



City of La Quinta

CITY / SA / HA / FA MEETING DATE: May 6, 2014

ITEM TITLE: DISCUSS OPTIONS FOR LANDSCAPE MAINTENANCE OF NORTH LA QUINTA PARKWAYS MAINTAINED BY LIGHTING AND LANDSCAPE DISTRICT 89-1

AGENDA CATEGORY:

BUSINESS SESSION:

CONSENT CALENDAR:

STUDY SESSION: 4

PUBLIC HEARING:

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Provide direction regarding parkway maintenance options.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- Last year, City Council directed staff to meet with property owners in 11 north La Quinta developments and solicit their feedback on a possible assessment to help pay for landscape maintenance surrounding their neighborhoods.
- Staff scheduled over 12 informational workshops with the property owners and conducted a mailed survey. Responses indicated a lack of support for an increased assessment to pay for improvements or a higher level of landscape maintenance.
- City Council asked staff to look at ways to improve the landscaping of north La Quinta parkways and entryways without an increase in assessments. The Council also requested that staff outline a strategy to deal with certain parkway ownership issues.
- A range of options for City Council consideration have been compiled that include very low maintenance/low water usage design; medium installation and maintenance cost design; and the City's standard design for parkway landscaping.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Three landscape options with varying installation, maintenance, and water usage are provided for City Council consideration in Attachment 1. The installation costs for parkway improvements range from \$1.35 million to \$8.75 million, with annual maintenance and utility costs ranging from \$30,000 to \$135,000.

The City can only afford to make these improvements over a number of years. Funding sources include pledging a portion of the \$35 million of former Redevelopment Agency loan proceeds the City will be repaid over the next 25 years, Art in Public Places funding, and/or Coachella Valley Water District grants (to convert high water use landscaping to desert scape or 100 percent hardscape).

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

When considering the Fiscal Year 2012/2013 operating budget, the City Council requested that staff identify means to increase revenues. Various proposals were subsequently presented including establishing assessment districts to fund additional median and parkway maintenance costs, and park maintenance costs. In Fiscal Year 2013/2014 the City will spend an estimated \$2.9 million to maintain parks, public landscaping and associated lighting; these costs are projected to increase by at least 7 percent to \$3.1 million in Fiscal Year 2014/2015. The City collects a combined \$1.1 million from the existing L&L District and storm water assessments leaving a deficit of approximately \$1.8 million for this year and an estimated \$2 million for next year. The General Fund is projected to underwrite an estimated \$1.4 million for park maintenance costs and nearly \$600,000 for landscape and lighting maintenance for Fiscal Year 2014/2015.

The L&L District was formed in 1989 under the Landscape and Lighting Act of 1972 to pay for operating, maintaining and servicing landscaping as well as lighting and associated facilities. Proposition 218 limits the City's ability to increase the current assessment of \$35.60 per parcel without a City-wide vote of the property owners and the need to vary assessments based upon which properties receive greater benefit.

On March 18, 2014, staff presented the results of an informal survey of 11 neighborhoods in north La Quinta (Attachment 2) which included: Acacia, Cactus Flower, Desert Pride, La Quinta del Oro, La Quinta Highlands, La Quinta Vistas, Marbella, Rancho Ocotillo, Sierra del Rey, Quintera, and Topaz. The survey was conducted to determine property owner interest in forming assessment districts to fund parkway and entryway capital improvement and maintenance costs. These neighborhoods were chosen because their parkway and entryway landscape maintenance costs are funded by the L&L District instead of a homeowner's association or maintenance organization. The results of the survey were conclusive – a majority of the homeowners were unwilling to pay these costs.

Parkway Fee Ownership versus Acceptance of Landscape Lots

Staff research regarding these subdivisions included identifying parkway ownership. As indicated in Attachment 3, most of the parkways are still owned by the original developers of these subdivisions with the landscape parkways and improvements offered but not accepted by the City. However, these development entities no longer exist.

Staff has explored two options to remedy this situation: acquiring these parkways or accepting the parkway dedications. If the City elected to acquire these parkways, the purchase cost and the subsequent liability may not justify this approach. The City would have to contact the former developers and possibly purchase the properties in order to

have a fee interest. If the property owners can not be reached, the City would have to conduct a quiet title action and acquire these properties through eminent domain. Once under ownership, if the City ever desired to abandon its rights, it would have to pay for appraisal and real estate transaction costs in order to sell the property.

