

McMillan Mesa Natural Area Zoning Map Amendments PZ-20-00063

PART 2 – CONCEPT ZONING PLAN

II.7 Project Narrative:

Project Title

McMillan Mesa Natural Area Zoning Map Amendments

Project Start Date

June 1, 2020

Contact

The applicant team is led by the City of Flagstaff Open Space Program. Genevieve Pearthree, the Planning Development Manager, assigned to this case, is available at gpearthree@flagstaffaz.gov or 928-213-2603. Robert Wallace, Open Space Specialist responsible for submittal of this rezone application, can be reached at robert.wallace@flagstaffaz.gov or (928) 213-2154. Other departments supporting this effort are the City's Comprehensive Planning program, Real Estate, and GIS.

Reason for Request

City Council directed staff to amend the Regional Plan and Zoning Code to reflect the outcome of Proposition 413.

Project Summary

The City Council adopted the McMillan Mesa Village Specific Plan in 1992 and the McMillan Mesa Master Plan in 2002. The Flagstaff 2030 Regional Plan acknowledged the ongoing community conversation regarding the conservation values of the Mesa and designated portions of the City parcels on the Mesa north of Forest Avenue as "Employment," southwest as "Future Suburban," and areas outside of Buffalo Park as "Area in White" – a designation that does not bind those parcels to any specific use.

On November 8, 2016, approximately 86% of Flagstaff voters voted in favor of Proposition 413 – Campaign for a Greater Buffalo Park. This proposition restricted the use of approximately 300 acres of City-owned Property on McMillan Mesa to public open space and passive recreation. The results of the election were canvassed and approved by Resolution Number 2016-38 on November 28, 2016.

The land affected by Proposition 413 is primarily zoned as Public Facilities and Rural Residential, both of which permit "Outdoor Public Uses, General" and "Passive Recreation" as allowed uses. According to the Ordinance, the City cannot sell the land or permit any of the other allowed uses under Public Facilities and Rural Residential, and therefore it is protected as de facto conservation land given the development limitations. Even though the current zoning allows for the passive recreation uses required by the proposition, the City Council directed staff to amend the Regional Plan and Zoning Code to reflect the outcomes of Proposition 413. The City Council approved the McMillan Mesa Natural Area major plan amendment on Tuesday, October 16, 2018. The resolution amended the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030 by amending the Future Growth Illustration (Maps 21 and 22) and the Road Network Illustration (Map 25) to make the land use and road network designations consistent with the McMillan Mesa Natural Area. The resolution went into effect on November 15, 2018. This Zoning Code Amendment proposes to rezone the Property to Public Open Space for the McMillan Mesa Natural Area, making the Property's zoning consistent with the Regional Plan Amendment, Future Growth Illustration and related maps, and Proposition 413.

Regional Plan Conformance Analysis

This section of the application for the zoning map amendment explains how the proposed amendment will affect the vision expressed in the written goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan that are most relevant to the proposed amendment. This includes an analysis of conflicting goals and policies in the following section called Regional Plan Variance Analysis.

Supporting Goals and Policies

Abbreviations Used Below:

- Environmental Planning and Conservation - E&C.
- Open Space – OS
- Community Character - CC
- Growth Areas and Land Uses - LU
- Economic Development - ED
- Neighborhoods, Housing, & Urban Conservation - NH
- Recreation - Rec
- Transportation - T
- Water Resources – WR

➤ *Open Space, Natural and Cultural Resources*

Policy E&C.4.1. Assess vulnerabilities and risks of Flagstaff's natural resources

Goal E&C.5. Preserve dark skies as an unspoiled natural resource, basis for an important economic sector, and core element of community character.

Goal E&C.6. Protect, restore and improve ecosystem health and maintain native plant and animal community diversity across all land ownerships in the Flagstaff region.

Policy E&C.6.3. Promote protection, conservation, and ecological restoration of the region's diverse ecosystem types and associated animals

Policy E&C.6.7. Use best practices to control the spread of exotic and invasive plants, weeds, and animals, and eradicate where possible.

Goal E&C.8. Maintain areas of natural quiet and reduce noise pollution.

Policy E&C.10.1. Encourage local development to protect, conserve, and when possible enhance and restore wildlife habitat.

Policy E&C.10.2. Protect, conserve, and when possible enhance and restore wildlife habitat on public land.

Policy E&C.10.3. Protect sensitive and uncommon habitats such as ephemeral wetlands, riparian habitats, springs and seeps, rare plant communities, and open prairie ecosystems including the physical elements such as water sources and soil types on which they depend through open space acquisition efforts, avoiding these features in the design of subdivisions and other development, etc.

