





# ABOUT THIS PLAN

## Who this Plan is For

The *Flagstaff Regional Plan* applies to the 525-square-mile FMPO planning area. It extends from Belmont to Winona and from Kachina Village and Mountainaire to north of the San Francisco Peaks. The plan serves as the general plan for the City of Flagstaff, and in the county areas works in conjunction with the *Coconino County Comprehensive Plan* and other community area plans. This plan is for the people that live here, and the businesses that employ here. This plan is for the visitors, prospective businesses, elected officials, City and County departments, the development community, interest groups, and resource agencies. This plan is for the future generation.



## Why Do We Plan?

Simply put, we want to help ensure that our region remains an outstanding area in which to live. We can ensure that future generations continue to enjoy the exceptional quality of life that the Flagstaff region has to offer by presenting a comprehensive vision for the future of the area, and by providing guidance to help that vision become a reality. The vision that guides this plan looks out over the next 20 years, while the goals and policies are intended to serve for the next 10 years.

### WHY PLAN IN PUBLIC?

Planning in public is vital to the long-term success of a planning initiative; having full community support ensures that long after the planners are gone, there will be an active group of people helping to implement the plan's concepts and strategies. These plans which are created as part of a community-based process have, from their inception, incorporated a full range of ideas and input from various constituent groups into their policies. While the adoption process often still involves adjustments to the plan, because the community has participated every step of the way, these changes are easy to make without upsetting the flow of plan adoption.

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## Why Do We Need a Regional Plan?

At its best, a general plan captures the aspirations of a community, describes its current condition, tells the truth about the challenges it faces, and lays out a strategy for achieving community aspirations in the face of those challenges. It is a living document, reflecting the ongoing conversations about how the community anticipates and decides how it will adapt to changing conditions.

The Growing Smarter Statutes adopted by the State Legislature in 1998 and 2000 require that all municipalities and counties adopt general or comprehensive plans, and that these plans be updated every 10 years. However, that is not the principal reason to have a plan. Planning allows us to make informed choices about our future. The *Flagstaff Regional Plan* contains goals and policies that provide guidance for making choices about the location and form of future development and improving the livability of the community.

The *Flagstaff Regional Plan* meets statutory requirements by addressing the 17 required and 4 optional topics defined in Arizona Revised Statutes §9-461.05. Its full value will be realized if this is the beginning of an ongoing, community-wide conversation about the Flagstaff region's future. This includes speaking to critical components of community success not required by statute and committing to timely updates.

### A REGIONAL FOCUS

The City of Flagstaff and the surrounding communities all have unique identities and characters, but as a whole, the Greater Flagstaff area operates somewhat as a single unified community. Residents of the outlying communities generally work and shop in the city, and schools, stores, and other services are largely located within the city. The City and the County do address capital improvements differently; however, environmental issues such as water and air quality, forest protection, and open space do not adhere to political boundaries. While the City and County have limited jurisdiction over federal lands managed by the U.S. Forest Service and National Park Service, the plan includes policies that support the collaborative efforts necessary to protect the integrity of these lands.

Creation of *A Vision for our Community: Flagstaff 2020* was the first step in bringing the City and County together, which was continued through the 2001 *Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan* and enhanced in this *Flagstaff Regional Plan*.

## How We Got Here

As the guiding document for the City of Flagstaff as required by state law, it was important that the *Flagstaff Regional Plan* was created with the input and collaboration of Flagstaff citizens, public officials, and staff members. In order to achieve this goal, the plan was created using an open planning process. A 19-member Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) was appointed by the Flagstaff City Council and Coconino County Board of Supervisors and met monthly or bimonthly for four years to develop the vision, guiding principles, and goals and policies for each of the topics covered by this plan. In addition, a Steering Committee composed of two Councilpersons and two Supervisors met quarterly to ensure that the process was on track and that the public participation plan continued to be effective. A core planning team of City and County staff met regularly throughout the process to provide staff support of the CAC, write drafts of the plan, and carry out all of the aspects of the public participation plan. Hundreds of city and county residents provided very important comments through open houses and focus groups, comments on the web site, blogs, and other means that were crucial in defining the plan's direction.



