

# Open Spaces Commission – Strategic Plan Appendices

## Appendix A: Strategic Plan Background

### Chapter 1: Introduction

The Purpose of this Strategic Plan .....	2
The Vision of the Open Spaces Commission .....	2
Mission .....	3
Open Spaces Commission Role, Duties and Structure .....	3
Strategic Plan Themes .....	4
Flagstaff Open Spaces Definitions .....	4

### Chapter 2 – Existing Conditions

Properties Managed .....	6
Current Amenities .....	7
Current Management and Maintenance .....	8
Current State .....	8

### Chapter 3:

Strategy for Achieving Strategic Plan Goals .....	9
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## Appendix B: Identifying and Prioritizing Open Space Areas

Open Space Conservation Criteria Considerations .....	10
Identifying Priority Open Space Areas .....	11
Steps for Identifying Potential Open Space Areas .....	12
Strategy for Building an Open Space System .....	13
Management and Maintenance .....	13

## Appendix C: Open Spaces Commission Authority

Open Spaces Commission Authority .....	14
Important Documents and Their Location .....	15

## Appendix D: Maps

Open Space System Strategic Plan Map .....	16
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# Appendix A: Strategic Plan Background

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### The Purpose of the Strategic Plan

The purpose of the Open Spaces Commission's strategic plan is to support the City of Flagstaff's Open Space properties. The Plan presents a path forward for an open space network that is integrated with the urban environment. It outlines the Commission's role in assisting Flagstaff Open Space and in providing meaningful recommendations and contributions in the preservation, management, and maintenance of Flagstaff Open Space. **The Strategic Plan is divided into two sections, the overview and these appendices respectively.** The Plan also articulates a clear vision for a complete open space system, which will ensure that the city, the Flagstaff community, and other external partners can come to consensus on how to achieve it.

Note: The Open Spaces Commission Strategic Plan complements the Legally Designated Open Spaces Management Plan and functions as the Open Spaces Long-range Management Plan as required by Ordinance 2003-03, which created the Commission. This Plan is not intended to replace the Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan, or the Management Plan for Legally-Designated Open Space Properties. The Open Space section has its own Strategic Plan to implement the day-to-day management of Flagstaff's open space properties and priorities.

### The Vision of the Open Spaces Commission

The Open Spaces Commission envisions a connected system of open lands that support the natural environment and sustain Flagstaff's quality of life, cultural heritage, and ecosystem health. This system includes undeveloped natural areas, wildlife corridors and habitat, trails, public lands, and greenway corridors. These spaces also serve to promote community health, both physical and mental. Additionally, the Open Spaces Commission holds the perspective that land is a living resource for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

The Open Spaces Commission supports Flagstaff Open Space in acquiring and maintaining lands which will enhance the quality of life in Flagstaff.

The Commission's vision for a complete Open Space system includes:

1. The protection of adequate open space throughout Flagstaff, both in the city and on the periphery of Flagstaff in all directions, for ecological preservation, equitable access, and for the community's physical, psychological, and social enjoyment. Adequate open space protection includes:
  - a. Preservation of the natural and unique landforms which define Flagstaff
  - b. Dispersal of critical natural areas throughout the community to provide relief from urban environments
  - c. Interconnection of Flagstaff Open Space with other protected community space (e.g., FUTS, Parks, Coconino County, Forest Service)
  - d. Availability of trail connections for non-motorized movement for the majority of the Flagstaff community
  - e. Accessibility of Open Space via the public transit system
  - f. Proximity to a natural area, greenway, or park within a 10-minute walk (1/4 mile) for the majority of Flagstaff neighborhoods
  - g. Preservation of natural areas south of I-40

2. Sufficient environmental and heritage interpretation for the public in order to encourage a community conservation ethic, the enjoyment of recreational activities, and to provide educational enrichment.
3. Adequate utilities/ facilities at main trailheads (e.g., signage, garbage cans, toilets, water).

## **Mission**

To advocate and support the development of the Flagstaff Open Space System, while preserving current Flagstaff Open Space, and providing equitable recreational opportunities and educational experiences.

## **Open Spaces Commission Role, Duties, and Structure**

The Open Spaces Commission was established by the City of Flagstaff in 2003 to advise the City Council on acquisition, preservation, and management of Flagstaff Open Space. The Commission is composed of seven members – six members from the Flagstaff community and one member from the Planning and Zoning Commission. The Commission serves as an advisory body for the acquisition, management, use, restoration, enhancement, protection, and conservation of legally-designated open space properties (Management Policies for Legally-Designated Open Space Properties – Page 9). The Open Spaces Commission will provide guidance to Flagstaff Open Space regarding management.

### **Flagstaff City Code Title 2-20-001-0003 – Duties**

- It shall be the Commission’s duty to advise the City Council on acquisition, preservation, and alternatives for open space land management.
- The duties of the Commission shall also include, but not be limited to: Reviewing and advising the City Council on the development of Legally Designated Open Spaces Management Plan and policies to provide broad, long-term direction for planning and decision making for the lands designated as Urban Open Spaces Management Area in the Urban Open Spaces Plan of the Flagstaff Area Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan.
- Advising and assisting the Mayor and City Council on ways to educate and involve the community on the value, protection, and stewardship of open space lands.
- Advising and assisting the Mayor and City Council on ways to work collaboratively with other governmental entities, organizations, and departments to advance and ensure the implementation of the Legally Designated Open Spaces Management Plan and the Flagstaff Area Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan.
- Advising and assisting the Mayor and City Council regarding regional open space issues as well as to any regional open spaces coalition that may be formed in the future relative to lands designated as open space in the Greater Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan.
- Obtaining public input and participation in various programs such as environmental education and interpretation on the use, operation, and management of open space and providing information concerning the goals, projects, and operations of the Open Space section.

