

City of Palm Springs, CA

City Council Strategic Planning Report

Held March 7, 2025

The City of Palm Springs, California, held a City Council Strategic Planning session on March 7, 2025. The session was planned and facilitated by Raftelis. It was held at the Courtyard Marriott Palm Springs from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Participants

The following individuals participated in the session.

City Council	Staff
Mayor Ron deHarte, District 3	City Manager Scott Stiles
Mayor Pro Tem Naomi Soto, District 4	City Attorney Jeffrey Ballinger
Council Member Grace Elena Garner, District 1	Assistant City Manager Teresa Gallavan
Council Member Jeffrey Bernstein, District 2	Special Assistant to the City Manager Cindy Cairns
Council Member David H. Ready, District 5	

Facilitators: Jan Perkins and Julie Gieseke of Raftelis

Objectives

- Review roles and operating principles
- Update the Strategic Plan by establishing goals and enhanced areas of focus
- Strengthening the team

Agenda

- Call to order
- Discuss roles and operating principles
- Update the Strategic Plan, determine goals and enhanced areas of focus
- Wrap-Up

Key Outcomes of the Session

- Council affirmed the **overarching principles** of Sustainability and Social Equity, created **four broad goals** (Economic Development, Public Safety and Community Services, Infrastructure, Facilities, and Housing), and added a **foundation** to the goals of Financial and Organizational Well-Being.
- Council determined six items for **enhanced areas of focus** for the coming year:
 - Convention Center modernization and seamless connectivity to Downtown
 - Airport modernization
 - Enhanced efforts on deferred maintenance
 - Updating the Zoning Code
 - Economic development planning
 - Affordable housing
- Affirmed roles of the Council and the Code of Conduct

Call to Order

Mayor Ron deHarte called the meeting to order and noted the value of creating goals. City Manager Scott Stiles provided opening comments, acknowledging the new members of the Council and the opportunity to set a shared path forward. He noted that teamwork and clarity about goals and priorities will help him as he leads the organization in service to the community.

Discussion of Roles and Operating Principles

Drawing from the “Attributes of Exceptional Councils” article from the Institute for Local Government, the facilitator invited comments about governance and roles within the Council-Manager form of government. The following graphic illustrates the discussion.



The Council also discussed the City Council’s Code of Conduct. The core principles within the Code of Conduct are listed below:

Core Principles *Embedded in the Code of Conduct*

- Act with respect of the **Charter** and **Council/Manager** form of government.
- Treat others, City employees, residents, and business-people with **courtesy and respect** in a manner that reflects well on the City.
- Conduct themselves in a dignified and **professional** manner and **not disparage** their colleagues.
- Deal with the City's administrative services only **through the City Manager** or their designee.
- **Act collectively** as a Council through properly noticed public meetings.
- Use **City resources** only for authorized purposes.
- Keep **confidential** matters confidential.
- Serve the **best interests of all** of the City as a whole.

There was a discussion about how the Code of Conduct could be highlighted more. The following graphic captures suggestions that the Code of Conduct could be part of orienting the new Council, that it could be conveyed to the public, and that it could be applied to the City’s commissions.



Context for Goal Setting

As context for goal setting, the group participated in a visioning exercise to think about the future of Palm Springs, highlighting what they hope to be true about their community in the future. Two questions were posed:

- What is **true today** about Palm Springs that you hope will still be true in 10 years?
- What is **not true** today about Palm Springs that you hope will be true in 10 years?

A summary of the conversation is captured in the graphic that follows.



Updating the Strategic Plan

The City Council reviewed the City’s Strategic Plan and a proposed new framework for the Plan. The Council agreed that having a Strategic Plan keeps the Council and staff focused. There was also discussion about the importance of reporting progress, which the City Manager will be doing.

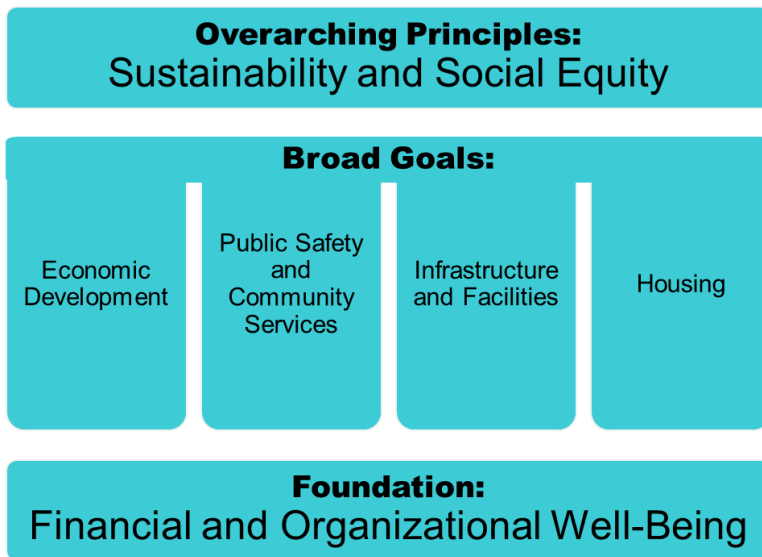
The new framework was intended to create a way for all City departments and services to connect to the Strategic Plan, as well as identify the key areas of focus by the Council.

Through discussion, the Council **retained the existing two overarching principles**. Four **new broad goals** that guide the organization in its decision-making and resource allocation were established, with a foundation underlying the goals. **Six key areas of focus were identified**.

This updated framework is reflected in the graphic to the right.



The graphics below illustrate the updated Strategic Plan elements.



Goals Defined:

Economic Development: Support a vibrant economy, including tourism, and new and existing businesses.

Public Safety and Community Services: Provide services that support a high quality of life.

Infrastructure and Facilities: Provide for quality, well-maintained infrastructure and facilities.

Housing: Support a range of housing opportunities to meet local needs.

Foundation Defined:

Financial and Organizational Well-Being: Advance fiscal sustainability and organizational resilience.

Bike Rack

A Bike Rack is a time management tool used to keep track of items to discuss at another time that may require additional follow-up or more robust conversation before decisions can be made. The following items were added to the Bike Rack during the retreat:

- Re-deliver Annual Report
- Boards and Commissions (direction, liaison, share Code of Conduct)

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

As the session came to a close, members of the Council expressed their appreciation for the opportunity to hear from each other and be in alignment on goals. The City Manager noted his follow-up on the goals provided, including tracking progress and metrics by goal and the enhanced areas of focus.