

SECTION 7.0 CITY OF PALM DESERT

7.1 City Profile

The City of Palm Desert (City) is located in the western Coachella Valley south of Interstate 10. It is bounded by Rancho Mirage to the west, Indian Wells to the southeast, the unincorporated community of Bermuda Dunes to the east, and unincorporated county lands to the north. The Santa Rosa Mountains lie to the south. The City encompasses 25 square miles and has a Sphere of Influence (SOI) that consists of 41.5 square miles (see *Figure 7.1, City of Palm Desert*). The City's northern SOI includes the community of Bermuda Dunes to the east and extends north of Interstate 10 to include Sun City and industrial and service-commercial uses west of Washington Street and north of Varner Road. The majority of the City's SOI is south of the city and includes Cahuilla Hills, Royal Carrizo and large areas of the Santa Rosa foothills and mountains. The Palm Desert General Plan Planning Area extends north to the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains and the boundary of Joshua Tree National Park. It is generally bounded on the west by Rio del Sol and on the east by Adams Street. This area encompasses an additional 68 acres, for a total Planning Area of approximately 134 square miles.

The City contracts with the County of Riverside for some services, including: police and fire protection, animal control, and health services. The City directly provides services for public improvements; art and community promotion; planning, zoning, building and engineering; housing and community development; code enforcement and inspections; and economic and business development. Palm Desert contracts with the Coachella Valley Recreation and Park District to provide recreation programs. The Palm Desert Redevelopment Agency has four project areas, encompassing approximately 68 percent of the city.

**Table 7.1
Palm Desert Profile**

General Information	
City Hall Address:	73-510 Fred Waring Drive Palm Desert, CA 92260 (760) 346-0611 www.cityofpalmdesert.org
Date of Incorporation:	November 26, 1973
Form of Government/Type of City:	Council-Manager/Charter
Area:	25 square miles
Population:	49,539 (Year 2006) / 63,402 (Year 2030) Average Annual Growth Rate = 1.3%
General Fund and Fire Fund Operating Budget (FY 2006-2007):	Revenues: \$56,387,000 Expenditures: \$56,598,013
GANN Appropriations Limitation / Percentage:	\$77,282,779 / 44%
General Plan Update	Adopted March 15, 2004

Services included in this MSR	
Law Enforcement:	Riverside County Sheriff , contract – 76 sworn officers
Fire Protection:	Riverside County Fire Department – 3 stations
Solid Waste/Recycling:	Burtec Industries, Inc. (franchise agreement)
Stormwater/Drainage:	Public Works, Riverside County Flood Control, Coachella Valley Water District
Roadways/Circulation:	Public Works
Recreation and Parks:	11 park sites, 1 municipal golf course
Library Services:	1 branch library, Riverside County Library System
Animal Control Services:	Contract with Riverside County
Code Enforcement:	Building and Safety Department – 6 staff

Water and Wastewater Services: The Coachella Valley Water District provides water and wastewater services within the city. These services are addressed in the *Coachella Valley Water and Wastewater Municipal Service Review* (2004).

7.2 Governance

The City of Palm Desert was incorporated in 1973 under the General Laws of the State of California. In November 1997, the voters approved a charter for the City. The City has a Council-Manager form of government consisting of five council members. The Council selects the Mayor from its own members for a one year term. Council members are elected at large for four-year terms, staggered every two years, with general municipal elections conducted in November of even-numbered years. The City Council is charged with governing according to the City's Charter, enacting City ordinances, establishing policies, representing the public, maintaining intergovernmental relations, and exercising general oversight over the affairs of City government, the Redevelopment Agency, Financing Authority, Housing Authority, and Parking Authority. The Council appoints the City Manager and City Clerk (see *Figure 7.2, City of Palm Desert Organization Chart*). Regular Meetings of the City Council are held on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month at 4:00 p.m. in the Civic Center Council Chamber. Council meeting agendas and minutes are available on the City's website (www.cityofpalmdesert.org).

