as the practical and fiscal realities of development. The three walking tours took place on the following dates and locations:

Walking Tour #1: Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 9 a.m.  
Cathedral City Senior Center, Civic Center Plaza, and Cathedral Cove Development

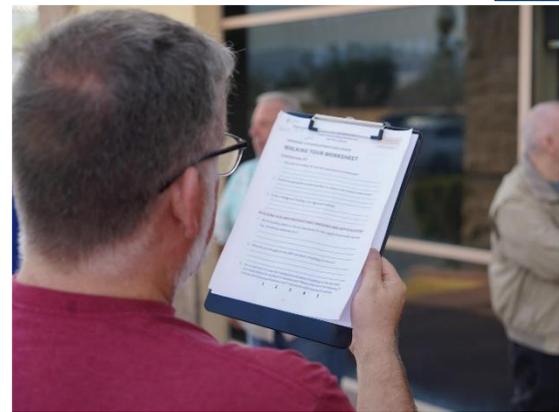
Walking Tour #2: Saturday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 11 a.m.  
Landau Boulevard, Veteran's Village of Cathedral City, and Surrounding Neighborhood

Walking Tour #3: Sunday, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at 10 a.m.  
Date Palm Drive and Ramon Road (Commercial Uses and Shopping Centers)

Attendees took part in any or all of the three tours. All tour attendees were given worksheets with questions regarding their thoughts on building and site design, landscaping, and the pedestrian experience of the area, including what they liked about the area and what they would like to see improved. Topics covered included contextual fit, building size and proportion (massing and articulation), public realm, fenestration, façade treatments, integration and compatibility, onsite circulation, and onsite amenities. Topics of importance that were frequently brought up by attendees included sidewalk accessibility and safety, parking, shade and urban heat, mountain views, landscaping, site orientation, and building design. Comments and feedback collected at these events will give the Project Team guidance on drafting the Updated Code, including Objective Design and Development Standards for multi-family and mixed-use development.

## Tastes and Sounds Events

City Planning staff offered short online and paper surveys at four Tastes & Sounds events between March and April 2025. Survey participants could opt in to a drawing held at each event for a local restaurant gift card. Surveys were short (5 to 10 questions) and could be completed in-person or on individual's phones. Through these surveys, the city gauged residents' and visitors' values and preferences on a variety of aspects from parking and pedestrian access, the importance of housing, and to what makes an area in the city more unique than other areas.



## Stakeholder Interviews

The Mintier Harnish Team coordinated with City Planning staff to facilitate stakeholder interviews with individuals in the community who could identify issues of public interest and concern relative to the City's development regulations and permit review processes. Stakeholders included developers, realtors, business owners, affordable housing nonprofits, civil engineers, city planners, and Public Arts Committee (PAC) members. Interviews were conducted for approximately one hour virtually via video conference call (e.g., Zoom) or over the phone. Comments and feedback collected throughout these interviews will give the Project Team guidance on drafting the Updated Code from the unique perspectives of each stakeholder. A total of nine stakeholder interviews were conducted between March 6<sup>th</sup> and April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025, with the following individuals:

<u>Stakeholder</u>	<u>Role</u>
Richard Altman	Resort Owner, CCBC Resort Hotel
Stephen Buchard	Real Estate Agent
Nicole Criste	Vice President/Principal Planner, Terranova Planning & Research
Paul DePalatis, AICP	Vice President/Director of Planning, MSA Consulting
Andy Jessup Jr.	President, Jessup Auto Plaza
Shaul Mezrahi	Owner, Silver Rock Development
Stephen Nieto	Director of Urban Design, Altum Group
Jessika Pollard	Policy and Pipeline Manager, Lift to Rise
Leonard Travis	Vice-Chair, Cathedral City Public Arts Committee (PAC)

## Engagement Results

The following section summarizes key takeaways and major themes from decision-maker, stakeholder, and community input received at outreach events and meetings.

