

6. PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE

Goals

- Protect and preserve natural open space.
- Ensure the protection of the environment while providing for responsible outdoor recreation.
- Provide activities and amenities that allow for community interactions and encourage active and healthy lifestyles.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Chapter:

- Parks and Recreation
- Open Space
- Policies
- Action Plan

What Changed Since 2002?

- *The City of Sedona Parks and Recreation Master Plan* adopted in 2013.
- *Verde Valley Regional Plan* completed.
- Forest Service added many new trails in and around the City.

What's New in This Plan?

- Recommendations for a City open space and trails plan.
- Recommendations to improve public access to Oak Creek within the City.
- Recommendations to incorporate parks, trails, and open space into subdivisions and other development projects.
- Recommendations for improved collaboration on trails related issues.

The preservation of natural open space in and around Sedona has been one of the highest community priorities since incorporation. Essentially half of the City is open space, with 49% of the land area designated National Forest. This public land comprises a large portion of our outstanding scenery, and provides a multitude of recreational opportunities. Balancing the protection of the natural environment and recreation activities is essential to the community's quality of life and economy.



PARKS AND RECREATION

Recreation is an important aspect of the community's quality of life, economy, and tourism. The breathtaking landscape, abundance of trails, and favorable climate are the reasons many people have chosen to visit or live in Sedona.

City Parks and Recreation

The City Parks and Recreation Department manages seven parks totaling 92 acres. The City offers recreational programs to thousands of residents each year. Programs include arts, music, sports, educational programs, and outdoor programs. Community events hosted by the City and private parties are often challenged by the fact that many locations either lack enough parking or impact residential neighborhoods.

The *City of Sedona Parks and Recreation Master Plan* was approved by the City Council in 2013. It contains recommendations for the management of the City's Parks and Recreation facilities, programs, and capital improvements. The planning process for the Master Plan, which occurred in 2011 and 2012, included public meetings, focus groups, and a survey of residents. The feedback received during the planning process was consistent with the findings of the Community Plan's outreach efforts.

National Forest Recreation

The Forest Service manages the recreational trails that are located on the National Forest, where most outdoor recreation activities in the City occur. These activities include hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and jeep touring. There are approximately 250 miles of non-motorized trails on the Red Rock District of the Coconino National Forest. The Forest Service manages all of these trails and trailheads, with the exception of two trailheads maintained by the City: Margs Draw and Sugarloaf Trailheads. The City and the Forest Service have collaborated on a variety of trail and trailhead planning and facilities in the past two decades. The City has also provided funding to support trail maintenance and improvements.