The City Council has established a number of commissions and committees to serve in an advisory role for issues important to the City and its residents. These include: Architectural Review, Art in Public Places, Historic Preservation, Housing, Parks and Recreation, Library Promotion, Public Safety, Rent Review and Youth. Others which are focused on economic conditions or financial issues include: Audit, Investment and Finance; Marketing; Advisory Committee for Project Area No. 4; El Paseo Business Improvement District; and Entrada del Paseo.

Insert Figure 7.1 – City of Palm Desert

Figure 7.2, City of Palm Desert Organization Chart

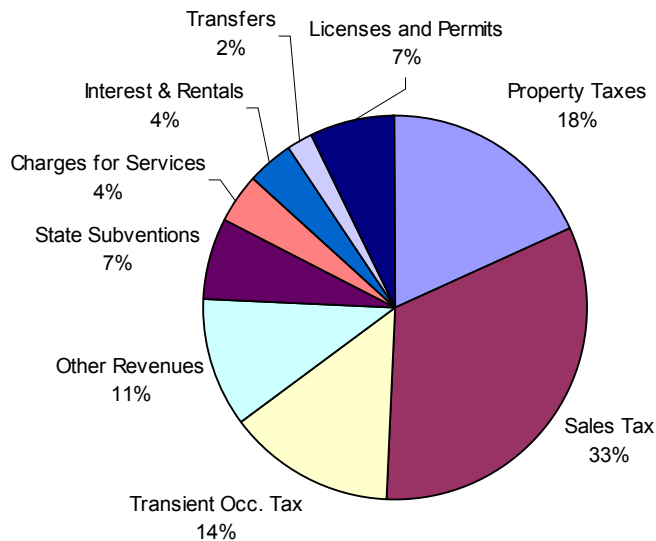


7.3 Financial Condition

The City of Palm Desert relies on three primary sources of revenue: 1) retail commercial; 2) tourist and resort development; and 3) educational institutions, including the College of the Desert, the California State University campus and the University of California Heckman School of Entrepreneurship. These institutions are expected to be a major source of employment in the future as well as provide sales tax revenue from increased daily population. Palm Desert is a no/low property tax city and therefore relies on sales tax, transient occupancy tax and a special fire tax to fund municipal services. In 1982 the voters approved Proposition A, imposing a special tax on real property to provide additional funding for fire services. The City’s transient occupancy tax is nine percent, the lowest within the study area.

The budgeted General Fund and Fire Fund revenues for FY 2007 are shown below in *Figure 7.3, City of Palm Desert General Fund Revenues, FY 2007 Budget*:

Figure 7.3 – City of Palm Desert General and Fire Fund Revenues, FY 2007 Budget



The City maintains a healthy financial condition, as shown in *Table 7.2, Palm Desert General Fund and Fire Fund Summary*. At FY 2005 the City had a General Fund balance of \$63.3 million with \$1.2 million in the Proposition A Fire Tax Special Revenue Fund.

Table 7.2
Palm Desert General Fund and Fire Fund Summary

General Fund and Fire Fund	2004-2005 (actual)	2005-2006 (projected)	2006-2007 (budgeted)
Revenues	\$45,260,000	\$49,193,192	\$56,837,000
Expenditures	\$39,679,581	\$49,133,794	\$56,598,013
TOTAL Surplus/(Deficit)	\$5,923,420	\$59,398	\$238,987

At FY 2005, the City had \$122.9 million in restricted reserves. Long-term liabilities totaled \$254 million, of which \$250 million are tax allocation bonds and obligations of the Redevelopment Agency and the Financing Authority. The City has no general obligation bond debt. The City has a five-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) that includes \$99.8 million in funding for FY 2007. Projects include \$71.5 million for streets and medians, \$480,000 for drainage, \$1.2 million for parks and recreation and \$25.5 million for housing projects. The City funds these improvements using a variety of sources, including a New Construction Tax, developer fees, Measure A revenues (a half-cent sales tax program for transportation improvements), and redevelopment funds.