### Modernizing the Development Code Seminar

A questionnaire consisting of seven questions was sent to Planning Commissioners following the seminar on February 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Feedback was received from four Commissioners in the weeks following the seminar and included the following topics:

- **Parking.** Several Commissioners noted that the existing parking requirements for commercial and hotel developments are excessive and/or unrealistic. Some referenced projects in recent years that were unsuccessful or faced difficulties in receiving approval for project applications due to the City's strict parking requirements. Others noted that large parking lots set businesses too far from the street. Some solutions brought up by Commissioners included shared parking agreements and a wider range of ministerial waivers for applicants who cannot meet the Code's parking requirements.
- **Setbacks.** Several Commissioners noted some issues with existing setback requirements. As a part of this update, setbacks should provide the minimum width for emergency access. Accessory structures, such as shade structures or chicken coops, should also be considered when drafting updated setback requirements. Additionally, setback standards are needed for the Planned Community Commercial (PCC) district.

- **Parcel size.** Several Commissioners noted that parcel size requirements should be reduced to allow more flexibility of uses, particularly for residential and commercial uses.
- **Range of housing types.** Commissioners expressed concern that the City is struggling to meet its Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) numbers. Some noted that a potential solution may be to review and amend building height, density, and other development standards that might restrict higher density housing and remove unnecessary restrictions for mixed-use and live-work uses.
- **Allowable uses.** Commissioners expressed that allowable uses should be updated to be more flexible and in line with existing and future types of businesses to ensure that the Code does not excessively restrict new uses, particularly when located in older buildings. However, some specific types of uses should be limited to avoid an over-proliferation of similar uses in a small area (e.g. gas stations, self-storage, warehousing).
- **Sidewalk, landscaping, and public space requirements.** Several Commissioners noted similar expectations for sidewalk, landscaping, and public space requirements for future development, including improved stormwater drainage, requiring shade trees, ensuring that trees do not impede sidewalk access, provision of benches and gathering spaces, inclusion of art in development, improved pedestrian lighting, use of permeable surfaces and/or alternative sidewalk materials, and improved landscaping along roadways that provide a buffer for pedestrians.
- **Focus on a livable city.** Development and design requirements should create opportunities for shading, walkable spaces, particularly taking into account high summer temperatures and how this impacts the needs of residents. Additionally, the City should focus on creating spaces that people want to spend time in, and not just “pass through.”
- **Public outreach considerations.** Commissioners noted several groups that should be involved as a part of this project, including the Hispanic community, the Hispanic American Chamber of Commerce, and residents living in Dream Homes neighborhood, as many younger families and Spanish speakers live in this neighborhood. Some recommended hosting barbeque and carne asada events to generate interest from the public, as well as hosting events after school hours to make it easier for parents to attend meetings.
- **Other.** Additional feedback received from Commissioners included the following: allowing for animal-centered uses, removing restrictions on the type or number of animals allowed as pets, consolidating Specific Plans along Date Palm, improving definitions for height measurements, providing more administrative processes, consolidating definitions to one place in the Code, and removing duplicative provisions.

## Community Open House #1: What is Zoning and How You Make a Difference

Approximately 30 people attended the first Community Open House on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025. Attendees were able to offer their input through a series of “Assets,” “Issues,” and “Opportunities” mapping posters, where they were asked to write assets, issues, and/or opportunities in the city on sticky notes to place on a map of Cathedral City. Major themes and feedback collected from these activities and conversations with attendees included the following:

- **Youth-friendly amenities.** Several attendees noted the relatively low number of youth-friendly amenities and activities in Cathedral City. Some stated that many city amenities are centered around seniors, when the same level of services should be provided to all age groups that might benefit. Others noted that more playgrounds should be installed at City parks, or, alternatively, local public school playgrounds should be opened after hours and on weekends for use by local families.

