



Envision Palm Desert → *Forward Together*



Strategic Plan Progress Report - 2016

# Envision Palm Desert Community Vision Statement

*Palm Desert is the heart of California's Coachella Valley.*

Palm Desert's outstanding quality of life offers residents and visitors of all ages a wide array of recreational, educational, shopping, housing and entertainment opportunities as well as arts and cultural activities and world-class events in a uniquely beautiful desert environment. This premier resort destination is a thriving, safe and sustainable community that attracts innovative employers by virtue of its diverse, highly qualified workforce and synergistic business, civic and educational partnerships.

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# Introduction

In 2013, more than 130 Palm Desert citizens met over seven months to develop a 20-year strategic plan that identified goals and specific steps to achieve them.

The resulting plan, ***Envision Palm Desert → Forward Together***, covered nine Strategic Results Areas: arts and culture; economic development; education; energy and sustainability; land use, housing, and open space; parks and recreation; public safety; tourism and marketing; and transportation. Each Strategic Results Area of the plan included its own discrete priorities, strategies, action plan, and measures of success.

The ***Envision*** plan was unanimously adopted by the City Council in February, 2014, with the understanding that each City department would track its progress toward relevant plan goals throughout the year and provide an annual update to the City Manager. Those updates would then be compiled into a report and delivered to the Council prior to approval of the municipal budget.

This report, covering the 2015/2016 fiscal year, is the second such progress report. It is organized by Strategic Results Area and lists the plan goals and related accomplishments for each topic. The strategic plan identified a wide variety of goals across all aspects of the community with 34 discrete strategic results area priorities to be addressed over the plan's 20-year timeframe. The City Council met on March 24 of this year to prioritize those goals. Council members identified a total of eight goals for staff to focus on going forward.

Special Events was the clear top priority identified during the Study Session with multiple Council Members expressing their desire to grow existing events and the develop new ones to encourage tourism.

Other topics receiving support from more than one Council Member included the creation of a City core which is clearly aligned and overlaps with another goal that received support, the revitalization of the Highway 111 corridor. Education was also a top point of focus with Council members endorsing the creation of a community-based education coalition that would work to improve student graduation rates/achievement levels and for the goal of Palm Desert becoming an "education destination."

Among the past year's numerous accomplishments, one highlight is the nearly completed update to the City's General Plan that will help facilitate the development of an economically vibrant and walkable downtown core, a goal identified in multiple areas of the Envision strategic plan.

## Arts & Culture

The strategic plan envisions Palm Desert as the cultural core of the Coachella Valley.

Priorities are to assess the current arts and cultural landscape, explore the viability of creating an arts and culture district, and develop secure and sustainable funding for arts and culture.

### ***Priority 1: Assess the current arts and cultural landscape.***

Measures of Success:

- A full understanding of the arts and culture sector, specifically demographic and economic impact and a quantification of the sector
- Having a completed assessment conducted by an outside organization such as Americans for the Arts to distribute to stakeholders

**Progress:**

**The strategic plan called for the hiring of an outside organization such as Americans for the Arts to perform a community study on the economic impact of the arts in Palm Desert. This has not taken place since funding has not been identified.**

### ***Priority 2: Explore the viability of creating and designating a Palm Desert arts and cultural district, whether it is geographic or economic.***

Measures of Success:

- The City Council embraces the creation of the district. There is a greater understanding of art and culture by the business community and arts and cultural stakeholders for the district.
- Support from 80 percent of the Palm Desert arts and culture organizations, as illustrated by participation through letters, emails and support at City Council meetings, etc.

**Progress:**

**As part of the General Plan update process, discussions have occurred regarding the possibility of creating an arts district in the vicinity of San Pablo and Highway 111. Opportunities still exist for the evolution of an arts district in the downtown corridor.**

***Priority 3: Develop and secure a sustainable source of funding for arts and culture.***

Measures of Success:

- As a result of the formation of a district, there is a steady funding stream that will potentially create available spaces for live and outdoor music, community events and festivals, a local multipurpose theater/arts center, and creative connections and partnerships that impact that economy through increased tourism and revenue.

**Progress:**

**The strategic plan called for the identification of an arts assessment district or other type of revenue generating district. It also called for the creation of an oversight board or committee to oversee distribution of revenues generated through the district. Although this has not yet taken place, First Weekend has provided opportunities for more arts and culture focused community events and festivals including STREET, Swing N' Hops, and Vision San Pablo.**

# Economic Development

The strategic plan envisions building on Palm Desert's strengths in business, education, arts, and tourism to provide an inviting economic climate offering lifestyle, education, and investment opportunities.

Priorities are to increase job and business opportunities, expand quality education to ensure people are prepared to serve in a workforce of the future, to create and attract entertainment and events that grow the economy and improve the quality of life, and enhance and raise awareness of business friendly services to retain and attract business.

## ***Priority 1: Expand job and business creation opportunities.***

Measures of Success:

- Create a spreadsheet of inventory and monitor growth in chosen categories.
- 2-3% sales and TOT growth each year over the next 10 years.

**Progress:**

**Action Step – Attract businesses that generate additional revenue for City programs:**

- During fiscal year 2015/2016, staff completed the sale of a 2.1-acre site to El Paseo Hotel, LLC, for the development of a 152-room hotel on the northeast corner of Larkspur and Shadow Mountain Drive. The architectural and engineering plans are complete and the developer has begun grading. Construction of the underground parking structure/hotel platform is scheduled to start this spring with hotel completion expected in fall 2017. When completed, this project will create more than 200 jobs and is expected to generate more than \$800,000 per year in new transient occupancy tax.
- In 2014, the Successor Agency entered into an 18-month Exclusive Negotiating Agreement with Quiksilver Hotel and Resort for the potential development of a more than 600-room hotel, 175,000 square feet of commercial space, 143 timeshare villas, and an action sport event venue on the Desert Willow Lot Pads. Concept designs were prepared and reviewed by staff. A six-month extension of the ENA is being considered and the developer anticipates submitting the entitlement application in fall 2016. The project has the potential of creating over 2,000 new jobs and generating new transient occupancy tax and sales tax.

- During this fiscal year, Economic Development staff assisted Tesla Motors to secure the necessary entitlements and easement approval to open the City's first new automobile sales business. Tesla Motors is unique in that it is operated in a retail space at The Gardens on El Paseo. Potential buyers are able to test drive new Tesla vehicles by appointment using three demonstration cars parked in The Gardens parking structure. Tesla Motors will bring new sales tax revenue to the City.

