



To: City Council, Regional Plan Committee, and Planning and Zoning Commission
From: Open Spaces Commission
Subject: Flagstaff Regional Land Use Plan 2045 Open Spaces Commission Review and Recommendations
Review Date: September 8, 2025

Dear City Council, Regional Plan Committee, and Planning and Zoning Commission,

On behalf of the Open Spaces Commission, thank you for the extensive work that's gone into the Draft Flagstaff Regional Land Use Plan 2045. We support the Plan's core priorities - Housing Attainability & Equity and Climate Action - and offer the following recommendations to ensure the open space system is interwoven with compact, infill-first growth and low-carbon mobility. The proposed edits below are targeted, actionable, and aligned with national best practices, and Flagstaff's existing FUTS and Active Transportation planning framework.

Our overarching request is to treat parks, open space, and trails as essential infrastructure - planned and financed alongside housing and transportation - so that densification delivers complete, healthy, and equitable neighborhoods.

Summary of Priority Revisions (with rationale)

1. Balance the "core priorities" directive so open space integration is not de-prioritized in project decisions

Where to revise: Chapter 3, p. 3-1, Core Priorities section.

Proposed edits:

- **Change the word 'non-negotiable' to 'declared' in the following sentence.**
 - Together, they make up the **declared** objectives that define success and serve as the key drivers to align with the vision.
- **Add a sentence following the sentence mentioned above.**
 - In applying core priorities, the City will co-optimize housing and climate outcomes with open space, trails, and community integration to deliver equitable, health-forward, balanced neighborhoods.
- **Add the word 'complementary' to the final sentence.**
 - When analysis of goals and policies is required, analysis of Regional Plan conformance should address their conformance with the core and **complementary** priorities.

Why this matters:

- The term 'non-negotiable' is a dismissive view of the complementary priorities. It's important to use another word, such as 'declared', 'balanced', 'primary', or 'important', to indicate the balanced approach.
 - Language should indicate a balanced approach for co-optimizing housing and climate outcomes with complementary priorities to foster a resilient, healthy community, and a vibrant inclusive economy.
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2. Prioritize the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS) within Policy MT.5 to help promote inclusion

Where to revise: Chapter 3, p. 3-7, edit Multimodal Transportation policy MT.5.

Proposed edit:

- **Change the word “increase’ to ‘prioritize’ in policy MT.5.**
 - **Prioritize** the accessibility, connectivity, and use of pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure, including the Flagstaff Urban Trail System and other trail systems, as a critical element of a safe and livable community and to promote transit access.

Why this matters: The word prioritize emphasizes the importance of making FUTS and related trail systems a central focus of transportation planning, rather than simply seeking to increase, which better supports equity and long-term community goals.

3. Recognize the importance of the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS) within the policy section (not just transportation) and require it to be thoughtfully located through new developments

Where to revise: Chapter 3, p. 3-9, add new policy in the Development Pattern Goal, DP.8, under the Walkable Mixed-Use Community Goals and Policies.

Proposed edit:

- **Add a new policy to the Development Pattern Goal.**
 - DP.8: Design and align the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS) within new developments to create a natural experience that interconnects neighborhoods and increases safe, low-carbon consumption access to community infrastructure.

Why this matters: FUTS already functions as a citywide spine for daily trips and recreation; calling it out as a policy helps recognize its importance and ensures trails are integrated, not just placed along roads or property edges. This also supports climate and mode-shift goals in the City’s Active Transportation Management Plan (ATMP). Mentioning it under the Development Pattern Goal promotes development patterns that support FUTS inclusion for attainable housing.

4. Make the 10-Minute Walking Access Standard a policy target in PROS.1

Where to revise: Chapter 3, p. 3-10; and Parks/Open Space policy sections where PROS policies appear, PROS.1.

Proposed edit: PROS.1 (revised): Provide parks and complementary open spaces **within a 10-minute walk of all residents**, prioritizing underserved areas of the Region, to support livable, sustainable compact development and climate resilience.

Why this matters: The 10-Minute Walking Access Standard is a widely adopted national benchmark for equitable access to open space and parks. This benchmark is mentioned on

p. 4-26; but embedding it clarifies efforts for planning and ensures infill brings natural relief and open spaces.

5. Clarify Map 3-1 and related text to avoid the impression that only one location “needs” open space

Where to revise: Chapter 3, p. 3-11, Map 3-1.

Proposed edits: Add a callout on Map 3-1 or add an asterisk to the map that can be referenced: “Parks and Open Space needs are not limited to areas addressed on the map.”

Why this matters: The current symbology can unintentionally signal that only the south of I-40 needs open space and parks. Clarifying map intent with this label improves accuracy and supports implementation citywide.

6. Adjust Policy PROS.4

Where to revise: Chapter 3, p. 3-12, Policy PROS.4.

Proposed edit: Include interagency examples: Support and incentivize public access points and trail hubs for passive and active recreation and events through interagency coordination (For example: U.S. Forest Service, State Land Department, National Park Service, Coconino County) and local trail partnerships.