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## Accomplishing Our Intentions

Realizing our vision will require the disciplined and artful execution of three activities. First is the analysis of four types of critical input to the plan, which includes information on local conditions and historical trends, larger trends, our community vision, and best practices to achieve our desired efforts. Second, the information gathered for those inputs must be incorporated in a planning process that recognizes the high level of economic, social, and environmental uncertainty we currently face, and develops community plans that will be robust and resilient in the face of such uncertainty. Third, the plan must communicate transparently how those inputs were utilized and why the final plan decisions were chosen over other alternatives.

## CRITICAL INPUT

### 1. **Current Local Conditions and Historical Trends**

Current local conditions and historical trends define one of the critical inputs for the *Flagstaff Regional Plan*. Information on community conditions and trends comes from many reputable sources including census data, scientific and economic information, local performance indicators assembled by academic and government bodies as well as by non-profits, and citizen input. This information is contained in the This is Flagstaff section of this document, as well as within many plan topics.

### 2. **Larger Trends**

A second critical input to the *Flagstaff Regional Plan* is a review of the local impact of regional, state, national, and even global trends. Even though we have little ability to influence them, community planners have a responsibility to anticipate what adaptations may be required, and how the community can become more resilient to unwanted changes.

Some of these larger trends include increases in temperature, drought, insect infestations, extreme weather events, forest fires, resource constraints driving higher prices, and national and global economic disruptions. At least for now, the greater Flagstaff area is largely dependent on significant economic imports and exports, including federal and state funding. As a result, the area's ability to respond to such trends will be largely dependent on the strength and effectiveness of the political will to deal with these trends at state and national scales.

### 3. **Community Vision**

The third source of critical input for the *Flagstaff Regional Plan* is a vision of the community we want to become. The CAC and planners have utilized previous planning and community visioning documents, plus extensive community focus groups to make the choices incorporated in this plan. This information includes considerable citizen input on what they like and don't like about our current conditions.

### 4. **Best Practices**

The fourth important source of input to the *Flagstaff Regional Plan* is the lessons learned by other communities. What policies and strategies have other communities tried, and what can we learn from their results? The planners and the CAC have reviewed other community plans and their outcomes, including the cities of Austin, Boise, Tucson, Sacramento and Cheyenne, and utilized those lessons in designing the overall approach and the detailed topics of this plan.



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## PLANNING FOR RESILIENCE IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY

Economists, sociologists, and scientists tell us we have created conditions with significant economic, social, and environmental tipping points. If we move beyond a tipping point, it can trigger abrupt, non-linear changes that are more than normally difficult to predict and undermine the best made plans. The challenge is to develop goals and policies for a 10-year general plan for a very unpredictable future.

Resilience is a community's capacity to absorb disturbance—to undergo change and still retain essentially the same function, structure, and feedbacks.

Scenario planning is a process designed to provide robust and resilient plans in the face of such uncertainties. It allows planners and community decision makers to project alternative possible futures, and then to design a plan that will be as effective as possible no matter which future unfolds.

## ENSURING TRANSPARENCY

The success of the *Flagstaff Regional Plan* depends not only on how well the four critical inputs are integrated into a plan for a resilient community, but how well the rationale for that plan is communicated to citizens. Transparency is vital to communication for several reasons:

1. People reviewing a plan that is transparent about its decisions can understand why planning choices were made, and can provide feedback if the plan's recommendations do not adequately reflect the conditions, trends, vision, and best practice information that went into the planning process.
2. Conditions and trends may and will change. The community's vision for its future may also evolve, and new best practices will emerge. If the decision process for each of the key plan recommendations is transparent, it will be easy to determine if and how elements of the plan need to be modified to incorporate these changes.
3. Decision transparency allows more effective evaluation of the results achieved. If the community failed to achieve a planning objective, for example, transparency will help reveal whether it was because of problems in implementation, or because of unexpected changes that made success impossible.

The planners and the CAC have worked hard to be transparent about why the plan recommends what it does, and through the annual reporting process, will continue to do so.



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