



**STAFF REPORT**  
**12/13/2023**

**TO:** Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

**FROM:** Gabriel Perez, Development Services Department

**SUBJECT:** Authorize the City Manager to execute a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the American Planning Association California Executive Board for planning technical assistance from the Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT).

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**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommend that the City Council authorize the City Manager to execute a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the American Planning Association California Executive Board for planning technical assistance from the Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT).

**BACKGROUND:**

The City Council has discussed the need to improve aesthetics and target investments along the Cesar Chavez Street Corridor segment between 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue 54. The Cesar Chavez Street segment is on the city's busiest corridor and was previously named Harrison Street. The street was previously known as the U.S. Highway 99 as part of a major Highway through the Coachella Valley where needs of moving people driving vehicles was given significant attention over the needs of people that may not be in vehicles. Figure 1 identifies the appearance of Highway 99 in the 1940's as a two-lane Highway with business that served many of the passing vehicles such as the CV Trading Post that sold fuel and dates to passerbys and the Covalda Date Company which operated a health food and date gift shop.

Cesar Chavez Street no longer serves as a major highway as the California State Route 86 connects the Imperial and Coachella Valleys. The Cesar Chavez Street segment includes a mix of commercial in-fill lots, older commercial buildings, and newer strip mall commercial development. Cesar Chavez Street is a primary arterial road that has not been constructed to its full right-of-way. The City prepared a report in February 2011 with the support of a Cal Trans grant entitled "[Improving Neighborhood Connections Along Coachella's Harrison Street Corridor](#)" that developed a vision for the corridor that prioritize land use, safety and health and non-automobile transportation. The report resulted in a vision for the corridor that recommended new street design with opportunities for on-street parking, wider sidewalks, and safer pedestrian crossings. The report also resulted in very ambitious proposals including roundabouts at the intersections of Avenue 50 and Avenue 52 and redevelopment of older car-centric shopping centers into more

pedestrian scale centers. Many of the proposed pedestrian crossings in the study have been implemented to connect pedestrians in neighborhoods on both sides of the street.

The Harrison Street report recommendations have not been implemented in a comprehensive manner and at times have been ignored in the approval of new development projects and development of capital projects. The General Plan identifies this as Subarea 4 (Harrison Street Corridor) with a vision as a pedestrian-oriented mixed-use corridor with a diverse mix of retail, commercial and residential uses. The subarea polices include pursuing revitalization of the Corridor with a series of road improvements and requiring new development to follow the vision of the 2011 Harrison Street Corridor report. Staff believes it is time to revisit this report and develop a cohesive strategy for Corridor revitalization.

**Figure 1: 1940's Photo of Cesar Chavez Street from the Frasher Foto Postcard Collection**



U. S Hwy.  
99  
through  
the desert  
Wonderland  
of the  
Coachella  
Valley  
COACHELLA  
CALIFORNIA

F4329

**DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS:**

The Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT) is a joint venture by the California Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA) and Planner Emeritus Network (PEN). Using their vast networks, the organizations bring together experienced planners and allied professionals to work collaboratively with public agencies and community stakeholders to provide planning expertise and technical assistance. APA has offered to provide the City of Coachella planning technical assistance for a priority planning issue in the City. Staff communicated that the planning assistance would be best applied to reimagining/revitalization of the Cesar Chavez Street segment between 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Avenue 54. The CPAT would include two on-site meeting in 2024 to include three professional planners and a designer. Costs to the City for the CPAT effort would mainly cover lodging, meals, mileage and meeting supplies. The planning effort would result in a final report that would serve the City for additional planning or implementation efforts. Staff

believes there is tremendous value to this efforts as similar efforts have resulted in strategic efforts in the [City of La Quinta Highway 111 Corridor Study](#) for reimagining the Highway 111 Corridor through the ULI technical assistance panel. The CPAT would initiate in 2024 and will include City Council, Planning Commission and community engagement with anticipated completion by Summer 2024.

**Figure 2: Land Use vision for Cesar Chavez Street from 2011 Harrison Street Corridor Report**



**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The CPAT effort would require an appropriation in the amount of \$10,000, which mainly covers lodging, meals, mileage and meeting supplies for the CPAT. Pursuing this planning effort would position the City to obtain infrastructure grants and ensure future infrastructure investments result in maximum benefits for the Corridor.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

1. Authorize the City Manager to execute a Memorandum of Understanding with American Planning Association California Executive Board for planning technical assistance from the Community Planning Assistance Team (CPAT)
2. Continue this item and provide staff direction.
3. Decide not to pursue the CPAT and suggest alternatives.

**RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE(S):**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve Alternative #1

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Community Planning Assistance Program (CPAT) description