



Why did the City buy the Western Gateway property?

The City bought the property so that it could be developed with a community-minded focus rather than the developer-minded focus of prior proposals (which typically included a large lodging component) submitted for this property over the course of many years. Additionally, the City's focus on development of affordable housing was one of the driving forces in acquiring the property in 2022 and has been a guiding principle used in the development of the draft Master Plan.

When did the City buy the Western Gateway?

The City bought the Western Gateway property, also known as the "Cultural Park" on December 8, 2022. This is the 41-acre property off Cultural Park Place. It neighbors the Forest Service's Western Gateway Trailhead, the Sedona Summit Resort and Yavapai College Sedona Center.

How will the City determine how the property will be developed?

The City is undergoing an extensive [master planning process](#) that involves ample public outreach to gather community feedback.

Unlike a private owner that would likely develop a lodging complex to maximize profit, the City is in the unique position to honor community needs and public amenities for the future uses on this property, without the need to maximize profit.

The draft Master Plan encompasses guidance from the [Western Gateway Community Focus Area](#) (CFA) that serves as a foundation for the Master Plan. The CFA recommends community amenities and open space, workforce and multi-family housing, and limited commercial uses on this site.

Based on the CFA and the City's [Affordable Housing Action Plan](#) which indicates the City has a significant deficit of affordable housing, the City issued a RFP for workforce housing on a small section on the northeast corner of the site in October/November 2023. Ultimately, no developer was selected and the land was incorporated into the master planning process.

Where can I see the draft of the Master Plan?

Go to PlanSedona.com to see the current draft.

Are there any conditions on future development at the site that the City must abide by?

The Coconino National Forest has informed the City that there are no restrictions on the use of the land. More specifically, there is no restriction imposed by previous federal ownership, nor previous private owners. For any use outside of an amphitheater, the City would need to rezone the property for the desired use that is stated in the Master Plan.

Has the Master Plan been finalized or adopted by Council?

No, the draft Master Plan is in the development stages. The City has conducted several public workshops and surveys to gather feedback, and more public sentiments will be gathered in the coming months before a new draft Master Plan will be presented to City Council at an educational Work Session in early fall 2025. It will then need to go to the Planning and Zoning Commission and then back to City Council again.

Has the Planning and Zoning Commission reviewed the Master Plan?

Yes, the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) has held two work sessions on the Master Plan. They will provide a recommendation to City Council on the draft Master Plan at a future public hearing date (yet to be determined).

P&Z held a Work Session in [April 2025](#). Documents for that meeting were uploaded to PlanSedona.com and available for public comment in advance of the meeting. As of June 9, 2025, those documents had 863 views and 41 comments from 11 people. The documents were also placed at the Community Library Sedona, which generated six written comments. Public comments at the April Work Session were supportive of the draft Master Plan's direction and the inclusion of housing.



P&Z held a second Work Session in [May 2025](#). Documents for that meeting were also uploaded to PlanSedona.com and available for public comment in advance of the meeting. As of June 9, 2025, those documents had 694 views and 29 comments from 12 people. The documents were also placed at the Community Library Sedona, which generated a handful of written comments. Public comments at the May Work Session were in support, neutral and not supportive of certain aspects of the draft Master Plan's direction.

How else can I provide feedback on the Master Plan?

You can go to [PlanSedona.com](#) at any time to provide any comments, and of course, you can email your [P&Z Commissioners](#) or [City Councilors](#) at any time to express your thoughts on this project.

Is it true that there's a lot of housing planned for this site? If so, why?

Housing is proposed at the property because it was a top use that residents shared they wanted to see at the site, there are few undeveloped large pieces of land left in Sedona that can accommodate housing, and it's been determined that as of 2020, the City was at a deficit of 1,250 affordable housing units.

Currently, the draft Master Plan has a maximum of 430 units of housing proposed, comprised of apartments and townhomes. The draft Master Plan only identifies the type of housing, but not if the units will be rentals, for sale, affordable, market rate, etc. City Council will decide on those details as the site is developed.

If the Master Plan says that 430 units of housing are proposed, does that mean all 430 will be built?

Not necessarily, but the number of each type of housing was determined based on the acreage, the topography and how many units are needed to attract a developer. The exact size of each project would depend on the developer, but for the sake of simplicity in the plan, the maximum number of units that could be built are listed. Additionally, build out is expected to happen over many years - not all at once. The City will have flexibility to respond to market conditions as different sections of the plan are developed.

If the maximum of 430 units of housing are built, will this area have more density than other local housing developments?