Overall, the Commission assists the City by sharing the people’s values for a complete Flagstaff Open system and articulating recommendations that help carry out acquisitions, projects, programs, and policies that meet the community’s needs and requests.

### **The structure of the Open Spaces Commission is as follows:**

- Monthly meetings of the required quorum (4 representatives) on the fourth Monday of each month.
- Meeting announcements/ agendas can be located at: <https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/3327/Open-Spaces-Commission>
- Additional meetings as needed, requested by members.
- Working sub-committee groups established as needed

## Strategic Plan Themes

Several “big picture” themes emerged from the strategic planning process.

1. The Preservation of Flagstaff Open Space is a high priority. To many Flagstaff area residents, open space is a defining feature of Flagstaff’s character and attraction. Natural areas define the region’s quality of life, protect biodiversity, improve environmental quality, influence future economic impact, and protect heritage resources. Flagstaff Open Space functions as a land resource, recreational destination, wildlife habitat, and transportation corridor. These areas protect the natural resources that people depend on, such as watersheds, timber, rangelands, and large areas of vegetation that help maintain or improve air and water quality.
2. Flagstaff Open Space areas must be kept in good repair. This includes natural resources such as water quality, native ecology, plant and animal populations, and places of solitude for the community. Heritage resource preservation is a must. These sites instill understanding and appreciation of native populations and shared human history. Flagstaff Open Space preservation is also essential to providing the community with access to recreational and educational opportunities for encouraging and maintaining health.
3. Commitment and partnerships are essential to success. Achieving the goals set forth in this plan will require substantial efforts from the Open Spaces Commission and partners of all types—new and old, to leverage existing resources to make the current Flagstaff Open Space system even better. Achieving goals requires collaboration with City of Flagstaff leadership, City Council, and public land managers such as the Coconino National Forest, Coconino County, the National Park Service, AZ Game & Fish, State Land Trust, and others. Reducing fire hazard while maintaining open space ecological value requires close cooperation with the Flagstaff Fire Department. The completion of important projects and regular maintenance of property necessitates the involvement of individuals and organizations to volunteer their time. In short, the intersection of public and private interests with the Flagstaff Open Space system requires a high degree of community cooperation and involvement.
4. Substantial financial support is required to maintain Flagstaff Open Space. Working to support the Flagstaff Open Space system set forth in this plan will require additional funding to meet increased land stewardship demands, sustain maintenance efforts, foster discovery and learning, and meet the community’s needs by protecting the essential lands and providing equitable access. The length of time required to implement the plan is directly related to the city increasing support and the length of time required to secure funding sources.

## Flagstaff Open Space Definitions

Designated open space is a complex mosaic of undeveloped or minimally developed lands that have been designated to protect natural resources, serve as a buffer from development, and provide opportunities for recreation that require minimal facilities. Such recreational uses include walking, trail running, biking, wildlife watching, photography, and quiet reflection. Flagstaff Open Space differs from parks in that open space does not have the developed facilities traditionally associated with city parks, such as stadium-style lighting, bleachers, playground equipment, and competitive sports fields. The following terms are used in the Flagstaff Regional Plan and subsequent planning and implementation documents to clearly articulate the community’s open space components. Designated open space is made up of one or more of the following components:

- **Natural Areas:** Lands primarily left in a natural state, which contain significant natural, heritage, aesthetic, or recreational features that warrant protection.
- **Heritage Areas:** Lands that contain significant historic or cultural resources.
- **Parks and Recreation Areas:** Lands generally dedicated to recreational uses. (The advising body for these areas is the Parks and Recreation Commission).

- **Trails:** Pathways for all forms of non-motorized transportation and recreation.
- **Scenic Views and Vistas:** Lands consisting of open hillsides, riparian corridors, and farmlands usually visible from public space and forming a prominent context for the built environment.
- **Neighborhoods:** Lands near residents' homes, which are used primarily by the immediate residents, but not exclusively, where people may relax and enjoy a variety of outdoor activities. A thorough definition of this term can be found in the Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan, Section 1, pages 21-22.
- **Greenways:** A strip of undeveloped land near or within an urban area, set aside for connectivity (human and wildlife), recreation, and/ or environmental protection.
- **Regional Preserves:** Lands designated or dedicated for the purpose of preserving natural, cultural, and scenic resources to enhance recreational and educational opportunities for residents and visitors.
- **Complementary Open Space:** Complementary Open Space properties, also called "Neighborhoods" are generally smaller than the regional preserves. These properties add to the user experience and provide additional value to the existing system of Open Space through providing buffers, protecting viewsheds, or improving trail transit and recreational opportunities.
- **Connectors:** Open Space Connectors link regional preserves and complementary open space using property easements, land acquisitions, the Flagstaff Urban Trail System, washes, hillsides, floodplains, or other areas that provide a natural greenway experience.