Why this matters: Rezone applicants and readers may not understand what partners are involved in interagency coordination. We therefore recommend listing a few examples such as the U.S. Forest Service, National Park Service, State Land Department, and Coconino County for clarity.

7. Re-frame Policy OS.2 so it doesn’t read as “open space is only considered where development can’t go”

Where to revise: Chapter 3, p. 3-14, OS.2.

Proposed edit: Revise Policy OS.2: Focus the purchase, dedication, and management of regional preserves and connector open spaces on protecting significant cultural and natural resources while integrating an open-space network that supports compact housing, climate action, and the 10-minute Walking Access Standard.

Why this matters: As written, Policy OS.2 indicates that open space is an afterthought to development pressure. The revision supports integration of open space to support compact, climate-aligned neighborhoods.

8. Fix Policy Map designation to acknowledge trail continuity for identified top priority trail connection

Where to revise: Chapter 4, p. 4-9, 4-10, Policy Maps 4-1 & 4-2 Future Growth Illustration.

Proposed edit: Correct the zoning designations on parcel APN# 106-10-003 from Suburban Center to Suburban Neighborhood to align with community feedback and the identified Open Space top priority trail corridor between the Rio De Flag Water Reclamation Plant and Forest Service land. Update Policy Maps 4-1 & 4-2 Future Growth Illustration.

Why this matters: The Open Spaces Commission has identified this area as an important segment of a top-priority trail corridor between the Rio De Flag Water Reclamation Plant and the Forest Service land to the south. The area identified is a crucial riparian corridor for wildlife, and is an important connection for hikers and cyclists to Forest Service land. Additionally, the corridor provides an important viewshed platform and connectivity to Fisher Point. This area along the John Wesley Powell Blvd. connection has minimal public access to public lands. As this location develops, public access must be secured to support development, ensuring that neighborhoods have legal access to recreation. This is imperative to support health, equity, and the 10-minute Walking Access Standard. The Suburban Center and development goals for this zoning type, which includes medium-to-high intensity of people, residences, jobs, and activities, is identified directly along this trail corridor, and were mapped at the direction of private landowners/developer feedback, and likely do not reflect comprehensive community interests.

9. Recognize the importance of the Flagstaff Urban Trail System (FUTS) and other trails within Chapter 4: Growth and Land Use, and require it to be thoughtfully located through new developments

Where to revise: Chapter 4, p. 4-34, add a final sentence to the Building Block: Active Transportation Plans section.

Proposed final sentence addition: Trail design and alignment should integrate natural experiences that interconnects neighborhoods and increases safe, low-carbon access to community infrastructure.

Why this matters: FUTS and other trails already function as a citywide spine for daily trips and recreation. Calling out the importance of integration and thoughtful design ensures trails are properly planned for and not just placed along roads or property edges. This also supports climate and mode-shift goals in the City's Active Transportation Management Plan (ATMP).

10. Remove Reference to Private Parcels over 400 acres

Where to revise: Chapter 4, p. 4-37, Map 4-5.

Proposed edit: Remove the reference to "Planned trails on private land over 400 acres" and label all planned trails as "Planned trails on private land with no property rights"

Why this matters: The Open Spaces Commission is aware of the Council's previous decision regarding references to Private Parcels over 400 Acres. We appreciate the extensive discussion, but we believe it is important for the City Council to reconsider its decision from May 2, 2025. Differentiating by property size indicates that large property owners should be treated differently during the trail planning process. Trails that would

serve these larger parcels are just as important as trails considered for other properties. Large property owners should not be treated differently to enable staff to work towards equitable, integrated trails.

11. Reframe the map disclaimer to ensure trails are incorporated into design

Where to revise: Chapter 4, p. 4-37, 4-38. Map Disclaimers on Maps 4-5 & 4-6.

Proposed edit: Revise the second sentence of the Disclaimer from, “Future trails are conceptual in nature and may be redesigned as development is proposed to provide a similar connection with alternative alignment”; to “Future trail lines are conceptual and will be aligned through developments to meet system connectivity, enhance user experience, maintain natural corridors, and support neighborhood livability.” Map Disclaimers on Maps 4-5 & 4-6.

Why this matters: This policy map must permit staff to work with developers to incorporate trails where they can benefit neighborhoods and connectivity. This recommended revision will help prevent trails from being placed on leftover property, such as solely along property perimeters or next to streets, and instead promote integration into neighborhoods.

12. Add trail access points and trailheads to the map

Where to revise: Chapter 4, p. 4-37, Map 4-5 or add a new policy map

Proposed edits: Add existing and planned trail access points and trailheads from the previous Regional Plan Map 26E (Map 26E link: [Map 26E – Forest Access and Trailheads](#)) to the policy map 4-5 or include an additional map that includes these access points and trailheads.

Why this matters: Map 26E was developed with Forest Service support and provides verified data on access points and trailheads. Including this information in the Regional Plan is critical to ensure that trail access is deliberately planned for and protected as the community grows. Clear identification of access points and trailheads will guide development design, help ensure continued community access to public lands, and support achievement of the 10-minute Walking Access Standard by making sure residents can reach trails and public lands safely and conveniently.