No, it will be comparable to other multi-family housing developments that already exist in the City. If all 430 units are built, including the land that is slated as open space, that would be 10.5 units per acre. If you remove the non-housing acreage from the calculation, the density is 38 units per acre. Other local projects have the following units per acre:

- 237 Van Deren is 40.9 units per acre (7 units on 0.17 acres)
- 550 Jordan Road (La Vivienda Apartments) is 37.0 units per acre (15 units on 0.41 acres)
- Pinon Lofts: 19.9 units per acre
- Wyndham Apartments: 16.6 units per acre
- Shadowbrook 16.0 units per acre (developed area of the site); 12.3 units per acre (entire site, including former septic leach field)
- Tierra Sienna Condominiums: 14.7 units per acre
- Navajo Lofts: 13.3 units per acre (under construction)
- Casitas Tranquil: 10.5 units per acre
- Morning Sun Condominiums: 8.5 units per acre
- Nepenthe: 8 units per acre
- Sunset Village Mobile Home Park: 7.6 units per acre

Why is there so much housing proposed for this property?

The overall density is about 10.5 units per acre (430 units on 41 acres); the City has zoning designations that allow for up to 20 units per acre, and the [Sedona Community Plan](#) does not have a maximum limit on density if the units are addressing the City's housing goals (which would need to be approved through a Planned Development zoning).



The properties designated for housing within the Master Plan, if not accounting for open space, collectively have a density of 38 units per acre. When this was presented at public workshops and to P&Z, there was a preference for concentrating the housing in specific areas of the site, rather than spreading it out over the site, freeing up areas for open space preservation, community amenities such as parks, and mixed use development to contribute to the livable/walkable goals of the Sedona Community Plan and CFA.

The City has had housing developers review the draft Master Plan to get an understanding of whether the plan would appeal to a housing developer. The draft Master Plan attempts to balance the understanding that developers need to achieve economies of scale in order to build, with the community's desire to retain small town character.

Why aren't we putting all the housing units at the Dells?

The property at the Dells is being used for the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Preparing this land for development is a multi-step process that includes, at a minimum, building new wastewater facilities, and ensuring utility service to the site can serve any proposed development. Due to the timeframes and costs of addressing these items, development of this property is many years away.

Until earlier this year, the property was under the jurisdiction of Yavapai County and zoned for large-lot single-family development. The City has annexed the land but development will still require a rezoning application, a development plan, and potentially another Master Planning process.

Does the City have 100 properties that they could put housing on instead?

No, of the 88 parcels owned by the City of Sedona:

- 38 are Built on, including the City property at Posse Grounds Park. There are acres behind the West Sedona School that are undeveloped but are considered "built on" because other parts of the parcel is built on.
- 9 are Open Space (Zoned Open Space or Planned Development) with most around Jordan Park Subdivision & part of Trailhead access
- 6 are General Utilities
- 8 are Right of Way
- 10 are for the Wastewater Plant, including those at the Dells that could be used in the future for housing if City Council decides that but there are no utilities at the site.
- 17 are Vacant. Of these vacant parcels:
 - One is 220 Sunset Drive, where a housing project is planned
 - One is 2250 Shelby Drive, in which construction is underway for affordable housing
 - One is 2411 89A, where a housing project is planned
 - One is 676 179, which Council bought for preservation from ADOT
 - Six are part of the Western Gateway
 - One is 780 Forest Road, and was bought as part of the Forest Road Extension Project (approx. 1 acre)
 - One is 555 Soldiers Pass Road (approx. 9 acres)
 - Four are the parcels along 89A and Brewer Road as part of the Ranger Road Extension/possible transit Ride Exchange
 - One is 50 Sinagua Drive (three-quarters of an acre)

What does affordable housing mean?

Affordable housing means that a household pays no more than 30% of their total household income for housing.

Examples of affordable housing are:

- Workforce Housing. Typically, housing affordable to households earning 80%-120% of the area median income
- Low-Income Housing. Typically, housing affordable to households earning less than 80% of the area median income
- Subsidized Housing. Housing that is built, acquired, or sustained with government funding



- Section 8. Also called Housing Choice Program, it is a voucher program that provides rent assistance to a family household no matter where they live

Residents of deed-restricted affordable housing units must show proof of income and their income is typically required to be re-certified each year. Income levels are based on household size; for example, in the Yavapai County portion of Sedona, the area median income for a household of two is \$72,500.

Are you going to put affordable housing at the Western Gateway?

While the City is ensuring long-term housing availability at the Western Gateway (no short-term rentals), no other decisions have been made regarding the potential future residents of the proposed housing. Affordable housing (income restricted and market rate), senior housing, etc. are all possibilities, but are not being determined as a part of the Master Plan.

What is the City's current policy direction for housing?

For the last several years, [housing](#) has been on the Council's [priority list](#), particularly in response to the legalization of short-term rentals (STR) in 2017 by the Arizona State Legislature. The City created a Housing Program with two full-time staff members.