The City budgets annually to provide funding assistance to non-profit agencies or groups that provide charitable, public benefit, public welfare or educational services to Palm Desert Residents. The Outside Agency Funding Committee makes recommendations on the grants. The FY 2007 budget includes \$947,000 for this purpose, a 20 percent increase from the prior year.

7.4 Projected Growth

Palm Desert is the second largest city of the six cities within the study area, and has the lowest projected growth rate. *Table 7.3, Projected Population Growth* compares the population growth in the City, in the western Coachella Valley incorporated areas¹, and in the Coachella Valley.

Table 7.3
Projected Population Growth

Area	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	Avg. Annual Growth Rate
Palm Desert	47,987	54,600	56,893	59,155	61,322	63,402	1.3%
Western Coachella Valley incorporated areas	186,707	211,028	237,540	263,684	288,742	312,772	2.7%
Unincorporated Coachella Vly	90,668	103,079	126,925	149,159	169,437	187,870	4.3%
Coachella Valley	419,338	470,827	540,105	607,149	670,378	730,001	3.0%

Source: SCAG 2004 Growth Forecast.

¹ Cathedral City, Desert Hot Springs, Indian Wells, Palm Desert, Palm Springs, Rancho Mirage

The California Department of Finance (DOF) estimates the City’s 2006 population to be 49,539, slightly higher than the SCAG estimate. In addition, the DOF estimates that the City had 33,142 housing units, with 2.149 persons per household. Palm Desert has an estimated 15,000 seasonal residents; approximately 30 percent of the dwelling units are second or vacation homes for part time residents.

Table 7.4, Land Use Acreage Summary, summarizes the land uses within the City per the Land Use Element of the City’s General Plan:

**Table 7.4
Land Use Acreage Summary**

Land Use Type	Developed Acres	Vacant Acres	%
Residential	8,722	1,078	57%
Commercial	1,222	517	10%
Industrial	231	293	3%
Public/Quasi- Public	636	16	4%
Open Space	2,572	0	15%
Roads	1,955	0	11%
Total	15,339	1,904	100%

The estimated permanent population at build-out ranges from 53,000 to 59,000. Lands north of the I-10 are subject to development constraints, including flooding and seismic conditions, a lack of infrastructure, and sensitive species habitat. This area contains the Coachella Valley Preserve. There are several hundred vacant acres between Varner Road and Avenue 38. Build-out in this northern SOI is expected to be at substantially lower overall densities with a smaller population. Development in the southern SOI area is limited to very low density residential on large lots with the vast majority of the area expected to remain undeveloped.

Note: On January 29, 2007, the Coachella Valley Association of Governments adopted updated population projections for the SCAG Regional Housing Needs Assessment. Those projections are included in Section 2.0, Regional Population and Growth.

7.5 Law Enforcement

Palm Desert contracts with the Riverside County Sheriff’s Department to provide law enforcement services within the city. The Palm Desert Sheriff’s Station is located at 73-520 Fred Waring Drive. This station also serves as the Sheriff’s Department base of operations for the contract cities of Rancho Mirage and Indian Wells, and the unincorporated area in the western half of the Coachella Valley. The also

operates two off-site Police Sub-Stations to provide easier access to police services to the residents on the east side of the city.

The City added six new deputies to its contract in FY 2006 due to growth in the northern sphere. Currently, there are 78 sworn officers serving Palm Desert, including 36 deputies dedicated to the Patrol Division and the balance assigned to the Traffic Division, Special Enforcement Teams, School Resource Officer, and Narcotics Enforcement. Current staffing provides the City with 1.5 officers per 1000 residents (based on the 2006 population of 49,539). Of the six cities in the study area, in 2005 Palm Desert ranked third in the property crime rate (56.7 incidents per 1,000 residents) and the violent crime rate (3.1 incidents per 1,000 residents).

