

Report on the Citizen Review Session for the Flagstaff Regional Land Use Plan 2045

The Citizen Review Session was held at the Planning & Zoning Commission Work Session on Wednesday, August 27, 2025.

Presentation and Discussion

Sara Dechter, Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Manager, gave a PowerPoint presentation and answered the commissioners' questions. The questions and responses are summarized below. There were some additional minor clarifying questions and process-related questions that were not included in this summary.

Commissioner Maher asked how staff ensured that the plan reflects broader public sentiment, given that certain demographic groups or community groups might be disproportionately passionate about certain elements of the plan and might be more inclined to participate.

- Sara Dechter responded that it was key to create many opportunities for people to show up. The team received input from people who had never previously commented on zoning cases or the plan, because of the additional outreach. When the passionate participants were not in agreement, staff used the sounding boards of the Regional Plan Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and the elected and appointed officials gathered at the Joint Retreat.

Commissioner Norton asked whether there was a legal definition of emergency, in the context of the City's declared housing and climate emergencies, and how the City's declarations of emergency affected the City's priorities and the Regional Plan priorities.

- Jennifer Mikelson, Housing Planning Manager, explained that the City's resolution adopting the housing emergency declaration from 2020 set forth specific action items for City staff. She stated that she was fairly certain that the Regional Plan was not mentioned in those action items. The 10-Year Housing Plan was born out of the declaration, and that plan does state how the Regional Plan should be revised.
- Jenny Niemann, Climate Section Director, added that the emergencies are not defined in any statutory way and do not have a legal definition. They do not require inclusion in the Regional Plan. She stated that she believes the two emergencies are

reflected in the core priorities because of the feedback received throughout the Regional Plan process.

- Sara Dechter added that each emergency has a strategic plan. From the beginning of scenario planning, staff considered what land use scenarios would move the needle on housing affordability and climate action. Staff found that scenarios that performed well for one emergency also performed well for both. Housing attainability and climate action became twin stars—each emergency is separate, but the solutions are linked. These two topics dominated the public comment. Housing affordability was the top choice on surveys that asked the community to rank their priorities, and drafts received intense feedback on climate action. A guide will be included in the Commission’s packet demonstrating how the Regional Plan integrates the parts of each strategic plan that are within its scope.

Commissioner Sheehy expressed concern about the bifurcated process for a major plan amendment and a zoning case, as requiring the processes to be sequential adds costs. She asked if there were options to run these processes concurrently.

- Sara Dechter clarified that while other jurisdictions allow concurrent processes, Flagstaff has required the processes to be sequential since the 1990s. This topic is a separate question from the Regional Plan, as it concerns what is laid out in Title 11 of the City Code. Staff are starting to work on code updates to Title 11, even before the Regional Plan ballot is complete, to ensure that there are no conflicts between the code and the plan.
- Commissioner Sheehy expressed that she hoped the topic would be revised when Title 11 is revised.

Commissioner Sheehy suggested that a statement be added to address any possible conflict between the text and the maps.

- Sara Dechter answered that the suggestion could be added to the list of recommendations for conditions of approval.

Commissioner Lucke stated that at the state level, recent legislation has applied to communities over 75,000 so that it includes Flagstaff, when it could have been 100,000 and exempted Flagstaff. She hopes that at a staff level and elected official level, they are fighting back to set the benchmark at 100,000 to allow more local control.

Public Comments

There were two public comments made Citizen Review Session.

Russell Randall stated that he was speaking on behalf of Barrier Free Flagstaff and the Northern Arizona Community of Practice Transition Team, as well as providing his own thoughts. He stated that he had thoroughly reviewed the Regional Plan Public Hearing draft and appreciated the edits made related to accessibility, inclusion, and universal design since the 60-Day Public Review draft, particularly in Ch.3. He noted sections of the plan where accessibility and inclusivity could be further mentioned and incorporated: the action items and Ch.5. He stated the maps and charts are not currently accessible for people with vision impairments and should be updated.

Robert Boothe stated that he was concerned about population growth in Flagstaff, including outlying County areas, and the development of new apartment complexes. He stated that water sustainability was his main issue, and that apartment residents should be under the same water restrictions as other residents. He stated that a new sustainability study should be done that accounts for population growth and climate change. If apartment residents are not under water restrictions, that should be a consideration in regard to a moratorium on new construction.