

# If Not/Why Not Comment Summary

## **Southside Neighborhood Specific Plan**

The purpose of this document is to address comments received by planning staff via public meetings, community forum, commission hearing, door-to-door canvassing, City Council, or individual response during the 60-Day Draft Plan review that were not directly address in the public hearing draft.. Specific comments have been documented and considered at length. All of these comments discussed by the project team or the stakeholder group but were too specific; had conflicting comments from other participants, or were premature to include in a planning document. All comments received during the 60-day public review were included in a response to comments tracking spreadsheet and are available on the project website. The following text acknowledges the broader themes and concerns raised which may not adhere to the stated goals, policies, and strategies of the Southside Community Plan or the Southside Community Association.

## Business and Live/Work Community

### ***Building heights: (unique comment numbers 21, 24, 31, 150, 151, 167, 402)***

The city received numerous comments regarding building heights in the Southside Community. Many of the comments expressed the desire to limit future large-scale development within the Southside.

Commenters stated the following reasons or desires:

- historic blocks traditionally have smaller structures,
- new development should be kept from dwarfing current residents,
- properties should be limited to one story buildings, and
- the City should think in terms of three and four stories rather than five or six.

Even though comments were received to reduce building heights throughout the neighborhood there are practical reasons to not fully embrace this approach and there are comments from other residents that show this perspective is not universal. As of now, the current zoning allows for 60-foot building heights throughout the Southside.

Going forward, the City can change building heights but must follow the procedures set forward by the Private Property Rights Protection Act (Proposition 207) pertaining to waivers and compensation for property owners. The strategy to address building height is to lower the allowable building heights in the main part of Southside but increase the diversity of uses while also allowing for higher density and larger buildings in the area that will be redeveloping as the Lone Tree Overpass is constructed. Also, the Plan heavily emphasizes preservation and adaptive reuse to ensure spaces are occupiable, more flexible to smaller business owners, and in keeping with the historic character of the neighborhood.

### ***Mixed Uses and Vacant Retail Space (unique comment numbers 24 and 33)***

The city received a couple of apprehensive comments regarding the possibility of commercial ground floors being left vacant while upper-level residential floors are occupied. One commenter cited Fremont station and the Hub as examples of such developments.

The significance of these comments are valid to the Southside, but the Plan does not directly address vacant commercial and retail spaces because it is a broader issue that has many market and regulatory factors beyond just Southside businesses. Instead, the City is looking into how to address vacant commercial space on a City-wide basis through a new Adaptive Reuse policy, and Zoning and Building

Code changes, while the Southside Community Plan proposes several policies that are intended to create the most viable business spaces possible. Also, as previously mentioned, the Plan emphasizes adaptive reuse and preservation because these places tend to be the most flexible and affordable for business owners.

## Community Character

### ***Concept Designs and Appropriate Materials (unique comment numbers 108, 109, 190, and 191)***

The City received both positive and negative feedback regarding the concept illustrations in the Plan's draft. Some felt current illustrations did not compliment the neighborhood and that current colors and bulk should be changed.

The mass, bulk and scale for the Live/Make Concept Illustrations was not changed significantly between the draft and final plan. These comments were important in the stakeholder and staff discussions of what materials to add to the section but it was important per comments from the Planning and Zoning Commission to have an example that clearly maximized the development potential under the proposed subarea. Colors and bulk were reviewed with architects and we added examples to demonstrate appropriate materials based on other cities. Stucco may be appropriate in residential structures because of its historic use in cottages and so it was not prohibited as a material in the Live/Work Neighborhood or the Neighborhood Core. Another material that is not mentioned in the plan but recommended as a possible building material was board and batten lap siding. There is very little board and batten lap siding in the historic buildings of the Southside, but it could be an acceptable material for new construction. Current concepts do not show it because it is not the preferred material for our climate.

## Growth and Change

### **Disincentivizing Growth, Development, and Investment: (unique comment numbers: 6, 92, 101, 150, 151, 152, 200, and 207)**

The City received several online and written comments pertaining to limiting growth and development in the Southside and Flagstaff as a whole. Those who provided a reason stated the following:

- "There is concern for multi-story buildings in such a compact neighborhood as well as the potential to drive current renters and buyers out due to cost."
- "Not incentivizing redevelopment of the historic areas would minimize gentrification and loss of legacy families"
- "We need to limit new development from dwarfing existing structures as well as limit gentrification."
- "Southside is a community, not someone's financial investment."
- "Completely de-emphasize new development except where absolutely necessary."

The Flagstaff Regional Plan and Climate Change Action and Adaptions Plans both demonstrate that growing in and not out is a mandatory strategy if the community wants to lower its dependency on single occupancy vehicles and address long term environmental risks. . The position taken was to balance the needs of long-term residents with preservation and support, and to allow for incremental increases in intensity for existing property owners. A balance is necessary because heavy preservation efforts alone can also lead to neighborhood gentrification, even if there is a short-term impact of reducing large scale developments. A preservation-only approach makes prices raise faster by limiting supply without altering demand, it makes it harder for existing residents to build upon their assets, and the cost of maintaining older homes is greater. Also, in speaking with long-term residents of the

Southside, many have stated that the Southside is both a community and investment for their families. Their property ownership and value is a key asset in their financial stability and planning. They requested that the plan balance these two needs, which the plan tries to achieve.