The Department operates the T-400 Target Team as an adjunct to the Patrol Division. The team consists of one sergeant, three deputies, a dedicated gang suppression officer, and a dedicated community-oriented policing officer. The primary function of the Target Team is to provide enhanced patrol services to residents of the City of Palm Desert. The Target Team conducts the time-intensive follow-up investigations of burglaries, thefts, and various other localized crimes, in order to keep the patrol officers in the field and available for calls for service.

In 2005, the Palm Desert station received 17,846 emergency calls within the Palm Desert city limits. The average response time for the highest priority calls was 4.6 minutes.

7.6 Fire Services

The City of Palm Desert contracts with the Riverside County Fire Department for fire protection and emergency services. There are three stations within the city limits, two additional stations within the City's SOI, and two within the expanded General Plan Planning Area. The City has identified the need for a new station in the vicinity of Cook Street and I-10 to serve future growth in the northern portion of the City. Palm Desert has an ISO rating of 3. *Table 7.5, Palm Desert Fire Stations* provides a breakdown of staff and equipment available at the City's stations and those within its SOI.

**Table 7.5
Palm Desert Fire Stations**

Station	Location	Staffing/Equipment
Station 33 – Palm Desert	44400 Town Center Way	Type 1 engine – 3 staff 1 ALS Medic Unit 1 truck – 4 staff 1 reserve truck 1 Heavy Rescue Unit 1 Rescue ALS Medic Unit
Station 67 – Mesa View	73200 Mesa View Drive	Type 1 engine /ALS medic unit 3 per engine / 2 per ambulance
Station 71 - North Palm Desert	73995 Country Club Drive	Type 1 engine / ALS medic unit / Type 1 Reserve engine 3 per engine / 2 per ambulance
Station 81 – Sun City	37955 Washington Street	1 engine / 3 firefighters 1 HazMat Unit / 2 firefighters 1HazMat Support Unit / 3 firefighters

As noted above in *Section 7.3, Financial Condition*, a special fire tax is imposed on real property within Palm Desert to provide additional funding for fire services. The charge for residential property is \$48 per year; commercial property charges are based on square footage.

The fire department is staffed by 51 personnel with 15 volunteers, equating to approximately 1.3 fire fighters per 1,000 residents (based on the 2006 population of 49,539). The department’s target response time is 1 minute during the day and 2 minutes during the night. Their average response time is 2 minutes.

The firefighters and emergency medical technicians at the three Palm Desert stations responded to 941 fires, 5,090 medical emergencies, and 407 miscellaneous calls in 2005 for a total of 6,438.

7.7 Solid Waste

Palm Desert has a franchise agreement with Burrtec Industries to provide solid waste collection and disposal services. Commercial pick-up is offered up to six days per week, and residential pick-up is generally once per week. Burrtec offers additional services to large waste generators including restaurants, hotels, retailers, and resorts.

Burrtec uses a 3-Cart Automated Collection System, which provides customers with one bin for trash, one for recyclables, and one for green waste. Gated residential communities use their own trash bins and a manual collection system.

Trash collected in the City is hauled to the Edom Hill Transfer Station. The trash is then diverted to the Badlands Landfill in Moreno Valley or the Lamb Canyon Landfill, located between the Cities of

Beaumont and San Jacinto. The Badlands Landfill is permitted to accept 4,000 tons of waste per day and is scheduled to close in 2018. The Lamb Canyon Landfill is permitted to accept 3,000 tons of waste per day and is scheduled to close in 2023.

The City's recycling program has proven beneficial in the preservation of landfill space for non-recyclable materials, and the preservation of energy and other finite resources used in materials production. Recyclable materials such as glass, plastic, and newspaper are hauled to a third party recycler in Los Angeles. Green waste is recycled by BioMass in Thermal. The City also has a program to help residents dispose of their electronic waste (e-waste). Residents may bring their e-waste to the Household Waste facility on Saturdays at no charge. The City hosted its first Tire Amnesty event in December 2006, where residents could dispose of unwanted tires free of charge. The City's reported waste diversion rate under AB 939 was 63 percent for 2004, exceeding the 50 percent requirement established by the California Integrated Waste Management Board.