A simpler process to gain the same rights involves accepting the offers of dedication that were made when the final maps were approved by the City. This would give the City the formal right to maintain and improve the lots. If directed by City Council, staff will prepare the necessary resolutions for the balance of these landscaped lots that have not been accepted by the City to date for approval at an upcoming meeting.

ALTERNATIVES:

Consider one or a combination of the landscape options presented in Attachment 1 (Scottsdale, Oasis or La Quinta Lush) or direct staff to prepare a request for proposals for landscape design services for the parkways and entryways in north La Quinta for City Council approval. Staff would then be able to provide more landscape alternatives than the ones presented.

Report prepared by: Timothy R. Jonasson, P.E., Public Works Director/City Engineer
Report approved for submission by: Frank J. Spevacek, City Manager

- Attachments:
1. L&L District Landscape Improvement Options
 2. Map of North La Quinta Neighborhoods
 3. Map of North La Quinta Parkway Ownership

Landscape and Lighting District 89-1 Landscape Improvement Options

Landscape Improvement Options for North La Quinta

There are 525,017 square feet of public parkways and entrance medians within the eleven north La Quinta neighborhoods being considered. Some of these areas require significant rehabilitation to meet the current City landscape and Coachella Valley Water District (CVWD) water conservation standards while others may be able to comply through minor modifications. Furthermore, conversion of turf (in some of the parkways) to desert scape may be subject to a reimbursement from CVWD, which would help offset some of the capital cost for these areas.

Three options with varying installation, maintenance, and water usage are described below:

Scottsdale – This landscape palette would have no irrigated plants but instead would have several colors of decomposed granite (DG), possibly in geometric patterns, accented by boulders similar to what is used for public landscaping in the Phoenix/Scottsdale area. The elimination of irrigated plants results in significant maintenance and utility cost savings. However, chemical stabilization would be necessary at least annually to prevent migration of the DG. **Installation cost estimate: \$1.35 million. Annual maintenance and utility cost estimate: \$30,000.**