In addition to the above comments were more generalized statements which simply expressed “no growth”, a desire to remove NAU students from the neighborhood, and limiting commercial buildings to one story along route 66 and the outskirts of Flagstaff. All these comments are beyond the scope of the Southside Community Plan because they either don’t pertain to the Southside Planning area or because there is no legal mechanism that a city can use to keep people from moving into Flagstaff or attending NAU Mountain campus. Also, increasing demand for housing that is unmet will raise the cost of housing for everyone and therefore a “no growth” approach is counter to the City’s affordable housing objectives.

#### **Rent Control (unique comment number 101)**

The City received one specific comment regarding the possibility of the City to consider rent control within the neighborhood. Rent control is a topic beyond the scope of the Southside Community Plan and is not legal in the State of Arizona.

#### **Medical Facilities and a Hospital in the Southside (unique comment numbers 148 and 156)**

The Plan does not address the Regional need for hospitals though medical services are encouraged as part of mixed-use developments. The language pertaining to medical facilities was intended to address small scale community needs. Assembling enough land for a hospital in the Southside would require significant property acquisition and parcel consolidation that is counter to many of the desired outcomes and policies in the Southside Plan.

### City Property

#### ***The city should not sell off its land to obtain affordable housing (unique comment number 34)***

This is not a direction that could be provided in the Community Plan. There are numerous factors of state and federal housing policy that may mean the City must keep this option available to allow for future affordable housing to be possible.

### Public and Community Spaces

#### ***Parks, Park Amenities, and Themes (unique comment numbers 179, 247, 250, 259, 265, 281, 287, 288, 289, 290, 303, and 304)***

The City received considerable feedback regarding what types of parks should be included in the Plan, possible amenities for each park, and the types of green practices that could be installed to make each park as environmentally friendly as possible. Some examples included park concessions, thematic parks, art displays, and dog-friendly parks. All of which are appreciated and many of the ideas presented are viable options for the future. However, it is too early in the process to define thematic elements and design options for specific parks. The illustrations displayed some concepts discussed but not all. More ideas can be considered once the land available for park space is finalized. Then, further public involvement is expected on the design of any park, especially for the proposed park located near the Lone Tree Overpass.

#### ***Parks shown are not central to the Southside Community (unique comment number 221)***

The City does not own any property that is centrally located in the Southside. The lack of park space was important enough that most feedback preferred to develop a park sooner rather than later. There is also no source of funding identified for purchasing property for a park. However, there is a strategy for the City to speculatively purchase parcels for a future park. This policy leaves open the option of creating a park in a more central location sometime in the future if funding or opportunities present themselves.

***Rio and Ellery Street Green Space Project should be a top priority (unique comment number 246)***

The above sentiment was expressed in a community workshop in which attending residents were given a set of multicolored dots, 2 green dots for highest priority, yellow dot for medium priority, and red for not supporting. The exercise resulted in the following: Mikes Pike triangle park received 0 dots, Lone Tree Overpass received 2 green and 1 yellow dot, Example Green Space with trail received one yellow, and the Rio/Ellery Street Green Space received 3 green dots.

Despite the outcome, Ellery was not prioritized because it is unclear with Fire Code requirements and the Rio De Flag Flood Control Project, when it would be possible to carry forward. Meanwhile, Mike's Pike project could be implemented very soon and the O'Leary Street FUTS provides a bike-ped connection that could complete an alternative bike boulevard which was indirectly emphasized in many comments.

***Free access for public facilities primarily for current Southside residents (unique comment 294)***

Public access cannot be guaranteed without making a public space open to everyone. Funding through fees is an alternative but the city is unable to promise a free space to Southside residents that isn't open to others without any costs.

***Murdoch Center amenities and upgrades (unique comments 305 and 306)***

The Murdoch Center was discussed at length throughout the public comment process and many of the comments have made their way to changes in text and illustration. There were a couple of comments regarding upgraded kitchen and technology spaces that were not added to the Southside Plan. The interior of the building can be considered at the design phase when a project is proposed to improve the facility. The comments do open the conversation to possible renovations and expansions in the future including the idea of a renovated kitchen and technology space, but further design and upgrade elements are beyond the scope of this document.

***The proposed Urban Regional activity center should be considered a Historic Activity Center (unique comment number 259)***

There is no overlap between Historic District and the Regional Activity Center per the High Occupancy Housing Plan, therefore this decision is outside the scope of the Southside Plan. The suggestion may be reconsidered as part of the General Plan update.

## Flooding and Other Emergencies

***There should be insurance subsidies for Southside residents only (unique comment number 99 )***

Insurance subsidies could be considered if subsidies become available, but the program must consist of a fair and consistent process. Such a process would involve scoring homes for their risk, historic value, and other such factors.

