

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### SEDONA CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PLAN

**PURPOSES:** Sedona’s Citizen Engagement Program (CEP) is intended to:

- Increase the Sedona City government’s access to its citizens’ ideas and expertise.
- Make information about citizen engagement more transparent, accessible, and interactive for all citizens.
- Engage capable, motivated citizens in actively advancing community projects they care about that will improve their community in a way that is personally meaningful, productive, efficient, and cost-effective.
- Make the system for eliciting, sorting, evaluating, prioritizing, and acting upon citizen initiatives more integrated and effective.
- Improve the collaborative processes among City staff, City Council, and engaged citizens.

The following outline summarizes how community input will be handled:

- 1) **Soliciting Ideas and Issues:** Citizen-generated issues and ideas will be collected by the Citizen Engagement Coordinator, the City staff, and City Council. In addition, Community Plan Advisory Groups (CPAGs) will be formed annually and meet as required to assure progress towards meeting the goals of the Community Plan and to prepare top-priority recommendations to the City Council. The number of CPAGs will be dependent on an as-needed basis.
- 2) **Organizing Ideas and Issues:** These ideas will be organized by the City Manager’s Office into three categories—those to be:
  - Addressed immediately by city staff; or
  - Agendized for City Council consideration as soon as possible; or
  - Maintained for consideration by the City Council at its annual prioritization meeting.
- 3) **Prioritizing Ideas and Issues:** The full list of pending ideas and projects and the CPAG recommendations will be submitted to the City Council at their priority-setting retreat to consider and prioritize for inclusion in the City’s Annual Work Plan.
- 4) **Implementing Ideas and Issues:** Projects included in the City’s Annual Work Plan will be assigned to a lead staff member, with specific objectives, a timeline, and possibly a budget. Whenever a project would benefit from citizen engagement, the appropriate staff member working through the new Citizen Engagement Coordinator will form a Citizen Work Group that will collaborate to help implement the project.
- 5) **Reporting Ideas and Issues:** The Citizen Engagement Coordinator and City Manager will provide quarterly reports to the City Council and the community on

community input and citizen engagement efforts and projects.

- 6) **Periodic Reviews and Annual Evaluation of the Citizen Engagement Plan:** The City Manager will work with the City Council, community and City staff to ensure that there is on-going review and evaluation of the CEP. The City Manager will solicit feedback from the community and may convene a small working group to assist in the CEP evaluation. The CEP will be evaluated and modified as needed to ensure that it is continuously functioning at the highest level of citizen engagement and creating broad-based opportunities for citizen input and involvement.
- 7) **Recognition Program:** The City Manager's office will make it a priority to honor all citizen volunteers annually in order to show their appreciation for their time and dedication.

**Arts and Culture Coordinator Position:** In addition to the new Citizen Engagement Coordinator position, the Sedona City Council also approved the funding for a new Arts and Culture Coordinator position (link to PD). Similar to the Citizen Engagement Coordinator position, the Arts and Culture position will be overseen by the City Manager's Office. This position will be a liaison to this community on arts and culture issues and will work with the City Council, City Manager and other City staff to address ideas, concerns and opportunities. In addition, this position will oversee the City of Sedona's Arts and Culture programs that include the Artist in the Classroom Program, Mayor Arts Awards Program, City Hall art rotation, roundabout artwork, and Art in Private Development Program. The City of Sedona recently filled the position. Nancy Lattanzi, local area artist, was selected to be the City's Arts and Culture Coordinator.

**LEGEND OF ACRONYMS:**

- CEC = Citizen Engagement Coordinator**
- CEP = Citizen Engagement Program**
- CWG = Citizen Work Group**
- CPAG = Community Plan Advisory Group**

## SEDONA CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

The elements of the Citizen Engagement Plan (CEP) are described below:

### 1. SOLICITING IDEAS AND ISSUES

The **Sedona Community Plan** will be the City's overarching guide to its priorities and projects for the next decade. The Community Plan will express the vision the residents have for the community, establish a set of values, outcomes, goals, policies and actions, and from that will come projects and tasks categorized by short-term, mid-term, and long-term goals.

Sedona citizens will be invited to identify problems and provide ideas relating to or independent of the Community Plan that they would like the City staff and Council to consider. Topic areas will expand upon existing commission disciplines and could include public safety, public works, etc. All received ideas will be reported back to the City Council. A standard **Citizen Idea Form** will be widely distributed to elicit the information needed to review an idea.