**Action Step – Revitalize Highway 111. Look at the possibility of creating a “City Center” atmosphere:**

- As part of the ongoing General Plan update, the consultant is looking at various opportunities to re-invent the Highway 111 corridor and develop a “City Center”. The Economic Development Department is assisting in this goal by continuing to promote the Façade Enhancement Program (FEP) with focus on older Highway 111 buildings. Additional property owner outreach is ongoing and staff is investigating the possibility of modifying the FEP guidelines to provide additional incentives to Highway 111 and San Pablo properties in need of redevelopment.
- The second part of revitalizing the area around Highway 111 involving Economic Development staff is the renovation of the Alessandro West Corridor. Staff contracted with an engineer and architect to update the construction drawings to move the project forward. The project includes the addition of 140 new parking spaces, landscaping, lighting and a new block wall along the entire Alessandro West corridor. The project's construction drawings are complete and plan check corrections are currently being addressed. Construction is expected to begin this summer (2016). New parking opportunities will allow existing and future businesses to expand and redevelop their older buildings. A central parking facility is envisioned at the center of the corridor at San Marcos Way. Successor Agency Bond funds are available to complete the project.

***Priority 2: Expand quality education so that people are prepared for the workplace of the future.***

Measures of Success:

- The expansion of university campuses over the next 20 years
- School enrollments in the key industries of desired growth will increase



**Progress:**

**Action Step – Develop incubators for medical and agricultural industries:**

- The Coachella Valley Economic Partnership (CVEP) continues its work to expand the medical portion of the west valley incubator.
- While work has been completed on the federal applications for an East Valley incubator, according to CVEP staff, the federal government did not fund the program and the application is on hold.

**Action Step – Partner with four-year schools to focus on key industries like business, medical, and research specifically related to agriculture.**

- In 2014, Palm Desert’s Successor Agency donated 11.5 acres to the University of California Riverside to begin the master planning for the development of a UCR Medical School at the Palm Desert Center. This property donation will further the City’s long term goals of developing new industries such as medical research and education opportunities for students to study locally and stay to work in the Coachella Valley.
- The Successor Agency executed a Disposition and Development Agreement with Cal State University San Bernardino allowing the transfer of approximately 114 acres from the City to the University. The property transfer will facilitate the master plan for the existing Palm Desert campus. The site will be used for educational purposes and Palm Desert will have naming rights once it becomes a stand-alone campus. Staff continues to work with University staff on their campus master plan, which envisions an 8,000-student campus within the next 10 years.

***Priority 3: Create and attract entertainment and events to enhance and expand the Palm Desert economy and lifestyle.***

Measures of Success:

- Hotel occupancy increases
- A cost benefit analysis template for review of events by committees and City Council is created

**Progress:**

**Action Step – Create a task force/committee to bridge the summer tourism gap and market Palm Desert to families and youth by identifying other attractions, in addition to golf, explore**

nighttime and youth-oriented activities, create a monthly signature event during the spring and summer seasons, and assist hotels in attracting conventions and tourist groups:

- The City has convened Palm Desert’s Hotel and Signature Events Committee that consists of City Council members and representatives from Palm Desert hotels, the Convention and Visitors Bureau, and City staff. This Committee is already fulfilling the mission identified in the strategic plan.
- Staff completed the relocations of the 2016 Fashion Week El Paseo and Palm Desert Food & Wine Festival events to the upper parking deck at The Gardens on El Paseo. This will allow those events to continue on El Paseo.
- Staff continues to work with Palm Springs Life to break out the Food & Wine Festival as a stand-alone event, which will expand the event’s opportunities for growth.

**Action Step – Explore the possibility of creating a venue for events and determine whether underground parking is needed:**

- In order to explore the opportunities to develop and attract entertainment and events, a viable venue is necessary. Staff has looked at various opportunities for venues including El Paseo, Desert Willow, Civic Center Park, The Deck (upper level of the parking structure) at Westfield Palm Desert and partnering with other local attractions. Of particular interest to staff is the feasibility of redesigning a portion of El Paseo (i.e. between San Pablo and Larkspur) as a flexible event space that could be closed to vehicle traffic on occasion to host new signature events. Earlier this year, on February 6, the City hosted a First Weekend signature event on El Paseo. Named Swing ‘N Hops, the event included the road closure between Larkspur Lane and San Pablo Avenue and was a success with an estimated 2,000 attendees between noon and 4 p.m. The event was well received by most El Paseo merchants and staff has been given direction to move forward with developing a flexible event space at this location. Staff expects to present concepts to the City Council this summer.
- Staff is also exploring the concept of using the driving range at Desert Willow Golf Resort as an event venue. Palm Springs Life has expressed strong interest in creating a standalone Palm Desert Food and Wine event staff will continue to explore the feasibility of using Desert Willow’s driving range and clubhouse for a future signature event.
- Parking for events and future economic development is currently being studied as part of the General Plan Update. Opportunities for parking structures are available at Presidents’ Plaza parking lots, the Ocotillo parking site, and with the future renovation of the Alessandro West corridor.

***Priority 4: Expand and raise awareness of business friendly services in order to retain and attract business.***

Measures of Success:

- Conduct business customer satisfaction surveys to establish a benchmark, then repeat in 24 months
- Have Business Area Network Systems (BANS) in place for the city's three major business districts

**Progress:**

**Action Step – Develop additional Business Area Network Systems (BANS)**

**The El Paseo Business Alert Network System (BANS) is an online program that facilitates communication between area businesses and police. Administered by the Police Department's Business District Team, the program has been very successful and enhanced the security of the businesses along the El Paseo business corridor.**

**Economic Development Goals for Fiscal Year 2016/17:**

- Revise the City's Façade Enhancement Program guidelines to provide a higher incentive to older Highway 111 properties.
- Develop a Transient Occupancy Tax sharing program to incentivize the development of new hotels and to assist existing hotels with renovations, thus increasing revenues.
- Develop collateral materials promoting Palm Desert for business recruitment.
- Expansion of First Weekend to include monthly signature events by the City and various partners (see Tourism and Marketing accomplishments and goals for additional details).
- Prepare resource information and make it accessible to local businesses and to attract new business. Market that resource and the city's business friendly atmosphere to the community.
- Update Economic Development website pages with current information and develop a monthly calendar of educational programs available by our various partners such as Small Business Development Center, CVEP and the Chamber of Commerce.

- Make Palm Desert's event permit fee competitive with other cities.
- Partner with two-year schools and workforce development groups with a focus on key industries like energy and medical, interior design/décor.

## Education

The strategic plan envisions Palm Desert as an education destination offering world class programs providing lifelong learning opportunities and an engaged and informed community.

Priorities are to create and support a community-based education coalition that will focus on graduation rates, attract and retain students of all ages by providing outstanding academic and cultural programs, and create community awareness of, and support for, the building blocks of student and career success.

***Priority 1: Create/Support a community-based Education Coalition in which all necessary community organizations come together to coordinate and focus their efforts on improving measures of student success such as graduation rates and achievement levels.***

Measures of Success:

- Within 24 months, a Palm Desert-based Coachella Valley Education Coalition with broad membership and regular meetings will have been created.
- Within 12 months of the Education Coalition being created, it will host the first successful Education Summit, measure attendance, and quality of speakers to create a baseline for future Summits.
- Within 12 months of creation of the Education Coalition, the ongoing attendance and participation of member groups will be assessed, to maintain an 80% rate of participation by identified groups.
- There will be a demonstrated increase in the use of technology and broader access of technological resources by local schools and community centers such as the Palm Desert Library.

