



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: 4/24/2025

**To: Flagstaff City Council, Coconino County Board of Supervisors,
Coconino County Planning and Zoning Commission, Flagstaff Planning
and Zoning Commission**

**From: Sara Dechter, Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning
Manager**

Subject: Future Growth Illustration

In the 60-day review draft of the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2045, Chapter 4 provides the Future Growth illustration (FGI), and the descriptions of land use categories. The attached description and maps show an updated version of this information, the map, and the related text. These materials are still going through technical and legal review and edits and are being shared for the purpose of gaining additional insights into the direction that the officials gather want to the plan to include.

In addition to the PDF maps, an interactive version of the draft FGI is available here: <https://gis.flagstaffaz.gov/portal/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=e5589ce2b60d4763bc2bf13619fb16e5>

Changes to the FGI

The updated FGI land use categories are proposed to change from the 60-day public review draft by combining the Suburban Neighborhood High Density and Medium Density into a single category, and by moving the implementation guidelines from Parks, Recreation and Open Space to apply to the land use category.

Geographic areas of the FGI that were changed all fall within the City and are:

- The John Wesley Powell area, where Suburban Corridor and Center parcels were added and removed.
- The Beulah Employment District area, which was limited to only the parcels of the Northern Arizona Healthcare Specific Plan.
- The Milton Suburban Center, which became an Urban Center north of University Ave.
- Southside, where Urban Center parcels were replaced with Urban Corridor and Urban Neighborhood, to better align with the Southside Plan.
- Country Club, where some Suburban Corridor parcels were replaced with Suburban Neighborhood.

As well as other individual parcel changes in response to public comment requests. The city is working through how future density and intensity would be calculated for rezones.

Comparing the 2030 and draft 2045 FGI

The survey responses show that there are some respondents who are concerned with the proposed densities and development pattern in the draft plan, and at the same time, the Scenario Planning efforts and other analysis shows that without density, the core priorities are unlikely to be achieved.

The draft Regional Plan supports increasing density throughout the City and maintaining density objectives in the areas outside the Urban Growth boundary in a manner like the current Regional Plan. It expands the area of the City Center that is defined as Urban and provides more flexible methods for locating commercial development within Suburban Neighborhoods to support walkable mixed-use neighborhoods. The density thresholds for Urban Neighborhoods are intended to move over time towards densities of 20 dwelling units per acre (duac) or greater. Most of these neighborhoods already have densities of 8-20 duac, Suburban areas are combined into a single category with a distinction in density for areas with and without City utilities as defined by the Urban Growth Boundary.

There are fewer commercial areas identified in greenfield sites than the current Regional Plan. However, changes from Suburban Neighborhood to a Corridor or Center are proposed as minor plan amendments that can be considered concurrent with rezoning cases. In addition, staff is working to refine an administrative path for smaller commercial areas within a new development or areas identified for small commercial in neighborhood.

Employment areas on the map are very similar to the ones identified in the current Regional Plan. A few exceptions are that the NAH Health Center site which was both a Regional Urban Activity Center and a Special District in the current plan is designated an Urban Center and the full property owned by Lowell Observatory is shown as a University/Research District. The updated Plan will also allow for

complimentary workforce housing and commercial. Employment areas include both land for attracting and expanding employment in the community and areas that can support the heavy and light industrial uses needed for construction, forest restoration, and other sectors.

Density and Intensity Calculations

The City and the County have slightly different methods of calculating density as defined by their respective Zoning Codes. The Regional Plan is silent on how to calculate density with the intention that the standard calculation for zoning for each jurisdiction may be used on development cases. An exception is that density bonuses that further goals and policies in the plan such as energy efficient buildings and affordable housing are not included in the Regional Plan calculation if they would cause the proposed development to exceed the upper bound of the range. This is an interpretation carried forward from the current Regional Plan.

FGI Implementation

The Arizona Revised Statute states that rezoning ordinances, which are the most common plan implementation action for the FGI, should conform to the land use element of the comprehensive or general plan. The Future Growth Illustration is the central means of determining that conformance.

Annexations by the City are also required to have a “finding of conformance” with the Regional Plan. In the current and revised plan, the Urban Growth Boundary is the area that allows for annexation without requiring a major plan amendment.

The 2001 Flagstaff Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan only required conformance with a very detailed land use map and rarely used goals and policies. The current Regional Plan requires more than what the state statute suggests and has all elements of the plan, not only the land use element included in the findings of conformance. Currently, applicants for rezoning and plan amendments create a lengthy narrative listing all the relevant goals and policies and analyzing the proposal against those goals and policies in detail. There has been benefits and challenges to both approaches. Staff is considering ways to find a middle ground where the focus of the finding of conformance is the Future Growth Illustration and related guidelines, and the priorities are addressed in the narrative of development case applications in a manner more consistent with the approach described in state statute.

Other practical ways to ensure that the land use elements of the plan are implemented consistently are:

Specific and Area Plans: Area plans or specific plans are geographic specific or topic specific plans that further refine and implement the Comprehensive

or General Plan. These plans may include a statement(s) describing how the plan implements Regional Plan goals and policies, and how it is compatible with it (See Page 2-5 for more information).