- **Services.** Attendees noted a need for more grocery stores to meet residents' needs, particularly in the southern section of the city.
- **Downtown/Civic Center.** Attendees noted various land uses that would add to and improve the City's existing Downtown/Civic Center, including more open space, an improved dog park, and boutique hotels, particularly on the south side of Highway 111. Others expressed that future development in the area should aim to match the design of the Civic Center building and promenade and ensure views of the Civic Center from surrounding development. The theater and events in the downtown should be encouraged to make the downtown more of a destination.
- **Housing.** Attendees stated that there is a need for more housing that is appropriate for low-income families. New housing opportunities should be spread throughout the city and not limited to certain areas. However, others noted that design standards to mitigate impacts from high winds and greater window shading should be factored into housing development.
- **Safety.** Many attendees expressed concern at the speed of cars along roadways and the dangers this poses to pedestrians, particularly along Cathedral Canyon Drive. Additionally, more lighting is needed along sidewalks. Some noted that better access to social services would improve safety of residents.
- **Urban heat.** Many attendees expressed concern over the rising heat index in the city, particularly in the summer months. Others noted that the updated Code should allow shade structures within residents' front yards and setback areas. Some expressed that at least 50 percent of parking lots should be shaded to reduce heat.
- **Landscaping and shade trees.** There is a need for more landscaping and open space throughout the city for aesthetics and comfort, particularly in the area around Date Palm Drive and 30th Avenue. Some noted that bioswales or other vegetated drainage methods could be used to improve water drainage to aquifers. Many expressed a desire to see more trees with an adequate canopy planted throughout the city for shade and to combat heat. Particularly in areas with palm trees, vegetation should be planted to provide more shade.
- **Parks.** Several attendees expressed an interest in more pocket parks and neighborhood public spaces throughout the city, including the vacant land around intersection of Calle Neptuno/Calle Carillo and Camino Mirasol, as well as near the intersection of Talbert Drive and Pomegranate Lane.
- **Land Uses.** Attendees noted that there is an excess of golf courses, fast food, drive-thru uses, and cannabis dispensaries in the city. Some noted that marijuana-centered uses are not necessarily an issue, so long as they properly mitigate for odor. Others noted that used goods stores (thrift stores) should not require a CUP.
- **Community-oriented uses.** Attendees requested more community-oriented events, including more activities at the City Library.
- **Other.** Additional feedback received from attendees included the following: information on special-use permits and other permits should be more detailed and clear, large gatherings of 100+ people should be prohibited in residential neighborhoods, and concern over how to make vacant land cost-effective for developers. Additionally, some attendees noted that the Project Team should use local Facebook groups to reach out to neighborhoods throughout the city and should communicate with local tribes to incorporate native cultural practices into the city's environment.

## Development and Design Walking Tours

A number of residents, City Planning staff, Planning Commissioners, and other stakeholders attended the walking tours, ranging from six to 18 total attendees per walking tour. Attendees of the walking tours received a worksheet to provide feedback on design elements of the area, including contextual fit, building size and proportion (massing and articulation), public realm, fenestration, façade treatments, integration and compatibility, onsite circulation, and onsite amenities. Major themes and feedback collected from these worksheets and conversations with attendees are summarized and categorized below into general comments that are applicable citywide, as well as comments that are specific to one of the three walking tour locations.

### General Comments *(includes comments received at walking tours that are applicable citywide)*

- **Allowable height.** Attendees noted that multi-family buildings should be allowed up to 3 or 4 stories in height, so long as they are not immediately adjacent to single-family homes.
- **Landscaping and street trees.** Attendees noted a need for more ground cover in landscaping that is easy to maintain, as opposed to covering landscaped areas with rocks. Landscaping should be installed between the sidewalk and street for pedestrian safety. Additionally, landscaping and/or art should be installed between sidewalks and walls/fences to bring interest to fences and walls. Trees should be planted for beauty and shade, but should not be too tall or block viewsheds. Finally, there is a need for more Code Compliance to ensure landscaping is maintained by property owners and tree canopies are allowed to grow large enough to provide shade. Some attendees noted a dislike of palm trees, particularly in regard to the lack of shade they provide.
- **Shade and heat.** Many attendees noted that shade and heat considerations should be a main focus of public space design. Attendees noted that arcades or covered walkways should be used to provide shade when walking between buildings. Shade structures (especially solar) are seen as an acceptable replacement for trees. Additionally, attendees noted an interest in allowing or requiring lighter, reflective pavement and/or permeable pavers for walkways, parking lots, and driveways to lower heat.
- **Walkability.** Many attendees noted that sidewalks should be free of mailboxes and other utility structures that block access and create ADA accessibility issues. Shading along sidewalks was also noted as an important consideration. Additionally, where possible, walking paths should be incorporated into site design.
- **Parks and public spaces.** Attendees expressed a desire for more places to sit down, such as benches along streets or other public spaces. Additionally, some would like to see more parks and spaces that encourage community gathering. Others noted that current Quimby fees and impact fees do not always create public parks; in private residential developments, these fees are sometimes used to add landscaping within gated communities instead of public spaces.
- **Parking.** Attendees expressed that parking lacking landscaping should be avoided, and property owners should be required to provide more shade through vegetation and/or shade structures. Palm trees should not count towards shade in parking lots. Additionally, some attendees noted that minimum parking requirements should include more ADA parking than minimum Federal requirements. Some attendees noted a preference for parking structures as opposed to surface-level parking lots for commercial and event uses. Other attendees noted that parking located behind buildings is acceptable, so long as the development is along a quiet street. Some attendees noted that navigating parking lots is difficult for pedestrians.