The City commissioned a [Housing Study](#) in 2020 that showed the City is approximately 1,250 units short of what is needed and the Verde Valley is approximately 3,600 units short.

In the past five years, the City has implemented several programs with the goal of increasing long-term housing, including:

- A down payment assistance program for local workers
- Rent Local, which pays STR owners to rent to a local worker for at least one year
- Deed Restriction program, which helps property owners place a voluntary restriction on their property to prevent use as an STR in the future

In addition to these programs, the City has allocated millions of dollars specifically for the development of affordable housing, including the following:

- Villas on Shelby (Purchased the property, financially contributing to project).
- Sunset Lofts (Financially contributing to project, acquired property when project did not proceed).
- Purchased the property at 2411 W SR 89A with the intention of developing housing.

In December 2024, City Council adopted Resolution No. 2024-37, declaring a [housing shortage emergency](#) exacerbated by the proliferation of short-term rentals and inviting other local Arizona governments to adopt the same.

Will the City bring the amphitheater back?

Throughout the Master Planning process, there has been public interest in a smaller performance/event space on the property. The public preference has been for a 1,000-seat venue (approximately double the size of the amphitheater known as Barbara's Park at Posse Grounds Park), which has been incorporated into the draft Master Plan, rather than the original 5,000 seat amphitheater known as the Cultural Park. The current draft Master Plan shows this space in the vicinity of the existing trailhead, not in the location of the past amphitheater.

What will happen to the current amphitheater?

While the amphitheater was originally designed as an outdoor performance venue and constructed to withstand the elements, maintenance has not been done for more than 20 years. The City recently conducted a structural analysis of the stage area which showed that the structure is not in danger of failing but has degraded and would need to be restored if the intent was to use it for its original intended purpose. The current draft Master Plan proposes diverse housing in this area and would not retain the structure.

The amphitheater's seating area was terraced into the hill and supported by a series of concrete retaining walls. These structures are in good shape and could be repurposed for public use such as a neighborhood park, with various amenities (play equipment, benches, grass, picnic tables, a garden, etc.) spread out over the existing terracing.



When was the Cultural Park open as an amphitheater?

The Cultural Park operated as an amphitheater from 2001-2003, at which time it closed due to financial difficulties. In the last year of operation, the owners submitted a request to amend the Sedona Community Plan to allow for lodging and commercial uses on the property. This request was denied and the property has remained vacant.

Who owned the property prior to the City's purchase of the land?

Sathcupa, LLC (represented by Mike Tennyson) owned the property from 2004 until the City's purchase of the land in 2022.

What developments have been proposed for the property since the amphitheater closed?

2006-2007: City Council approved a Sedona Community Plan Amendment to allow the property owner to pursue a rezoning for lodging, a smaller amphitheater, and other commercial and arts-related uses. The property was never rezoned.

2014: Sathcupa presented a conceptual plan to the City that included residential, lodging, a resort, a conference center, community events, opens space, a culinary institute, and a trailhead. This project was never pursued but was the impetus for the City initiating the Western Gateway CFA Plan which included a work group of resident volunteers providing input for the future of the property.

2021: Zone Change and Development Review application was submitted for residential, hotel, and commercial development. This application was withdrawn by the applicant.

2022: Community Plan Amendment, Zone Change, and Development Review application was submitted for residential, hotel, and restaurant uses. This application was withdrawn by the applicant.

What is the Western Gateway Community Focus Area (CFA)?

The [Western Gateway Community Focus Area](#) (CFA) encompasses a significant amount of property at the western entrance to Sedona – the former Cultural Park site, the High School, the Marriott and Park Place properties, the Sedona Summit Resort, the Yavapai College Sedona Center, and the undeveloped land around the hospital. The CFA was developed through a public process from 2014-2016 and sets the stage for development of this entire area – what the City expects when this area develops and what incentives there are for developers in accordance with the CFA.

What is the difference between the Western Gateway CFA Plan and the Western Gateway Master Plan?

The Western Gateway CFA Plan covers the entire planning region and provides a roadmap for what ideal development could look like in the future. The Western Gateway Master Plan covers this specific 41-acre property and contains specific details for development. The Western Gateway Master Plan must be in compliance with the CFA and will provide details for what will be built on the parcel rather than the overarching goals and objectives contained in the CFA.

Will the trailhead and picnic tables stay?

Yes, both the trailhead on the Forest Service land and the ramada, picnic tables, and adjoining parking area will remain open. The public will be able to access both locations, however it is possible the ramada and picnic tables will be relocated to the trailhead on Forest Service property in the future. Preservation of the trailhead and forest access has been key in the development of the Master Plan. All drafts of the Master Plan have shown an expanded community area at the location of the current trailhead, additional amenities, and additional parking. A [Sedona Shuttle](#) Trailhead Route stop is also being incorporated into the design to ensure public transit accessibility to the site.

