

Record of Proceeding

McMillan Mesa Major Plan Amendment Open House

June 18, 2018 5 pm to 7 pm, NACET Business Accelerator

City staff held an open house to answer questions and provide information about the major plan amendment being proposed for McMillan Mesa Natural Area and other selected city properties, such as the FUTS trail properties between Hemlock and Cedar, and the Veterans' Home. More than 30 members of the public attended.

Organization and Materials presented

The open house was set up to discuss both the Open Space program's work on the McMillan Mesa Natural Area Management Plan, and the major plan amendment proposed to the Regional Plan. The material for the Management Plan provided topical information about the property and asked for feedback from the public on managing the property, identical to what was presented at previous community events.

The discussion of the major plan amendment was presented through a series of posters that described the changes being proposed and their potential impacts to Regional Plan goals and policies, and City infrastructure and resources. Posters presented described impacts of the proposed amendment to Parks and Open Space (including the McMillan Mesa Natural Area), Growth and Land Use, Transportation and Emergency Services, Water Demand, Capacity and Production, and Wastewater and Stormwater. Posters provided for the Major Plan Amendment are found in Appendix A.

This was a first opportunity to present initial findings from Water Service's geophysical study results for the McMillan Mesa properties. The full study looked for areas with potential for citing new wells throughout the City. Participants were informed that the full study findings were going through a separate process and would be presented to the Water Commission first in the coming months.

The City also provided information on the two ongoing construction projects near the Natural Area.

Vicki Morris, a representative of MMV Development, also attended to answer questions about the adjacent private development projects underway and under review.

City officials and staff in attendance

Sara Dechter, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Carlton Johnson, Associate Planner
Daniel Folke, Planning Director
Rick Barrett, City Engineer
Jeff Bauman, Traffic Engineer

Alan Sanderson, Transportation Project Manager
Robert Wallace, Open Space Specialist
Shane Dille, Deputy City Manager
Jamie Whelan, Vice Mayor
Charlie Odegaard, City Councilmember

Topics discussed:

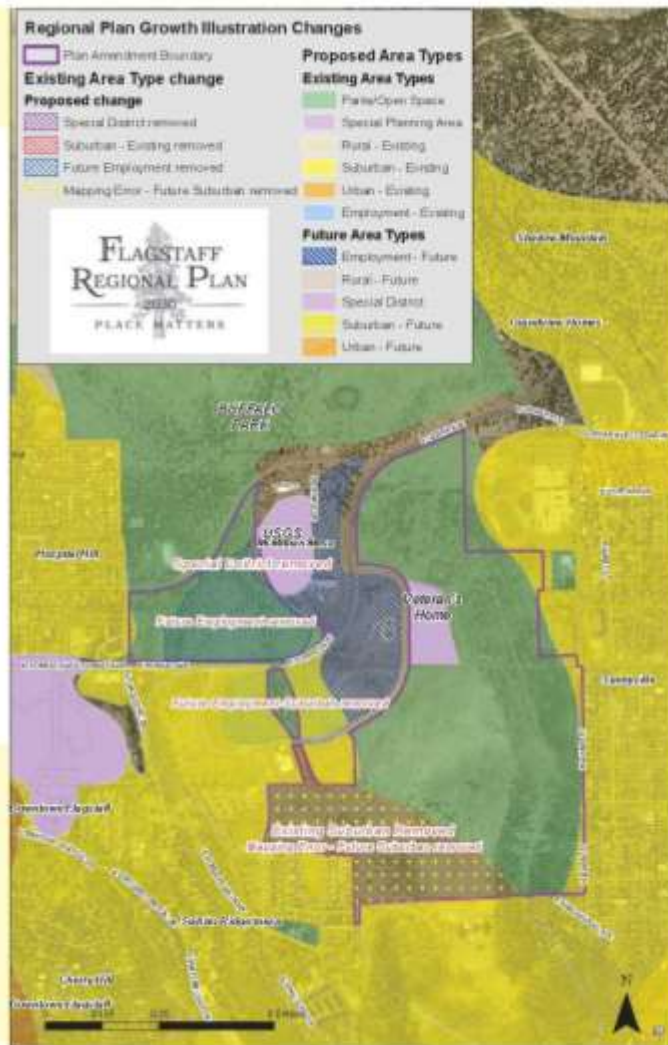
- Proposition 413 Section 3 – The language of this section of the ordinance the City passed in 2016 is worded in such a way that it raised questions about the exemption that it grants for possible off-site improvements for the Veterans’ Home within the McMillan Mesa Natural Area. The project manager has agreed to follow up with the Legal Department about the relationship of the reference to Section and the terminology “other improvements.”
- The completion of Ponderosa Parkway between Route 66 and Turquoise was discussed. This is a planned roadway that does not enter the Natural Area. Residents were informed that the City already owns the right of way and has designs to complete this project, even though it is currently unfunded. They were also informed about the necessity of the road for secondary access for fire safety and emergency services.
- The roadway connection from Route 66 to Gemini would travel through the Natural Area and was a large topic of discussion. Staff discussed the impacts to emergency services and traffic volume, specifically along Pine Cliff Drive. The City received several comment cards related to this topic (See Appendix B).
- There was some confusion about the “Scenarios” on the Transportation and Emergency Services poster. Some many people misunderstood and thought the scenarios were two equally-weighted options that could happen. The Scenarios were the basis for estimating the magnitude of impacts that result from the passing of Proposition 413, to remove the previously planned “Connection” between Gemini and Route 66. Several people looking at the poster had trouble distinguishing between the proposed amendment, which is to remove the road from the Road Network Illustration, and the comparative analysis of future conditions with and without the “Connection” road. The disclosure of negative impacts was intended to present a factual outcome, and was not a position of the City staff or part of the proposed amendment.
- Bicycle Safety – There was a discussion of safety concerns with bicycles along FUTS trails and roads in the area. The City Traffic Engineer agreed to follow up to assess the issues on site.
- Changes to Future Growth Illustration – Staff answered questions about the Future Growth Illustration area types, especially why they were drawn the way they were and what they meant.
- Development on adjacent private land – There were many questions about how the adjacent private development was going to change the character of the Mesa and how it would impact viewsheds. Vicki Morris, a representative of MMV Development, was present and able to share the company’s plans for building out their properties.
- Privately-owned open space – There is a parcel that is zoned Public Open Space, adjacent to the McMillan Mesa Natural Area. Several participants were concerned that the parcel was not included in the re-mapping, would be developed and asked if the City would eventually acquire the property.
- New well sites – The Water Services department is in the middle of analyzing where would be the most efficient and cost-effective place to put in future wells for water production. The first round of analysis has identified fault lines in and around the Natural Area that need further analysis. The possibility of new wells in the area was discussed. Several residents stated they prefer the wells be located outside the Natural Area, and in a location that is already disturbed.

We also need to determine if Proposition 413's language related to "improvements" would even allow for wells to be located within the area.

- Several participants questioned if the well house photo was accurate. Staff will investigate further and replace in future presentations if needed.
- Gravity sewer line – The Water Services department has had plans for gravity sewer line between the USGS campus and Forest Ave. The site is currently served by a pressurized main that travels uphill to Buffalo Park and then enters a gravity line that follows the old alignment of Cedar Ave. The participants were informed that it is the City's policy to eliminate pressurized mains, wherever possible, because they are prone to failures, require energy to operate, and require significantly more maintenance than gravity lines. Participants wanted more information about: (a) if the gravity sewer was necessary, such as a cost-benefit analysis of building the new line, (b) if the main could be located to use the natural screening of trees and avoid the open meadows, and (c) if an alternative alignment could be considered that avoids the Natural Area, or the most sensitive areas of the Natural Area.

