

City Talk for March 13, 2024
Community Development Department
Steve Mertes, community development director

Plan ahead

As of this reading, the final draft of the Community Plan is nearing the finish line of the update process, with it going before City Council for a vote this month. This update process, which is required every 10 years, started two years ago and is the culmination of much hard work from staff; our consultants; the Citizen Work Group; our agency partners including the Sedona Fire District, Sedona Public Library, the National Forest Service, Keep Sedona Beautiful, Arizona Water Company and others; and the public itself, who came out in droves to attend our many in-person public outreach meetings. These meetings started with our September 2022 Kick-Off Event, attended by 350 people, and ended with our two Community Forums in January 2024. The public also participated in our two virtual Listening and Learning Sessions, and our city-wide survey, and then participated in reviewing and providing comments to the initial draft of the Plan update on plansedona.com during our 60-day review period starting Dec. 1, 2023. The amount of community engagement was wonderful, and it showcased the passion our residents have for our city.

I would be remiss if I didn't have a special thank you for our Citizen Work Group members who have donated copious amounts of their time and efforts to the cause from the very beginning. Over the course of 22 months, these dedicated people participated in 30 scheduled work group meetings, volunteered for, and participated in our public outreach meetings, and even ran our smaller community meetings on housing topics. This just touches the surface of their involvement, and this process could not have been so successful without them.

If and when approved, our new Community Plan describes the goals, visions and values of the city, as told to us by the community, and will serve as a decision-making guide for the Planning and Zoning Commission and the City Council for the next ten years. As the Community Plan update nears completion, we now look to a new plan ahead of us that will be similar in process to the Community Plan in that it will involve robust public outreach with abundant opportunities for community input. I am speaking, of course, about the creation of the Master Plan for the Cultural Park.

A consultant will be hired that will work with staff to create a Master Plan for the Cultural Park that will address community input, gathered similarly to the processes used during the Community Plan update. The formulation of the Master Plan will also be guided by the goals and objectives of the Western Gateway Community Focus Area (CFA), in which the Cultural Park resides. Some of these goals are as follows:

- Create mixed use, walkable districts.
- Provide public gathering spaces that promote social interaction.
- Encourage diverse and affordable housing options.
- Create a more walkable and bikeable community.
- Preserve and protect the natural environment.
- Protect and preserve natural open space.
- Enhance opportunities for artistic display, engagement and learning.
- Ensure harmony between the built and the natural environments.

- Reflect a unique sense of place in architecture and design.

The acquisition of the Cultural Park gives the community the ability to consider some of our pressing needs, while also creating an environment that offers a compatible mix of land uses to support and bring residents together. I know that our residents will be fully engaged in this process, and I look forward to seeing the plan evolve as we collectively plan ahead for the future.