Will additional access points to Forest Service lands be created?

No. All access will go through the official Girdner Trailhead and the City will work with the Forest Service to ensure that social trails are not created.



Will the City improve the Cultural Park Place roadway?

The City has made minor improvements to the road between SR 89A and the trailhead. Any future development at the site will necessitate more in-depth road repair and construction of new roads.

Will the property be left open to explore like it is now?

For safety, the City has fenced off part of the property, including the portion that the amphitheater is located on. Access to the USFS trail system including the parking area adjoining the picnic tables and ramada will be open.

As the property is built out in accordance with the Master Plan, the areas will be open to the public.

What are the high-level stats of the different public outreach opportunities on plannedona.com?

The following stats were gleaned from the website as of June 6, 2025:

- 187 people have signed up for email updates
- 122 comments have been submitted on the general comment form (open-ended)
 - Housing is the most frequently brought up topic, with 49 comments in support and 12 comments against
 - An amphitheater was the second-most brought up topic, with 26 comments in support and 13 comments against
 - Other popular topics include Parks (28 yes, 2 no); a Recreation Center (26 yes, 2 no), trails (25 yes, 1 no), and open space (19 yes, 0 no)
- Survey #1, open at the beginning of the planning process allowed for open ended comments.
 - Housing was the most popular topic, with 80 comments in support and 31 comments against
 - An amphitheater was the second-most popular topic, with 40 comments in support and 9 against
 - Other popular topics included Commercial development (26 yes, 17 no), Open Space (32 yes, 0 no), parks (30 yes, 0 no), and a recreation center (26 yes, 1 no).
- Survey #2 was open after the first public workshop. Survey respondents were asked to respond specifically to a variety of questions. The summary of those responses is in the current draft of the Master Plan.

What were the results of the first public workshop on the Master Plan?

The first public workshop consisted of two activities: The Dot Exercise and the Bubble Mapping Exercise.

For the Dot Exercise, members of the public were given dots numbered 1-5 and were asked to put dots on the items they most wanted to see in the Master Plan (1 was their 1st choice, 2 was 2nd choice, etc.). After the meeting, the dots were used to create a weighted result, with #1 counting for 5 points, #2 counting for 4 points, etc. The numbers below represent the weighted totals for each option, not the total number of dots placed on each item:

- 242: Condominiums and Apartments
- 175: Recreation Center
- 156: Healthy Community
- 145: Entertainment Venue
- 138: Community Park or Plaza
- 110: Missing Middle Housing
- 101: Art
- 97: Small Public Spaces
- 96: Community Center
- 82: Single Family Housing
- 75: Shops and Restaurants
- 70: Movie & Theater
- 67: Music and Food
- 38: Family Centered Programs



For the Bubble Mapping Exercise, members of the public were given a blank site plan and stickers/bubbles with different uses based on how much land area they would take up. A total of 91 bubble maps were created. The numbers below indicate how many of these maps include each of the indicated elements.

- 54: Community Park
- 52: Community Garden
- 45: Dog Park
- 37: Playground
- 36: City Plaza
- 29: 26 Townhomes
- 26: 70 Apartments
- 21: 120 Apartments
- 20: 1,000 Seat performance venue
- 18: 60 Townhomes
- 18: 5,000 Seat performance venue
- 16: 300 Apartments
- 13: 20 Cottage Houses
- 12: 30 Duplexes
- 12: 16 Duplexes
- 12: 36 Cottage Houses
- 7: 360 Apartments
- 7: 2,000 Seat performance venue

What were the results of the second public workshop on the Master Plan?

Based on the results of the first workshop and online surveys, four different potential scenarios were created. These scenarios were presented to the public at the second workshop. The presentation at the workshop included an in-depth explanation of how each concept was developed and the considerations that went into each mix of land uses. After the presentation, the public was asked to vote for their preferred option (green chip) and least preferred option (red chip). The following are the results of that vote:

- Concept 1 Housing: 6 Green, 31 Red
- Concept 2 Village: 34 Green, 4 Red
- Concept 3 Residential and Recreation: 35 Green, 3 Red
- Concept 4 Amphitheater: 17 Green, 55 Red
- Total votes cast: 92 green chips and 93 red chips

After the workshop, the concepts were posted online for further comment. As of June 9, 2025, the document had been viewed 1,156 times and had generated 39 comments from 11 people.

Based on the results of the vote, as well as the written comments submitted during the workshop and online, the draft Master Plan moved forward with a concept that combined #2 and #3.