

CHAPEL NEIGHBORS:

Highlights of Meetings May 5 (Egress in East Chapel) and May 7 (Chapel of the Holy Cross)

May 5, 2025 – Egress Chapel East

Participants:

City of Sedona (Anette Spickard, City Manager; Andy Dickey, Deputy City Manager; and

Brian W. Fultz, Councilman and Chapel area resident)

Sedona Police Department (Chief Stephanie Foley)

Sedona Fire District (Chief Ed Mezulis)

Chapel Neighbors: Joan-Alice Burn, Carol Does, Bob Haizmann, Barbara Matsuura, Rob Smith

Refer to separate document prepared by Joan-Alice Burn and Rob Smith, with input from Carol Does and Bob Haizmann entitled **5 May 25 City Mtg – V4**

May 7, 2025 – Proposed Property Improvements at Chapel of the Holy Cross

Participants:

City of Sedona (Anette Spickard, City Manager and Andy Dickey, Deputy City Manager) and Brian W. Fultz (Councilman and Chapel area resident on Panorama Drive)

United States Forest Service (Alex Schlueter, Red Rock District Ranger; Laura Varon-Burkhardt [LJ], Special Use Permit Administrator; Bridget Roth, Public Services Staff Officer)

Chapel of the Holy Cross (Father Ignatius Mazanowski, Pastor St. John Vianney Catholic Church [SVJ] and Rector Chapel of the Holy Cross; Betty McGinnis, Director of Chapel Operations and Gift Shop; Rae-Mi LeRoy, Director of Parish and Chapel Initiatives; SVJ Parishioners Bill Greifenberg and Bruce Huelet)

Chapel Neighbors: Joan-Alice Burn (Mystic Hills), Gail A. Digate (Chapel Road), Carol Does (Cathedral Lane), and Bob Haizmann (Meadowlark Drive)

Note: Rae-Mi LeRoy (SVJ) shared her comprehensive meeting summary with Chapel Neighbors. A copy is sent as a separate email.

Highlights

Father Ignatius and Betty MCGinnis provided an overview of the proposed property improvement plan to address the following four (4) major needs and concerns:

1. Public Safety

2. Enhanced
3. Accessibility
4. Improved Traffic Flow
5. Public Sanitation

(Refer to LeRoy document for specifics of the proposed plan under each category.)

Roadways

Enter at Fox Road (one way in) onto expanded parking area with exit (one way) at Chapel Road. Designed to improve the traffic flow and enable visitors to move through the property with greater ease.

Additional parking would add 53 more spaces in a new lot at the bottom for a total of 118 spaces. When parking at the top is full, a barrier would be set up so vehicles exit onto Chapel and circle or loop back to locate a parking space.

Extended Shared Use Path from end of current Chapel Road Shared Use Path to top of hill (Chapel ramp) with crosswalks from lower parking lot and Chapel trailhead. Would be wide enough to accommodate bikers, hikers, walkers, and golf carts used to transport handicapped visitors.

Permanent public restrooms (approximately 1300 square feet) to replace current portable toilets and construction of a storage facility located near Fox Road entrance. Includes water station. Restrooms maintained daily. Storage facility to house golf carts and other equipment. Necessary to prevent theft and vandalism.

Discussion

^ City representatives expressed support of the overall concept and appreciated changes that had been made in the design based on previous feedback in 2024.

^ USFS has not authorized new construction on this leased land for decades. However, may be open to parking modifications with charging for parking (I.e., hourly fee).

^ Deeper discussion about the longer term vision for visitor experience at the Chapel; for example, many brief visits, fewer in depth visits? Chapel administrator shared that the Chapel primarily is a religious/spiritual site which also attracts visitors interested in the architecture and physical surroundings. They commented that many visitors leave the experience emotionally moved.

^ Deputy City Manager Andy Dickey introduced the notion of induced demand in response to the concern about increased traffic expressed by Chapel Neighbors “when you build it, they will

come.” The destination itself is a powerful draw. Parking may become a deterrent. Would additional parking address the critical “pinch points” that visitors encounter essentially from the roundabout at Chapel Road and SR 179 all the way through the Chapel of the Holy Cross property?

^ Critical Questions: Would additional parking improve or eliminate identified “pinch points”? Would through put increase?

^City remarked that tourism has plateaued. Chapel parking could be added to a Parking Management system currently implemented citywide with access through an app on a phone or tablet. (City providing an update on this system at City Council meeting May 28, 2025).

^ Questions also included when does the periodic back up on Chapel Road become a public safety issue; how many days of serious back up are acceptable/tolerable. Need to have an alternate plan when public safety becomes an issue. Chapel of the Holy Cross might consider a reservation system and provide shuttle service from a remote parking area for those situations.