The terms used by the City of Flagstaff to describe open space, include legally designated open space (the land the Open Space section manages), or *designated* open space, *dedicated* open space, and *common* open space. By city and state code these are defined as:

- **Designated Open (Flagstaff Open Space):** an area that is legally protected by the City of Flagstaff for the public as natural, heritage, and aesthetic properties in order to promote Flagstaff's quality of life and provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and education within the city.
- **Dedicated Open Space:** the minimum amount of private open area required with each unit provided as outdoor yard areas, patios, decks and balconies. Thus, dedicated open space is property set aside during the development process for private resident use only and/or for the aesthetic quality of the development.
- **Common Open Space:** the minimum amount of open space within a development intended or reserved for the use and enjoyment of all owners and occupants including but not limited to areas set aside for resource protection, passive and active recreation, gardens, and landscape areas.

Vacant lands are frequently used by individuals for similar functions to open space but are not dedicated to that purpose and may be developed at any time by their owners.

- **Vacant land** - publicly or privately-owned, undeveloped land not protected from development.

## CHAPTER 2 – Existing Conditions

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### Properties Managed

Four Natural Areas, comprising of 3,100 acres of acres of legally-designated open space properties (2021) is currently managed by the Flagstaff Open Space section. These lands include Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve, Observatory Mesa Natural Area, McMillan Mesa Natural Area, and the Shultz Creek Natural Area and Trailhead.

- **Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve** is a natural and heritage amenity located in northeast Flagstaff. This 478-acre Preserve that was inhabited by the Northern Sinagua between approximately 700 and 1300 A.D. Archaeologists have identified 29 heritage sites within the Preserve, some of which have been listed with the Arizona State Museum and National Register of Historic Places. Approximately 100 separate petroglyph panels with nearly 800 individual petroglyph images are pecked into the Canyon’s walls and basalt boulders. Other significant heritage resources, including excavated pit-houses and concentrations of pottery sherds are also located within the Preserve, making it an important heritage site for the northern Arizona region. Additionally, water supplied from the adjacent Wildcat Reach Wastewater Treatment Plant supports a healthy riparian corridor along the Rio de Flag, providing habitat for wildlife and songbirds. The Arizona Trail also runs through Picture Canyon. Picture Canyon provides a natural place for members of the Flagstaff community to learn about ecology, geology, and archaeology, while participating in outdoor recreation.
- **Observatory Mesa Natural Area**, located on the west side of Flagstaff, is a 2,251-acre natural amenity for northern Arizona, providing important habitat for wildlife traversing between the San Francisco Peaks and Mogollon Rim and serving as a popular recreation corridor for the community. Its proximity to Lowell Observatory makes it an important area for protecting Flagstaff’s dark skies from light pollution. Additionally, due to the Mesa’s location within City limits and proximity to multiple neighborhoods, it serves as a popular recreation area and a “neighborhood” for local residents.
- **McMillan Mesa Natural Area** is 317.90 acres and protects important natural and heritage resources. In conjunction with the adjacent 215-acre Buffalo Park, it preserves one of the last intact native grasslands within the City. There are multiple evidences of heritage resources within, and surrounding McMillan Mesa Natural Area. The variety of wildlife habitats within the area support resident and migratory species, including a resident herd of mule deer, flocks of mountain bluebirds, meadowlarks, skunks, foxes, and porcupines to mention only a few. The Arizona Trail runs through McMillan Mesa Natural Area, an 800-mile National Scenic Trail from Mexico to Utah, and was the 1985 brainchild of Flagstaff teacher Dale Shewalter. This Natural Area also holds a portion of the historic 1857 Beal Wagon Trail, when Lt. Edward Fitzgerald Beale was commissioned to build a road from Ft Smith Arkansas to Los Angeles California (in northern Arizona, the precursor to the railroads and Rt 66), using 22 camels as pack animals. The Natural Area is primarily surrounded by private parcels, designated City-park land, and other City-owned properties, and preserves “neighborhood” opportunities and serves as a buffer of natural communities for adjacent neighborhoods. Subsequently, the expansive open space is an important success in providing access to natural settings that help support better health, environment, and equitable access.
- **Schultz Creek Natural Area and Trailhead**, formerly a 20-acre legally designated open space property located east of the intersection of Schultz Pass and Mount Elden Lookout roads. The property is located in a minimally developed area in town, with adjacent landowners being the Coconino National Forest, private residences, and Museum of Northern Arizona. The Natural Area was the site of the City’s first water reservoir and symbolized the entry into a contract between the City of Flagstaff and the Santa Fe Pacific Railroad. The Beal Wagon Trail also ran through it. In 2022 after the Pipeline fire and subsequent monsoon rains, this area was found to be the ideal site for three storm water retention basins

to mitigate the effects of flooding in the Rio de Flag and neighborhoods from Schultz Creek to downtown Flagstaff. Completed in November 2022, these retention basins were constructed, and this area is no longer considered to be under the purview of the Open Space program. The location of the property is in an important strategic location as it helps provide access to other protected lands and recreational opportunities.

