

Council Recap - November 21, 2023

Council members approved the La Quinta Village 252-unit apartment community planned for a vacant 14-acre lot on the northeast corner of Washington Street and Avenue 50.

The development is planned to include 74 moderate-income affordable units and 178 market-rate units in two-story buildings. The project will also include site improvements such as landscaping, utility infrastructure, covered parking, clubhouse, pool, spa, barbecue areas, putting course, pickleball court and dog park.

Project developer Troutdale Village LLC will also pay a portion of the cost for Imperial Irrigation District to expand capacity at the nearby Marshal Substation.

Because the property is listed as an affordable housing site to accommodate 280 very low- and low-income units in the City's Housing Element, the project required a General Plan amendment. The developer was also required to identify alternative sites that can accommodate development of the very low- and low-income affordable housing units.

While Council approved the project, development is dependent upon approval of the amended Housing Element by the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). To get HCD's approval, alternative sites for development of 280 very low- and low-income units had to be identified and approved by Council.

On November 14, at the Council's request, the Planning Commission approved three properties recommended by staff and not currently part of the Housing Element inventory, including a 7.5-acre parcel on the southeast corner of Washington Street and Avenue 50 for which the property owner has submitted an application to develop 64 units for very low- and low-income affordable housing; a 5.2-acre City-owned parcel on the northeast corner of Highway 111 and Dune Palms Road for development of 180 very-low- and low-income units; and 6 acres of a 12.74-acre site on the northeast corner of Washington Street and Fred Waring Drive.

On Tuesday, staff introduced another alternative property on Darby Road, just east of Palm Royale Drive. The vacant 4.8-acre parcel is owned by an affordable housing developer with a density to allow up to 57 very low- and low-income units. The site is near shopping centers, schools and other apartment communities, and within 2,000 feet of the Washington/Fred Waring site.

Council chose the Darby Road property over the land on Fred Waring and Washington.

Additional highlights from Tuesday's City Council meeting:

- Council approved an amendment to the City's short-term vacation rentals (STVR) ordinance to exclude apartments from the program, in a 4-1 vote with Mayor Pro Tem Steve Sanchez opposed, saying apartments in the village commercial area were previously allowed STVR permits. Council delayed voting on whether to allow homeowners' associations (HOAs) to apply for an exemption from the ban in HOAs where STVRs are permitted under the Covenants, Conditions, and Restrictions (CC&Rs), asking staff to bring it back as a separate item. No new STVR permits have been issued in La Quinta, except in specially zoned areas, since August 4, 2020, when the City Council approved a moratorium and later turned it into a permanent ban.
- Council discussed expanding the Community Services Commission (CSC) from five to seven members and renaming it the Community Services and Arts Commission, adding two additional members with backgrounds in the arts. The CSC's focus is providing recommendations concerning the City's community service programs, recreational facilities, and public art acquisitions. Community members have expressed an interest in forming an Arts Commission. Rather than two separate commissions, staff requested Council to consider expanding the CSC and rename it the Community Services and Arts Commission. As a study session item, the Council took no action but voiced support for the name change and suggested adding one or two students to the commission. Staff will present the Council's suggestions to the CSC at its March meeting (CSC meets quarterly) for commissioners' input.

The La Quinta City Council meets twice monthly on the first and third Tuesday at 4 p.m. at City Hall. We invite the public to attend to stay in the know of all things LQ.

Mark your calendars for the December 5 Council meeting when the City hosts its annual Open House from 5 to 6 p.m. at City Hall.

If you can't make it to a meeting or missed a meeting, you can livestream or watch the video online at <https://laquinta.12milesout.com>.

Agenda packets with staff reports can be viewed on the City's website, www.laquintaca.gov, or received via email or text by signing up for Quail Mail.