^City proposed a traffic study to collect and analyze data relative to “pinch points.” Chapel Neighbors emphasized the need to collect data in both high season (Thanksgiving, Christmas, Spring Break, Easter) and “regular” times.

^ Chapel proposal to fund extended shared use path to sell memorial pavers. USFS in this district does not authorize this approach. Suggested alternate ways to recognize and honor donors.

^ Chapel of the Holy Cross administrators expressed concern about covering the costs of the proposed project without permission to sell pavers. USFS suggested the Chapel engage in grant writing as there are other potential funding sources. (Note: Gail A. Digate, as an individual Chapel resident and not as a representative of Chapel Neighbors, committed to assisting the Chapel in this funding endeavor.)

^USFS outlined the process and steps for which the Chapel of the Holy Cross administrators must comply in order to move forward, highlighting that input and feedback from the neighbors is an essential component. USFS also pointed out that its staff is willing and able to assist. The estimated timeline for the scope of the proposed project is less than five (5) years. Suggestion to work upfront through the issues identified by the City and Chapel Neighbors in preparation for completing required USFS documents (e.g., Management and Operational Plans).

Next Steps

1. Chapel of the Holy Cross needs to submit Annual Operating Plan to USFS.
2. Chapel of the Holy Cross needs to submit Master Development Plan to USFS. Previously submitted documents can be updated to reflect the proposal and discussion of May 7.

USFS will assist Chapel of the Holy Cross administrators by providing examples and feedback.

3. Chapel of the Holy Cross administrators need to revise the total proposal into discrete projects with separate implementation plans which can be phased over the five year period.
4. Chapel of the Holy Cross administrator to meet periodically (every 2 to 3 months) with USFS, City and Chapel Neighbors as a working group to monitor progress, identify issues, and maintain communication. Next meeting to be held by end of June 2025.
5. Chapel Neighbors (Gail A. Digate and others) and Mystic Hills HOA (Joan-Alice Burn) to communicate the proposal to residents and provide feedback to Chapel, USFS, and City.
6. Using City's traffic study data, determine trigger points (i.e., number of days back up on Chapel Road, Fox Road, and spillover in neighborhoods) for when the situation creates a public safety hazard. City suggested Chapel Neighbors review background documentation on similar challenge in Back O' Beyond neighborhood. City will share this information. Chapel Neighbors underscored the importance of articulating working assumptions with the City in the development of the traffic study.

Other Related Observations (prepared by Bob Haizmann)

1. Chapel of the Holy Cross proposal does not currently reflect the impact of emergency egress on Chapel area neighborhoods.
2. Chapel of the Holy Cross proposal does not currently include a business model that is based on length of visits. Chapel Neighbors is interested in clarifications regarding various timing of the stages of "a complete visit" and identified "pinch points." As there is no management of time for visits, the proposed larger parking lot may or may not increase the number of visitors and for what length of time. The bottlenecks may change. If the capacity to host visitors in the Chapel is reached, and the gift shop is too full to accommodate more, and the deck space is taken up, this will limit additional visitors entering the property. Consequently, the effect of adding more parking spaces on the number of visitors presently is unknown.
3. Will the City traffic study include "induced" tourism? Examples: More people will visit because there is more available parking. More people will visit because social media reviews mention improved parking at the Chapel.
4. City traffic study should include consideration of Chapel neighborhood emergency egress data. It is important to recognize that traffic studies and simulations are as valid and reliable as the assumptions and parameters that form the model. Involvement of Chapel Neighbors is essential from inception to data analysis.

Additional Comments from Joan-Alice Burn, Gail A. Digate, and Carol Does

Joan-Alice Burn

I think the tourism data that Andy Dickey referenced during the meeting is critical. Whether tourism is shown to be leveling off or not, that information directly impacts many of our concerns, the likelihood that the Chapel's proposed plans will be an improvement for the neighbors, as well as inputs for a traffic study.

Regarding the importance of cooperation, I don't want to give off a vibe of "this won't work." I want to move forward in the spirit of "let's find a way to make this better." My concern is that coming off as throwing obstacles (rather than seeking solutions) will simply frustrate the Chapel administrators and the City to the point of possibly excluding continued involvement of Chapel Neighbors.

Gail A. Digate

Reflecting on the conversation May 7, it seems that USFS and the City of Sedona will keep Chapel Neighbors in the process of further study, gathering and then seriously considering our input and feedback. I am confident that we can work cooperatively and collaboratively with Chapel administrators, the City and USFS moving forward. There is hope and evidence for emerging, mutually beneficial solutions and, quite possibly, a viable partnership.

Carol Does

Agree with Joan and Gail about looking to move things forward and not get stuck searching for perfection.