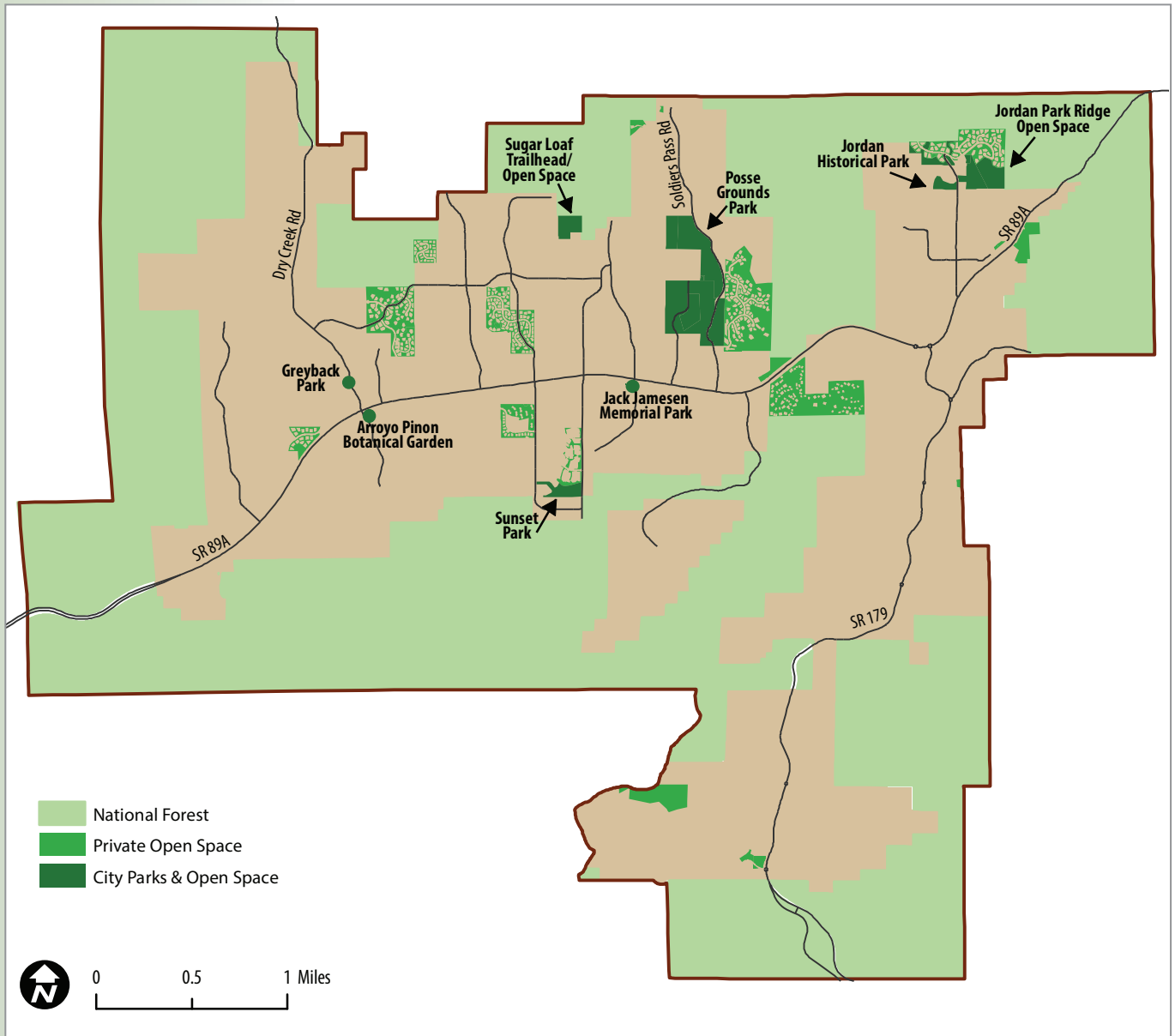
Outdoor Recreation Tourism

Recreation is a significant component of the tourism industry and contributes to the economy with tour companies, outfitters, and guides that offer a variety of supplies, services, and activities based on outdoor recreation. Visitors can choose from traditional recreation such as golf and tennis or more adventurous activities like fishing, hiking, mountain biking, or horseback riding. These activities can be done as guided tours, or self-guided with rentals such as a jeep, all terrain vehicle, or mountain bike. Businesses offer supplies, rental equipment, and tour guides, which contribute to the economy with jobs and sales tax revenue.

Key Issues

- Desire for more opportunities that allow for social interaction.
- Lack of public access to Oak Creek within the City.
- Popularity of National Forest trails, resulting in problems with access, parking, user conflicts, and trail conditions.

Current Designated Open Space in Sedona



OPEN SPACE

The City’s open space inventory comprises an impressive 52% of land within the City limits, of which 49% is National Forest. The City and the Forest Service have worked cooperatively over the years to ensure the preservation of these lands. Forest Service planning policies have specifically restricted land exchanges in the Sedona area.

There are some public and semi-public uses such as schools, transit facilities, parking, and water storage tanks for which there may be limited private land options, yet may be required in the greater Sedona area in the future. These uses may need to be evaluated to determine whether they should be considered on the National Forest to accommodate these needs and whether mitigation of potential impacts can be provided.

The wildland-urban interface between the National Forest and private development has been difficult to manage in a manner consistent with Forest Service policies and practices. Introduction of non-native plant species, development of unauthorized trails, unregulated National Forest access, and encroachments are some of the impacts associated with the urban environment.

There is also a continued need for participation in regional planning to ensure open space preservation between Verde Valley communities. Regional issues requiring coordination include the disposition of ten square miles of State Trust Land between Cottonwood and Sedona, as well as infrastructure that may have a visual impact in the region, such as cell towers. The Verde Valley Land Preservation Institute was formed in 2003 in response to regional cooperation on open space planning. The *Verde Valley Regional Plan* was adopted by Yavapai County in 2006, which further articulates the need for the preservation of public lands and open space between communities.