- **Land uses.** There is a need for mixed-use buildings, maker's spaces, live/work developments, and dog kennels in the city. Some attendees would like to see more resorts and/or hotels to attract more tourist-based income.
- **Setbacks.** Generally, attendees expressed that residential buildings should not be developed close to the street due to high traffic speeds and noise. Alternatively, buildings can be placed closer to street but screened with trees. Commercial buildings should not be developed close to the street.
- **Massing and articulation.** Attendees noted a preference for "broken up buildings" as opposed to large, monotonous multi-family buildings to create more variety and a "community feel" to buildings. Additionally, balconies and awnings are seen as a positive design element. If multi-family developments include balconies, these should face the interior of the building.
- **Utilities.** Several attendees noted a preference for hidden or screened utilities.
- **Corner frontages.** Attendees noted an interest in corner-facing frontages and entries.
- **Façade treatments.** Attendees noted a preference for façade treatments that provide contrast and interest. Others expressed a preference for a cohesive environment, possibly through the use of a color palette for commercial development.
- **Fenestration.** Cathedral City has beautiful mountain views in most directions; some attendees noted that future developments should provide windows of adequate size and placement for residents to enjoy these views. Some wondered if the City could require the use of double- or triple-paned windows or greater window shading to reduce heat into buildings in hotter months
- **Public art.** Attendees expressed that public art, including murals, art nooks, and sculptures should be incorporated into site design, or developers should provide space for future art installation(s).
- **Amenities.** Attendees noted a need for leisure amenities and common spaces (e.g. gazebo, yard) in multi-family developments, not just active amenities. Other amenities seen as important options for future residential communities include family-friendly amenities, fitness and wellness facilities, outdoor communal spaces (including places to sit), outdoor recreation facilities, co-working spaces, events spaces, on-site laundry, and covered parking spaces.
- **Code Enforcement.** Attendees noted general Code Enforcement issues citywide.

#### Civic Center and Northern Cathedral Cove

- **Design.** Attendees liked that the design of the Senior Center building matches that of the Civic Center. Some attendees would like to see a more modern version of this building for future development. Additionally, attendees noted that the new apartments being developed next to Civic Center have good/modern design.
- **Height and density.** Attendees noted that the City should consider allowing for taller, denser development in the downtown area to create a dense city core.
- **Accessibility and safety.** Attendees expressed a desire for sidewalks to connect to all parts of the downtown and be ADA accessible for pedestrian safety. It was noted that the ADA Ramp next to Monster Shakes is a good example of a well-designed ADA ramp, and that many event spaces and commercial and residential buildings in this area are not designed to accommodate those who are physically disabled. Additionally, E Palm Canyon Drive needs more frequent pedestrian crossings. Many attendees noted that bike lanes could connect the Civic Center to surrounding neighborhoods.
- **Cultural/neighborhood identifiers.** Cathedral Cove and other notable/historic neighborhoods should have neighborhood identifiers at entry locations, such as a large sign or small neighborhood identifying signs placed at the top of street signs.

