

Cathedral City, California

# A City of Peace



Inner peace for individuals

Peace on the streets for citizens and visitors

World peace for everyone



Cathedral City Peace Initiative

## Application to Become an International City of Peace

### **The Foundation**

We are the Cathedral City Peace Initiative. In March 2022 three people came together to discuss the possibility of seeking International City of Peace designation for their beloved Cathedral City, California, their home. Robert McKechnie, a retired educator, brought the threesome together. The others were Karen Riley, an artist, environmentalist, and educator, and Sue Townsley, a retired university administrator and local activist. The group gave itself a simple name, The Cathedral City Peace Initiative. At this point, we are working to add people to our committee and develop ideas that will bring our ideas into the light.

Locally we are thinking about three kinds of peace:

1. We want inner peace for individuals.
2. We want peace on the streets of Cathedral City for our residents, visitors, and people passing through.
3. We want world peace for all people, places, and things.

Our work is based on the United Nations goals:

1. No poverty
2. No hunger
3. Good health and well-being
4. Quality education
5. Gender equality
6. Clean water and sanitation
7. Affordable and clean energy

8. Decent work and economic growth
9. Industry, innovation and infrastructure
10. Reduced inequality
11. Sustainable cities and communities
12. Responsible consumption and production
13. Climate action
14. Life below water
15. Life on land
16. Peace and justice strong institutions
17. Partnerships to achieve the goal

We agreed to use four standards to guide our work.

1. We are not religious.
2. We are not political.
3. We do not argue or fight with anyone. We simply want to express our ideas, and we will listen respectfully to the ideas of others.
4. We understand the need for a military. At the same time, we think the military should re-frame its mission to focus on establishing and maintaining “permanent” peace. Our founders have interesting backgrounds.

## **The Founders**

### **Robert McKechnie**



Robert is a retired educator. First, he worked as an English teacher in a public school district with prosperous, accomplished, and comfortable families. Then he went on to serve in the administration for a large but not especially prestigious state university. After that he served as a school counselor in a troubled school district serving families living in poverty.

After his first retirement at age 68, Robert raised funds for a local animal shelter. That led him to an executive director position for a local senior center. He retired again at age 80. Again, retirement didn't work. A Rotarian with a local club, Robert heard about the Rotary E-Club of World Peace. He attended their World Peace Conference in January 2021. Based on a profound shift of consciousness experienced in the conference, Robert joined another activist to co-found

California for a World BEYOND War. That led to learning about the International Cities of Peace and a desire to do something for his beautiful hometown, Cathedral City, California.

### **Karen Riley**



Make a difference. Karen Riley believes that it is up to us to make the world a better place for people, animals, and the environment through creative solutions involving art and recycling.

Karen is the Executive Director and a founder of the S.C.R.A.P. Gallery (Student Creative Recycle Art Program), the environmental arts education program. Since 1997, the S.C.R.A.P. Gallery has been addressing two of today's most urgent issues – the environment and the education of youth throughout the Coachella Valley and beyond. The essence of the S.C.R.A.P. Gallery is captured in the Four R's – Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Responsibility. S.C.R.A.P. Gallery is an award-winning program recognized as an Outstanding Organization by the North American Association of Environmental Education.

Riley supports a variety of art and environmental endeavors throughout Southern California, serving on the boards of the Coachella Valley Art Center, East Valley Art Foundation, Artists For Refugee Children, and as a 5 Gyres Ambassador.

Riley received her Bachelor's Degree in Journalism from California State University Long Beach and her Master's Degree in Environmental Education from Fairfax University. She was selected to participate in the 2019 NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration) Planet Steward program, which supports educators in developing hands-on action-based projects for students. She is also the author of *Landfill Lunch Box*, *ArgollasPlasticas y OtrasCosas/Plastic Rings and Other Things*, *Don't Trash My Planet*, *The Eco Deck*, and *Recycle Road Trip*.