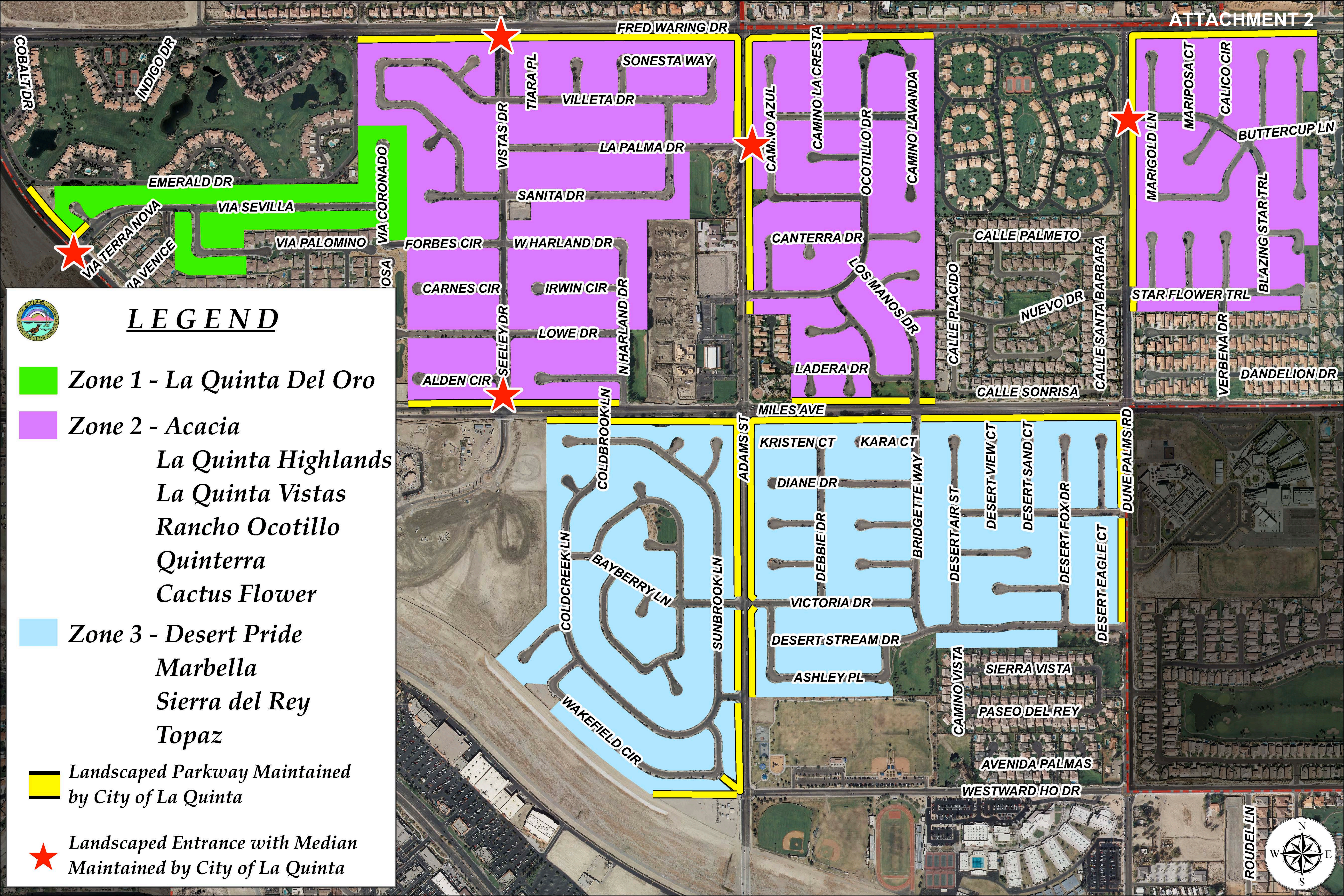


Oasis – This landscape palette features palm or other desert appropriate trees, or drought tolerant ornamental bushes like the Ocotillo, planted approximately every 50’ with multicolored DG, cobble and boulders between them. The existing irrigation system would be utilized wherever possible to save irrigation installation costs. Water usage would be lower since palm trees generally require less water over other plantings. Chemical stabilization would be necessary annually to prevent migration of the DG. **Installation cost estimate: \$1.93 million. Annual maintenance and utility cost estimate: \$40,000.**




La Quinta Lush – This landscape palette is featured in the City’s recent landscape projects on Jefferson Street parkways and the Fred Waring Drive Median projects. The landscaping includes a combination of palm and Palo Verde trees, drought tolerant plants, multi-colored DG, cobble river bottom areas and accent boulders. This landscape option requires higher maintenance and utility cost to support the additional landscaping. However, stabilization of the DG after installation is generally not necessary. **Installation cost estimate: \$8.75 million. Annual maintenance and utility cost estimate: \$135,000.**

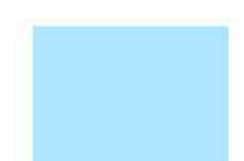




LEGEND

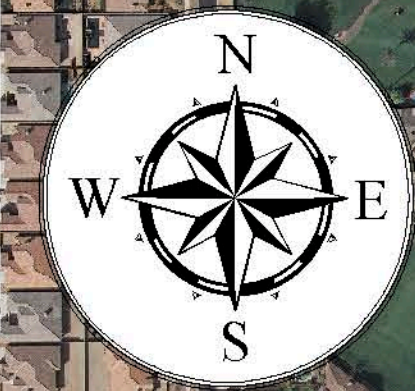
 Zone 1 - La Quinta Del Oro

 Zone 2 - Acacia
La Quinta Highlands
La Quinta Vistas
Rancho Ocotillo
Quinterra
Cactus Flower