**Progress:**

This goal requires the assignment of the program to a lead staff member to convene the parties and start a dialogue for the creation of an independent education coalition. This has not yet occurred.

***Priority 2: Become an “Education Destination” which is successful in attracting and retaining students of all ages by providing outstanding academic and cultural programs and demonstrating high levels of career readiness.***

Measures of Success:

- Increase in the quality and quantity of students attending local institutions
- Retention of a percentage of the top local students, measured by their attendance at local institutions
- Increase local job placements from local educational systems by 20% as determined through review of job placement programs at educational institutions
- Reduce the unemployment rate of young adults (18 – 26) by 10-20%
- Increase employer satisfaction with locally hired employees – to be measured through a bi-annual survey of local employers

**Progress:**

**Continued support for the expansion of CSUSB-PD and UCR includes regular communication with CSU & UC administrators in the University Planning and Development Committee.**

**The City has provided support for UCR’s plan to develop the Palm Desert campus as an extension of the newly accredited medical school and bring educational conferences and symposia to the campus. CSUSB has hosted several educational conferences including, in January, a conference on Dyslexia, Literacy and ADHD for educators, medical professionals and other stakeholders.**

**CSUSB-PD now has freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors on campus. Staff is working with CSUSB-PD on internships and hosted two interns in Fiscal Year 2015/16.**

**The most significant actions that the City has taken in support of this goal are the donations of land to Cal State University San Bernardino and the University of California, Riverside, for expansion of their Palm Desert campuses. Continued support for the expansion of these campuses includes regular communication with Cal State and University of California administrators through the University Planning and Development Committee.**

**The City’s Community Development Department is focused on creating affordable housing in the University Park area. This supports the goal of Palm Desert being an education destination.**

***Priority 3: Create community awareness of, and support for, the building blocks of student success, including academic, vocational and career success.***

Measures of Success:

- Reduction in High school dropout rates, by 10% initially and then increasing reductions

- Increase the number of students with A-G completion (eligibility to enter the Cal State/UCR systems)
- Increase the number of people who complete academic/vocational programs (i.e., certificate, AA, BA, BS, etc.)
- Measure the variety and quality of vocational/trade opportunities

**Progress:**

**The City supports community awareness of student success through several programs including:**

- **Palm Desert Charter Middle School and Lincoln Elementary School after school programs, which are funded through the general fund;**
- **The City's annual Student Art & Essay Program provides a public forum for recognizing student success and positive reinforcement for student's efforts;**
- **Outside agency funding supports programs such as: bullying/gang prevention; STEM programs; academic field trips; Odyssey of the Mind and other programs designed to develop well rounded, high achieving students.**
- **Support for CVEP and the Vocational Academy programs.**

**Education Goals for Fiscal Year 2016/17:**

Funds are included in the FY 2016/2017 budget for:

- After-School Programs
- Student Art and Essay Program
- Outside Agency Funding – funds are available for request by education groups for specific programs
- Internship Program – funds are budgeted for internship programs; contact has been made with CSUSB to promote internship opportunities

# Energy and Sustainability

The strategic plan envisions the City as a responsible steward of the community's natural resources.

Priorities are to reduce per-capita consumption of energy and water, to promote greater use of sustainable materials with an eye upon the needs of future generations, to encourage all new construction to be net zero energy design and exceed the Coachella Valley Water District's efficiency standards, and to encourage property owners to act to reduce energy and water consumption.

## ***Priority 1: Reduce per capita consumption of energy and water.***

Measures of Success:

- 2013 per capita consumption of energy and water is reduced 30% by 2033

### **Progress:**

Through the State's mandated drought measures, the City evaluated its water use throughout the community. Staff has achieved reductions in water use by more than 30 percent in some months while continuing to closely monitor plant material for its health and appearance.

The City participated with the Coachella Valley Water District to provide incentives for lawn conversion to desert landscaping by contributing \$50,000 towards turf removal for residential and commercial properties.

The Public Works Department has also initiated the following projects that will help the City accomplish this priority:

- Installed new drinking fountains with bottle filling stations at Civic Center Park, Freedom Park, and Cap Homme/Ralph Adams Park.
- Installed water conserving smart irrigation controllers at Baja Park and in the University Park medians
- Removed approximately 15,000 square feet of turf at the Civic Center and installed water efficient landscape.
- Landscaped two new parkway planters with water efficient landscape at Fred Waring Drive and Portola Avenue.



- Started replacing high energy use walkway fixtures with LED energy efficient fixtures at Civic Center Park
- Replaced Internally Illuminated Street Name Signs (IISNS) at intersections throughout the City, improving access to the city and its attractions by making street names more easily recognizable, while reducing electrical consumption
- Upgraded LED traffic signal indications at selected intersections, reducing electrical consumption and improving visibility and safety.
- Revitalized the median island on Dinah Shore Drive between Monterey Avenue and Miriam Way, replacing the landscape with water efficient irrigation and plant material

***Priority 2: Promote greater usage of more sustainable materials.***

Measures of Success:

- Revisions to the city's building codes and California law/regulations requiring the desired actions are completed

**Progress:**

The City held a Green for Life Open House to educate staff and City officials about green building practices, retrofitting, and other sustainability related information. The information learned will enhance the City's knowledge and improve staff's ability to inform the public about green building practices.

Staff is working on a Green for Life program that should be adopted before the end of this fiscal year. The program will provide educational information about green building and will promote the two local PACE programs – Ygrene and HERO.

The City has coordinated the installation of eight new, publicly available electric vehicle charging stations located at convenient locations throughout the community. The City also upgraded four existing electric vehicle charging stations at City Hall and Civic Center Park as part of the project, which was paid for using City funds dedicated to the reduction of air pollution as well as state and federal matching grants.

The City's Special Programs Department is working with the South Coast Air Quality, Mobile Source Air Pollution Reduction Review Committee (MSRC) and contractor Clean Fuel Connection to install a DC Vehicle Electric Fast Charger. The station adjacent to the existing

electric vehicle chargers in the Civic Center Parking lot will allow electric owners to fully charge their vehicles in 30 to 45 minutes and expands the availability of alternative fuel options throughout the community.

In January 2015, 28 combination trash and recycling receptacles and 28 benches were installed along the length of the El Paseo shopping district. These receptacles and benches were custom fabricated using sustainable materials that include 70 percent recycled glass generated from the Coachella Valley. The furnishings were fabricated by Greenday, LLC of Indio.

The benches and trash receptacles that had been on El Paseo were collected and re-distributed throughout the City's parks. The original receptacles were only for trash and the new ones are now double receptacles for trash and recycling. This allows El Paseo visitors to separate recyclables from trash for the first time.

The City installed 11 new picnic tables made from recycled bottles and concrete at Civic Center Park. The City also installed 11 decorative safety bollards made from recycled bottles and concrete at Hovley Soccer Park.

At the San Pablo Community Gardens, staff installed 27 garden boxes made from the same recycled materials.

The Citywide street and parking lot resurfacing this year used Cold In-Place recycled asphalt as the base course and an environmentally friendly warm mix asphalt for the cap, using less energy and reducing carbon emissions.