Policy E&C.10.5. Support the development of watchable wildlife recreation opportunities.

Goal OS.1. The region has a system of open lands, such as undeveloped natural areas, wildlife corridors and habitat areas, trails, access to public lands, and greenways to support the natural environment that sustains our quality of life, cultural heritage, and ecosystem health.

Policy CC.2.1. Actively locate, identify, interpret, and preserve historical, archaeological, and cultural resources, in cooperation with other agencies and non-governmental organizations, as aspects of our society for future generations to retain, understand, and enjoy their cultural identity.

Policy LU.3.3. Protect sensitive cultural and environmental resources with appropriate land uses and buffers.

Policy LU.4.2. Utilize the following as guidance in the development process: Natural Environment maps, Environmental Planning and Conservation policies, Considerations for Development, Cultural Sensitivity, and Historical Preservation maps, and Community Character policies, while respecting private property rights.

McMillan Mesa Natural Area provides the community an opportunity to expand the preservation and restoration of a montane grassland. This is an at-risk ecosystem type in the Flagstaff area. It also supports the preservation of dark skies by reducing lighting on the Mesa, which allows more recreational opportunities for amateur astronomers and supports the astronomy industry in the region.

At this time, invasive species are the most challenging ecological issue for the Mesa. With the management of the Property being coordinated under the Legally Designated Open Space Management Plan, the Property will be surveyed for invasive plants, and funds will be directed towards vegetation management. This will improve the ecological health and aesthetics of the Property.

Having this Property managed by the Open Space Program creates opportunities for forest restoration projects to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire to start or spreading through the Property. This work will be organized and completed in partnership with the City of Flagstaff Fire Department.

This area's open space designation will also allow the opportunity to manage the site to interpret the natural and cultural history and provide a space that supports education and research opportunities. Watchable wildlife opportunities may also be considered as part of the area's Management Plan.

➤ *Great Streets and Views*

Goal CC.1. Reflect and respect the region's natural setting and dramatic views in the built environment.
Policy CC.1.4. Identify, protect, and enhance gateways, gateway corridors, and gateway communities.
Policy LU.19.3. Enhance the viewsheds and frame the view along the corridors through design.
Policy ED.7.4. Invest in attractive community gateways, main corridors, and public spaces to draw the business and workforce the region desires.

Cedar Avenue is a Great Street on Map 12 of the Flagstaff Regional Plan. The corridor offers spectacular views of the San Francisco Peaks, Dry Lake Hills, and McMillan Mesa. The preservation of open space will preserve views throughout the corridor: the trees, slopes, and the grasslands. The presence of natural resources will enhance the surrounding land use values for the neighborhood and business park.

➤ *Nearby Neighborhoods and Schools*

Policy NH.1.8. Prioritize the stabilization of a neighborhood's identity and maintain cultural diversity as new development occurs.
Policy CC.5.4. Complete sidewalks and Flagstaff Urban Trails System connections for all schools, community colleges, and university campuses.

The preservation of the McMillan Mesa Natural Area will preserve the natural environment that is important to surrounding neighborhoods. It will also maintain safe non-motorized access through the open space to the neighborhoods, community centers, and schools that are located around the Natural Area.

➤ *Employment and Special District Area Types*

Policy LU.15.4. Accommodate safe and convenient walking, biking, and transit facilities in existing and proposed employment centers.
Policy LU.17.1. Enhance connectivity and coordinated planning efforts with neighborhoods contiguous to special planning areas.
Policy ED.7.3. Leverage the region's assets of history, culture, and natural environment, as well as educational and scientific facilities, as an economic development tool.

Preserving open space and enhancing the quality of trail connections in and around an employment area like McMillan Mesa is part of the Regional Plan's vision for harnessing the natural and scenic assets of the community as a tool for economic development. The development of biomedical and long-term medical

facilities in the McMillan Mesa business park brings together science, patient therapies, wellness, and workforce housing. Parks and open space contribute to these attributes and can help fuel the marketability and vitality of the area. Numerous trails provide walking and biking access between neighborhoods and employment areas. These include the Arrowhead, Arizona, Cedar, McMillan Mesa, Mesa Ridge, Segó Lily, Sunset, and Switzer Canyon Trails, which provide access from surrounding neighborhoods, including Switzer Ridge/Mesa, McMillan Mesa Village, and Sunnyside. Many of these trails traverse the Natural Area, cross Cedar/Forest Avenue, and continue into Buffalo Park. Furthermore, planned management actions identified in the Legally Designated Open Space Management Plan include investigating options to realign the steep section of the Cedar Trail. This realignment would enhance alternative transportation and increase public safety. Reviewing existing unauthorized trail alignments for inclusion/exclusion in the trail system as connector trails and designing ADA compliant trails will also be considered.