7.8 Stormwater Drainage

The Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) and the Riverside County Flood Control District are responsible for the management of regional drainage within and in the vicinity of Palm Desert, including rivers, major streams and their tributaries, and areas of significant sheet flooding. Both Districts are empowered with broad management functions, including flood control planning and construction of drainage improvements for regional flood control facilities, as well as watershed and watercourse protection related to those facilities. To carry out their mandates, the Districts also have powers of taxation, bonded indebtedness, land and water rights acquisition, and cooperative partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies. An elected Board acts as the official decision-making body of CVWD, while the Riverside County Board of Supervisors is the official decision-making body of that District. While CVWD and the County have the primary responsibility of regional flood control, the City is directly responsible for the management of local drainage. The preservation of lands constrained by topography or drainage, including steep slopes, areas rich in vegetation and cover, alluvial plains and drainage channels greatly reduces runoff and preserves the capacity of downstream facilities. The planned integration of on-site storm water detention facilities, where possible and appropriate, significantly reduces the needed size of downstream facilities, while creating opportunities for groundwater recharge, and enhanced open space and recreation areas.

The City has a Land Development and Capital Improvement Projects Division which provides project review and permitting for land development projects (subdivisions, commercial and single family homes) focusing on the areas of grading, roadway construction and drainage improvements. The division also includes the development, design and construction of the City's Capital Improvement Program. Projects such as new roadway construction and roadway widening, flood control and storm drain systems and major street rehabilitation are all included in the division activities. The division also monitors

compliance with federal regulatory requirements in the areas of water and air quality. The City has budgeted for \$480,000 in drainage capital improvement projects for FY 2007.

7.9 Roads and Circulation

The Palm Desert Traffic Division oversees the development, operation and maintenance of the City's transportation infrastructure. The division also oversees the design, installation and maintenance of traffic control devices, reviews and resolves of traffic related problems and prepares traffic-engineering studies. The City has budgeted for \$71.6 million in capital improvement projects for FY 2007. The CIP includes \$250,000 annually for the major street and sidewalks program and \$250,000 annually for the major street landscape program.

Public Transit. The provider of public transit service within the City and the Coachella Valley is the SunLine Transit Agency. SunLine carries nearly 4 million passengers per year in a service area of more than 360 square miles and provides five bus routes within the City.

7.10 Parks and Recreation

The City's Parks and Recreation Department oversees parks and recreation services within the City. The City has 205 acres of park land consisting of eleven parks with a variety of amenities and open natural land conservation areas. The City currently provides 4.1 acres of park land per 1,000 residents, with a General Plan goal of 5 acres per 1,000 residents. *Table 7.6* summarizes park facilities within the City:

Table 7.6
Palm Desert Park Facilities

Park Name	Acreage	Amenities
Civic Center Park	70	4 Baseball Fields with Concession/Restroom Building, 6 Tennis Courts, 4 Volleyball Courts, 3 Basketball Courts, 5 Picnic Pavilions, Amphitheater, Skate Park, Tot Lot, Dog Park, Public art displays
Palm Desert Soccer Park	21	5 Full Size Soccer Fields with Concession/Restroom Bldg, Picnic Pavilions, 3 Horseshoe Pits, 3 Shuffleboard Courts, 1 Basketball Court, Tot Lot
Ironwood Park	14.5	Picnic Pavilions, Tot Lot, Open Grass Area, Restroom
Cahuilla Hills Park	27.5	2 Tennis Courts, Picnic Area, Trails; The park serves as a trail head for the Cahuilla Hills Trails System.
Portola Park	2	Tot Lot, Picnic Area, Restroom, Baseball Field available after school and on weekends
Cook Street Sports Complex	10	3 Baseball Fields, Open Turf Area, Restroom/Concession Building (owned by School District)