In the summer of 2015, the Community Development Department added intern Lesly Figueroa, who developed a Sustainability Education Series for students in the after school program at Abraham Lincoln Elementary School. The program involved speakers from organizations that focused on recycling, food waste and composting, climate change, agriculture and sustainable food, and energy and solar. The series kicked off with a sustainability party thrown for the students by the Palm Desert Youth Committee, and included seed planting, sustainable arts projects and games, and a sustainability quiz to assess the student's knowledge on the topic. If successful, the series could be expanded to include other schools.

During her time the City, Ms. Figueroa also hosted a sustainability competition for City staff. Each department was given a score sheet with numerous categories in which they could score points. At the end of the contest, a potluck hosted by the losing departments honored the winning department - Community Development. The contest was educational and challenged staff members to reduce their waste, learn about their food sources, and explore other topics related to sustainability.

***Priority 3: Encourage all new construction to be net zero energy in design and exceed the current Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) efficiency standards.***

Measures of Success:

- All new construction will be net zero energy in design and exceed the current CVWD water efficiency standards.

**Progress:**

As mentioned above, staff is working with the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) on the Green for Life Program, which we anticipate will soon be adopted by the City.

The program will include a voluntary Green Building Manual that will provide information for net zero energy design.

The City also completed construction of Carlos Ortega Villas, a 72-unit affordable senior housing project that incorporates the latest in energy efficiency technology to produce the first net-zero affordable housing community in Palm Desert. Going forward, Carlos Ortega Villas will be used as a model for achieving net zero construction.

***Priority 4: Encourage owners of all existing properties to voluntarily retrofit them to obtain reductions in energy and water usage.***

Measures of Success:

- Compared to 2013 levels, 50% of existing properties have been voluntarily retrofitted for energy and water reduction
- Compared to 2013 levels, 50% of existing hotel rooms and timeshare units currently not equipped with occupancy sensors have been retrofitted

**Progress:**

The City Council has approved two PACE programs that provide a financing incentive for retrofitting existing properties by using a loan that is repaid via property tax assessment.

As previously mentioned, the Green for Life program will include a voluntary Green Building Manual that will provide information for net zero energy design to educate and encourage property owners to retrofit them.

## Land Use, Housing & Open Space

The strategic plan envisions a well-planned and developed community with a vibrant city core, natural open space, and housing, business, and community revitalization opportunities.

Priorities are to enhance Palm Desert as a first-class destination for premier shopping and national, regional, and neighborhood retail businesses, to expand Palm Desert as an educational hub, to facilitate development of high quality housing for people of all income levels, and to develop creative and innovative zoning and incentives to promote education and high quality residences that also encourages a balance between housing and jobs.

### ***Priority 1: Enhance Palm Desert as a first-class destination for premier shopping and national retail businesses.***

Measures of Success:

- Addition of new retailers
- Increased sales tax generation
- Increase in lease rates on Highway 111
- Increased tourist traffic in the Highway 111 corridor

#### **Progress:**

Staff understands the necessity of being a leader in the Coachella Valley retail marketplace. To ensure long term success, the City Council has invested significant resources into creating a city-center plan that will serve as the 20 – 30 year guiding document for Palm Desert. The concepts being developed will build upon past successes while diversifying our retail portfolio.

### ***Priority 2: Facilitate development of high quality housing for people of all income levels.***

Measures of Success:

- An increase in the number of residential building permits issued.
- Increase in property sales due to the variety of housing products available
- Reduction or elimination of substandard housing

#### **Progress:**

The updated General Plan will focus on diversifying the City's housing stock and providing mixed use opportunities. The City is also pursuing inclusionary housing for low income level homes whenever developers request development densities greater than allowed by the Code.

One of the strategic plan action steps identified under this priority is a review of development fees to identify opportunities for incentivizing "small" development.

A review of development fees has been completed and compiled into a single document available for distribution to the public. An update of the Palm Desert Municipal Code to clarify a number of ambiguous details has also been completed.

The City completed construction on the 72-unit affordable senior community known as Carlos Ortega Villas. The project supports the Envision Palm Desert Strategic Plan as a priority under the Land Use, Housing and Open Space section which identified the importance of housing available to all income levels. The project was funded by bonds issued by the former Redevelopment Agency for the development of affordable housing.

In the City's north end, staff is working with the developer of the Millennium Specific Plan, already under construction, which includes 266 affordable units (66 developer required and 200 City projected units) and the developer of Ponderosa II, who has pledged to construct approximately 15 units for residents with moderate incomes. When completed, the aforementioned projects will serve to provide housing across a broad spectrum of income levels.

***Priority 3: Facilitate development of multiple universities and colleges with full campuses including student housing.***

Measures of Success:

- Significantly increased student enrollment and expanded curriculum and degree offerings

Progress:

One of the action steps connected with this priority calls for the City to allow flexible development standards in the university area to encourage a campus community.

The goal of allowing flexible development standards has been implemented, as evidenced by approval of the Millennium Master Plan, which has mixed-use planning areas and a variety of development standards adopted for 152 acres just northwest of the Cal State/UCR campuses in Palm Desert.

The City Council had visions of a vibrant university in Palm Desert dating back to the early 1990s when they purchased 200 acres of land for that purpose. In pursuit of that vision, the current Council is allocating resources to allow staff to plan for the future of the university corridor via the University Neighborhood Specific Plan.

This plan looks strategically at what the types of neighborhoods and uses compatible with a university. Staff is working collaboratively with the campus to ensure that planning efforts are complimentary. The Cal State Palm Desert campus has a student population of 1,300 today. The Dean indicates that they are on pace for 3,000 full-time students by 2019.

***Priority 4: Create a mixed use city core integrating shopping, dining, lodging and housing.***

Measures of Success:

- Build out is complete
- Economy is robust with low vacancy rates
- Energy use (especially gasoline) is reduced
- Community health is improved
- Residents and visitors alike have a strong sense of where the heart of Palm Desert is

**Progress:**

This is the largest change proposed in the City's Envision strategic plan and in the General Plan Update.

The first action step under this priority calls for the formation of a City Core Commission to begin the planning process. This was accomplished by creating a General Plan Update Technical Working Group comprised of City Council and Planning Commission members, technical staff, and the City Manager. The group worked with Raimi + Associates and Sargent Town Planning for approximately eight months.

The second action step toward the goal of creating a mixed use City core called on the "Core Commission" to define the vision, including the core's location, elements, and pedestrian and vehicular circulation. The vision has been completed by engaging community members, business owners, and property owners in a series of workshops at which the concepts and ideas were first solicited, and then developed and refined over a four-month period.

The ideas will be included in the update of the City's General Plan, which will be presented for consideration and adoption in hearings before the Planning Commission and City Council.

Staff is hopeful that the City Center Area Plan, scheduled to be completed in summer 2016, will pave the way for a much needed revival of the Highway 111 corridor.