➤ *Recreation*

Policy Rec.1.1. Integrate active and passive recreational sites within walking distance throughout the region to promote a healthy community for all City and County residents and visitors.
Policy Rec.1.2. Promote public and private partnerships to offer parks, recreation facilities, and resources.
Policy Rec.1.3. Coordinate City, County, and Forest Service recreational planning to best serve the community.
Policy Rec.1.4. Design new or updated public facilities to include parks, open space, and/or recreational opportunities where feasible.

The Buffalo Park/McMillan Mesa Natural Area complex will provide the City's second-largest park/open space area. The size of the area and its continuity with Forest Service trails and resources will further enhance these combined properties' management and recreational opportunities.

➤ *Transportation*

Goal T.3. Provide transportation infrastructure that is conducive to conservation, preservation, and development goals to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts on the natural and built environment.
Goal T.5. Increase the availability and use of pedestrian infrastructure, including FUTS, as a critical element of a safe and livable community.
Goal T.6. Provide for bicycling as a safe and efficient means of transportation and recreation.

McMillan Mesa will provide an opportunity to walk and bicycle for recreation and transportation. There are eight existing trails that pass through the Natural Area, and more are planned through the Management Plan process. Schools Coconino High School and BASIS benefit from safe places for students to get to and from campus, walking and biking.

➤ *Water Resources Goals and Policies*

Goal WR.1. Maintain a sustainable water budget incorporating regional hydrology, ecosystem needs, and social and economic well-being.
Policy WR.1.2. Seek regional opportunities to partner with resource land managers and adjacent landowners to improve water yield and hydrologic processes.

The proposed McMillan Mesa Natural Area is expected to have no impact on Water Sources (WR.1 and WR.2) or Water Demand (WR.3 and WR.4) goals and policies. The Northern Arizona Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology, and some of the USGS facilities is currently served by a pressure sewer that connects to a gravity sewer toward the north end of this existing development. There is a desire from the City of Flagstaff to eliminate all pressure sewers. Therefore, there is a plan to serve this area with a gravity sewer by connecting the developed area to the sewer main within Forest Ave. This connection would cross a portion of the proposed Natural Area. This project will need to be reviewed by the City's legal department to ensure adherence to Proposition 413 directives.

➤ *Stormwater and Watershed Management, and Water Quality Goals and Policies*

Policy WR.5.3. Identify downstream impacts as the result of development and provide for mitigation measure to address impacts. When possible, mitigations should be non-structural in nature.

Policy WR.5.7. Support healthy watershed characteristics through implementation of practices, consistent with the City of Flagstaff Low Impact Design Manual, that improve flood control and flood attenuation, stormwater quality, and water sustainability; increase groundwater recharge; enhance open space quality; increase biodiversity, and reduce land disturbance and soil compaction.

Goal WR.6. Protect, preserve, and improve the quality of surface water, groundwater, and reclaimed water in the region.

Policy WR.6.4. Encourage low-impact development strategies.

While the Natural Area is not expected to create any downstream impacts, mitigation, treatment, and recharge opportunities exist within its boundaries, as discussed in the Stormwater and Drainage Impact analysis subsection. The use of Low Impact Design principles in the creation of such mitigation efforts should minimize the visual impact of such facilities.

Regional Plan Variance Analysis

➤ *Economic Development*

Policy ED.3.8. Protect existing business and industrial land uses from encroachment and allow for their expansion.

Policy ED.4.2. Promote variety and flexibility in land use and development options within the urban growth boundary

The designation of McMillan Mesa Natural Area as Public Open Space removes approximately 300 acres from the goal of promoting infill and intensification near activity centers.

➤ *Growth Areas and Land Uses*

Policy LU.5.1. Encourage development patterns within the designated growth boundaries to sustain efficient infrastructure projects and maintenance.

Policy LU.16.1. Encourage the continued intensification, expansion, and protection of existing industrial, warehousing, and distribution uses from encroachment where appropriate.

The open space designation conflicts with the Regional Plan policy to protect employment and uses from encroachment.

