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# The Desert Sun

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PALM SPRINGS



Firefighters respond to a blaze that scorched dozens of palm trees at Prescott Preserve in Palm Springs on Feb. 1.

TAYA GRAY/THE DESERT SUN

## 100 palm trees scorched by Prescott Preserve fire

Tom Coulter Palm Springs Desert Sun | USA TODAY NETWORK

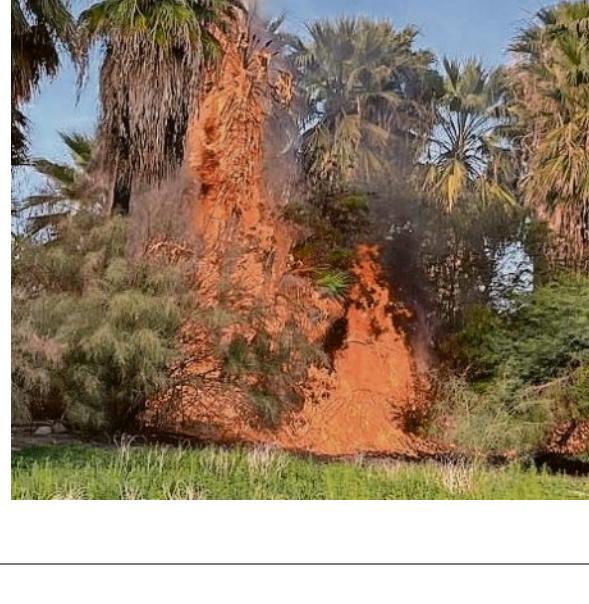
A 3.5-acre fire at the Prescott Preserve in Palm Springs burned roughly 100 palm trees and forced a partial road closure Sunday, Feb. 1. Fire crews contained the blaze within a couple hours. • Police and firefighters were still at the scene as shortly before 5 p.m., after the blaze was reported just after 2 p.m. The blaze was located in the preserve between Farrell Drive and Compadre Road, located south of Ramon Road, and portions of both of those roads remained closed at 5 p.m. Sunday.

Palm Springs Fire Battalion Chief Ryan Barrier told The Desert Sun that firefighters initially received a 911 call regarding a single bush on fire at the preserve. By the time the first engine arrived on scene, the blaze had spread to numerous palm trees, with no threat to nearby structures. The fire's forward progress was stopped by around 3:45 p.m., according to Barrier.

Palm Springs fire crews were expected to remain on scene Sunday evening to work on mopping up the area, Barrier said, while Cathedral City and Cal Fire units were being demobilized as of 4:30 p.m.

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**RIGHT:** A brush fire at Prescott Preserve spread to dozens of nearby palm trees on shortly after 2 p.m. on Feb. 1. Firefighters were able to stop the fire's progress within a couple hours of the blaze breaking out. PROVIDED BY ROBERT OLSON



## Stricter parking limits may come to downtown Palm Springs

**Sam Morgen**

Palm Springs Desert Sun  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Parking in downtown Palm Springs can feel like a gamble. Some days it's easy; other days a Village-Fest-sized crowd takes up all the spaces.

On Wednesday, Jan. 28, the Palm Springs City Council started the first steps at making the downtown parking experience smoother.

Going off data from a 2024 parking study funded by the hospitality advocacy group PS Resorts, the council initiated several measures that could eventually help both locals and visitors more easily shop and dine at their favorite downtown destinations.

"We are very lucky to have so much free parking. Can we just start there," Mayor Naomi Soto said during Wednesday's meeting. "You go to any other city, you're paying for parking every two seconds. If we really want to utilize a good parking experience, I think we need to easier for people to know where to park and what to expect."

Although it may be surprising to some longtime residents, the 2024 study, completed by the Dixon Resources Unlimited consulting firm, found that downtown Palm Springs typically had plenty of parking to go around.

The majority of off-street lots downtown experienced below 50% occupancy during observation periods in May, the study found. The study did not review parking during the peak tourist season, which runs roughly through April.

Despite there being lots of parking, the study says inconsistent signage and an unwelcoming atmosphere in parking garages has led to confusion over where people can park and for how long.

See PARKING, Page 2A



A study found Palm Springs has plenty of free downtown parking, but recommended some improvements.

TAYA GRAY/THE DESERT SUN

## CVUSD: Mold found at Desert Mirage, Toro Canyon school complex

**Jennifer Cortez**

Palm Springs Desert Sun

USA TODAY NETWORK

An independent inspection found mold in a few shared spaces used by Desert Mirage High School and neighboring Toro Canyon Middle School, according to an environmental report re-

leased by Coachella Valley Unified School District.

The inspected areas — including the front office, for example — are used by both of the Thermal schools, which otherwise operate separately.

The report comes on the heels of a press conference held by parents of children with disabilities at John Kelley

Elementary School and their attorney, who allege years of unsafe conditions tied to mold exposure. At that same press conference, Superintendent Frances Esparza said the district had plans to conduct mold inspections annually across all campuses.

The assessment that reports mold at Desert Mirage High and Toro Canyon

Middle was prepared by Safeguard EnviroGroup. It documents findings from an inspection conducted Jan. 22 of specific areas of the campus authorized for review.

Six areas were evaluated: the A-1 reception area, the library tech room, the

See MOLD, Page 5A

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