***Priority 5: Utilize progressive land use policies and standards to support ongoing and future needs.***

Measures of Success:

- Requests for rezones of property are reduced by 50% from the base year
- Vacancy rates in all sectors are at acceptable levels

**Progress:**

The strategic plan outlines a number of action steps for this priority including: updating the City's General Plan; preserving hillsides, open space, view corridors and recreation areas; hotel development that includes family, boutique, and resort hotels; and the repurposing of existing development, including golf courses.

Consultants have been selected and retained to update the General Plan, and the technical work for the update has commenced. This 20-month project should be complete this year.

The work of preserving hillsides and open space, view corridors and recreation areas continues and is a part of the analysis of each project submitted to the Planning Department for consideration.

The Planning Department continues to support the design and entitlement of hotels and resorts.

While the Department's focus in 2015/2016 has largely been on the update to the General Plan, staff has made several notable accomplishments, including an addition to the Specific Plan zoning standards that allows property owners to streamline the development entitlement process.

Staff also continues to meet with developers and the public to facilitate discussion of alternative land uses at the Palm Desert Country Club and the Santa Rosa Golf Course. This task will be ongoing for years to come.

**Land Use, Housing & Open Space Goals for Fiscal Year 2016/17**

- Staff will be studying revisions to the City's water conservation ordinances in an effort to centralize all aspects of landscape and water efficiency into one location in the Municipal Code.
- To maximize the utility of the specific plan for the Highway 111 corridor, a comprehensive study of parking in the commercial core area, including a fiscal analysis

of a parking structure in Presidents Plaza, will be needed. The cost of such a study was not included in the proposed budget for FY 2015/16.

- Consistent with the priority of facilitating the development of multiple universities and colleges with full campuses, including student housing, the city will allow flexible development standards in the university area to encourage a campus community.
- Another related action step calls for the City to encourage the development of on-campus dormitories through the University Planning Committee. This work is ongoing and staff will participate in Cal State's process to develop a new interim master plan for development of a Palm Desert campus that can accommodate 8,000 students.
- Implementation of a core plan is the final action step related to the priority of creating a mixed-use City core that integrates shopping, dining, lodging and housing. Staff anticipates that implementation will begin with design and construction of the public realm infrastructure improvements on San Pablo, followed by modification of the ingress and egress to the Highway 111 frontage roads. Design and construction of the street modification, sidewalks, landscaping, cycle track, and parking on San Pablo is not currently funded. Construction could begin in FY 2016/17 if funding is made available.
- Staff will continue to work in the coming year on the other action steps identified under this priority including: the preservation of hillsides, open space, view corridors and recreation areas; private sector hotel development that includes family, boutique and resort hotels; and supporting private sector planning of, and investment in, the repurposing of existing development including the Santa Rosa Golf Course.



## Parks & Recreation

The strategic plan envisions parks, open spaces, and recreational opportunities as drivers of innovation and a high quality of life.

Priorities are to fund park maintenance and plan for future replacement and growth, assure a continuing flow of innovative ideas through creative partnerships, and adequate staffing. Other priorities include encouraging resident input, promoting healthy community principles by incorporating recreational and exercise opportunities in all public spaces, planning and developing the North Sphere Regional Park, and evaluating the need for expansion of the Palm Desert Aquatic Center.

***Priority 1: Prepare for the financial requirements of maintaining existing parks to the highest level of service. Planning efforts shall also address future costs of replacement and growth of the parks capital improvement fund.***

Measures of Success:

- The parks are being maintained to the highest level of service
- New sources of revenue have been created
- At least one Signature event has been developed within a park facility
- The Capital Improvement Fund is growing

**Progress:**

**Of the seven action steps outlined under this priority in the strategic plan, progress has been made toward many goals, several of which are described below.**

**Capital efforts remain concentrated on maintaining our high quality park system. Additionally, the City has hired a new Management Analyst to serve as an on staff parks and recreation professional and continue to work collaboratively with our partner agencies.**

**Staff has initiated the concept of creating a charitable foundation that could be used to support the City's Parks. Final foundation documents and the proposed structure of the organization are in process and will be completed in FY 2015/16.**

**Identifying new sources of funding, including private and or sponsorships, has been an ongoing topic of discussion. Staff has developed a naming and sponsorship policy which can be used when requests for sponsorship arise. Any requested donation or naming rights item would be presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission, and ultimately the City Council for final approval.**

Staff has also been exploring various events which could utilize our parks in non-traditional ways. The strategic plan suggests ideas similar to food festivals, vintage car shows, etc. In the immediate future, staff is working on ways to bolster the City's already successful spring and fall concert series (May & October). Ideas that had been proposed included expanded food vending, the addition of dancing areas, and broadening the concert series' selection of musical genres.

Special Programs Department staff has pursued some of these ideas and food trucks are scheduled to be present as part of the spring (May) Concert Series, which will feature an eclectic lineup of artists that should appeal to a variety of demographics.

The strategic plan makes reference to exploring the appropriateness of use fees. Staff has recently proposed an updated policy to the Parks & Recreation Commission that clarifies fee categories for all users. The Council approved this updated policy in 2015.

***Priority 2: Assure a continuing flow of innovative ideas by seeking creative partnerships, ensuring adequate staffing, and encouraging resident input.***

Measures of Success:

- Palm Desert facilities and program opportunities are regarded as innovative.
- The Palm Desert community demonstrates a supportive and open attitude to new ideas.

**Progress:**

This priority speaks to creating a culture of openness and collaboratively working with our partner agencies.

All of our partner agencies regularly attend recurring meetings with City staff. Staff believes our collaborative relationship with our partner agencies has never been better.

The strategic plan also makes reference to ensuring appropriate staff members continue to participate in professional organizations. The City has memberships with the California Parks and Recreation Society as well as the National Parks and Recreation Association. Staff regularly attends these organizations' annual conferences and seminars to learn about new developments and trends in the industry.

***Priority 3: Make recreational and exercise opportunities pervasive in all public spaces.***

Measures of Success:

- The Parks and Recreation Commission has developed criteria to annually assess recreation within Palm Desert.
- It has been demonstrated that we have integrated culture and environmental awareness into parks.
- Specific examples of integrating recreation and exercise opportunities into public spaces have been identified, including initial constraints, how they were addressed and how successful each area has been.
- There are concrete examples that recreation opportunities have been successfully implemented in the El Paseo Corridor.

**Progress:**

**During the strategic plan process, many of the discussions centered on what we can do to encourage future City growth that recognizes recreation needs and the importance of exercise.**

**Staff recognized that the City would be updating its General Plan at the conclusion of the strategic plan and included the City's recreation liaison on the steering committee for that update. The General Plan is in the process of being updated. The new draft plan includes a health and wellness component as well as changes to the built environment to accomplish our goals.**

**Staff was successful in bringing the first annual Palm Desert Half Marathon and 5K (formerly the Palm Springs Half Marathon) to the City. This first-time event drew under 1,000 attendees.**

***Priority 4: Develop the North Sphere Regional Park which will be bordered by Portola Drive to the west, Dinah Shore Drive to the south, and Interstate 10 to the north.***

Measures of Success:

- The community was an integral part of the planning and development process for this facility.
- The park is used by the surrounding community on a daily basis.
- The park has successfully been integrated with surrounding housing.