➤ *Transportation*

Policy T.8.1. Promote efficient transportation connectivity to major trade corridors, employment centers, and special districts that enhances the region's standing as a major economic hub.

Policy T.8.3. Design neighborhood streets using appropriate traffic calming techniques and street widths to sustain quality of life while maintaining traffic safety.

Policy T.8.4. Protect rights-of-way for future transportation corridors.

Policy T.8.5. Support the area's economic vitality by improving intersection design for freight movements

The elimination of Ponderosa Parkways extension to Gemini will reduce driving accessibility of the immediate area and could increase traffic on the 4th Street corridor. This change is expected to increase vehicle travel distances, cut through traffic in neighborhoods, and affect emergency response times.

Impact Analyses

➤ *Transportation Impact Analysis*

As a result of not constructing the future "Access" road between Ponderosa Parkway and Gemini, vehicle trips on Switzer Canyon, Pine Cliff, Turquoise, and 4th Street may receive more vehicle traffic than predicted in the Regional Plan Development Scenarios Analysis.

➤ *Water, Sewer, and Stormwater Drainage Impact Analysis*

• *Water Demand and Capacity*

There is no expected change in demand or capacity based on the proposed McMillan Mesa Natural Area; no associated improvements are necessary.

The majority of water mains exist within the existing road's right-of-ways. In addition to water mains within the right-of-ways, there are some eight-inch water mains that connect the San Francisco de Asis school/church to Pinecliff Dr and Gemini Rd's 12-inch water mains. No new water mains are desired or expected within the proposed McMillan Mesa Natural Area. However, the Legally Designated Open Space Management Plan does state that the City of Flagstaff Water Services will continue to have access to the existing lines that pass through the proposed Natural Area.

• *Stormwater*

There are no expected changes to any downstream stormwater facilities based on the proposed McMillan Mesa Natural Area.

There are opportunities within the proposed Natural Area to potentially improve stormwater quality or reduce downstream effects. A location was identified within Tract J of the original McMillan Mesa Specific Plan (which is now part of the Natural Area) for a potential detention basin. This location has some existing stormwater infrastructure and has historically experienced drainage issues during large events along Hemlock Way. Another area that may benefit from future stormwater infrastructure improvements is along the Natural Area's eastern border, against Isabel St. The slopes against Isabel St are soft, and sediment sometimes ends up in the Street during heavy rain events. The City's Legally Designated Open Space Management Plan identifies planned management actions to work with the City Stormwater Section to determine the need for stormwater treatments within the Natural Area.

There are numerous FUTS throughout the proposed Natural Area. The City's Stormwater Division needs approximately 30 feet around each trail to maintain the drainage and engineered features that would help the functionality of the existing FUTS. The City's Legally Designated Open Space Management Plan does permit the maintenance of formal trails.

• *100-Year Water Supply*

There is no expected change to the City of Flagstaff's 100-year water supply since the area's water demand is equal-to or less-than the original plan for the area, which was used to determine the 100-year water supply needs.