## Sue Townsley



Sue Townsley is a retired 30-year employee at a major research university, where she planned conferences and speakers' series for both graduate students and post-doctoral fellows. She is also a co-founder of the Friends of Jazz at UCLA where she coordinated jazz concerts and masterclasses with the likes of Quincy Jones and Tony Bennett. Guitarist Kenny Burrell was the Jazz Studies Program Director. Since retirement, Sue has continued to volunteer in the jazz community, and in 2021 she led the Coachella Valley to participate in International Jazz Day, a partnership between the Herbie Hancock Institute and UNESCO. She put the Coachella Valley on the United Nations jazz map! She is on various boards and was named 2020 Outstanding Fundraising Volunteer by the Association of Fundraising Professionals. Understanding the diversity within university systems and in the jazz world, and the necessity for everyone to show respect for each other, Sue is delighted to assist Cathedral City in becoming a City of Peace.

## The Initial Plan

### Vision

We envision a peaceful world where all conflicts are settled without violence of any kind and the ideas of all people are considered respectfully.

### Mission

We convince the residents of Cathedral City and others that peace is possible, necessary, and preferred within our city and beyond.

### Goals:

- **More people will meditate.** We will teach people to meditate and convince them that inner peace impacts all parts of life in positive ways.
- **More people will settle conflicts in non-violent ways.** We will work with our citizens to develop and use conflict resolution tactics and convince them that the non-violent settlement of conflict is possible and more effective.

- **More people will advocate use of the rule of law principles to bring about non-violent settlement of conflict between and within nation states.** We will promote these ideas in our outreach and educational activities in the city and beyond.

### Activities

- We have already started a weekly meditation designed to convince people of its value, train people in simple meditation techniques, and disciplined practice.
- We will regularly conduct two repeating workshops, one involving non-violence conflict resolution and the other, the theory of peaceful conflict resolution between and within nation states.
- We will erect a billboard in our local area that will say the following: NO WAR.
- We will establish and maintain ourselves as a presence in local events as a way of promoting the ideas.
- We will establish and maintain a speaker's bureau for community groups throughout the Coachella Valley.

We are about to set up a Program Committee that will develop ideas for new activities and invite others to volunteer in the interest of peace.

### Evaluation

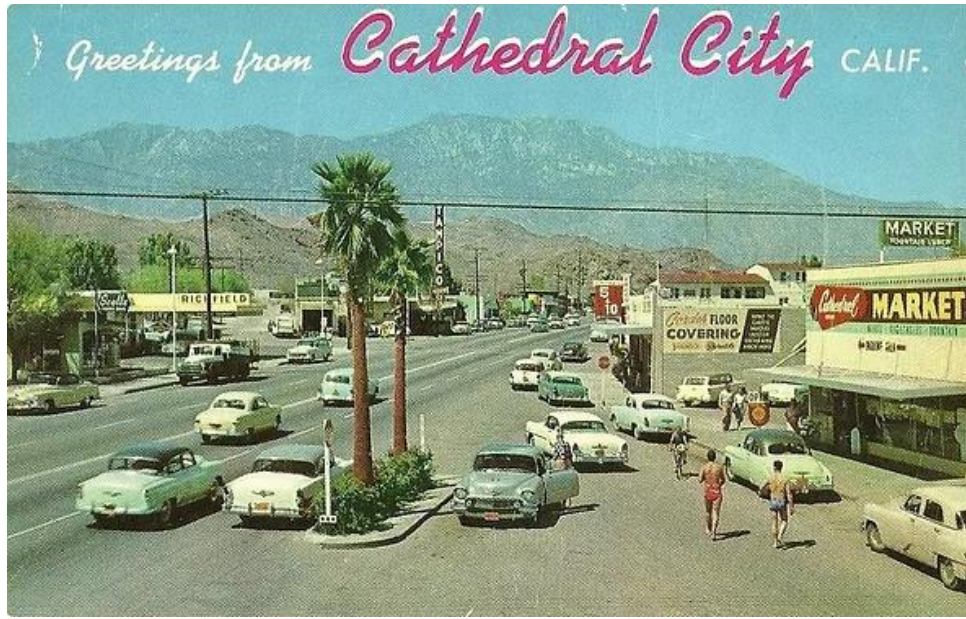
1. By the end of 2022 more than 50 people (unduplicated) will have attended our weekly class in meditation techniques. We intend to conduct a survey designed to assess the efficacy of the meditation and reveal attitudes toward the value of meditation.
2. By the end of 2022 more than 50 people (unduplicated) will have attended our workshop on non-violent conflict resolution. We intend to conduct a survey designed to assess the understanding of the material and the intention to use these techniques.
3. By the end of 2022 more than 50 people (unduplicated) will have attended our workshop on peace theory. We intend to conduct a survey designed to assess the understanding of the material and the intention to share the ideas with others.