- Revenue generators included in the design of the facility have produced an income stream used to maintain and operate the park.

**Progress:**

Staff has implemented a plan that identifies when this park should begin development. The schedule is based on the construction of housing in the immediate vicinity.

There are approximately 6,000 housing units planned in the north sphere of which approximately 1,200 have been constructed. Staff has determined that 4,000 of those units will be in place before the regional park is needed. Given the current rate of construction, we anticipate that it will be four years before the start of design and construction.

Staff is carefully monitoring our park funds and working to grow them in advance of anticipated expenses related to design and construction of the regional park.

***Priority 5: Examine the need for expansion of the Palm Desert Aquatic Center.***

Measures of Success:

- The data collected clearly lays out the information needed to either support an expansion of the facility, or not.
- The business/operations plan for any expansion clearly shows an increase in the cost recovery goal to 60% of annual operations costs.

**Progress:**

Staff believes it is too early to consider any future expansion of the Aquatic Center. YMCA staff is continuing to monitor and track program data that will aid in plans for future development.

## Public Safety and Emergency Services

The strategic plan envisions a high quality of life for Palm Desert as a result of its comprehensive public safety services.

Priorities are to continually enhance the delivery of public safety services, to increase methods of crime prevention through expanded community participation, and to help the community be more prepared for disasters and public safety emergencies.

### ***Priority 1: Enhance the delivery of public safety services.***

Measures of Success:

- **Fire Department:** Continue to respond to 85% of medical and fire emergencies within five minutes or less once the call is dispatched.
- **Police Department:** Strive for an annual decrease in all type of crimes as indicated within the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Uniform Crime Report.

**Progress:**

**The following accomplishments in 2015/2016 support this priority's strategy of expanding the existing, superlative services provided by Palm Desert's fire and police departments:**

- **SLESF Funding (continued in FY 2016/17)**  
Palm Desert's participation in the Holiday Theft Suppression Program and the availability of Supplemental Law Enforcement Services Fund (SLESF) revenues will assist in meeting this priority, by (1) providing increased law enforcement presence to mitigate potential criminal activity during the busy holiday shopping season and (2) delivering revenues for front line law enforcement activities throughout the year.
- **Purchase of a New Medic Unit (refurbishment in FY 16/17)**  
The purchase of a new medic unit ensured that the Fire Department has the latest equipment to respond to calls for service. Medical aid response comprised approximately 75% of all Fire Department service calls in 2015/2016.

- **Police Motor Purchase (additional purchase in FY 2016/17)**  
The purchase of one new BMW police motorcycle helps maintain a current fleet for the Police Department's Traffic Enforcement Division and will assist them in citywide traffic safety enforcement.
- **Posse Holiday Patrol**  
The use of the Sheriff's Mounted Posse at the Palm Desert Westfield Mall during the peak holiday shopping season successfully curtailed any vehicle theft at this location and provided a highly visible law enforcement presence, which offered an additional community relations benefit.
- **PACT Team Participation (continued in FY 16/17)**  
Palm Desert's participation in the East-PACT team will assist in meeting the Strategic Plan's goals by mitigating the impact of public safety realignment under AB 109 through the direct supervision of post-release inmates into the community.
- **Public Safety Budget**  
The Police and Fire budget continue to include personnel and equipment that is in addition to standard patrol and fire operations. Some examples include the City's own fleet of medic units and numerous police specialized teams (i.e. traffic enforcement, SET Team, Business District Team, etc.).
- **Fire Fighter II/Medic (proposed in FY 16/17)**  
A proposed reorganization will allow the City to upgrade two Basic Life Support engines to Advanced Life Support engines. The remaining BLS engine is being proposed for modification to an ALS engine in the FY 2016/17 Fire Department budget.

***Priority 2: Increase methods of preventing crime, especially through expanded community participation.***

Measures of Success:

- Neighborhood Watch: Increase active participants by 10% annually
- COPS Program: Increase COPS Program volunteers by 10% annually

**Progress:**

This priority's strategy is to expand the Police Department's education, promotion, and training programs related to crime prevention by engaging the community.

The El Paseo Business Alert Network System (BANS) is an online program that facilitates communication between area businesses and police. Administered by the Police Department's Business District Team, the program has been very successful and enhanced the security of the businesses along the El Paseo business corridor.

The inclusion of a second Community Services Officer II in 2015 has provided the City with another Crime Prevention Officer. This position works with the other CSO II to expand community outreach through Neighborhood Watch, Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), Crime Free Multi Housing seminars and the BANS program.

In addition to Neighborhood Watch meetings, the Police Department has hosted other public outreach efforts including a new "Coffee with a Cop" program, bi-annual "Every 15 Minutes" event, and the annual "Shop with a Cop" event. Such events help promote the police department and assist with community relations.

As of the writing of this report, Palm Desert's Citizens on Patrol (COPs) program had 29 member volunteers (two more than last year).

Staff is conducting an active public outreach campaign to recruit additional COPS members that has included items in the City's BrightSide newsletter and public service announcements that air on multiple stations on television and radio. In addition, the COPS administrative staff has continued to conduct outreach with local organizations to solicit volunteers through presentations and articles in organizational newsletters.

***Priority 3: Help the community become more prepared for disasters and public safety emergencies.***

Measures of Success:

- CERT and CPR/AED certify a minimum of 40-60 community members annually

**Progress:**

This priority's strategy is to help the community become more prepared for disasters. The following accomplishments in fiscal year 2015/2016 support this strategy:

- **Emergency Services Coordinator (continue in FY 16/17)**  
The City Council recently approved a full-time contracted Emergency Services Coordinator that is shared with the City of Indian Wells. The Coordinator will assist in meeting this priority through a variety of public outreach efforts and by hosting Community Emergency Response Team classes, the first of which is scheduled to be held May 20 to 22, 2016. This individual will provide emergency response training to City staff. Staff also wants to implement a more formal and organized Palm Desert CERT Program with continuous active community participation.
- **Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) (continue in FY 16/17)**  
With funds received from the Homeland Security Grant Program, the City will be able to continue hosting numerous CERT classes. One of the identified steps for Priority Three is to ensure a viable Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) program by hosting a minimum of four CERT classes per year and examine program needs annually based on population & community interest.
- **Emergency Management Performance Grant (continue in FY 16/17)**  
The City's participation in the 2015 EMPG was intended to assist us in funding the Emergency Services Coordinator position. However, since the new Coordinator started late into the grant period, staff may modify the City's request to update our Emergency Operation Center.



## Tourism & Marketing

The strategic plan envisions a year-round international resort destination offering a wellness lifestyle, exemplary hotels, arts, entertainment, shopping, recreational, and education opportunities for all ages.

Priorities are to improve access to the city and its attractions, grow existing events and develop new events to enhance the desirability of Palm Desert year-round, attract new and developing markets (culinary, medical, cultural tourism, business, sports, film industry, emerging international markets and those for younger demographics), and support Palm Desert tourism through enhanced marketing.