## Current Amenities

Amenities	Flagstaff Open Space Properties			
	Picture Canyon	Observatory Mesa	McMillan Mesa	Schultz Creek
<b>Access</b>	Year round	Year round	Year round	Year round
<b>Parking Access</b>	Lot – 9 vehicles	Thorpe Park Along FS Rd. 515	Buffalo Park	30 parking spaces
<b>FUTS Connectivity</b>	FUTS Connection: No	FUTS Connection: Yes	FUTS Connection: Yes	FUTS Connection: No
<b>Bus Access</b>	No direct access, over 2 mile walk from nearest stop.	Route 5 (orange)  2 NAIPTA stops (Thorpe Rd.)	Route 2 (blue)  6 NAIPTA stops (Forest/Cedar Ave. & Gemini Rd.)	Route 5 (orange), within a 1/2-mile walk.  1 NAIPTA stop (Fort Valley Rd.)
<b>Total Authorized Trail Miles</b>	5.8 Miles Status: Completed	5.4 Miles Status: In progress	3.5 Miles Status: In progress	Unauthorized trails only, formal system not implemented.
<b>Total Trail Miles with accessible standards</b>	None	None	None	None
<b>Register Box</b>	Yes	None	None	None
<b>Recreational Uses Offered</b>	Hiking/Running Mountain Biking Environmental Education Wildlife Watching Cross Country Skiing Snow Shoeing Dogs on leash Virtual Geocaching Horseback Riding Heritage Site Visitation	Hiking/Running Mountain Biking Environmental Education Wildlife Watching Cross Country Skiing Snow Shoeing Dogs on leash Virtual Geocaching Horseback Riding Designated Road Driving Hunting (with permit) Large-Scale Activities/ Events (with permit)	Hiking/Running Mountain Biking Environmental Education Wildlife Watching Cross Country Skiing Snow Shoeing Dogs on leash Virtual Geocaching Horseback Riding Heritage Site Visitation	Hiking/Running Mountain Biking Environmental Education Dogs on leash
<b>Restroom Services</b>	Temporary	Thorpe Park	Buffalo Park	None
<b>Trash Services</b>	City bin	City bins	FUTS trail trash service and Buffalo Park	None
<b>Water Services</b>	None	Thorpe Park ramada seasonally	Buffalo Park seasonally	None
<b>Dog Waste Bags</b>	Available	One available location	None	None
<b>Signage</b>	Location: Complete, needs some updates Regulation: additional needed Trail markers: Some, in progress Interpretation: Complete Boundary: Some, in progress Heritage site specific regs: Some, in progress	Location: Some FUTS, in progress Regulation: Some, in progress Trail markers: Some, in progress Interpretation: Not started Boundary: Some, in progress Heritage site specific regs: n/a	Location: FUTS Regulation: Not started Trail markers: FUTS Interpretation: In progress Boundary: Not started Heritage site specific regs: Not started	Location: Not started Regulation: Bulletin board Trail markers: Not started Interpretation: Not started Boundary: Not started Heritage site specific regs: Not started
<b>Trail Maps</b>	Site specific – Yes	Site specific – No	Site specific – No	Site specific – No

	FUTS - No	FUTS - Some	FUTS - Yes	FUTS – No
<b>Education</b>	Community guided hikes: Ongoing Outdoor Ed: Ongoing	Community guided hikes: No Outdoor Ed: Ongoing	Community guided hikes: Ongoing Outdoor Ed: Ongoing	Community guided hikes: No Outdoor Ed: No

## Management and Maintenance of Open Space

### Importance

Flagstaff Open Space maintenance is central to the long-term success of an integrated open space system. Studies have shown that long term maintenance, in terms of both management and funding, is essential to the provision of high-quality open space as most failed open space is the result of lack of maintenance.

According to the Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan (1998), open space and greenways need to be managed and maintained to reduce wildfire risk, preserve important riparian ecology, and protect existing heritage sites. Wildfire risks should be reduced by forest health management and hazard mitigation techniques. Other forms of maintenance include litter pick up, graffiti removal, trail maintenance, fencing and signage, and revegetation work. Additionally, noxious and invasive weeds create circumstances counter to management goals and which require resources to correct. The consequences of not providing noxious and invasive plant removal include soil erosion, grazing losses, reduced biodiversity, deteriorating water quality, increased fire conditions, and destruction of wildlife habitat.

### Current State

Since acquisition of Flagstaff Open Space properties, visitation records have shown an increase in use. At Picture Canyon Natural Cultural Preserve 30,000 individuals visited in 2020. An estimated 35,000 individuals used Observatory Mesa and 25,000 for McMillan Mesa Natural Area.

Management and Maintenance of Open Space	Flagstaff Open Space Properties			
	Picture Canyon	Observatory Mesa	McMillan Mesa	Schultz Creek
<b>Parking Lot</b>	Last work: 2016	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Register Box</b>	Monthly	n/a	n/a	n/a
<b>Signage</b>	Location: 2018 Regulation: 2016 Trail markers: 2016 Interp: 2018 Boundary: 2014 Heritage site specific regs: 2019	Location: 2014 Regulation: 2014 Trail markers: 2014 Interp: n/a Boundary: 2014 Heritage site specific regs: n/a	Location: 2018 Regulation: n/a Trail markers: 2018 Interp: n/a Boundary: n/a Heritage site specific regs: n/a	Location: n/a Regulation: n/a Trail markers: n/a Interp: n/a Boundary: n/a Heritage site specific regs: n/a
<b>Trails</b>	Last work: 2023	Last work: 2019	Last work: 2020	Last work: 2023
<b>Restroom Services</b>	Weekly	At Thorpe Park	At Buffalo Park	None
<b>Trash Services</b>	Weekly	At Thorpe Park	Along FUTS trails	None
<b>Dog Waste Bags</b>	Weekly	Biweekly	At Buffalo Park	None
<b>Water Services</b>	None	At Thorpe Park	At Buffalo Park	None

