



PARKS, RECREATION, OPEN SPACE, AND EVENTS

DECEMBER 2025
NEWSLETTER

*Connecting our community through people, parks,
natural areas, and programs.*

Director's Reflection on 2025

As we wrap up an incredible year, I want to celebrate our team's amazing accomplishments!

The Parks section completed two milestone projects: new sport courts at Bushmaster Park that was the culmination of the first BBB Recreation funded capital project in over ten years, and a new park at the Murdoch Center, which is the first addition to the park system since Foxglenn Park, enhancing our community spaces and bringing joy to countless residents and visitors alike. Recreation courageously piloted new programming and operational efficiencies, introducing fresh and exciting activities that have been a hit with our community.

The Open Space section developed and gained Council approval for the Observatory Mesa Trail Plan, a 4-year project, and hosted nearly 2,000 youth for tours of our protected lands, inspiring the next generation of environmental stewards.

The Events and Marketing section had a phenomenal year with sold-out athletics programming, a dazzling new 4th of July drone show, record-breaking attendance at the Winter Wonderland tree lighting, and near-viral success on social media, showcasing the vibrant spirit of our city.

Reflecting on my 25th year with the city, I am honored and thrilled to work with such an incredible team. As Helen Keller once said, "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Congratulations on an outstanding 2025, and let's make 2026 even more spectacular!

– Rebecca Sayers, PROSE Director



PARKS

New Art Installations at Cleo Murdoch Park

Two new sculptures have been installed at Cleo Murdoch Park through a partnership with the City of Flagstaff Beautification, Arts & Sciences program and the Southside Community Association. The pieces include Rustle by artist Beth Nybeck and the Historic Dunbar School Plaque by Marie Jones, celebrating creativity and community heritage.



Sculpture at Cleo Murdoch



Fencing at McMillan Mesa Park

Projects

Taking advantage of the great weather, Parks has completed several improvements, including installing 200 linear feet of new steel FUTS-style fencing at McMillan Mesa Park and adding new steel kiosk signs at select parks such as Bushmaster, Buffalo, Mobile Haven, and Smokerise.

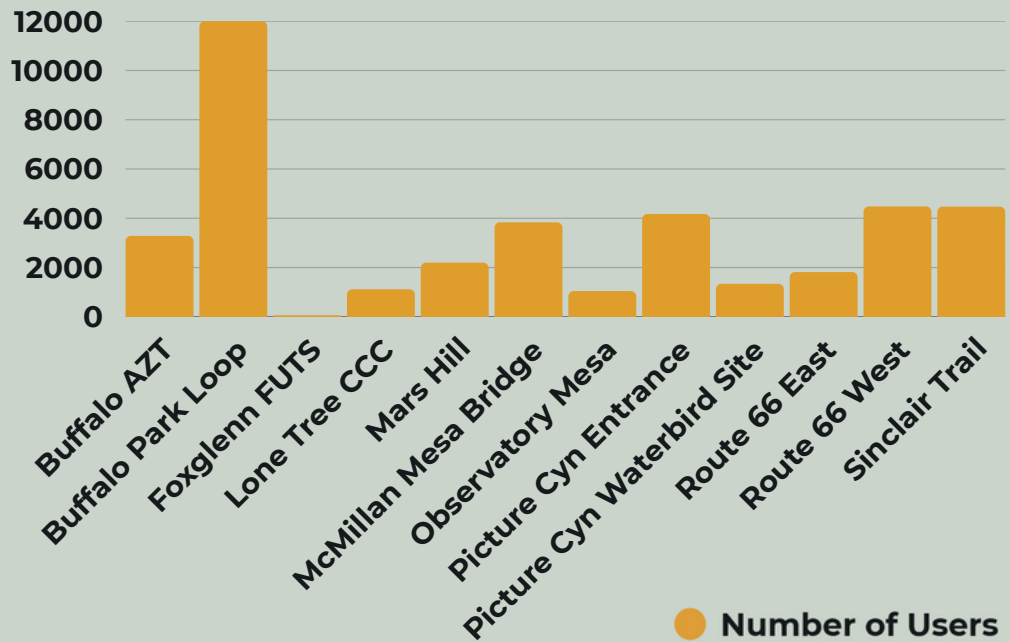
Parade of Lights

Parks took the lead for PROSE to join the Parade of Lights again this year, building on last year's float design with a festive twist on The Island of Misfit Toys theme.