We are ready for a better earth, a more peaceful place, harmony, a world that can be sustained. We feel the responsibility for bringing this about. We can do it, and we will succeed. At the same time, we realize that this is a tall order. Help from others will be necessary. next few pages, you will understand our starting place and see how we can move forward with the assurance that we will bring Cathedral City into the light. Thank you for this opportunity.



## The History of Cathedral City

*Entrance to Cathedral City, 1940*



*Cathedral City 1950, Courtesy of the Cathedral City Historical Society*



*Cathedral City 1940, Courtesy of the Cathedral City Historical Society*



*Fountain of Life, 2022*

*Photo Courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*

The Village, as it was called, was established by four men: George Allen, Jack Grove, Glenn Plumley, and M.V. Van Fleet all with broad vision. The original tract map was filed on August 25, 1925 in Riverside; acres sold for \$5.00 to \$25.00. Both the Cathedral City Water Co. and the Cathedral City Development Co. were incorporated in the Village and the population grew. The Palm Springs settlement, to the west of Cathedral City, began in 1884 and became a destination for vacationers, second-home owners, and the Hollywood crowd by the 1930s. Rancho Mirage to the east became a destination for wealthy individuals who built country clubs for their friends and colleagues and is known as the Playground of Presidents. Cathedral City became a destination for artists (e.g., Agnes Pelton and Billie Seaman), writers (e.g., Willard Price and James Kyle) and a variety of independent thinkers.

Palm Springs was incorporated in 1938 and created exacting standards; Cathedral City was unincorporated until 1981 and housed a few brothels, speakeasys, and gay bars which were also destination places. The workforce for these businesses and the surrounding areas settled in Cathedral City. As of this writing, Cathedral City is still a working person's village, and



everyone is welcome. It has a large Hispanic population as well as LGBTQ. Artists, writers, and entrepreneurs still choose to live and work in our City and our Mayor and City Council embrace the diversity. The city hosts events such as a Tejano Festival, Taste of Jalisco (our sister-city), LGBT Weekend, and Jazz Festivals. It acknowledges artists from the past by posting recognition Street Blades over street signs where they lived/worked. It also supports our local Boys and Girls Club as well as our Senior Center, both of which have taken great strides to accommodate Spanish speakers.

The city is very inclusive and as housing becomes available, new residents choose this city's approach to management, as it has in its administration a liaison to the LGBT community and a mayor who was born in Mexico. After the 2020 census, our Congressional district was redefined and Cathedral City (one of Coachella Valley's cities in the west, between Palm Springs and Rancho Mirage) was positioned with the cities in the east that have specific needs for low-income and an immigrant population.

Police Chief George Crum has taken our city to new heights by taking a hard look at the department and taking affirmative steps to make change. Chief Crum banned the use of force called the carotid choke and continues to engage in discussions and workshops to address inequality and ensures that the Cathedral City Police Department reflects the values of the community.



*Cathedral City Library, 2022*  
*Photo Courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*



*Ocotillo Park, 2020*

*Photo Courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*



*Dennis Keat Soccer Park*

*Photo Courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*





*Panorama Park, 2020*  
*Photo Courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*





*Boys & Girls Club of Cathedral City  
Photo Courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*



*Cathedral City Senior Center  
Photo courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*

## **Today's Facts**

The 2022 population of Cathedral City is 55,649,

Recent population growth:

- 2015 – 53,826
- 2000 – 42,966

- 1990 – 20,584

The median age is 39.4 years.

The poverty rate is 20.1%.