<b>Invasive Weeds</b>	Last work: 2022	Last work: 2022, Invasive Plant Grant from DFFM in 2023-24	Last work: 2022	Last work:
<b>Forest Thinning</b>	Last work: 2023	Last work: 2022	Last work:	Last work: 2018
<b>Monitoring</b>	Heritage sites: 2021 Authorized Trails: 2021 Unauthorized Trails: 2019 Invasive Plants: 2021 Stream Flow: - Insect Disease: - Wildlife: -	Authorized Trails: 2020 Unauthorized Trails: 2020 Invasive Plants: 2021 Insect Disease: - Wildlife: -	Authorized Trails: 2020 Unauthorized Trails: 2020 Invasive Plants: 2021 Insect Disease: - Wildlife: -	Authorized Trails: n/a Unauthorized Trails: 2020 Invasive Plants: 2020 Insect Disease: - Wildlife: -
<b>Graffiti Mitigation</b>	Last work: 2022	Last work:	Last work: 2022	Last work:
<b>Litter Clean Up</b>	Last work: 2022	Last work: 2022	Last work: 2022	Last work: 2022
<b>Trail counters</b>	Ongoing	Ongoing	Ongoing	n/a
<b>Volunteer Hours</b>	Last work: 2023	Last work: 2023	Last work: 2023	Last work: 2022

### CHAPTER 3: Strategy for Achieving Strategic Plan Goals

This strategic plan will provide concrete direction for the work of the Open Spaces Commission. Goals and strategies for each were identified by the Commission and provide overall guidance. Action items and tasks will be selected by the commission annually (fiscal year priority) to make progress toward these goals and will be monitored using performance metrics. The number of actions incorporated into the fiscal year priorities must be consistent with the Commission’s capacity, staff support, and resources, to accomplish the item.

Each fiscal year the Commission will:

- Review and update the Strategic Plan to ensure goals, strategies, and action items are relevant to the Commission and Flagstaff Open Space, and to identify tasks that support its mission and goals;
- Choose appropriate tasks to incorporate into the strategic plan’s Action Items.
- Decide what action items should be chosen as fiscal year priorities based on importance and the group’s capacity to work towards implementation of each item.
- Select a leader (Lead Entity) for each fiscal year priority to facilitate work plan development and completion of the action item. (The Lead Entity will assume the responsibilities associated with coordinating and implementing the item).
- Assess the Commission’s progress and achievements at the end of the year.

Many factors will influence the pace and scope of implementation, some of which will be outside the control of the Commission. Factors may include,

- Flagstaff Open Space priorities may change based on new needs and issues.
- Adequate funding to implement projects at a level and/or time consistent with the strategic plan.
- The Commission may not have the capacity to accomplish a selected priority.

The Commission’s expectations regarding implementation of their actions must remain flexible and be tempered with the understanding that progress will be achieved incrementally, and that fiscal year priorities may need to be adjusted. This plan will evolve in response to the above circumstances. The Commission will review the plan each fiscal year to ensure that its many components – including goals, strategies, action items and priorities – remain relevant to the Commission and Flagstaff Open Space, and to gauge its progress toward implementing the plan.

## Appendix B: Open Space Conservation Criteria Considerations

Evaluation of any given open space parcel by the Open Spaces Commission shall include the use of these criteria, but not be limited by it. In August 2017, the City of Flagstaff Open Spaces Commission developed the following criteria that should be used when evaluating open space for value as preserved open space. In addition, to helping the Commission determine if a property has value, in 2021 the Commission developed a scoring technique that can be utilized to prioritize property for consideration. These criteria are not meant to be restrictive criteria, only to display important features.

Open space value considerations include:

### a. Ecological Value

*Does the property protect a sensitive type of ecology or wildlife corridor?*

- 0 = no ecological or wildlife value (i.e., the property is fully developed)
- 1-3 = has the potential to preserve native vegetation or a wildlife corridor
- 4-6 = protects at least one sensitive habitat (wetland, waterway, grassland, etc.) or wildlife corridor
- 7-9 = protects 2 or more sensitive habitats (wetland, waterway, grassland, etc.) or wildlife corridor

### b. Scenic Significance

*Does the property provide a viewshed of an iconic or unique feature, including ledges and rock features?*

- 0 = No feature is visible
- 1-3 = provides views of natural features common throughout Flagstaff
- 4-6 = provides a viewshed of at least one feature
- 7-9 = provides viewsheds of two or more features

### c. Heritage Significance

*Does the parcel protect prehistoric or historic heritage resources?*

- 0 = no known resources
- 1-3 = unknown, but possible given the locality
- 4-6 = probable, there are nearby resources identified
- 7-9 = there are identified resources on the parcel

### d. Recreational Opportunity

*Does the property have a potential to provide community recreational opportunities?*

- 0 = None
- 1-3 = Provides buffer along an existing trail
- 4-6 = helps develop a Connector or Neighborwood area
- 7-9 = high potential for a Regional Preserve or Complimentary Open Space with trails