13. Add missing existing trail right-of-way access locations

Where to revise: Chapter 4, p. 4-38, Map 4-6.

Proposed edit: Revise the map to include trail easements across Fimbrez and Flag Mesa HOA.

Why this matters: This is an important connection to the Observatory Mesa Natural Area, and it’s necessary that this connection is identified on the map.

14. Update the Bikeway Policy Plan Map

Where to revise: Chapter 4, p. 4-39, Map 4-7.

Proposed edits: Add a disclaimer on the map that future arterial and collector roads will be incorporated into the bikeway network as they are planned as part of future development.

Why this matters: As new roadways are built, they need to have adequate bikeways that can be incorporated into the bikeway network. This helps meet the FUTS vision and the City's Active Transportation Master Plan for safe, direct, low-carbon consumption access.

15. Make “integration” as important as “access” in neighborhood policy

Where to revise: Chapter 8, p. 8-3. under the subtitle, ‘Future Parks and Open Space’ add a new sentence after the first sentence

Proposed edits:

- Add the following sentence after the first sentence of the paragraph.
 - “Future open spaces and parks should be placed through developments to meet system connectivity, be accessible for residents, maintain natural corridors, and support neighborhood livability.
- Add a paragraph break following the new sentence for clarity. The new paragraph would start with “The County completed the ...”

Why this matters: Integration signals that during planning, open space and parks will be thoughtfully located within neighborhoods and street networks, which is vital, and shouldn't be an afterthought.

16. Strengthen Chapter 8 action items and timelines

Where to revise: Chapter 8, p. 8-4, High Priority Action Items box

Proposed edits:

- Update Action 1 language to: Leverage available funding to negotiate for the purchase/dedication of greenfield lands for parks, open space, and trails in the John Wesley Powell Boulevard (JWP) extension area and other priority areas, to secure integrated alignments and sites.
- Update Action 1 Timeline to: Short-term.
- Update Action 2 language from ‘Consider’ to ‘Pursue’: Pursue a County and/or City bond or financing mechanism for regional park, recreation, open space initiatives, including operations and maintenance.

Why this matters: Open space integration should not be limited to the JWP area but must also acknowledge other priority areas, providing flexibility to pursue additional opportunities as they arise. This action should be identified on a short-term timeline, as moving forward quickly is critical to ensure that neighborhoods have access to open space as the community develops. Additionally, establishing a dedicated financial mechanism,

rather than only considering one, is essential to guarantee progress toward incorporating open space within neighborhoods as growth occurs.

17. Map Stands of Ponderosa Pine

Where to revise: Chapter 8, p. 8-4, under Other Action Items.

Proposed action: Develop a comprehensive tree inventory that adds native tree species, highlighting the Ponderosa pine stands, as a significant natural resource to the mapped resources section in Chapter 7, p. 7-8.

Why this matters: Trees, especially the Ponderosa pine, are a significant natural resource in Flagstaff. They are an asset for shade, heat mitigation, identity, and wildlife connectivity. They are critical to climate action and daily livability. Ponderosa pine stands, that are varied in age for continued forest health, need to be identified for their importance to character, open space, urban development, livability, and climate change.

18. Implementation Tools We Recommend Adding

Where to revise: Chapter 8, p. 8-4, add as action items under the Other Action Items section.

Proposed edits:

- **Add two new action items:**

- **Partner:** Develop incentives, density bonuses, and expedited reviews, and partnerships to encourage developers to incorporate the 10-minute Walking Access Standard, FUTS connectivity targets, designate meaningful trail alignments, or designate neighborhood complementary open space or pocket parks in projects.
- **Plan:** Conduct a code analysis to provide insight on how best to update or develop code or zoning tools to assist in the dedication of trail corridors, complementary open space, and pocket parks.

Why this matters: These steps clarify to developers what goals we have as a community and will help support outcomes. Without early-stage tools, ideal sites get built out first and open space becomes “what’s left over,” which is inequitable and costly to fix later.

Thank you for considering these important recommendations. These updates will help promote nearby, high-quality parks, open space, and trails that increase livability in compact housing, particularly for renters and households with limited yards, while reducing transportation costs by enabling walking/biking for short trips. Integrated green networks (shade, riparian buffers, Ponderosa stands) will help cool neighborhoods, manage stormwater, and support mode shift to low-carbon trips via FUTS and bikeways—directly implementing the City’s active transportation and climate goals.

These targeted revisions will help Flagstaff densify well—with health, equity, and climate in mind—by ensuring parks, open space, and trails are planned in, not left out or implemented on the leftovers. The Open Spaces Commission appreciates your consideration and stands ready to collaborate on drafting language, mapping updates, and implementation tools.

Respectfully submitted,
Flagstaff Open Spaces Commission

Chair Jacqueline Thomas
Co-Chair Bruce Fox
Commissioner William Kluwin
Commissioner Molly Joyce
Commissioner Mary Norton
Commissioner Lina Wallen
Commissioner Nat White