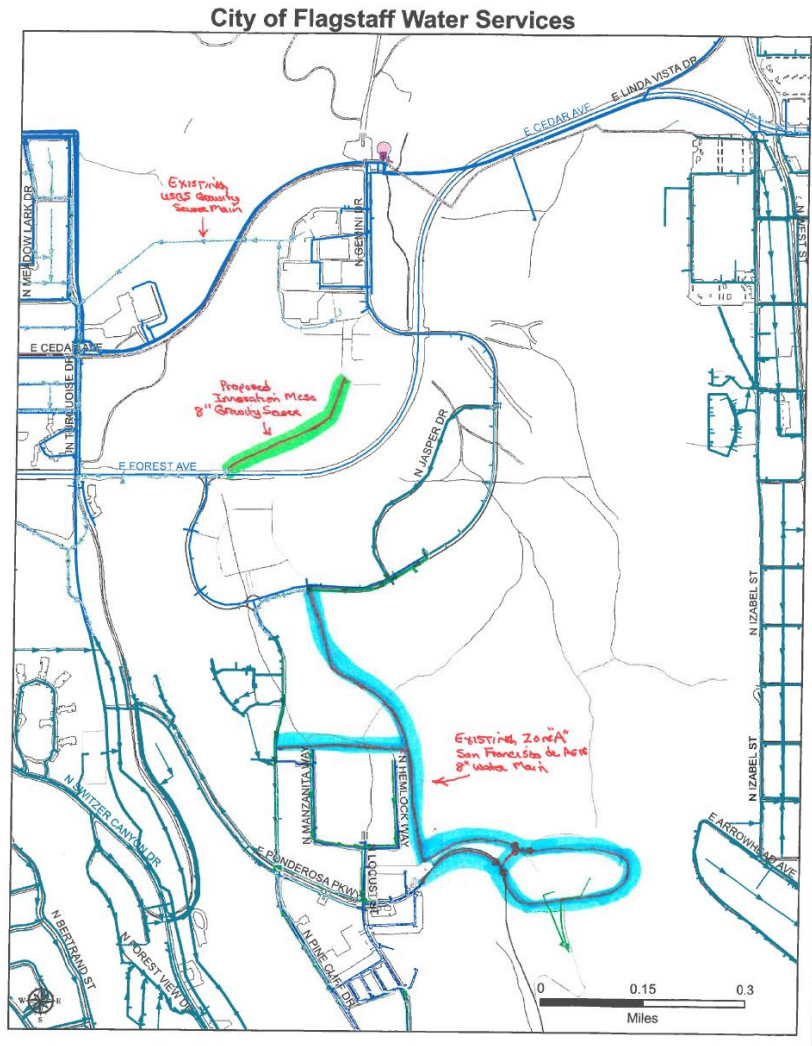
• *Reclaimed Water*

The McMillan Mesa Natural Area has not proposed using any reclaimed water. Therefore, there is no change to the City of Flagstaff's reclaimed water system as a result of this proposed rezoning. There is one existing 8-inch reclaimed waterline that runs through the McMillan Mesa Natural Area. Water Services needs access to this line at any time for maintenance, repairs in the event of a break or leak, and to access valves. Any rights granted by existing easements will not be impacted by this rezone. Moving forward, associated projects will need to involve City legal review and input to ensure adherence to legal directives of Proposition 413.

• *Sewer Demand and Capacity*

There is no expected change in sewer demand or capacity based on the McMillan Mesa Natural Area and no associated improvements are necessary.

The majority of sewer mains are located within the existing road's right-of-ways. The southern half of the existing development north of the Natural Area, containing the Northern Arizona Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology and some of the USGS facilities, is currently served by a pressure sewer that connects to a gravity sewer toward the north end of this existing development. There is a desire from the City of Flagstaff to eliminate all pressure sewers. Therefore, a plan to serve this area with a gravity sewer by connecting the developed area to the sewer main within Forest Ave has been proposed. This proposed connection would have to cross the McMillan Mesa Natural Area. Proposition 413 provides direction regarding improvements on the Property. This project will need to involve City legal review and input to determine if the project can move forward and adhere to legal directives of Proposition 413.



Water Service's proposed USGS gravity sewer project.

➤ *School Impact Analysis*

The designation of McMillan Mesa Natural Area to Public Open Space is not expected to generate new school enrollment for the Flagstaff area.

➤ *Police and Fire Impact Analysis*

The removal of the Ponderosa Parkway extension from the Road Network Illustration may have an impact on response times for nearby neighborhoods. Fire Station #2 is located on Ponderosa Parkway below the edge of the Mesa. To access properties to the north, engines will have to route around the Natural Area, which will add time to responses.

Having this Property managed by the Open Space Program creates opportunities for forest restoration projects to reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire starting or spreading through the Property.

➤ **Economic Development Impact Analysis**

The proposed plan amendment will have both positive and negative effects on the economic development of the community. Positive influences will be to protect community character, including open space as a marketable characteristic to the medical and science research business park developing on the Mesa, and to create opportunities for the recreation and tourism industries on City land. The economic value (consumer surplus) derived from non-motorized trail use in Arizona by in-state residents, based on a midpoint estimate, is \$8.3 billion per year, with model estimates ranging between \$6.2 billion and \$10.6 billion, according to The Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics, The University of Arizona, 2020 assessment. The undesired economic effect will be the City's reduced capacity for infill and reduction in the size of the business park on McMillan Mesa.

Public Utilities and Essential Services Use Analysis

The proposed McMillan Mesa Natural Area is expected to have no impact on water demand, water capacity, wastewater demand, wastewater capacity, or other services that are typically associated with providing public facilities.

A complete new legal survey for the entire McMillan Mesa Natural Area for the following ten parcels (107-01-001B, 101-28-007C, 110-08-001G, 109-02-001S, 107-01-001F, 101-28-007E, 101-37-001E, 101-37-002H, 101-37-002J, and 107-01-001G) has been completed. A registered surveyor completed this legal description to obtain legal descriptions for the City Council ordinance. The City's GIS department produced maps that include all known existing easements and utilities within the area to be rezoned. This process identified as many utilities within the site as possible. The City recognizes that McMillan Mesa Natural Area is encumbered by existing easements. Any rights granted by existing easements will not be impacted by this rezone. In addition, the Open Space Program will continue to work with existing utilities with no easement, existing easement dedications, and other existing encumbrances to ensure adherence to legal directives of Proposition 413.