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Park Name	Acreage	Amenities
Washington Charter School Park	2.5	Tot Lot, Open Turf Area available after school and on weekends (owned by School District)
Joe Mann Park	2.5	Basketball Court, Volleyball Court, Water Feature, Rose Garden, Dog Park, Picnic Pavilion, Tot Lot, Open Turf Area, Restroom
Cap Homme/Ralph Adams Park	27	Multi-use Trails, Picnic Areas; this site serves primarily as a trailhead for the Cahuilla Hills Trails System
Palma Village Neighborhood Park	2	Shaded Playground, Basketball Court, Sand Volleyball Court, Walking Paths, Covered Picnic Areas, Restrooms
Freedom Park	26	3 Ball Fields, Tennis Courts, Basketball Courts, Sand Volleyball Courts, Tot Lot, Trails, Picnic Shelters, Dog Park, Community Garden, Skate Features, 2 Multiuse Fields, Restroom/Concession Building
Total Acreage	205	

In addition to the parks shown above, the City owns and operates Desert Willows Golf Course, which has two 18-hole championship courses.

In the future the City plans to construct a regional park, to be located on the north side of Country Club Drive west of Washington Street. The 34 acre site would include facilities such as baseball fields, a multi-use field, tennis courts, basketball courts, volleyball courts, picnic areas, playground and other amenities. A portion of the site is owned by the Desert Sands Unified School District and includes the District's new Ronald Reagan Elementary School.

Palm Desert maintains a number open space hiking trails. The majority of trails are located in the outlying areas in the hills and mountains that surround the Valley. Open space areas within the City with hiking trails and facilities include the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains and the Living Desert.

In 1990 the Cities of Palm Desert, Indian Wells and Rancho Mirage entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to fund park and recreation facilities that serve the Cove Communities. The cost of recreation facilities are shared based upon a formula of population and assessed value. Through this MOU, the three cities contributed toward the construction of the sports complex located in the Palm Desert Civic Center Park; the facilities are available to Rancho Mirage, Palm Desert, and Indian Wells residents through the joint funding agreement. The City has also adopted the Quimby Act as part of its municipal code which requires new subdivisions to dedicate land or pay fees for parks and recreational purposes.

It is noted in the Parks and Recreation Element of the General Plan that the City needs to prepare a Master Parks and Recreation Plan that will fully assess the adequacy of existing facilities and evaluate the need for additional land and facilities.

Palm Desert contracts with the Coachella Valley Recreation and Park District to operate and schedule some of its facilities, including the Palm Desert Community Center and Civic Center Park. The District is proposing the formation of a new assessment district for the entire district. The City's Parks and Recreation Commission has expressed concerns over this issue; the Commission is also evaluating the benefit the District provides to Palm Desert residents. If these concerns cannot be resolved satisfactorily, the Commission may consider recommending that the City detach from the District.

7.11 Library Facilities

The Palm Desert Public Library, located at 73-300 Fred Waring Drive, is a branch of the Riverside County Library System. The library encompasses approximately 20,000 square feet of a 40,000 square foot facility, which is shared with the College of the Desert Library. Although their books and resources are physically separated, the two libraries have a reciprocity agreement and also share an online research database and checkout desk.

The Palm Desert Public Library contains approximately 75,000 volumes and is staffed by five full-time employees, 15 part-time employees, and approximately 35 volunteers. Hours of operation are Monday through Wednesday 10am-8pm, Thursday through Saturday 10am-5pm, and Sunday 1pm-5pm. A special events coordinator arranges musical events and guest speaker lectures and presentations. The library operates a youth story-time program and adult computer classes and supports the County-wide Literacy Program, which is managed from the Indio Public Library.

The City allocates General Fund revenues to pay for additional library services, which are above and beyond those provided under the County contract. Specifically, these funds cover expenses for three additional hours of operation on Thursdays, a volunteer program and coordinator, special events programs, and a special events coordinator.

7.12 Animal Control

The City contracts with the Riverside County Department of Animal Services for the control of dogs, cats and other domestic animals. Services that are provided include spaying and neutering of pets, sheltering of lost or abandoned pets at various shelters throughout the County, and nuisance issues such as animal care questions, dog licensing, barking dog problems, and loose dogs in public places.