### ***Priority 1: Improve access to Palm Desert and its attractions to enhance the ease of lifestyle.***

Measures of Success:

- Increase in sales tax and Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)
- Increase in permits for street licensed golf carts and other alternative modes of transportation
- Increase in flights to Palm Springs International Airport and expanded passenger rail service

#### **Progress:**

The nearly completed General Plan Update will assist with this goal by facilitating the development of a walkable and easily accessible downtown core.

Recognizing that improved access to Palm Desert includes safe, smooth, and efficient roadways, the City has substantially increased the level of service at Monterey Avenue and Interstate 10 by reconfiguring the Interstate on and off ramps to provide a more efficient traffic flow and accessibility to the Monterey Avenue commercial corridor.

A right turn lane from eastbound Highway 111 to Fred Waring Drive was also constructed improving access to local businesses.

One of the strategic plan action steps related to this priority calls for the further development of El Paseo and core commercial areas as tourist clusters that provide a range of businesses, amenities and activities that will reduce vehicle trips. This is consistent with the vision outlined in the General Plan update.

***Priority 2: Grow existing events and develop new events to enhance the desirability of Palm Desert as a year-round destination.***

Measures of Success:

- Adding annual year-round events on the established schedule
- Increase in sales and Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)
- Growth in attendance at existing events
- Solidified city funding and staffing resources

**Progress:**

This was identified by the City Council as its top strategic plan priority at the Council's March 24 Study Session. The strategic plan's strategy to accomplish this priority calls for the creation of a local committee to serve as a resource for establishing priorities, developing partnerships, identifying venues, researching desired events, and acquiring funding, etc. The City's Hotel & Signature Events Committee, has been working to address these and other issues.

Other action steps related to this priority that have been addressed include identifying and better utilizing existing venues/areas for potential events. The success of Swing N' Hops in February demonstrated that El Paseo in front of The Gardens is a viable event venue and staff is formulating plans to further develop this space for future events.

Staff is also researching design concepts that might allow a portion of San Pablo Avenue to be used for events. The upcoming Vision San Pablo demonstration project will be a good test of this site as an event venue.

Desert Willow Golf Resort has also implemented changes at its driving range and continues to investigate additional modifications to the space that would make it a desirable space for outdoor events.

Another action step under this priority calls for the development of one signature event each month from May to October.

First Weekend Palm Desert runs November through May and staff has been working hard to grow and enhance First Weekend's appeal by identifying and, in some cases, creating at least one signature event to each month's activities.

As a result of these efforts, two First Weekend events from 2015 have emerged as viable signature events with growth potential: STREET in November on The Deck of the parking structure at Westfield Palm Desert and Swing N' Hops, which was held on El Paseo in February. These and similar events could eventually spill over beyond the November to May timeframe as First Weekend grows.

Staff continues to work with Palm Springs Life to investigate whether the Food + Wine Festival Palm Desert should become a standalone event that would occur in the fall. Staff also continues to research ArtPrize and similar concepts for future consideration as shoulder season events.

The strategic plan also called for the identification of a permanent home for Fashion Week El Paseo that will allow for this signature event's future growth. A major accomplishment in 2015 was the identification of a permanent home for Fashion Week on the top deck of the parking structure at The Gardens on El Paseo. Feedback from Fashion Week attendees and surrounding merchants regarding the new site has been uniformly positive.

Staff was successful in bringing the first annual Palm Desert Half Marathon and 5K (formerly the Palm Springs Half Marathon) to the City. This first-time event drew under 1,000 attendees.

Staff has continued to book top notch bands for the spring and fall concerts in the park. Attendance at these events has grown substantially.

The City is exploring the feasibility of engaging an events consultant to evaluate the type of signature and other events have the best possibility of success in attracting visitors to Palm Desert and the optimal times for those events. The desirability of and need for hiring full-time events specialist on staff at a later date is also under consideration.

### ***Priority 3: Attract new and developing travel/tourism markets.***

Measures of Success:

- Increased sales tax and Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT).
- Increased City staff and budget.
- Completed Plan of Action.
- Community stakeholder participation and sponsorships.

**Progress:**

The following information describes Action Steps called for in the strategic plan under Priority 3 and how staff is implementing those steps to meet the goal of attracting and developing new travel/tourism markets:

**Action Step – Identify and establish partnerships with committees and organizations in order to implement identified priorities:**

- Staff is working with the Greater Palm Springs CVB’s newly hired Film, Arts and Entertainment Manager to identify opportunities to encourage film production in the City of Palm Desert.
- Staff is also working in concert with the GPSCVB’s Director of Communications to synchronize outreach to travel writers and bloggers who can help the City of Palm Desert reach new audiences.

**Action Step – Develop and utilize supporting marketing materials:**

- Staff continues to leverage social media outlets to support these marketing goals, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Pinterest accounts for the City of Palm Desert.
- Increase in FY 15/16 budget allows for the development of video, addition of public relations, and creation of a new ad campaign, all of which are currently in process.

**Action Step – Engage travel writers and bloggers that can reach the prioritized new and developing markets:**

- Working with H&L Partners, the City conducted a PR FAM Media Tour in February 2016, which included 10 professional travel journalists whose work is featured in an array of national print and digital outlets.
- Expanded funding in the FY 15/16 budget allows for ongoing PR efforts aimed at expanding the reach of City of Palm Desert marketing messages to engage new audiences.

***Priority 4: Support the City’s tourism industry through enhancement of its marketing efforts with an allocation of additional City resources, the development of partnerships, and coordination of existing efforts.***

Measures of Success:

- Increase in sales tax and Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT).
- Increase in activity with regional, state and national tourism partners.

- City's marketing budget is sustained or increases with market trend in order to support the goals.

**Progress:**

The following information describes Action Steps called for in the strategic plan under Priority 4 and how staff is implementing those steps.

**Action Step – Budget additional resources to fund the goals as outlined:**

- Council approved an additional \$200,000 in the FY 15/16 budget to support cooperative marketing efforts in the form of hotel incentives and promotional programs to increase summer business. These funds have been used to support the acquisition of the Biggest Loser Palm Desert program at the JW Marriott Desert Springs, an ongoing program that is estimated to have brought in \$118,800 TOT in 2015, from a \$40,000 investment.
- The funds have also been used to secure the National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce national meeting and the Jewish Learning Institute of New York, both of which are new weekday business in the slow summer season. These two programs are projected to generate \$38,000 in TOT, from a \$20,000 investment.

**Action Step – Strengthen relationships with the Greater Palm Springs Convention & Visitors Bureau (GPSCVB), state tourism, and other travel industry partners in order to develop complementary marketing programs:**

- Staff has participated in the GPSCVB's Destination Development Plan study sessions, part of the goal of which is to create a marketing framework which would allow the City's marketing program to complement and capitalize on the CVB's marketing program. Consideration of this has been taken into account in developing the creative brief for the City's new ad campaign.