Land Use Analysis

Prior to McMillan Mesa Natural Area Major Plan Amendment in 2018, the Flagstaff 2030 Regional Plan designated portions of the City parcels on the Mesa north of Forest Avenue as "Employment," southwest as "Future Suburban," and areas outside of Buffalo Park as "Area in White" – a designation that does not bind those parcels to any specific use. When Proposition 413 passed and following the McMillan Mesa Natural Area Major Plan Amendment in 2018, these associated uses changed. The major plan amendment reduced the "Area in white", decreased the Suburban area, and increased the city-wide areas of Parks/Open Space. The net reduction in the Employment/Special District area types, which are designated for research, office, business park, industrial and employment generating uses, is approximately 28 acres. The mapping correction to Future Employment along Gemini increased Employment/Special District areas by 5.3 acres. Therefore, the total reduction in Employment and Special Districts is 22.7 acres. Designating a new "Special Planning Area" for the veteran's home on the Future Growth Illustration allocated 10 acres to this purpose.

The land affected by Proposition 413 is currently zoned as Public Facilities, Rural Residential, and Research and Development. According to the Ordinance, the City cannot sell the land or permit any of the other allowed uses under Public Facilities and Rural Residential. City Council directed staff to amend the Zoning Code to reflect the outcomes of Proposition 413. This proposed Zoning Code Amendment recommends rezoning the Property to Public Open Space for the McMillan Mesa Natural Area (10 parcels listed below), making the Property's zoning consistent with the Regional Plan Amendment, Future Growth Illustration and related maps, and proposition 413.

McMillan Mesa Natural Area 10 Parcels Proposed to be Rezoned to Public Open Space:

- All of 107-01-001B: 152.52 acres southeast of Gemini Drive and the “cinder pit” parcel. Existing Zoning: 5.168661 acres Public Facilities and 147.34 acres Rural Residential
- All of 101-28-007C: 19.10 acres parcel immediately north of the “Horseshoe Neighborhood”. Existing Zoning: 19.10 acres Public Facilities.
- Part of 110-08-001G: 50.16 acres (remaining parts are Buffalo Part and USGS business park) the southwest portion of this 298-acre parcel bounded by USGS facility, Switzer Canyon Trail, Forest Avenue, and North Turquoise Drive. Existing Zoning: 16.109275 acres Public Facilities and 34.050725 acres Rural Residential.
- Part of 109-02-001S: 70.43 acres of 181.8 acres (rest is Buffalo Park) the southern portion of this parcel bounded by Forest Avenue, Coconino High School, the “cinder pit”, and the APS powerline. Existing Zoning: 59.749 acres Public Facilities and 10.68 acres Rural Residential.
- All of 107-01-001F: 1.94 acres, located southeast of Gemini drive. Existing Zoning: Research and Development.
- All of 101-28-007E: 0.01 acres parcel east of N. Pine Cliff Drive and south of parcel #101-46-005A. Existing Zoning: Public Facility
- All of 101-37-001E: 4.158662 acres 1751 N Gemini Dr. Flagstaff, AZ 86001. Existing Zoning: Research and Development. Flagstaff Urban Trail System connector.
- All of 101-37-002H: 1.186275 acres 1750 N Gemini Dr. Flagstaff, AZ 86001. Existing Zoning: Research and Development. Flagstaff Urban Trail System connector.
- All of 101-37-002J: a 0.08 acres parcel adjacent to 107-01-001F. Existing Zoning: Research and Development.
- All of 107-01-001G: a 0.09 acres parcel adjacent on the west side of parcel 107-01-001B. Existing Zoning: Rural Residential.