### e. Underserved Access

*Does the parcel improve access time for currently underserved residents?*

- 0 = does not provide additional residents with less than 20-minute access time
- 1-3 = provides additional residents with less than a 20-minute access time
- 4-6 = provides additional residents with 10 to 15-minute access time
- 7-9 = provides additional residents with 10-minute or less access time

### f. Education

*Does the parcel have potential to provide educational opportunities for the community? (i.e., environmental and heritage interpretation, community conservation ethics, educational enrichment activities, experiential learning, study, or research learning)*

- 0 = no significant opportunities
- 1-3 = minimal, opportunities for self-directed education
- 4-6 = medium, opportunities for signage or provides a connection to an educational zone with signage or experiential learning opportunities
- 7-9 = high, potential for providing interpretive, experiential learning and research opportunities

**g. Connectivity**

*Does the parcel help develop connections for the integrated open space system, Parks, FUTS master plan, or the Flagstaff loop trail?*

- 0 = does not help develop any connection
- 1-3 = helps develop 1 connection
- 4-6 = helps develop 2 connections
- 7-9 = helps develop 3 or more connections

**h. Buffer**

*Does the parcel provide a buffer from development for a connector, regional preserve, FUTS, or neighborhood?*

- 0 = no buffer
- 1-3 = minimal, provides for 5-10 feet
- 4-6 = medium, provides for 10-30 feet
- 7-9 = high, provides for 30 plus feet

**i. Development Pressure**

*What is the likelihood for future development in the surrounding location?*

- 0 = the area is protected as conservation land
- 1-3 = minimal, there are no current plans, though the land is zoned for use
- 4-6 = probable, there are plans being developed
- 7-9 = planned, there are development plans moving forward

Any parcel of open space may not meet all these criteria but parcels meeting multiple criteria and/or demonstrating high value in any one criterion will generally be given higher priority.

## Identifying Priority Open Space Areas

When inventorying and evaluating parcels for open space designation, the Open Spaces Commission considers availability, affordability, and timeliness. The Commission evaluates properties as they are brought to the Commission's or City staff's attention or come on the market. The Commission will use City policy, Ordinance 2003-03, Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan, Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030, and Coconino County Comprehensive Plan including maps and text as guidance when identifying priority open space areas.

The Open Spaces Commission has identified five key areas of importance for open space conservation. Open space priorities will be reassessed by the Open Spaces Commission periodically and are intended to focus attention and efforts in the short term. The following key areas are not listed by priority.

- 1) Parcels that contribute to a greenway along the Rio de Flag and its major tributaries.
- 2) Parcels that provide an open space buffer for Flagstaff Urban Trails System segments.
- 3) Parcels that bring extra value to and provide connection between existing parks, Flagstaff Open Space, and FUTS segments.
- 4) Observatory Mesa Section 7.
- 5) Parcels south of I-40.
- 6) Walnut Canyon State Land sections (Sections 22 and 28 T21N R08E).

The Commission will continue to work through the priorities list unless short-term opportunities arise that take priority.

## Steps for Identifying Potential Open Space Areas

- 1) Inventory
  - a. Review all City properties periodically.
  - b. When appropriate review of planned and potential private development in consultation with the Planning and Zoning Commission and City staff.
  - c. Utilize knowledge and expertise of City staff, Open Spaces Commission members, and open space constituency groups, e.g., Friends of the Rio de Flag and similar groups.
  - d. Consult with adjacent landowners, e.g., State Land, Coconino County, U.S. Forest Service, and National Park Service.
  - e. Regularly update maps included in this plan.
- 2) Evaluation
  - a. Assess those parcels identified in Step 1 to determine their suitability as open space.
  - b. Review suitable parcels for availability, affordability, and timeliness.
  - c. Request City staff to determine the potential availability (and cost) of the parcels for acquisition or for the designation as open space, based on the “Tools” listed, below.
  - d. Request City staff report their findings to the Open Spaces Commission.
- 3) Recommendation
  - a. Set priorities for open space designation based on the additional data supplied in Steps one and two.

## Strategy for Building an Open Space System

The Open Spaces Commission aims to build a system of open space and natural areas that are connected by FUTS trails, other pathways, and the Rio de Flag corridor. The open space system should be easily accessible, interconnected, and include dominant natural features in the region (e.g., McMillan Mesa Natural Area, Picture Canyon Natural and Cultural Preserve, Observatory Mesa Natural Area, Rio de Flag corridor). Furthermore, the Flagstaff Open Space system should not stand alone, and to that end the Commission will work to partner with other land managers (e.g., Coconino County, National Forest Service) to ideally provide links and interface. This summary introduces possible strategies in which to build this system, including (but not limited to):

- 1) Participate in development process.
  - a. Review proposed developments to identify areas potentially suitable to be recommended for open space conservation through donation or purchase.
  - b. Encourage donations of land and easements in private landowners’ Trusts or Wills.
  - c. Review potential open space donations, easements, and deed restrictions.
  - d. Work with Flagstaff Urban Trails System (FUTS) development and seek to identify potential open space connecting existing routes and trail extensions.
- 2) Recommend designation of city-owned parcels as open space.
  - a. Review existing parcels with City of Flagstaff Real Estate Program.
  - b. Make recommendations for open space conservation.
- 3) Recommend outright purchase (or exchange) of land (or easement) of publicly or privately-owned parcels for open space conservation.
  - a. See Tools for Open Space Planning, Acquisition, and Conservation on page 6. Collaborate with the City of Flagstaff Open Space section, Coconino County, developers, land trusts, and non-profit organizations.