A part-time **Citizen Engagement Coordinator (CEC)** [\[online version will link to PD\]](#) will implement and manage the CEP. This staff position will have direct access to and oversight by the City Manager and Assistant City Manager.

Many other methods, traditional and innovative, may be used to solicit community input. These include:

- **City Council listening sessions** inviting various constituencies to provide targeted public input directly to the City Council.
- A **town hall, open house, or forum** that is either topical or open to general discussion of City issues (or both).
- Smaller, more focused **roundtables and focus groups** to solicit a deeper level of input and information sharing around specific subjects.
- **One-to-one conferences with individuals and organizations.**
- **Social media** will be used to enable everyone in our community to provide input.
- The **City's website**, which creates an online interactive "go-to" place for community dialogue, similar to the City of Mesa's I-Mesa program.
- **Traditional media outlets** (e.g. newspaper, radio and television stations), to inform, educate, and encourage public dialogue.
- **Partnerships with schools and youth organizations** will be fostered in order to engage youth and families.

### Community Plan Advisory Groups (CPAGs)

The Community Plan serves as the city's core strategic planning document and is intended to be a living document that proactively guides the city's strategic development through 2020 and beyond. The priorities of the Community Plan and other major issues that arise will be explored in depth. To accomplish this:

Several months prior to the City Council annual priority-setting meeting, the City Manager working with the Citizen Engagement Coordinator, will set up and meet with one or more **Community Plan Advisory Groups (CPAGs)**. The number of CPAGs will vary depending on City Council's needs and they may focus on, but are not limited to, the areas of:

- Arts and culture
- Environment and sustainability
- Community life (to deal with housing, parks and recreation, and other aspects of community life)
- Economic development and tourism

The City Manager may identify other additional focus areas and convene additional advisory groups. For example, the City Manager may convene an advisory group for City management and operations to address issues such as City finances, public works and public safety.

Each CPAG will **assess community affairs** in their area of interest regarding progress toward fulfilling the goals of Community Plan.

Typically, each CPAG will be composed of **citizens** who have demonstrated interest and/or expertise in that area and come from a diverse background to create a well-balanced group. Former commissioners and those on the Citizens Steering Committee for the Community Plan are invited to comprise the inaugural CPAG(s). If CPAG members indicate an interest in serving a second year, for continuity purposes, the City Manager has the discretion to appoint them.

Interest in CPAG membership will be solicited throughout the year by the Citizen Engagement Coordinator and compiled into a Volunteer Registry. CPAG members are selected annually by the City Manager's Office, with input from City Council and suggestions from citizens interested in citizen engagement. This work group also will meet periodically with the CEC to provide on-going feedback and evaluation of the Citizen Engagement Program, and annually to evaluate its overall effectiveness.

Each Community Plan Advisory Group will meet in advance of the City's annual priority-setting session **to seek consensus on a few (1-3) top priority policy matters and particular projects** that they want to recommend strongly for Council consideration. These meetings will be posted in advance for the public to attend. Their recommendations will be concisely summarized and distributed widely.

If needed, one **integrative meeting** will be held among selected representatives from each of the CPAGs to share their groups' recommendations and to suggest ways of integrating items of crossover concern. When this work is accomplished, the work group will disband.

## 2. ORGANIZING IDEAS AND ISSUES

Once community input has been captured, staff will administratively review ideas and potential projects to determine if any are **already being addressed** within another City effort or if they would best **be integrated into other ongoing projects**. They also may provide input on **resource requirements, legal issues**, etc. Once organized, staff will send input along one of **three essential tracks**:

- a. **Immediate resolution/implementation by City staff** on issues and services that fall within the purview of city departments and the current operational budget.
- b. **Immediate consideration by the City Council** for issues and services that that require legislative authority and fall within the *current* budget and staff resources.
- c. **Future consideration at a City Council annual goal prioritization meeting** for ideas that require major policy, funding, and/or staff resources for *future* fiscal year(s).

The Citizen Engagement Coordinator will report back to the members of the CPAGs and to interested citizens as to the disposition of their projects. The CEC will additionally post suggestions and project progress on the City's web page so citizens can easily track where these are in the pipeline.

## 3. PRIORITIZING IDEAS AND ISSUES

The citizen initiatives requiring the City Council's authorization and possible funding will be reviewed at **an annual City Council work session** held in November or December, prior to the commencement of the annual budget process. This will allow City-wide prioritization since all possible work plan items will be considered at one time in relation to one another. The City Council will decide upon the **highest priority items** and incorporate them into **an annual work plan** upon which the annual budget will be based.