Changes in Land Use due to this Proposed Zoning Amendment

Area Zoning	Acres Reduced	Acres Added	Net Change
Public Facility	100.14	0	-100.14
Rural Residential	192.07	0	-192.07
Research & Development	7.45	0	-7.45
Public Open Space	0	~300	~300

Public Good Analysis

Positive impacts of rezoning the Property include providing the community an opportunity to expand the preservation and restoration of a montane grassland. This is an at-risk ecosystem type in the Flagstaff area. The Buffalo Park/McMillan Mesa Natural Area complex will provide the City's second-largest, and most diverse recreational and natural resource area. The water, wildlife, vegetation, and geologic resources are important factors that support the Property's permanent preservation and will subsequently be managed and maintained appropriately to ensure protection. Having this Property managed by the Open Space Program creates opportunities for forest restoration projects in partnership with the City Fire Department that could reduce the potential for catastrophic wildfire starting or spreading through the Property. Rezoning the Property will preserve views within its boundaries and along priority corridors adjacent or through its boundary. Its continuity with Forest Service trails and resources will further enhance the opportunities of these combined properties. Eight existing multi-use trails pass through the Natural Area. These trails provide a chance to walk and bicycle for recreation and transportation. The presence of natural resources will enhance the surrounding neighborhoods and business park by protecting a marketable characteristic while providing mental and physical health opportunities for the community.

The allocation of 10 acres for the construction of the Veteran's home is part of the business park setting and will bring in patients throughout the region, providing a potential economic advantage. The preservation of McMillan Mesa Natural Area as Public Open Space offers the community with recreational opportunities that support physical and mental health. McMillan Mesa provides healthy opportunities to get outside for neighborhood and business parks alike, including Switzer Mesa, McMillan Mesa Village, Stone Ridge, Hospital Hill, the USGS and NACET Business Park, Shadow Mountain, Grandview Homes, and Sunnyside. Subsequently, the rezoning of this Property provides low-income residents with a direct connection to the natural environment. It helps achieve environmental justice, providing access to natural settings that allow better health, environment, and equitable access. People living in walkable neighborhoods get about 35–45 more minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week and are substantially less likely to be overweight. Transportation and land use will also be supported by prioritizing walking and biking to support public health. Rezoning the Property supports economic prosperity and recreation by enhancing recreation and outdoor opportunities and accommodating increased use.

The McMillan Mesa Natural Area is expected to have no impact on water demand, water capacity, wastewater demand, or wastewater capacity. While the Natural Area is not likely to create any downstream stormwater impacts, opportunities for mitigation exist to help with stormwater runoff.

Public Benefits:

- The McMillan Mesa Natural Area will preserve views within its boundaries and along priority corridors adjacent to the area. These views are meaningful to the character of the Flagstaff community and are essential to maintaining tourism and promoting economic benefits.
- Due to its location, it provides numerous neighborhoods with access to exercise opportunities and a healthy outdoor setting, both important components that are shown to improve the health of communities.
- McMillan Mesa's urban location and proximity to educational institutions make it a good fit for the biological studies of species, environmental investigations, and opportunities to visit the Property to learn about land management and urban planning. Coconino High School is within proximity to the northeast, BASIS Flagstaff Charter School to the east, and the Montessori Charter School of Flagstaff to the south. Also within walking distance is the Peak School, Killip Elementary School, and Pine Forest Charter School. The natural area and provides excellent chances for outdoor education.
- Several trails bisect the Natural Area. Trails can act as a firebreak, causing a gap in the vegetation to act as a barrier to slow or stop wildfire's progress and could hopefully reduce the size of a wildfire. General goals include maximizing the health of the Natural Area through the implementation of thinning and broadcast burning operations. Properly maintained trails could be useful to conducting fire operations and could offset the cost of completing work.
- City Strategic Plan Goals Supported by Rezoning:
 - 1.2, 2.2, 3.2, 4.1, 4.2, and 4.4.
- CAAP Goals Supported by Rezoning:
 - Protect existing forests, resources, and meaningful open spaces.
 - Support proactive engagement with the community.
 - Protect natural area and ecosystems services that are most vulnerable to the impacts of increased visitation and climate change.
 - Maintain ecosystems as dependable sources of recreation, economic prosperity, biodiverse plant, and wildlife habitat, and improve forest management through collaboration with regional partners.

Challenges presented by the preservation of the Natural Area include the City's reduced capacity for infill, reduction in the size of the business park on McMillan Mesa, and the indirect effects of the reduced motorized transportation through the Natural Area. The designation of Public Open Space on a large area central to Flagstaff further separates the east and west sides of the City and is, therefore, inconsistent with the Regional

Plan goals of promoting infill and intensification near activity centers. The open space designation also conflicts with the Regional Plan policy to protect employment land uses from encroachment.