## Transportation

### ***The city could benefit from a monorail and underground subway system (unique comment number 155)***

This is ambitious and beyond the scope of the Southside Plan. Some of the examples listed in the comment included New York, Miami, and Phoenix, and Flagstaff does not have the population nor the budget to support such a rail system. Mountain line is currently considering modifications of the Downtown Connection Center in the Southside and the introduction of bus rapid transit features to encourage demand for public transit as the next step forward for transit investments.

### ***Pedestrian bridges along highly trafficked roadways (unique comment numbers 134 and 320)***

One topic mentioned multiple times was the inclusion of additional stoplights and a walking bridge along major roadways such as Butler, Lone Tree, and South San Francisco Street. While Butler and Lone Tree will be a fully signalized intersection with crosswalks, FUTS, and sidewalks, the pedestrian bridges are unlikely to make it into the final design. Grade separated crossings are very expensive and only four to eight are going to be funded in the next ten to twenty years meaning official placement will be prioritized at a city-wide level.

### ***Elden Street Extension and Enhancement (unique comment number 244)***

The Elden Street extension may not be a part of the final design of the Lone Tree Overpass and the design and access of the street may be a trade-off with the area available for a park.

### ***Lone Tree Overpass Barrier- Public Safety needs to be considered when accounting for a nearby park (unique comment number 341)***

Specific mitigations are too detailed to incorporate into a neighborhood plan but will be discussed extensively by the project team in charge of the overpass design.

### ***In regard to O'Leary Street, possibly take off parking on one side of the street to make room for a bike lane (unique comment number 390)***

The community has prioritized parking in this area. Also, there is not typically a bike lane on a local street, bikes are expected to function well without their own lane.

### ***There needs to be an overpass near NAU for traffic congestion (unique comment number 404)***

An overpass near NAU is outside the scope of the Southside Plan and the described location would be outside of the Southside Planning area.

## Parking

### ***Parking in front and/or near driveways (unique comment numbers 137 and 206)***

The city received several comments asking for a solution to be made regarding visitors parking in front of or near their driveway. These needs are typically included in the interdisciplinary groups that work on street design and would be beyond the scope of the Plan. One specific commenter suggested the city create an ordinance stating that no person be allowed to park within five feet either side of the driveway. Currently, City and State statute (28-872.A2) says "In front of a public or private driveway", so it would seem redundant to change city ordinance especially considering the limited public parking currently available in certain areas of Flagstaff. A vehicle parked within five feet does not impair access to the driveway and would unnecessarily restrict otherwise lawful parking.

### ***Paid Parking in Flagstaff (unique comment 310)***

The City received a comment discussing how paid parking has directly led to a personal and more widespread halt of shopping within Flagstaff, and that paid parking should be abolished. It is a wider discussion than the Southside to determine where paid parking is delineated because parking enforcement throughout the area is dependent on ParkFlag revenues, as are opportunities to create new parking.

## Policing and Enforcement

### ***Increased Police presence in the Southside Community (unique comment numbers 78, 81, 185, 327)***

During the community workshop and community forum processes, increased policing and enforcement was cited repeatedly as something that could enhance the Southside neighborhood. The issue, as one commenter put it, “has become a top discussion among residents and business owners”.

The Flagstaff Police Department must balance the constitutional rights of every person and the public safety of the entire community. The department has programs to support community members experiencing homelessness, substance abuse, and mental health challenges. With this in mind, enforcement is not the most effective means of reducing crime. Community design and social support programs are recommended throughout the Plan including Policy S16.4: “Create an environment for safer nightlife in the neighborhood” and a strategy to continue the increased police presence around closing time for bars and restaurants to help control noise.

### ***Start arresting panhandlers in the area (unique comment number 331)***

Treating panhandling as a crime has been deemed unconstitutional and the police department does not arrest people for this activity in and of itself.

## Zoning Code

### ***Southside could be enhanced by implementing a maintenance code and/or greater code enforcement (unique comment numbers 181 184)***

This issue has come up infrequently in public comment and was not carried forward. A property maintenance ordinance has been proposed in Flagstaff previously without success and some public comments early in the process worried that such an ordinance would be a force for gentrification.

### ***There should be updated design standards made available to the public to influence future development (unique comment number 157)***

There is still time between proposing Zoning Code updates and the completion of the Southside Historic Context to include updated inventory into the process but the work will not be completed before the Southside Plan is presented to City Council, because funding for an updated context was not provided until this year’s budget.

## Other

### ***Rumor of the tracks moving (unique comment number 263)***

The city is unaware of efforts to relocate the main rail lines through the City. There may be some reconfiguration of spurs in the future and discussions of completing the third rail along the current alignment. Completely relocating the tracks is outside the scope of the Southside Plan.

### ***Could the railroad spur be used as a trail and maintenance? (unique comment number 301)***

The railroad spur is not being abandoned as of the latest communication with BNSF and therefore this is not an available option.

***No more aspen trees in the Southside (unique comment number 138)***

Specific tree species are not called out in the Plan.

***Fuller grown trees should be planted in place of those cut-down, saplings will not provide as much oxygen or coverage (unique comment number 275)***

Planting full-grown trees are very expensive and have a large disturbance area of soil. In addition, the root system for trees can fail in this region because of a lack of water without heavy irrigation. These factors make successful replanting large trees unlikely to be successful.