- **Visual corridors.** Many attendees would like future developments to create “visual corridors” that visually link development surrounding the Civic Center to the main downtown area. This could be completed through setbacks, walking paths, or other methods.
- **Excess parking.** Attendees noted that the parking lot at W Buddy Rogers and Buddy Rogers Ave does not fit with the rest of the Civic Center. Attendees disliked the lack of shade and would like to see this part of the Civic Center redeveloped.
- **Vacant lots.** Attendees noted an excess of vacant lots in and surrounding the downtown area.
- **Signage.** Several attendees noted that existing signage is confusing and inadequate in terms of accessibility for both pedestrians and vehicles.

#### Veteran’s Village and surrounding single-family neighborhood

- **Multi-family design and site placement.** Generally, the design and site placement of the Veteran’s Village development was well-liked by attendees. Features appreciated by attendees included: adequate setbacks to provide a buffer between residential buildings and the street.
- **Safety.** Attendees noted a need for speed reduction along Vega Road.
- **Vacant residential lots.** Attendees noted that several single-family residential lots are vacant, and that there is an opportunity to incentivize developers to develop housing on these lots.

#### Date Palm and Ramon

- **Design.** Attendees noted that too many store windows in this area are covered up (cannot see inside establishment) or have posters featuring negative uses over windows (i.e. cigarettes, alcohol)
- **Shade.** Several attendees noted that the existing vegetation in most commercial parking lots (such as the Stater Bros. parking lot) are not adequate to reduce heat.
- **Accessibility and safety.** Attendees noted that many pedestrian areas are not ADA accessible. Some stores do not have pedestrian access to adjacent sidewalks.
- **Commercial signage.** Attendees expressed a desire for commercial signage to be more consistent in terms of placement and size.
- **Warehouse design.** Attendees noted that the indoor cannabis warehouse along Ramon Road is an example of poor overall site design, including sparse landscaping, visible utility boxes, and a monolithic building façade, which may be improved if broken up through design features.

#### **Tastes and Sounds Events**

Over the four Tastes & Sounds events between March and April 2025, a total of 86 surveys were collected. Survey questions varied by week to cover different topics and only included multiple choice-style questions. Just under 57 percent of survey respondents either live in Cathedral City full or part-time, or work in or own a business in Cathedral City. Major themes and feedback collected throughout these surveys included the following:

- **Land uses.** Survey respondents noted a need for more of the following land uses in the city: venues where people can gather (such as dance or comedy clubs and breweries), both large and specialty grocery stores, professional offices (including medical, dental, financial, and legal), entertainment/recreation options, and sit-down restaurants.

- **Housing affordability.** A majority of survey respondents noted that housing affordability is either an important or very important concern for them.
- **Housing density.** Respondents were divided on whether higher housing densities (such as buildings of up to three to four stories) were appropriate in the downtown area, with approximately 60 percent noting this density is appropriate for this area. However, a majority of respondents generally supported encouraging more multi-family housing and infill development citywide.
- **Neighborhood amenities.** A majority of survey respondents supported the City to encourage more amenities as a part of new development, including, but not limited to, pools, pocket parks, trails, plazas, and more.
- **Development features.** Respondents expressed that the most critically important development features included ample landscaping that provides cooling and shade, as well as parking and circulation that prioritizes safe pedestrian circulation. Others also found that parking lot shading and attractive and visible signage were important development features.
- **Fence materials.** A majority of respondents preferred expanding the allowed fence materials for visible portions of the front and side yard fences on residential lots in addition to concrete blocks and metal/wrought iron, although some respondents noted a preference for wood fences.
- **Parking.** One survey question asked respondents if various commercial areas throughout Cathedral City (including businesses along Date Palm Drive, Ramon Road, downtown, and West 111) had not enough, just enough, or too much parking. Across all commercial areas noted in this question, a majority of respondents stated that commercial parking lots have the right amount of parking. Some respondents stated that these areas do not have enough parking, and far less respondents noted too much parking in these areas. Additionally, a majority of respondents were in favor of developing flexible parking standards for developers, including reducing parking minimums when supported by shared parking agreements.
- **Shade.** Another survey question asked respondents if various commercial areas throughout Cathedral City (including businesses along Date Palm Drive, Ramon Road, downtown, and West 111) had not enough, just enough, or too much shade. Across all commercial areas noted in this question, a majority of respondents stated that parking and pedestrian areas do not have enough shade. The only area that many respondents noted has the right amount of shade is the downtown. Respondents would like to see trees and shade structures used to shade both parking and pedestrian areas. However, respondents would prefer to see more artistic or alternative shade structures in pedestrian spaces specifically.
- **Favorite areas of the city.** Respondents expressed several favorite areas of the city to visit. Top answers included the downtown, followed by restaurants and venues on Date Palm Drive near both Gerald Ford Drive and Ramon Road, West 111 and Palm Canyon area, and Cathedral Cove. When asked what factors made an area a more popular choice over another, respondents cited the importance of having several things to do (including restaurants, parks, shops, and more) within walking distance of each other, as well as areas with an inviting indoor and outdoor atmosphere.
- **Outreach.** Around half of respondents were not aware that the City offers pre-approved ADU plans.

