

Safety and Security Update: June 26, 2025

Dear Escena Residents:

As Board liaison to the Escena Safety and Security Committee I post a monthly update on its work. Here are the main items the Committee looked at since the last update. Feel free to jump to the item of most importance to you.

1. **Vesta:**

During the past month it appears Richmond American Homes did a better job securing the exits at Vesta that led to Escena. When last checked, the “back gate” that leads to Cathedral City from the southernmost lot was still broken, but the security guard they hired was observed on site.

2. **Access Issues**

a. Cellgate

This month several Committee members took a road trip to, and spent hours at, Silver Sands HOA in Palm Desert, because it uses an access system known as “Cellgate.” <https://cell-gate.com> Members also met with Big Sky Gate Keeper, the contractor who repairs The Escena gates and who installed this same system in other communities in the Valley.

Cellgate uses a kiosk with a touch screen, which includes an index of residents. In many ways it’s a modern version of Escena’s antiquated DoorKing system (the black callbox you observe coming into our community). Among other things, it permits a resident to send a one-time QR code to a visitor who can use the code to enter the community.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/QR_code

One Cellgate kiosk costs \$13,000+ to install and the company charges \$1.75 per household per month for its use, plus a monthly charge for the kiosk. (All costs preliminary as tariffs, among other things, affect these products.) Big Sky states Cellgate if reasonable, but only if we can install it at multiple gates.

b. Lane Changes

If the community were to use Cellgate (or similar products) lane changes at Escena Way would likely occur. The residents’ entrance lane would have to be next to the Escena Way gatehouse and the Cellgate kiosk for visitors would be on the outside, because larger vehicles cannot fit under the gatehouse roof.

c. DoorKing replacement

We inquired whether Escena should purchase a new version of DoorKing rather than Cellgate. Big Sky did not recommend this because: a) the DoorKing system runs on ABDI software, b) ABDI has been sold; c) many long-time ABDI employees left the company after the sale; and d) obtaining technical assistance from DoorKing is now very difficult and untimely.

d. Current DoorKing/Callbox functionality

The Infrastructure Committee is working with DRM and Big Sky to refurbish the current DoorKing (callbox) system. (A more complete report on this system can be found in the May 2025 update and will not be repeated here.)

As noted last month some residents report difficulties with the system. Others do not. Big Sky states residents in some communities have a filter set on their cellphone to only permit calls from known contacts. When that happens, your phone will not receive a telephone call from the callbox unless the gate telephone numbers are added to your telephone's "contacts" list. If you have problems, you could see if adding these numbers to your contacts would help:

Escena Way Kiosk Phone: 1-442-300-7840

Artisan Way Kiosk Phone: 1-442-300-5685

Clubhouse Kiosk Phone: 1-442-324-5467

Vermillion Kiosk Phone: 1-442-464-9390

e. Gate ownership

Our community owns only the Escena Way entrance while the declarant/developer, SunCal, owns the other three. Nonetheless, the Committee is exploring solutions for all four gates and will ask the Board to negotiate with SunCal about the other three. At present, however, we cannot improve the other three gates without permission.

f. Board decision:

This month the Board was briefed on Committee progress. The Board needs to determine how to improve the access system. It must also consider cost.

3. Contractor Traffic

Residents reported several contractors were not using the Artisan traffic roundabout properly, almost causing an accident. (Rather than go around the circle to the right they took a shortcut to the left.) A resident obtained a photo of one truck that had performed this maneuver and DRM was instructed to contact them.

Upon following up on this issue with Toll Brothers, we learned that some of the large flatbed trucks used by Toll Brothers to bring in equipment, such as earth movers, are incapable of going around the Artisan roundabout in the correct manner. If they did so, their back tires would come over the curb and damage Escena property.

Since then, we informed Toll Brothers that their truck drivers must do a better job looking out for resident traffic. You should be aware that Toll Brothers has been very receptive to our concerns. In addition, since we cannot prevent those trucks from using Escena we also are asking residents to be acutely aware when using the roundabout. This is not a perfect solution. Fortunately, such large flatbed trucks are not often used. Nevertheless, be on the lookout!

Finally, residents saw various contractor vehicles were speeding on Grandview, where the speed limit is 25. As we have done in the past, we informed Toll Brothers of the issue and asked them to address it.

Thank you to everyone who brings these items to our attention so we can follow up.

4. Traffic signs

The Committee was asked about additional traffic signs, such as “stop” signs. The Committee consulted with the Infrastructure Committee on this issue and discovered the following (and I paraphrase):

Traffic signs in the community are determined by city traffic engineers when the community is designed and approved by the City (Palm Springs, or Cathedral City in Vesta).

Those engineers perform a "warrant analysis" (to determine if stop signs are warranted) that considers, among other things, traffic volume, design speeds and sight distance. The traffic volume criterion is based on future traffic volume after the build-out of Escena, not the present volume.

Assuming the plans do not call for a stop or other traffic sign, under the law the HOA would assume liability (for improper design leading to an accident) if it placed the sign without conducting a warrant study by a professionally licensed traffic engineer who had professional liability insurance. Even so, that would not stop a person involved in an accident from suing the HOA, which would likely mean additional legal fees.

This does not mean that additional signs would not be helpful, but it does lay out some of the legal challenges and potential financial risks involved with such a decision.

Signs, of course, are not the only answer to improve safety. We recommend what you have heard since you first obtained your driver's license: practice defensive driving, be aware of your surroundings and maintain a reasonable speed.

5. Printer for Gatehouse

Committee members decided to directly buy a new printer and paper for printing guest passes rather than going through our management company, which in turn would have asked another contractor to perform the work. Committee Chair Javier Lopez-Quinones also donated his time to configure the printer's software. Thank you, Javier! Savings to the community was approximately \$1000.

6. Contacting DRM

Please remember to notify DRM by way of the "request" feature on the TownSquare app if you observe a safety issue that needs remediation. That same is true for irrigation leaks and other matters the management company should handle. DRM does not read the discussions in the Forum portion of the app.

7. Cameras

Earlier this year the Board approved a quarterly camera maintenance contract. The second quarter's review occurred and one camera was found to be out. It is being replaced. Cameras can fail early in desert heat, but the new contract gives a five-year warranty on every newly installed camera. That exceeds the 1–2-year warranty the community previously received before the new contract was signed.

8. No Trespass Signs

The Committee investigated the use of No Trespass signs, which are legally necessary for someone to be arrested for Trespassing on community property. The Board approved placement of five signs and chose a design recommended by the Design Review Committee at the June Board meeting. The signs will be installed by Signarama, which has installed other Escena signs.

Conclusion

Thanks to all residents for their help and a big thanks to the volunteer members of the Safety and Security Committee for their work. They put in a lot of time on behalf of residents and are to be commended for their work on behalf of the community.

Note: The opinions expressed in this update are mine and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Committee or the Board.

Respectfully submitted,

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