

VII. FINDINGS OF CONSISTENCY

Prior to adoption of the Specific Plan, a finding of consistency with the goals and policies set forth within Section 92.21.1.00 through 92.21.1.07 of the City's Zoning Ordinance, as well as the General Plan must be made.

1. The development provided in the Specific Plan is harmonious with, adapted to, and respectful of, the natural features with minimal disturbance of terrain and vegetation.

Findings: *As proposed, the Desert Palisades project will respect existing topography and natural features as much as possible. Site disturbance will be limited to the initial grading for street and infrastructure installation, trail demarcation, and subsequent individual lot development. Once the streets and infrastructure have been constructed, lots will remain natural and available for purchase. The lots range in size from 16,000 to 32,000 square feet. A maximum footprint of 6,000 square feet is permitted for home and accessory building construction for each lot, leaving the remaining portion of each lot undisturbed. The landscaping and architectural guidelines set forth in this Specific Plan were developed to address this specific requirement, among others listed herein.*

2. The development within the Specific Plan is properly located to protect sensitive wildlife habitat and plant species, and avoids interference with watercourses, arroyos, steep slopes, ridgelines, rock outcroppings and significant natural features.

Findings: *During the site planning process, the placement of lots and circulation on the project site was refined by performing extensive site reconnaissance, as well as consultation with the project's biologist and archaeologist related to any significant finds during their field surveys. According to the Biological Survey (Cornett, 2006) no sensitive wildlife or plant species currently exist on the project site.*

Existing vegetation will remain in its natural state and any landscaping introduced will be low intensity and native to the area, complementing existing conditions. The proposed lot lines for each residential lot are separated by common open space between lots that will remain undisturbed (approximately 54 acres). The use of GPS aided in the planning process by digitizing large rock outcroppings as well as sensitive cultural areas for avoidance in site plan and Tentative Map preparation (Historical/Archaeological Report by CRM Tech, 2006). Existing historic drainage courses have also been preserved in the project's design. Bridges or fair-weather crossings will be utilized in street design to traverse these channels.

3. The development provided in the Specific Plan will be constructed with respect to buildings, accessory structures, fences, walls, driveways, parking areas, roadways, utilities and all other features, with natural materials, or be screened with landscaping, or be otherwise treated so as to blend in with the natural environment.

Findings: *The architectural and site design guidelines presented in this Specific Plan (Section V) address each of these issues, including acceptable materials, screening requirements, and methods for the blending of building design with the natural environment.*

4. The development provided in the Specific Plan utilizes landscaping materials, including berms, boulders and plant materials which, insofar as possible, are indigenous and drought tolerant native species.

Findings: *All landscaping concepts and proposed perimeter berms/buffers described within this Specific Plan will utilize materials currently found on-site. Boulders removed during the initial grading phase will be relocated to perimeter areas to create a natural buffer for adjacent residents and traffic along Tram Way.*

The proposed plant palette is very limited and includes plants which are drought tolerant and normally found in undeveloped areas of the desert where they can survive without regular watering.

5. The grading of land within the Specific Plan will be terrain sensitive and excessive building padding and terracing is avoided to minimize the scarring effects of grading on the natural environment.

Findings: *As previously discussed, grading will be required to construct the site's roadways/infrastructure and install utilities. The preliminary grading plan submitted with the Specific Plan is limited to only these roadways. Once this initial phase of grading is completed, disturbed areas will be re-naturalized and lots will remain undisturbed until individual owners are ready to construct homes. The timing of these subsequent activities will be driven by market conditions and individual preferences. The architectural guidelines provided herein propose various home foundation systems intended to limit building padding and terracing. The incorporation of natural terrain and features is also encouraged in home construction. Each home builder will have a maximum footprint of 6,000 square feet of building area to work with, leaving the remaining property as a natural "yard".*

6. The Specific Plan preserves open space areas to the maximum extent permitted by the Ordinance and in accordance with the conservation plan, and adequate assurances are provided for the permanent preservation of such areas.

Findings: *According to the ESA-SP Zoning Ordinance, a minimum of 72% of the Planning Area is required to be left as undisturbed open space. The Desert Palisades project includes approximately 74% open space. This is based on the developable area of 100 acres. When accounting for the gross acreage of the project site (117 acres) the open space percentage is closer to 77%.*

Based on the requirements for dwelling size (6,000 square feet), approximately 15 acres of the site would be developed with homes if the maximum buildout of 110 homes is reached. There are approximately 11 acres of private streets and rights-of-way proposed within the project. As a result, approximately 26 acres of the Planning Area would be disturbed by development. Areas between lots, drainage courses, and the on-site trail system are included in the 54 acres of undisturbed land shown as lots “A” through “I” on Tentative Tract Map 35540. Assigning lots to areas reserved for preservation is in accordance with the provisions of the ESA-SP Ordinance. Prohibiting mass grading of lots, limiting overall lot coverage, and allowing for large separations between home sites is also part of the project’s broader goals to keep the site as natural and undisturbed as possible.

7. The Specific Plan provides the maximum retention of vistas and natural topographic features including mountainsides, ridgelines, hilltops, slopes, rock outcroppings, arroyos, ravines, and canyons.

Findings: *This document provides an existing view analysis from various vantage points which has been expanded on in the EIR through a visual simulation that will place homes on the landscape to analyze impacts. The preliminary analysis provided in this Specific Plan revealed that the site is not visible from adjacent residential uses and is below the existing elevation of Tram Way. Because existing topography will be preserved as much as possible with limited grading, and a specific color and material palette will be permitted for homes, scenic impacts should be minimal. The total project site (totaling 117 gross acres) also contains approximately 9 acres of hillside near the southern boundary, on which no development or disturbance of any kind is proposed.*

8. The development provided in the Specific Plan has been adequately designed to protect adjacent property with appropriate buffers to maximize the enjoyment of property within the Specific Plan and surrounding properties.

Findings: *The project provides a minimum separation of approximately 110 feet between the easternmost row of homes and the eastern boundary that separates Planning Area 4 from the adjacent Little Tuscany neighborhood. Similar buffers occur along the portion of the project that fronts Tram Way, and the northern boundary of the project. The Tram Way buffer along with the topographic variation that exists between Tram Way and the project site will obscure most of the development from motorists along this roadway. Relocated boulders and scattered plantings will also be incorporated into each buffer area in lieu of a block wall, creating a natural appearance while allowing for privacy and enjoyment of property between neighborhoods. The mountainous terrain adjacent to the southern boundary of the project prohibits any development from taking place.*

9. The development provided in the Specific Plan will not have a negative fiscal impact on the City or its citizens.

Findings: *a fiscal analysis was prepared for the project by Stanley R. Hoffman Associates (March, 2007), which presents the fiscal impact analysis for the City of Palm Springs's Desert Palisades Specific Plan. This report was updated in July, 2010. The fiscal impact analysis projects recurring revenues and costs to the City's General Fund. Fiscal impacts were projected in year 2007 constant dollars. According to the report, a recurring surplus of about \$593.5 thousand was projected after buildout based on recurring revenues of about \$775.9 thousand and recurring costs of \$182.4 thousand. The large projected surplus for the proposed Specific Plan is a result of the substantial projected property tax, retail sales tax generated by the residents of the project, payment into the Community Facilities District of \$500/lot/year and property tax in-lieu of vehicle license fees (VLF). Projected property taxes account for about 60 percent of projected recurring revenues, and are the result of the high-value, custom home residential development proposed. The updated report also shows a surplus to the city of \$7,195 before any lots are sold or any homes built. Refer to the actual reports for a more detailed discussion on how these conclusions were reached.*