Updates to City Codes: Amendments to the map and text of the Zoning Code must conform to the Regional Plan, while Subdivision Code, Engineering Design Standards and Specifications, and other City and County Codes can be important implementation tools but do not require such a finding in all cases. The City's Zoning Code (Flagstaff City Code Title 10) is updated at the discretion of the elected officials of the City in response to goals, policies, and implementation strategies presented in the Regional Plan (Arizona State Revised Statute [ARS] 9-462.01.F).

Amendments to the Coconino County Zoning and Subdivision Codes must be consistent with the goals, objectives, and policies of the County's Comprehensive Plan, including amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (County Code 5.12.b.6). The County's Zoning Code and Subdivision regulations may be updated at the discretion of the County's elected officials in response to the goals, policies, and implementation strategies of the Regional Plan.

Acceptance of Dedications and Abandonments: Real property for street, square, park, or other related public purposes is required to have a "finding of conformity" with the City's General Plan (ARS 9-461.07.C). City Council, at its discretion, may choose not to accept dedications or approve abandonments that do not conform to the Regional Plan's goals and policies.

Capital Improvement Plans (CIPs): The City's CIPs and long-range utility and transportation plans are generally consistent with the Regional Plan's land use policies and infrastructure recommendations (water, sewer, stormwater, transportation, and parks/recreation) (ARS 9-461.07.B). Major new improvements that are not reflected in the Regional Plan, and which could dramatically depart from its recommendations, should be preceded by a Regional Plan amendment when they cannot be modified to meet the Regional Plan's goals and policies.

Annual Work Programs and Budget: The Regional Plan is designed to "serve as a pattern and guide for the orderly growth and development of the municipality and as a basis for the efficient expenditure of its funds relating to the subjects of the general plan" (ARS 9-461.07.A.1). Consideration of the Regional Plan's goals, policies, and action items should be given in the budget process and when setting work programs for the City and may be for County departments and divisions.

Discussion questions

Staff is looking for feedback from the group gathered on the following:

- Are the land use categories appropriately grouped and described?
- Are there elements of the graphics or images that need further explanation?
- Are the locations of the land use categories on the FGI where they should be?
- Are the compatible zoning categories and density ranges appropriate?
- Do you have concerns or feedback on potential implementation scenarios?

State Statute citations

9-461.05. C. *The general plan shall consist of a statement of community goals and development policies. The plan shall include maps, any necessary diagrams and text setting forth objectives, principles, standards and plan proposals. The plan shall include the following elements:*

1. *A land use element that:*

(a) Designates the proposed general distribution and location and extent of such uses of the land for housing, business, industry, agriculture, recreation, education, public buildings and grounds, open space and other categories of public and private uses of land as may be appropriate to the municipality.

(b) Includes a statement of the standards of population density and building intensity recommended for the various land use categories covered by the plan.

(c) Identifies specific programs and policies that the municipality may use to promote infill or compact form development activity and locations where those development patterns should be encouraged.

(d) Includes consideration of air quality and access to incident solar energy for all general categories of land use.

(e) Includes policies that address maintaining a broad variety of land uses, including the range of uses existing in the municipality when the plan is adopted, readopted or amended.

(f) For cities and towns with territory in the vicinity of a military airport or ancillary military facility as defined in section 28-8461, includes consideration of military airport or ancillary military facility operations. If a city or town includes land in a high noise or accident potential zone as defined in section 28-8461, the city or town shall identify the boundaries of the high noise or accident potential zone in its general plan for purposes of planning land uses in the high noise or accident potential zone that are compatible with the operation of the military airport or ancillary military facility pursuant to section 28-8481, subsection J.

(g) Includes sources of aggregates from maps that are available from state agencies, information from the Arizona geological survey on how to locate existing mines, consideration of existing mining operations and suitable geologic resources, policies to preserve currently identified aggregates sufficient for future development and policies to avoid incompatible land uses, except that this subdivision does not affect any permitted underground storage facility or limit any person's right to obtain a permit for an underground storage facility pursuant to title 45, chapter 3.1.

ARS 9-462.01.F *“All zoning and rezoning ordinances or regulations adopted under this article shall be consistent with and conform to the adopted general plan of the municipality, if any, as adopted under article 6 of this chapter. In the case of uncertainty in construing or applying the conformity of any part of a proposed rezoning ordinance to the adopted general plan of the municipality, the ordinance shall be construed in a manner that will further the implementation of, and not be contrary to, the goals, policies and applicable elements of the general plan. A rezoning ordinance conforms with the land use element of*

the general plan if it proposes land uses, densities or intensities within the range of identified uses, densities and intensities of the land use element of the general plan.”

ARS 11-814.A. All rezonings adopted under this article shall be consistent with and conform to the adopted comprehensive plan. In the case of uncertainty in constructing or applying the conformity of any part of a proposed rezoning to the adopted comprehensive plan, the rezoning shall be construed in a manner that will further the implementation of, and not be contrary to, the goals, policies and applicable elements of the comprehensive plan. A rezoning conforms with the comprehensive plan if it proposes land uses, densities or intensities within the range of identified uses, densities and intensities of the comprehensive plan.