## Stakeholder Interviews

Prior to each interview, stakeholders were provided with a list of questions that would generally inform the discussion; however, stakeholders were encouraged to bring up additional topics of interest to the project. A total of nine stakeholder interviews were conducted. Major themes and feedback collected throughout these discussions included the following:

- **Parking requirements.** Many stakeholders brought up issues with existing parking requirements in the city, generally stating that parking requirements are excessive, create urban heat, and are a constraint to development. Several noted past proposed projects that were not completed or had extended timelines as a result of excessive and/or unattainable parking standards. These stakeholders would like to see parking standards revised to be better defined and reduced. Alternatively, the City could consider shared parking agreements as a way to reduce the total space dedicated to parking in the city. However, a few stakeholders did not find issue with the existing parking requirements, noting the city's sprawling urban environment and lack of transit.
- **Allowed uses.** Several stakeholders noted issues with cannabis-centered uses in the city, particularly regarding inadequate odor mitigation. Others expressed a desire for more retail and residential mixed-use development (particularly along northern Date Palm and in the downtown area), restaurant spaces (not including drive-thrus), indoor recreation, a hospital, and nicer hotels. Land uses that are considered to be an "eyesore," such as storage facilities, should be developed to be concealed behind other developments to not be in the public eye, but still accessible to those who need this use. Some stakeholders noted an oversaturation of drive-thrus in certain areas of the city, stating that these uses tend to cause traffic problems on nearby streets and limit opportunities to make the city more walkable. Others noted the positive impact of the ban on short-term rentals in the city.
- **Flexible standards.** Many stakeholders expressed that updated standards should aim to achieve accessibility, form, and function of buildings, while allowing creativity from developers. Some noted that flexible development standards would be helpful on smaller or otherwise constrained parcels to encourage development of smaller vacant lots in the city.
- **Objective design standards.** Several stakeholders noted that updated design standards should aim to fit the character of the city, while not placing excessive costs on developers. Some noted that all design standards, whether for projects that meet the criteria for objective standards streamlining or not, should aim to be as objective and clear as possible, as some current design standards are overly subjective and vague. The types of standards that were the most important to stakeholders included setbacks, windows, shade requirements, orientation, and height. Some stakeholders noted that the most impactful amenity options for multi-family housing include community centers (such as those with a shared kitchen and/or pool) and Early Childhood Education (ECE) centers.
- **Housing.** Stakeholders noted a need for more housing in the city, particularly housing options that are affordable for working class families. Some noted that many housing projects are held up due to strict development standards, the cost of land, and decision-maker resistance to streamlining or rezoning for such projects. Promoting pre-approved ADU plans, developing objective design standards, and applying for grant funding could help boost the city's housing stock. Some noted that the City could look to Palm Springs as an example of well-implemented pro-housing policy, including their affordable housing fund (funded by Transient Occupancy Tax) and down payment assistance program.
- **Economic development.** Many stakeholders expressed a desire for the updated Development Code to encourage economic development in the city. Some noted that, in some cases, the city has had difficulties attracting developers due to public perceptions of the city compared to its neighbors; this public perception could be improved through discouraging fast food, drive-thrus, and marijuana-centric uses. Some stakeholders wondered how to find alternate uses for the many vacant, large buildings in the city.