The employed citizens number 23,119.

The median property value is \$279,500.

#### Breakdown by race

- Hispanic – 59.9%
- White –29.6%
- Asian – 6.1%
- Black – 1.5%
- Two or more races -- .4%
- American Indian -- .3%
- Hawaiian and Pacific Islander -- .2%

#### Education –

- Less than 9<sup>th</sup> grade – 11.98%
- 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> grade – 11.98%
- High school graduate – 28.35%
- Some college – 21.22%
- Associate degree – 7.05%
- Bachelor's degree – 13.94%
- Graduate degree – 7.71%

#### Income levels

- The Cathedral City median household income was \$46,521 in 2019
- The Cathedral City median per-capita income is \$26,788.
- The unemployment rate in Cathedral City is 6.9%

## Cathedral City's Present



*Agua Caliente Casino, 2022/ Photo courtesy of the City of Cathedral City.*



*Coachella Valley Repertory Theater, 2020  
Photo Courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*





*Taste of Jalisco, Cathedral City Amphitheater, 2022*  
*Photo Courtesy of Courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*

In recent years Cathedral City and other municipalities around the nation stalled many of the projects planned as improvements to civic life.

Probably Cathedral City's most iconic feature is Big League Dreams, a sports park at the corner of Date Palm Drive and Dave Kelley Drive, that opened its doors in 1999. Three baseball diamonds attract sports enthusiasts from around the Southwest. Making it all the more interesting is the fact that the parks are replicas of three famous historical facilities, Rigley Field, Fenway Park, and Yankee Stadium. The facility includes a 20,000 square foot pavilion, a children's play area, stadium seating, and restaurants.

Construction started in 2019 on an outdoor the Cathedral City Community Amphitheater after many years of planning and efforts to put together the financing. Completed in the summer of 2020, the facility could not be used at first because of the Covid. Recently the amphitheater opened as an addition to the Downtown Arts and Entertainment District and Commons Area, which includes government offices, the police department, a cinema and repertory theater, restaurants, and recreational amenities such as the beautiful Fountain of Life.





*Cathedral City Amphitheater, 2022*

*Photo Courtesy of the City of Cathedral City*

The new \$8.2 million fire station completed in 2021 added significantly to Cathedral City Fire Department's capacity to meet the public safety needs of a growing population. Located at the northeast corner of Date Palm Drive and Buddy Rogers Avenue, it doubled the size of the older fire station with space for dorms, office, kitchen, and fitness center.

Across the street the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians opened a new 30,000 square foot casino in 2020, adding considerably to the entertainment picture in Cathedral City. The facility includes 5,000 square feet of restaurant space, an outdoor venue for events and plenty of parking that assures easy approach.

Construction will begin on several new home communities around the city:

- Building will resume on 319 residences in the Verano project that has been sitting vacant since 2005.
- Another residential project left partially completed in the market crash of 2008 will begin again with 146 new homes.

- Rio del Sol, another new home community left stalled in 2008, will begin again with 146 homes.

We all know that the former Sam's Club big box store sat vacant for 16 years before Amazon came in to refurbish it to become a commercial hub center for the Coachella Valley. That brought 152 jobs with benefits of all kinds, including 100% tuition reimbursement. This is a major development in the for the economics of the city and surrounding areas.

A 13.5 acre within the Downtown Arts and Entertainment District will see significant commercial and residential development in the coming years. Longer term commercial and industrial development is planned for the area north of the city. This will include both open space and residential development.

One of the most exciting plans involves the building of a satellite campus for College of the Desert. This facility will focus on helping at-risk youth gain skills to work in the automotive industry. This has been in the planning for years as an extension of the Cathedral City Auto Mall.

Both the Cathedral City Fire and Police Departments are working with other civic leaders on the homeless problem plaguing the city. At the same time, the Cathedral City Senior Center has developed a food bank program aimed at assisting people struggling with food insecurity.

## **The Ask**

The Cathedral City Peace Initiative Committee asks that Cathedral City, California be designated as one of more than 350 International Cities of Peace throughout the world. You can be sure that we will dedicate ourselves to bringing peace to our individual citizens, our city streets, and our world. We are both committed and ready.