## **Management and Maintenance**

Acquisition and formal designation are the first steps in building an accessible open space system, but management and maintenance are required to maintain the natural character of each designated open space parcel and ensure recreation and other activities are not degrading the parcel.

1. Flagstaff Open Space must be managed to maintain the open space qualities on which they were selected (not necessarily ALL criteria) while at the same time allowing for appropriate use.
2. Parks, Recreation, Open Space & Events Division should have primary responsibility for maintenance.
3. City staff will prepare open space management plans that cover management and maintenance for City-owned open space.
4. The Open Spaces Commission will monitor the status of existing open space parcels on a regular basis.

## Appendix C - Open Spaces Commission Authority

### CHAPTER 2-20 OPEN SPACES COMMISSION

#### SECTIONS:

2-20-001-0001 CREATION OF THE COMMISSION:

2-20-001-0002 TERMS OF OFFICE:

2-20-001-0003 DUTIES:

2-20-001-0004 OPEN SPACES LONG RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS:

2-20-001-0005 MEETINGS; ATTENDANCE:

#### **2-20-001-0001 CREATION OF THE COMMISSION:**

There is hereby created an advisory body to be called the "Open Spaces Commission" ("Commission") consisting of the following seven (7) regular members all of whom shall be appointed by the City Council, except for designee from the Planning and Zoning Commission: one (1) member from the Planning and Zoning Commission; and six (6) public at-large members. All Commission members shall be voting members. A Chairperson shall be selected by a majority vote of those members at a meeting called for that purpose. (Ord. No. 2007-08, Amended, 02/06/2007; Ord. 2014-28, Amended, 11/18/2014; Ord. 2015-22, Amended, 01/05/2016)

#### **2-20-001-0002 TERMS OF OFFICE:**

Appointments from the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Parks and Recreation Commission to the Open Spaces Commission shall be for no longer than the remaining term of the appointing Commission's designee. Terms of all other appointees shall be for three years except for the first appointments creating staggered terms as follows: The City Council shall appoint two members for three-year (3) terms, two members for two (2) year terms, and two members for one (1) year terms. After the initial appointment all terms thereafter will be three (3) year terms.

#### **2-20-001-0003 DUTIES:**

A. It shall be the Commission's duty to advise the City Council on acquisition, preservation, and alternatives for open space land management.

B. The duties of the Commission shall also include, but not be limited to: Reviewing and advising the City Council on the development of an Open Spaces Long Range Management Plan and policies to provide broad, long-term direction for planning and decision making for the lands designated as Urban Open Space Management Area in the Urban Open Spaces Plan of the Flagstaff Area Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan.

C. Advising and assisting the Mayor and City Council on ways to educate and involve the community on the value, protection, and stewardship of open space lands.

D. Advising and assisting the Mayor and City Council on ways to work collaboratively with other governmental entities, organizations, and departments to advance and ensure the implementation of the Open Spaces Long Range Management Plan and the Flagstaff Area Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan.

E. Advising and assisting the Mayor and City Council regarding regional open space issues as well as to any regional open spaces coalition that may be formed in the future relative to lands designated as open space in the Greater Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan.

F. Obtaining public input and participation in various programs such as environmental education and interpretation on the use, operation, and management of open space and providing information concerning the goals, projects, and operations of the open space section.

## **2-20-001-0004 OPEN SPACES LONG RANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN COMPONENTS:**

A. The components of the Open Spaces Long Range Management Plan shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Section goals, management decision-making processes, and implementation techniques for resource preservation.
2. Policies to provide the framework for more issue- or site-specific planning and implementation.
3. Criteria for the acquisition of lands that are consistent with open space goals and policies set forth in the Open Spaces Long Range Management Plan.
4. Plans for the management of the open spaces to achieve the goals of the Open Spaces Long Range Management Plan using such studies and data as property inventories, the nature and significance of the natural and cultural resources, plant and animal species ecosystems, existing uses and conditions, and interactions and connections between natural areas and between developed and undeveloped areas.
5. Developing, identifying, and recommending the use of various methods, such as intergovernmental agreements, rights-of-way for access, and grants, to assure protection of critical open space lands.
6. Policies to monitor, maintain, enhance, and restore, where necessary, natural and cultural resources, uses, accesses, trails, and facilities.
7. Public participation, education, and interpretive programs.

## **2-20-001-0005 MEETINGS; ATTENDANCE:**

The Commission shall meet on a quarterly basis, at a minimum, at such times, dates and locations as determined by the members, except that the chairperson may call a special meeting with not less than twenty-four (24) hours' notice. All other rules or procedures shall be established by the members so long as the rules are consistent with state law, including the Open Meetings Law, the City Charter and this chapter.

A quorum shall consist of four (4) voting members of the Commission.