- **Shade and urban heat.** Several stakeholders noted that the City has some tree canopy shading requirements, but these shade requirements are too low, not adequately enforced, and developers/landowners tend to over-prune trees and vegetation, reducing their ability to provide shade. Shade could be improved through the use of arcades, canopies, awnings, and solar structures, as well as through reduced parking requirements, incorporating more landscaping into site design, planting appropriate species of trees, and ensuring adequate code enforcement.
- **Downtown/Civic Center.** Many stakeholders noted the great opportunities for development in the city's Civic Center area, including improving walkability and bikeability and evolving this area into a vibrant destination for the community. Some noted that the City has all the tools and infrastructure needed to incentivize development in this area and connect businesses that are currently spread out and disconnected from one another. Several expressed a dislike for the upcoming drive-thru development occurring on the south side of Highway 111, noting that this does not fit the character of the Civic Center. Most stakeholders would prefer to see denser commercial, mixed use, multi-family, and hotel development in this area to create a walkable destination for residents and visitors. Others noted the importance of parks and events spaces in this area to accommodate events like the Hot Air Balloon Festival, as these events draw people from throughout the Coachella Valley.
- **Public art.** Stakeholders noted a need for more art in the city to beautify the community. Some stated that the process for developers to propose artwork on their own property is difficult, and, as a result, many opt to pay the in-lieu fee; for future development, stakeholders would like to see spaced dedicated to public art incorporated into proposed developments or other methods of incentivizing art installations. A public arts program could fill this need through connecting local artists with developers. Others noted that murals advertising local businesses could bring more art to the community.
- **Specific plans.** Several stakeholders noted that many specific plans in the city are too visionary and have such particular and overly specific requirements that they tend to limit realistic development in these areas. Several noted that the requirements and land uses in the North City Specific Plan area do not match developer expectations for this area.
- **Development opportunities.** Stakeholders noted that compared to other Coachella Valley cities, Cathedral City has lots of vacant land within city limits that is cheaper and could offer more opportunities for growth and development. However, the City's existing Zoning Code and specific plans constrain most development and extend the development process by years. Many noted that the City should aim to make the process cheaper and easier for developers to incentivize development in the city. Although the city depends, in part, on tourism, development on vacant land should aim to benefit the community.
- **Application and permitting process.** Many stakeholders noted that, for past projects, City Planning staff would not properly communicate all requirements or permit costs for projects. In other cases, different City departments would interpret the Zoning Code differently. Stakeholders would like all permitting requirements to be clearly communicated as soon as possible in the permitting process, as additional requirements brought up by staff later in the development stage tend to be very costly to developers. Some also noted that completing all entitlement and Building permits prior to going through architectural approval often requires a complete redo of initial documents submitted, costing developers significant time and money. Particularly given the fact that worldwide supply chain issues have impacted developers in recent years and caused cost overruns, some

stakeholders would like to see more flexibility built into the permitting process to limit these overruns. Additionally, some noted that findings applied to projects should aim to be as objective as possible. Others noted that the City should aim to work with small businesses to reduce permitting costs and encourage smaller, infill developments in the city.

- **City Planning staff.** Many stakeholders expressed a noticeable, positive difference in the City's Planning staff in recent years. Several stakeholders noted that past Planning staff members would "gatekeep" development and provided misleading information to applicants at times; however, in recent years, Planning staff have been much more engaged, supportive of new development, flexible when variances are needed in projects, and willing to work with developers to encourage development.

## Conclusion

Several notable themes and major takeaways were consistently expressed by decision-makers, stakeholders, and community members throughout this portion of community engagement for the Development Code update.