 Zone 3 - Desert Pride
Marbella
Sierra del Rey
Topaz

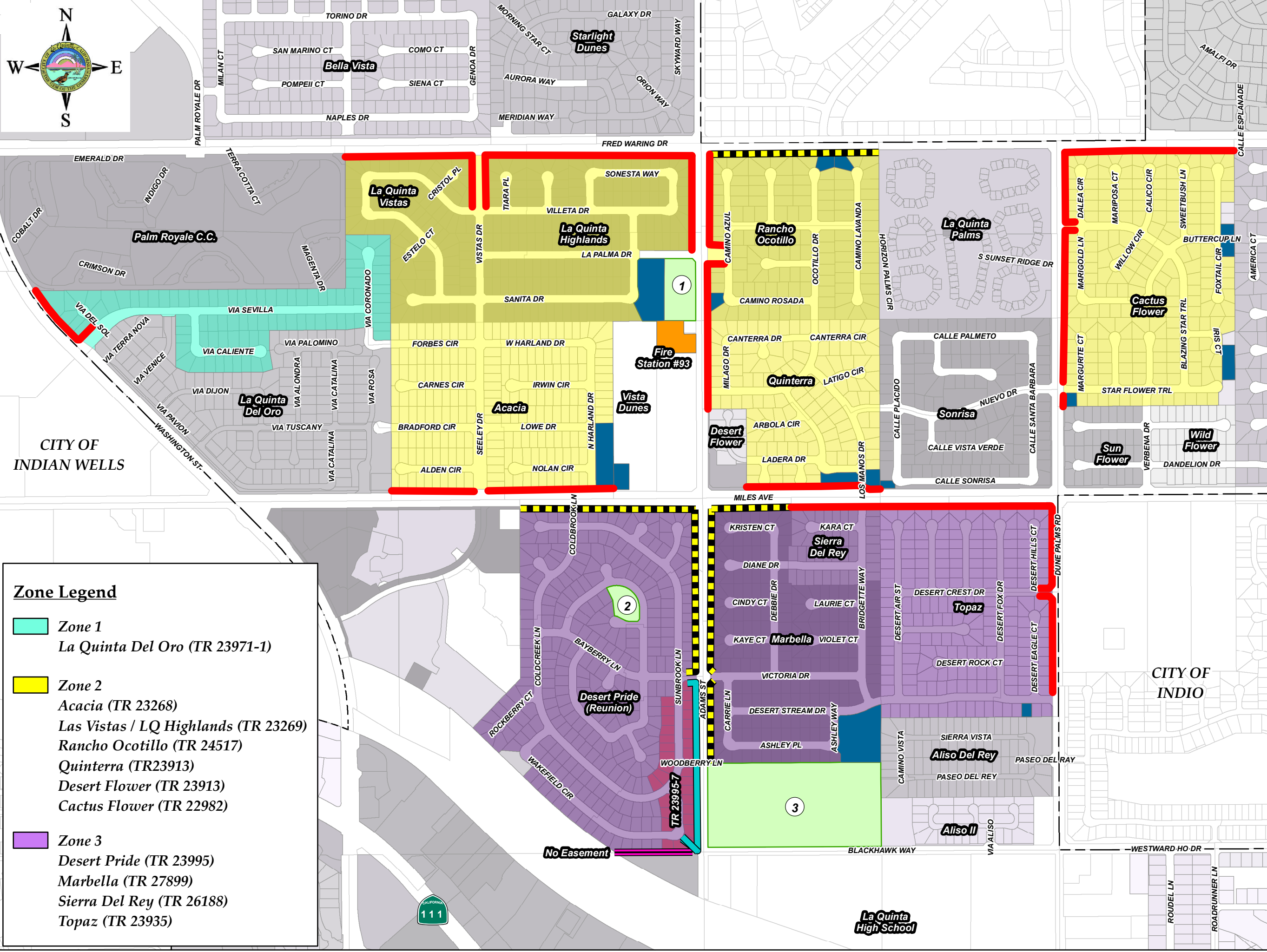
 Landscaped Parkway Maintained by City of La Quinta

 Landscaped Entrance with Median Maintained by City of La Quinta



City of La Quinta

North La Quinta Landscape Parkways



Zone Legend

- Zone 1**
La Quinta Del Oro (TR 23971-1)
- Zone 2**
Acacia (TR 23268)
Las Vistas / LQ Highlands (TR 23269)
Rancho Ocotillo (TR 24517)
Quinterra (TR23913)
Desert Flower (TR 23913)
Cactus Flower (TR 22982)
- Zone 3**
Desert Pride (TR 23995)
Marbella (TR 27899)
Sierra Del Rey (TR 26188)
Topaz (TR 23935)

Legend

- Developer Owned Not Accepted by City
- Developer Owned Accepted by City
- City Owned
- Homeowner Owned; No Easement
- Storm Retention Basin
- City Owned Facilities Maintained by LLD

City Owned Parks

NAME

- ① ADAMS PARK*
- ② DESERT PRIDE PARK
- ③ LA QUINTA PARK

* Does not include Retention Basin

Date: April 28, 2014
GIS data received from Riverside County Jan. 2014.

This map is for reference only.
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