The City Council will consider any or all of the following **prioritization guidelines** in order to establish work-plan items:

- Does the project contribute to implementing the Sedona Community Plan?
- Is the project consistent with City strategic plans or priorities (i.e. economic development, arts and culture)?
- Does broad-based support exist from different segments of the community?

- Does the project address a special community need or emergency?
- Do resources (staff, financial, technological) exist to complete a project?
- Does the City have a limited window of opportunity to take advantage of outside funding?
- Are there changes in federal or state law, or other external forces to be considered?

#### 4. IMPLEMENTING IDEAS AND ISSUES

The following steps will be taken to implement the priorities established by the City Council:

A. For each approved project the City Manager will assign a **staff member, specific objectives, and a timeline and budget where appropriate.**

B. Whenever appropriate, the lead staff member, the Citizen Engagement Coordinator, and volunteer citizens will form a **Citizen Work Group (CWG)** that will collaborate to move the project forward. The size, makeup, and operation of each CWG will vary depending on the project.

Before signing on to participate, CWG volunteers will be **informed about what is expected**, e.g. the time commitment, the kinds of tasks they may be asked to complete (e.g. conduct a survey or write a report), what staff will and will not be able to contribute, and what other resources they will have. Since the CWGs' mission has already been established as a City Council priority with **City resources behind them**, citizens will see **concrete accomplishments** from their participation.

Citizen Work Groups will be **flexible and adaptable**, and members can communicate as often as necessary by multiple sharing vehicles (e.g. *Go-to meetings, Dropbox*).

C. To ensure optimal CWG membership, a detailed **Volunteer Registry** will be created and managed by the Community Engagement Coordinator to serve as a pool from which the City Manager's office can draw from when putting together project teams.

The Registry will be created and maintained through the following steps:

- The Citizens Engagement Coordinator (CEC) will reach out to **current commissioners** and seek their participation in the Registry and the new program.
- The CEC will **reach out to community groups** to inform them about the Citizen Engagement Program and opportunities for citizen participation.
- The CEC will **publicize opportunities for citizen involvement**

- Signing up for the Volunteer Registry will be made as **simple and accessible** as possible using a **Citizen Registry**.

The Citizen Engagement Coordinator is responsible for ensuring that there is ongoing communication **with all registered volunteers throughout the year**, not just those currently participating in work groups.

## **5. REPORTING IDEAS AND ISSUES**

Information about all of the above kinds of **input** from the community and their **engagement** in carrying out the Council's priorities will be **presented quarterly to the City Council**. The quarterly presentations will provide information and basis for discussion, and give the City Council the opportunity to ask questions and make suggestions about the ideas, issues, and the citizen engagement process.

These quarterly reports will also be housed on **the City's website** for ongoing community access, comment, and feedback.

## **6. PERIODIC REVIEWS AND ANNUAL EVALUATION OF THE CEP**

The City Manager will conduct periodic reviews and evaluations of the CEP to identify potential improvements, needed modifications and new approaches. The City Manager may convene a small working group to assist in this evaluation. The City Manager will provide an annual report to the City Council that will also be posted on the CEP web page to provide an overview of CEP implementation efforts for the given year and any associated changes or improvements.

## **7. RECOGNITION PROGRAM**

The City Manager's office will make it a priority to honor all citizen volunteers annually in order to show their appreciation for their time and dedication. Ways to do this could include:

- Have citizens in the Citizen Work Groups and CPAGs present their ideas and findings to City Council.
- An awards and annual recognition event.
- Appreciation articles in the newspaper.
- Plant trees in the community each year honoring volunteer contributions.
- Implement a Volunteer Caught You Caring Award program which would recognize individual volunteer efforts by inviting fellow volunteers to nominate a person. Could be conducted on a quarterly basis.
- Develop an annual video presentation and post on the City's web site featuring volunteer contributions.
- Create an annual volunteer yearbook to be displayed online that contains volunteers' photographs along with his or her achievements of the year.

- Send out occasional thank you cards to current volunteers thanking them for their service.
- Send an anniversary card to volunteers (past and present) highlighting their year(s) of service and how they made a difference in your organization over the past year.
- Participate in National Volunteer Week activities.
- Initiate a local Volunteer Month in the City via Mayor Proclamation and different activities and public information pieces as a way to thank current volunteers, recruit new volunteers and promote the value of volunteering to the community. For each year, a different volunteer related theme would be adopted.