Prior to McMillan Mesa Natural Area Major Plan Amendment in 2018, the Flagstaff 2030 Regional Plan designated portions of the City parcels on the Mesa north of Forest Avenue as "Employment," southwest as "Future Suburban," and areas outside of Buffalo Park as "Area in White" – a designation that does not bind those parcels to any specific use. These designations allow associated land uses that included employment expansion, suburban home expansion, and other development. When Proposition 413 passed, and following the McMillan Mesa Natural Area Major Plan Amendment in 2018, associated uses and the transportation network changed. The major plan amendment reduced the "Area in white", decreased the Suburban area, and increased the city-wide areas of Parks/Open Space. The reduction in Employment/Special District area type, which is designated for research, office, business park, industrial and employment-generating uses, is approximately 23 acres.

Transportation networks were also identified before the approval of the passing of Proposition 413. The Road Network Illustration in the Regional Plan showed a future road connection from the south. An "Access" road that would have connected Ponderosa Parkway and Gemini, though there was no anticipated timeline on when it may have been constructed. As a result of not constructing the future "Access" road between Ponderosa Parkway and Gemini, vehicle trips on Switzer Canyon, Pine Cliff, Turquoise, and 4th Street may receive more vehicle traffic than predicted. This change is expected to increase vehicle travel distances, cut-through traffic in neighborhoods, and affect emergency response times.

Public Challenges:

- The Open Space designation conflicts with the Regional Plan policy to protect employment and uses from encroachment.
- As a result of not constructing the future "Access" road between Ponderosa Parkway and Gemini, vehicle trips on Switzer Canyon, Pine Cliff, Turquoise, and 4th Street may receive more vehicle traffic than predicted in the Regional Plan Development Scenarios Analysis. This may also have an impact on response times for nearby neighborhoods. Fire Station #2 is located on Ponderosa Parkway below the edge of the Mesa. To access properties to the north, engines will have to route around the Natural Area, which will add time to responses.

These changes are not expected to be detrimental to the public interest (health, safety, convenience, welfare) and support other important community initiatives, such as City strategic plan goals and the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan (CAAP).

Access to the Natural Area and surrounding Open Space properties are provided by Cedar Avenue to the east and northwest and Pine Cliff Drive by way of Turquoise to the south and southwest. Gemini will provide ingress and egress to the Veteran's Home. The Natural Area will generate fewer trips from the site of this plan amendment than the original land use predictions. The exact modeling of trips for the Veteran's home will be completed by the State and may be reviewed by the City. The proposed McMillan Mesa Natural Area is expected to have no impact on water demand, water capacity, wastewater demand, or wastewater capacity.

Property Suitability Analysis

There is good access to the Natural Area provided by Cedar Avenue to the East and northwest and Pine Cliff Drive by way of Turquoise to the south and southwest. NAIPTA bus service Route 2 (Blue) is provided on Cedar Avenue at the eastern intersection with Gemini and through a school diversion along Gemini for school start and release times. FUTS trails allow for bicycle and pedestrian access from Ponderosa Parkway, Cedar Avenue, and Buffalo Park. FUTS trails also circulate recreational traffic through Natural Area and Buffalo Park. These trails provide recreation access to the Dry Lake Hills and Mt. Elden on the Coconino National Forest.

Preservation of the Natural Area provides the community an opportunity to expand the protection and restoration of a montane grassland, an at-risk ecosystem type in the Flagstaff area. The Buffalo Park/McMillan Mesa Natural Area complex will preserve views within its boundaries and along priority corridors adjacent or through its boundary.

McMillan Mesa provides access for passive recreation, education opportunities, and escape from urbanized settings. The Natural Area will preserve natural and cultural resources such as:

- Steep slopes, rocky outcrops and escarpment, and forest resources on the eastern side of the Property,
- Special status (rare) plant species,
- Sensitive wildlife species,
- The viewshed corridor and Great Street designation along Cedar Avenue,
- Passive recreation opportunities throughout the Natural Area and on adjacent open space properties,
- Several cultural and archeological resources on the eastern slopes of the Mesa, and
- Historic resources, including the Beale Wagon Road.

The Property is an important habitat for wildlife and provides the community with wildlife viewing opportunities. The Montane grassland habitat is known for supporting small mammals and is particularly important in providing prey animal populations that support sensitive and threatened birds of prey, such as the Mexican Spotted Owl and Northern Goshawks. The Natural Area provides habitat for mule deer and other species of wildlife. Prairie dog colonies within the plan amendment boundary have been mapped on the north side of Cedar Avenue, south of the USGS, and along the north side of the Natural Area near Coconino High School. Prairie dogs likely exist throughout the properties as their colony size and extent follows population boom and bust cycles.