

DOWNTOWN CATHEDRAL CITY, CALIFORNIA A COMPACT URBAN OASIS AMID SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S DESERT SPRAWL

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CONGRESS
FOR THE
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Cathedral City, located next to Palm Springs in the California desert, is redeveloping its blighted former downtown into a compact oasis in a traditional downtown urban form.

In the 1930s and 40s, Palm Canyon Drive developed as a two lane road connecting Palm Springs with the other cities and towns in the Coachella Valley. A small downtown developed in Cathedral City, the unincorporated town just east of Palm Springs. As later growth occurred, Palm Canyon Drive became State Highway 111 and was expanded to four or more lanes and the expansion brought the traveled portion of the highway too close to the adjacent development. This change began to cause a deterioration of the adjacent development, resulting in a lack of investment, excessive vacancies, marginal businesses, and finally blight.

In the early 1990s, Bruce Liedstrand, as Executive Director of the Downtown Project, brought in urban designer Michael Freedman to study the problem and assist in finding workable solutions. Liedstrand and Freedman worked together with a newly formed local citizen's group, the Downtown Task Force, to understand the causes of the blight and to develop a community vision for

downtown redevelopment. The Task Force Vision, which was approved by the City Council and enjoys broad community support, included a redesign and reconstruction of Palm Canyon Drive and the redevelopment of the blighted area into an entertainment use, with restaurants and a small amount of retail. The vision also included housing, both market rate and affordable, within walking distance of the downtown core.

Before a marketing



City of Cathedral City - Town Center Master Plan/Palm Canyon Drive Precise Plan and Palm Canyon Drive Streetscape Improvements
Bird's-eye perspective of Downtown Revitalization master plan concept with redesigned Palm Canyon Drive, new City Hall/Public
Safety Building, new Town Square, and envisioned mixed-use retail, entertainment, housing, and parking facilities.
(Urban design by Freedman Tung & Bofaniley, rendering by Mark Pechenik).

plan could be designed and implemented, the Community Vision attracted an Imax large format theater and retail/restaurant development. This, in turn, attracted multiple developers interested in developing a destination multiplex theater and substantial additional commercial development. After a public process, the city selected a master developer for the latter project and negotiated a development agreement.

The redeveloped downtown, which is now under construction, is expected to open in the fall of 1998 and will include:

1. A 68,000 SF Civic Center, including a City Hall and Police Station, presiding over a Town Square with a memorable Fountain
2. Redesign and reconstruction of Palm Canyon Drive, and interior streets
3. A 40,000 SF Imax Theater Complex, including:
 - * A 250 seat Imax large format theater
 - * A campus of the University of California, Riverside, including the Graduate School of Management and the Extension Service
 - * A Computer Graphics Training School
 - * Restaurants and retail
4. A 270,000 SF new Entertainment Center that will include:
 - * A 68,000 SF, 18-screen, multiplex theater with 3500 seats
 - * 35,000 SF of hotel/loft apartments
 - * 18,000 SF of offices
 - * 50,000 SF of restaurants
 - * Approximately 100,000 SF of retail
5. Housing, both market rate and affordable, will be developed within walking distance of the downtown core.