Many noted that certain **allowable land uses** are overly concentrated in the city, including golf courses, fast food, drive-thrus, and marijuana dispensaries. Others noted that the list of allowable land uses by zoning district should be updated to better reflect current needs and provide more flexibility for the city's future development needs. Types of land uses that residents would like to see more of include, venues where people can gather, grocery stores, professional/service offices, and entertainment/recreation options. **Housing** was noted as a major need for residents, particularly housing that is affordable and meets the needs of working class and lower income families, including multi-family housing and infill development. **Parking** was noted as an important topic at all engagement events thus far. Many noted an excess of parking, particularly for commercial uses, and expressed a dislike towards the negative impact this poses on public space design and urban heat. However, some residents noted that commercial areas in the city tend to have just the right amount of parking. Many also noted a need for more flexibility in parking standards to limit this factor as a constraint on development.

**Shade and urban heat** were major issues of concern to residents, decision-makers, and stakeholders alike. Some residents noted that landscaping and/or shade structure that provide shade and cooling are some of the most critically important development features for new residential and commercial development in the city. Many noted a lack of shade in public spaces, particularly along sidewalks and in parking lots. Others noted that property owners tend to over-prune or poorly maintain vegetation, reducing trees' ability to provide shade. Many expressed a need for improved and expanded **public spaces and sidewalks** throughout the city. Public spaces in the city should be able to host events, foster community gathering, feature public art, and provide amenities for all age groups, including youth-friendly amenities. Sidewalks were a common topic of discussion, with many noting the lack of accessible sidewalks, sidewalk obstructions, disconnected sidewalk systems, and pedestrian safety concerns due to vehicle speeds. Many would like to see improved walkability in the city.

Throughout discussions, many noted that the **Downtown/Civic Center** area has a lot of potential to become a vibrant destination for the community. Several noted that the City should encourage commercial and residential developments and public parks in this area to continue the momentum created by the development of the Civic Center itself. Others noted a preference for visiting areas of the city that have several things to do, such as restaurants, parks, and shops, within walking distance of each other. Overall, many noted the vast **opportunities for development** in the city that would benefit residents, business owners, and developers. To encourage development, the City should revise development standards to promote flexibility and creativity in projects, and limit constraints to development. Additionally, many noted that the city should adopt objective design standards that fit the character of the city, while not placing excessive costs on developers.

## Next Steps

This memorandum outlines the various public outreach methods and events conducted between project initiation (November 2024) and April 2025. Upon receiving City staff's review of this memorandum, Mintier Harnish will facilitate a project management meeting to discuss how the feedback collected thus far should

be considered for the subsequent Development Code update to address the community's needs and expectations for future development in the city.

Starting in April 2025 and the following months, the Project Team will continue with its ongoing outreach efforts and will begin drafting the updated Development Code. Next steps include the following:

**Citywide Survey and Digital Mapping Exercise.** The Mintier Harnish Team will prepare and release a citywide digital survey in conjunction with a Maptionnaire online exercise to solicit feedback from community members. The survey will gauge interest from community members and identify issues and opportunities for development improvement consistent with the General Plan and as it relates to zoning and design regulations citywide. To improve participation, the Mintier Harnish Team recommends the City prepare and send mailers to property owners through utility billings. At the conclusion of the online survey participation period, Mintier Harnish will analyze and synthesize the survey results into a comprehensive summary memorandum, which will be submitted to City staff for review and consideration. The memorandum will highlight key topics, trends, and overarching preferences found throughout survey responses. This document will serve as a valuable resource for understanding community input and will also be shared and discussed with City staff.

**Draft Cathedral City Development Code.** The Project Team will prepare the new Development Code in four phases: Zoning District Provisions, General Site Planning and Specific Use Standards, Subdivision Ordinance, and Administrative Provisions. Through this process, the Consultants will seek feedback on the draft Development Code sections by City staff, the Development Code Steering Committee, Development Code TAG, and the Planning Commission.

**Citywide Objective Design Standards.** The Project Team will prepare updated Citywide Objective Design Standards (ODS) that provide guidance for the physical form and visual character of new residential development projects in the City. These updated ODS will provide design guidance for streetscape corridors, including plant palettes, street trees, street lighting, and landscape treatments along primary roadways, as well as for multi-family residential, mixed-use, and compact single-family residential uses, addressing site design, building architecture, landscaping, outdoor spaces, lighting, and signage.