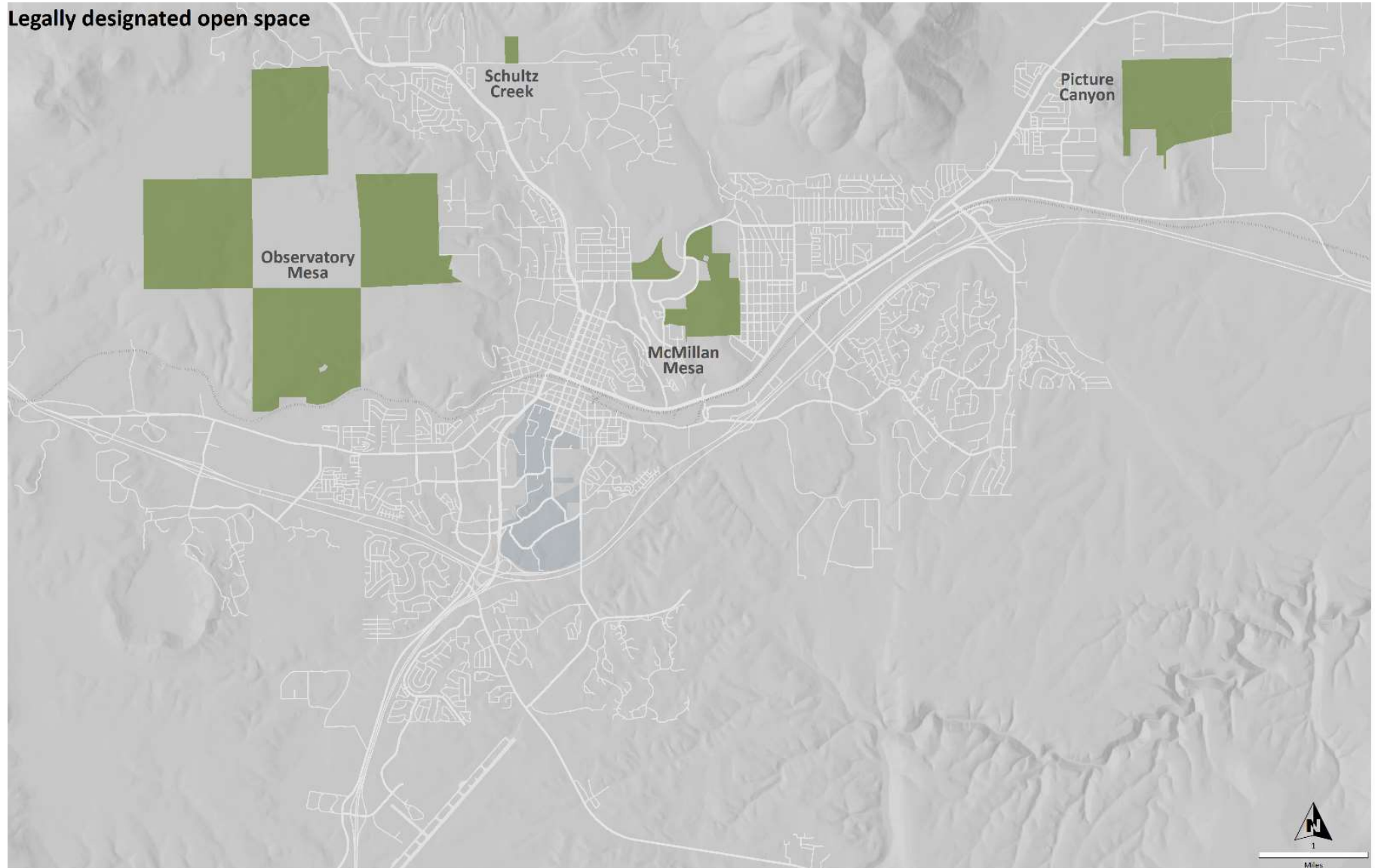
A regular Commission member who is absent for three (3) consecutive regular meetings may be removed from the Commission by a vote of the City Council. (Ord. 2003-03, Enacted, 02/04/03; Ord. 2007-08, Amended 02/06/2007; Ord. 2016-30, Amended, 07/05/2016)

## **Important Documents and Their Location**

1. Open Spaces Commission Ordinance, City of Flagstaff - <https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/View/41772/Open-Spaces-Ordinance-2003-03?bidId=>
2. Open Spaces Commission Code, City of Flagstaff (Title 2, Chapter 2-20) - <https://www.codepublishing.com/AZ/Flagstaff/>
3. Flagstaff Area Open Spaces and Greenways Plan - <https://repository.asu.edu/items/36279>
4. Flagstaff Regional Plan (Flagstaff Open Spaces pages: V1-V6) - <https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/2945/The-Plan>
5. Management Plan for Legally Designated Open Space Properties [https://flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/View/66134/Management-Plan-for-Legally-Designated-Open-Space\\_2020](https://flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/View/66134/Management-Plan-for-Legally-Designated-Open-Space_2020)
6. ~~Flagstaff Sustainability Strategic Plan – (Flagstaff Open Spaces page: 12)~~ <https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/View/57355/Sustainability-Section-2018-2020-Strategic-Plan?bidId=>

7. Flagstaff Climate Action and Adaptation Plan - <https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/3697/Climate-Plan>  
[https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/View/59412/Flagstaff-Climate-Action-and-Adaptation-Plan\\_Nov-2018\\_Strategies-and-Actions](https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/View/59412/Flagstaff-Climate-Action-and-Adaptation-Plan_Nov-2018_Strategies-and-Actions)
8. City of Flagstaff Code - <https://www.codepublishing.com/AZ/Flagstaff/>

## Appendix D - Open Space System Strategic Plan Maps



## Appendix D - Open Space System Strategic Plan Maps