Our call for peace includes a formula for abolishing war. Culture must change. When it comes to conflict between and within nation states, the outcome looks something like this:

- Outlaw war. Conflict between and within nation states is subject to the rule of law. Aggression and the use of military force is outlawed. Leaders of warring nations identified as aggressors are investigated, charged, tried, and, punished if convicted.
- Outlaw profiting from war. The war industry is removed from the for-profit sector and placed in the non-profit sector. No one profits from the creation of military hardware of any kind.
- Respect other nations. Nations stop meddling in the affairs of other nations. Again, the rule of law is applied – investigation, charges, trial, and punishment if convicted.

- Establish and maintain human rights for all people. All nations actively promote the expansion of human rights for all people (not just their own citizens).

A review of world history clearly shows that war does not resolve conflict. War does not create peace. The only true peace is permanent peace. War starts, becomes intolerable, then stops without true resolution of conflict, then starts again.

We intend to convince other citizens of our city and beyond that it will be possible to end the institution of war. Most people disagree at this point. We will ask them to consider the following:

- In 1800 most people in the United States thought the institution of slavery was necessary to have a thriving and healthy economy. They were wrong. By 1900 slavery was outlawed throughout the world. Slavery didn't end, but it was and has remained greatly reduced.
- In 1840 most people in the United States thought women would never vote. They were wrong. Women started to vote in all states in 1920.
- In 1900 most people in the United States thought a bridge would never be built to cross the Golden Gate just north of San Francisco. They were wrong. Construction on that beautiful bridge was started in 1933, and it was completed within budget and on time in four years. Cars started gliding over the bridge in 1937. Within two weeks after the opening people were taking the bridge for granted.
- In 1940 most people in the United States thought a vaccine would never be developed to protect people from polio. They were wrong. The vaccine started to be administered in 1955, and for the most part, that dreaded disease was wiped out in developed nations within a few years.

We also suggest the use of the rule of law resolves or at least reduces violence of many conflicts in human experience. Unfortunately, the rule of law is not used in conflicts between and within nation states. We promote the idea that violence must be unacceptable. The rule of law must be applied to reduce or stop conflict in all instances. If the leader of a nation authorizes violence in case of conflict within a nation, several things must take place. First, appropriate authorities would investigate, appropriate authorities would bring charges, a trial would be conducted, and, if found guilty, that leader would be punished according to the law.

We admit to working on something that will never be accomplished in our lifetimes. Some people criticize us for that. The thinking behind our work could even be labeled grandiose. We respond with the reminder that we care deeply about our grandchildren and great-grandchildren, even the ones who have yet to be born. Keep in mind that the most famous suffragettes never saw women vote. They were women and men of great vision and faith. They were brilliant, brave, and strong. They thought in nuanced ways. We use the suffragettes for inspiration.

Most citizens seem to maintain that reducing military preparedness would make our nation insecure. We disagree. We're already insecure. We have spent billions, even trillions, on military preparedness in recent years, and some analysts today maintain that we're more insecure than ever. Consider the Russia-Ukraine situation, and the apparent instability of the Russian leadership. Anything could happen. Some analysts say that even a small nuclear war would end life on earth.

We want to point out that the only peace is a permanent peace. At the same time, we maintain that a military solution never leads to a permanent solution. Military-minded leaders and citizens simply conduct devastating wars, establish temporary peace, re-draw the lines, and then go in the direction of more violence and war. History proves this. All this militarism costs staggering amounts of money while only helping a small number of rich people to acquire more wealth while killing, torturing, and maiming others. Security illudes us. Critics will say that our statements are hyperbole. Unfortunately for these critics, the facts cannot be denied. It makes no sense to go on this way.

You can be sure that we will use our designation as an International City of Peace to approach our fellow citizens with our revolutionary ideas. Peace is possible. Inner peace for individuals helps everyone. Peace on our city streets makes civil society possible. World peace makes life worth living. We insist that human survival depends on our success. We're certain that minds and hearts can and will be changed. We will change them.