



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: 4/22/25

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

From: Lauren Clementino, Senior Planner, Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning

Cc: Sara Dechter, Comprehensive and Neighborhood Planning Manager

Subject: Sense of Place

Many public comments asked for more references to Community Character or Community Identity to be included in the Regional Plan 2045. These comments focused on the lack of aesthetic or architectural design language and urged a stronger position on preserving aspects of Flagstaff's historical character. Comments suggested that aesthetics should have an important consideration in densification and new development, and several comments emphasized the importance of protecting viewsheds. Of the 66 comments under the Community Character theme approximately 60% cannot be directly addressed or acted on through changes to the Plan. These comments proposed zoning changes that cannot be implemented through the Plan or changes that are in conflict with other laws and regulations. For example, many comments focused on greater restrictions on building heights for new development, with many comments specifically suggesting two-story height limits in more areas. In another example, other commenters asked for restrictions preventing the demolition of historic properties.

Staff recommends adding the following "Best Practices for Creating a Sense of Place" section in Chapter 3. Best practices illustrate how policies can be implemented. Some best practices are already incorporated into City or County code while others identify ways to conform voluntarily with the related policies. Staff recommends using the term

“Sense of Place” over the terms “Community Character” or “Community Identity” as a more universally applicable term that ties directly into Goal CR: The Region maintains an enduring and unique sense of place that celebrates its diverse ecosystems and community heritage.

- Designing visually appealing entrances to public spaces to promote a sense of arrival and sense of place.
- Creating a pedestrian-oriented design at street level to create vibrant and active civic spaces for residents, neighbors, and visitors.
- Repeating the patterns of streets, alleys, buildings, and civic spaces from within nearby historic districts or neighborhoods in the site planning of new development in or adjacent to historic districts.
- Repeating elements of the natural environment and compatible historic design from nearby historic districts in the design of adjacent new development and redevelopment.
- Utilizing design that breaks up building footprints or bulk and mass to ensure transportation connectivity and a comfortable pedestrian environment.

Staff would tie these best practices to the policies by incorporating sense of plan into mostly existing policies from the 60-day review draft. Wording of best practices and policies are subject to change through continued refinement in technical and legal reviews that are underway.

Link to spreadsheet of 60-Day Public Review comments by topic – see Community Character tab:

<https://flagstaff.maps.arcgis.com/sharing/rest/content/items/6a754481425e426fa7eaa411ed507a7/data>

Link to Flagstaff Regional Land Use Plan PDF:

<https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/DocumentCenter/View/84813/Flagstaff-Regional-Land-Use-Plan-60-Day-Public-Review-Draft>

Discussion Questions

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

- What do you associate with "sense of place"?
- What do you think about the approach of using the sense of place best practices?
- What do you think of strengthening policies focusing on sense of place?