**Action Step – Develop additional cooperative marketing programs for local businesses and districts:**

- Additional cooperative advertising funds were approved in the FY 2015/16 budget, which have allowed the City of Palm Desert to participate in the successful "Summer Chill" co-op program sponsored by the Greater Palm Springs CVB for television spots that ran on KTLA in our drive market. This program now offers year-round exposure in our drive market, having grown to include fall and winter campaigns. The City has expanded its participation as well, by bringing in more key organizations to better illustrate what the City

offers its guests. These organizations include the McCallum Theatre, The Living Desert, Desert Willow and the Palm Desert Aquatic Center.

**Action Step – Create a plan that leverages the success of the existing Palm Desert Visitor Center location and allows for innovative and flexible methods of information delivery to our visitors, including mobile outreach concepts:**

- The Visitor’s Center has been relocated to City Hall, and staff is currently researching innovative and flexible methods of information delivery to our visitors, including mobile outreach.

**Action Step – Develop programs that enhance public relations, social media, photo gallery, travel writer and blogger outreach efforts:**

- The FY 2015/16 Marketing Plan will incorporate many of these segments within its goals and objectives.
- Funds have been requested in the FY 2015/16 budget that would allow the Marketing Department to develop these programs.

**Action Step – Make an ongoing commitment to embracing and utilizing technological advancements to enhance the city’s tourism website and other marketing resources:**

- The City’s e-gov and tourism websites have been enhanced through upgrades. The new site is much more “mobile friendly,” which is increasingly important as about half of all those who visit the City’s website do so on a mobile device. Attention is being given to maximizing the mobile experience.
- The City has experienced tremendous growth in its social media following on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Pinterest. Staff continues to seek ways to effectively leverage these platforms to reach new audiences and further support the City’s overall marketing strategy.
- Continual efforts are being invested into exploring and analyzing the most efficient and impactful ways to incorporate technology based programming into the City’s marketing program.

# Transportation

The strategic plan envisions a community with safe, convenient, and efficient transportation options for residents and visitors.

Priorities are to create walkable neighborhoods in residential, retail, and open space areas to reduce the use of low occupancy vehicles, revitalize the Highway 111 corridor through land use and other improvements; and emphasize multiple modes of travel including carpooling, bus riding, cycling and walking.

***Priority 1: Create walkable neighborhoods and areas within Palm Desert that would include residential, retail, services and employment centers, and parks, recreation and open space to reduce the use of low occupancy vehicles.***

Measures of Success:

- Mixed use and transit-oriented development has appeared in identified areas.
- Land use changes have reduced vehicle trips and have made serving the redesigned neighborhoods/nodes with buses more effective and efficient.
- There is greater walking and bicycling throughout the City.
- A Highway 111 Business District has been established.

**Progress:**

**The strategic plan identifies a number of action steps related to this priority including the modification of zoning, land use maps, and the adjustment of City policies to encourage and facilitate mixed-use development.**

**The ongoing update of the City's General Plan will fulfill many of these steps and aid in accomplishing the overarching priority of creating walkable, mixed use areas within Palm Desert to reduce the use of low occupancy vehicles.**

**Sites on the Highway 111 corridor are already being evaluated for potential increases in density and intensity of use. The General Plan update and related changes to development standards are nearly completed.**

**In addition, the City constructed a traffic circle at the intersection of Avenue of the States, California Drive, and Michigan Drive, and installed additional safety lighting and crosswalks to improve traffic circulation and pedestrian safety.**

The Public Works Department's wheelchair ramp program is upgrading 48 wheelchair ramps per year throughout the community. These efforts, in conjunction with ongoing work to repair and maintain the community's sidewalks, help ensure that Palm Desert is a walkable community.

***Priority 2: Revitalize the Highway 111 corridor through land use and travel corridor evolution and visual improvement.***

Measures of Success:

- Land Use assemblage has occurred within and adjacent to mapped mixed-use development opportunity sites.
- Developer Incentive Program has been specifically designed to appeal to mixed-use developers.
- There is a TOD Bus Rapid Transit route along Highway 111 corridor with average one-mile station spacing.
- The establishment of the Highway 111 Corridor Business District, a self-funded business promotion group under the auspices of the Chamber of Commerce.

**Progress:**

City staff and consultants have been working with property owners, business owners, and interested members of the public to evaluate property use and transportation circulation on the Highway 111 Corridor as part of the General Plan Update. The Highway 111 Specific Plan addresses many of the goals outlined under this priority.

Multi-story mixed use development is key component of this plan and represents a major change for the City.

In addition, a concept has been developed that would reorganize circulation and parking on the frontage roads and incorporate bike lanes. This concept will undergo review, including public hearings, over the coming months as part of the General Plan adoption process.

Palm Desert has multiple attractive bus shelters on Highway 111 that include turnouts. The City has historically been a leader in providing excellent bus facilities with artistic attractive shelters that encourage ridership. Staff is investigating the possibility of working with SunLine to install additional shelters at some of the City's 29 unsheltered bus stops.

***Priority 3: De-emphasize single/low-occupancy vehicles and optimize multiple modes of travel (bus, carpool, golf cart, bicycle and pedestrian).***



Measures of Success:

- CV Link and other non-motorized routes of travel are found throughout the community.
- There is expanded passenger rail service serving city.
- A community transportation education program established.
- Mixed-use and TOD development areas have been identified and mapped.
- Private and public para-transit system and facilities have been expanded and coordinated.
- There is increased resident and visitor bus and para-transit ridership.
- There is train service with arrivals given alternative modes options.
- There are increased bike and pedestrian promenades throughout the community, especially at the commercial/residential interface.

**Progress:**

**On the east side of Portola Avenue between Fred Waring Drive and Desert Star Boulevard, Public Works staff relocated the street adjacent sidewalk providing a parkway buffer to encourage foot traffic and increase pedestrian safety.**

**Street crews conducted a City-wide sidewalk inspection and replaced or repaired several sidewalk areas to enhance pedestrian safety.**

**Curb ramps were also modified to meet grade requirements and add truncated domes to assist the visually impaired and provide a more walkable, pedestrian friendly environment.**

**As part of the General Plan update process, public meetings were held that identified several corridors in the City that could be developed as pedestrian and bicycle prioritized areas. San Pablo Avenue, between Magnesia Falls Drive and Highway 111, has been identified as one such corridor. This street, which connects El Paseo and Highway 111 and the Palm Desert Civic Center and College of the Desert, will provide the City with a location where the concept can be perfected and emulated throughout the community.**

**Planning is also underway for the Mid-Valley Bike Path, which will facilitate bicycle travel along Palm Desert's northerly boundary.**

**There is an ongoing regional effort to expand and enhance rail transportation within the Coachella Valley. A staff liaison needs to be identified to attend regional meetings in furtherance of this goal.**

**The City's Development Services staff is actively encouraging developers to build mixed use projects with synergistic land uses that facilitate forms of transportation other than single occupant vehicles. Examples include the Millennium project in north Palm Desert.**

For large events, such as the Coachella festival, the City is facilitating bus shuttle transportation through permits that allow additional shell stops in Palm Desert. One such stop opened for this year's festivals at Westfield Mall.

The City's BrightSide newsletter continues to provide an excellent public outreach forum to educate the community about Palm Desert's efforts in connection with this priority.