Parade float



November 2025 Trail Counts



RECREATION



Youth Basketball 2025



Youth Basketball 2025

Jr Suns Youth Basketball League

Over 200 youth players have registered for this season's Jr. Suns League at Hal Jensen Recreation Center. Games begin on January 10, 2026, with 23 teams across three divisions ready to hit the court.

Weight Room Expansion at Joe C. Montoya Community & Senior Center

Staff at the Joe C. Montoya Community & Senior Center partnered with Facilities Maintenance to transform an old office and storage room into an open workout area for stretching, bodyweight exercises, and cardio equipment. This upgrade creates a welcoming area for residents to focus on health and wellness—and it was made possible entirely through generous community donations.



The new space

New Electric Zamboni at Jay Lively Activity Center

Jay Lively Activity Center received a new 552AC Electric Zamboni. Rink staff installed the FastICE system and coordinated with Facilities Maintenance to mount the Laser Leveling System inside the ice rink. Ice rink staff recently took the Zamboni on the ice and had a successful first ice cut! The new EV Zamboni supports the City of Flagstaff's Carbon Neutrality Plan by reducing emissions and improving indoor air quality. Jay Lively Activity Center is the first municipal and second ice rink in the state of Arizona with an electric Zamboni.

New Electric Zamboni





OPEN SPACE

Jack Welch Memorial Bridge Dedication and Art Installation at Picture Canyon

On December 7, the community came together to dedicate the Jack Welch Memorial Bridge at Picture Canyon, honoring the remarkable legacy of Jack Welch—an advocate, site steward, and former Flagstaff Citizen of the Year. A commemorative plaque celebrating Jack’s contributions was donated by the JWalkers hiking group. Open Space Steward Diana “Frenchie” Henry helped secure a Beautification, Arts and Sciences grant that brought to life artwork by Hopi artist Duane Koyawena. The artwork’s design reflects the natural and cultural significance of Picture Canyon, incorporating traditional Hopi symbols, the preserve’s logo, and imagery representing life, guidance, and the enduring presence of loved ones. The event included a group hike and food donations for the local food bank. Open Space staff, City Council members, and community members joined in to celebrate Welch’s lasting impact and the cultural meaning behind the installation. This tribute ensures Jack’s memory lives on while highlighting Indigenous influences and the importance of stewardship for this cherished space. Special thanks to Parks staff for their assistance with installation and to all community members who helped turn this vision into reality.



Artist Duane Koyawena and Frenchie with the artwork



Group photo from the dedication event

OPEN SPACE

The white deer on McMillan Mesa



Science Communication Through Art with Summit High School

Students wrapped up the Science Communication Through Art project this quarter by exploring creative ways to connect art and nature. They worked with watercolors, pastels, and colored pencils while studying artist Andy Goldsworthy's work. Activities included making sound maps, creating textured pieces, and finishing with a visit to McMillan Mesa to design ephemeral art using natural materials. One student crafted an oak tree from Gambel oak leaves and sticks, photographed it for her portfolio, and then returned the items to their natural state.



Student photographing their work

FACTS After-School Program

Open Space Educator Ashlee Fliney visited De Miguel and Marshall Magnet schools to lead outreach focused on "Leave No Trace and Open Space." Students played Litter Tag and then created skits to teach each other about the 10 Essentials for outdoor adventures. These interactive activities helped students learn how to enjoy nature responsibly while having fun.



Ashlee leading an activity

EVENTS, MARKETING & ATHLETICS



Winter Wonderland 2025

Winter Wonderland & Tree Lighting

This year's Winter Wonderland and Tree Lighting event was an incredible success, drawing approximately 18,000 attendees throughout the day! The Events and Marketing team led the coordination and on-the-ground efforts, but this celebration wouldn't have been possible without the amazing support from our Recreation staff, Parks team and other partners. From craft tables and bounce houses to the obstacle course, scavenger hunt, hot cocoa stations, and seamless setup and cleanup—everyone's hard work made everything run smoothly. A heartfelt thank you goes out to all partners and supporters of this event including Discover Flagstaff, the Downtown Business Alliance, Bigfoot BBQ for donating hot cocoa, Flag Tag AZ, and all who joined in to make this event unforgettable.



Santa after the tree-lighting



Crafts



Live music

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