There are currently 16 acres of State Trust Land within the City. One parcel is located on Soldiers Pass Road and the other is the site of the KAZM radio station west of Dry Creek Road. State Trust Land is not public land, and State law prohibits the designation of State Trust Land as open space without State Land Department approval. Since the undeveloped State Trust Land in the City has great community value as open space, the City should evaluate options to ensure its preservation.

Preservation of open space within private development is also important in areas that have high scenic value along the highways, in riparian areas, and at entry corridors into the City.

Key Issues

- Desire for permanent protection of the National Forest in and around the City.
- Need for further protection of the National Forest from impacts at the wildland-urban interface.
- Preservation of open space in highway corridors, gateways, and riparian areas.
- Interest in preserving undeveloped State Trust Land between Cottonwood and Sedona.

Open Space Inventory

	<u>Acres</u>
National Forest	5,700
City Parks & Open Space	119
Private Open Space	254
Total:	6,073
City Parks & Open Space:	
Posse Grounds Park	79
Jordan Park Ridge	18
Sugar Loaf Trailhead	9
Sunset Park	7
Jordan Historic Park	5
Jamesen Park	0.4
Arroyo Pinon	
Botanical Garden	0.3
Greyback Park	0.3
Total:	119

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE POLICIES

1. Provide and support community events, festivals, and programs that offer a variety of opportunities for social interaction and contribute to a sense of community.
2. Diversify the funding sources that support the City Parks and Recreation Department to include public funding, earned revenues, and outside funding sources.
3. Develop partnerships that leverage resources of the City and other organizations to support park and recreation facilities and programs.
4. Establish regulations and incentives to incorporate parks and trails into subdivisions and other development projects.
5. Support collaboration between agencies, organizations, and businesses on trails marketing, management, and maintenance in recognition of the value of trails to the community and the economy.
6. Improve and manage public access to Oak Creek within the City.
7. Support Forest Service policies that ensure National Forest land in and around Sedona is permanently protected.
8. Partner with the Forest Service to manage the wildland-urban interface to preserve and protect the National Forest and natural resources through joint planning and management.
9. Maintain the lowest density land uses next to the National Forest, supporting cluster development, and reserving open space in Community Focus Areas or Planned Areas.
10. Preserve natural open space, including areas with significant natural resource values, the riparian habitat of Oak Creek, and viewsheds such as ridgelines, scenic vistas, along highways, and gateways into the community.
11. Support the preservation of significant open space between Verde Valley communities through ongoing coordination with other jurisdictions and land trusts.

PARKS, RECREATION, AND OPEN SPACE ACTION PLAN

Action	Lead	Partners
Priority 1 (0-5 years):		
1 Develop City standards for park and trail acquisition, design, development, and maintenance.	Parks and Recreation, Community Development	City Manager's Office, City Council
2 Prioritize implementation of the <i>City Parks and Recreation Master Plan</i> recommendations to align with the Community Plan.	Parks and Recreation, Community Development	City Manager's Office, Planning and Zoning Commission
3 Amend City regulations to improve the quality and usability of dedicated parklands; provide a trail dedication alternative to developers; develop design standards for trail and park design, size, and dedication options for developers; consider cash-in-lieu donations for park development with new subdivision approvals.	Community Development	Parks and Recreation, City Manager's Office, City Attorney, City Council, Planning and Zoning Commission
Priority 2 (6-10 years):		
4 Establish a trails coalition to improve community collaboration on trails related issues.	City Manager's Office	Parks and Recreation, Community Development, Forest Service, business organizations, businesses, user groups
5 Develop an open space and trails plan that includes criteria to identify open space access and preservation priorities, including regulatory tools and incentives for open space acquisitions, and to address trail access issues.	Community Development	City Attorney, Forest Service, property owners, City Manager's Office, Planning and Zoning Commission, City Council
6 Investigate and possibly implement methods to obtain trail access across the State Trust Land parcel on Soldiers Pass Road.	Community Development	Forest Service, State Land Department