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## Sedona switches strategy in Cultural Park controversy

By OLIVIA MAILLET The Verde Independent  
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A sign put up by the Sedona city manager's office in 2023 that states the Cultural Park is a "recreational facility." This photo was taken on April 18, 2026. (Courtesy of Bill Noonan)

SEDONA — In early April, the city of Sedona filed a lawsuit against county representatives and the Save Sedona Committee about an initiative titled the "Sedona Cultural Park Preservation Act."

Save Sedona gathered enough signatures to put the initiative on the primary election ballot in July, aiming to restrict residential development on Cultural Park land. The initiative will appear as Proposition 403 on the ballot.

The lawsuit had a hearing at the Prescott Courthouse on Thursday, April 30. In its complaint, the city asserted, "The Initiative would amend the Sedona City Code to designate approximately 41 acres of certain City property currently zoned for a private outdoor amphitheater as a 'city parks and recreation facility' to be known as the Sedona Cultural Park."

However, according to a city council agenda from 1995, the Cultural Park was changed from a residential zone to planned area development to include not only the amphitheater, but also a stage building, festival grounds, an indoor performing arts complex and an arts village.

In addition, the city's complaint also stated that the initiative would "require the City to 1) 'maintain [the property] as a city parks and recreational facility, including the maintenance of its . . . structural improvements.'"

The city claimed that the initiative could not legally turn the Cultural Park into a City Parks and Recreation Facility. Physical evidence shows otherwise. The city manager's office put up signs in 2023 that stated the hours of the "Cultural Park Recreational Facility."

"The city followed no procedure to apply that designation, which indicates zoning did not need to be changed to do it," wrote Dr. Bill Noonan, the treasurer of the Save Sedona Committee, in an email. The city continues to argue that the initiative is a form of zoning; Noonan said that the Cultural Park will retain its current zoning when the initiative passes.

"The initiative only performs a proper legislative act that is appropriate subject matter for an initiative," he said.

Noonan said that Judge John Napper will most likely have a decision and written opinion early next week, and acknowledged that the case will likely have an expedited appeal to the Arizona Court of Appeals. This case will be expedited because time is of the essence; the initiative will be on the primary ballot on July 21.

Another similar committee, Sedona Cultural Park 2.0, went in front of the city council last Tuesday, April 28, and walked out with a non-binding, non-exclusive letter of intent giving the organization permission to explore options for restoring the amphitheater. Sedona Cultural Park 2.0 is to spend the next year developing a business plan, and this may include talking to major players in the entertainment industry.

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