All participants were encouraged to provide written comments if they would like, which are available in Appendix B.

Appendix A: Major Plan Amendment Posters



GROWTH AND LAND USE

McMillan Mesa Natural Area Future Area Type Changes

The Regional Plan's Future Growth Illustration is calibrated to a model of future land uses that reflects how the growth patterns affect livability indicators such as water use, vehicle miles traveled, development footprint, and housing mix. Of particular importance to this model is the balance of "housing and employment land uses with the preservation and protection of our unique natural and cultural setting" (Goal LU.4). Because land that supports future employment opportunities is generally at risk for conversion to housing, the Regional Plan requires a more rigorous process to the examination of impacts for removing the "Employment" area type. In the case of the changes initiated by Proposition 413, the net loss of 23 acres of Employment or Special District area type translates to approximately 600 fewer jobs at build out. This created a conflict with Policy LU.16.1, which encourages protection of employment area from encroachment by other uses.

Acres of change due to Major Plan Amendments

Area Type	Acres Reduced	Acres Added	Net Acres
Parks/Open Space	0	318	+318
Existing Suburban	59	0	-59
Employment	36	0	-36
Special District	1,52	10	+8,48
Area in White	231	0	-231



Mapping Error Corrections

This amendment will also address a mapping error on the Future Growth Illustration. There are approximately 5 locations within the City limits that have overlapping, identical "Future" and "Existing" area types. The amendment will remove the "Future" or striped color in favor of the "Existing" or solid color on the map. It will also fill in gaps between polygons that inadvertently created "areas in white." There is no expected impact to any Regional Plan goals and policies or to any facilities or resources as a result of this correction.

Acres of Change due to Mapping Errors

Area Type	Acres Reduced	Acres Added	Net Acres
Future Urban	39.4	0	-39.4
Future Suburban	178.3	0.5	-177.8
Employment	0.75	5.3	+4.55





PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

Natural Resources

The majority of the McMillan Mesa Natural Area is a Montane grassland habitat that is known for supporting small mammals and birds of prey. Animals include prairie dog colonies and threatened birds of prey like the Mexican Spotted Owl and Northern Goshawk. Invasive grass and forb species are present through the grassland. The drought hardy invasive plants have the potential to dominate the grassland ecosystem.

Steep slopes, rocky outcrops and forest resources exist on the eastern side of the Natural Area. Dramatic viewsheds exist throughout the area and along Cedar and Forest Avenues, which are designated as Great Streets in the Regional Plan. The Area does not have significant water resources and has very little floodplain or floodway.



Open Space Use and Management

The City's Open Space Specialist is preparing a Management Plan for the use and improvements associated with this open space as part of a process separate from this Major Plan Amendment. The Buffalo Park/McMillan Mesa Natural Area complex will become the City's second largest park/open space area. Its size and connections to the Forest Service trails will enhance recreational opportunities in the area. The Natural Area will be open year-round and will provide passive outdoor recreation.

The Management Plan will be structured around improving the area. Access is provided via the PUTS from surrounding neighborhoods and via transit along NAIFTA's Blue Line. Multiple roads intersect the Natural Area for vehicular access but there is only one public parking lot at Buffalo Park. Access improvements will be evaluated. The City will manage the issue of invasive species on the mesa. The forests will be managed to achieve a forest structure that is resistant and resilient to wildfire and continues to provide ecosystem services. The Area will maintain and enhance a diversity of habitats that support native wildlife species with an emphasis on rare habitats and special-status species.

The Natural Area will be programmed to support education on the area's natural and cultural history. There can be information for visitors that introduces the native flora and wildlife via interactive walks and watchable wildlife locations. Studies have uncovered petroglyph panels and evidence of grinding slicks along the rocky outcroppings north of Cedar Ave. Portions of Cedar Ave seem to follow the Besse Wagon Rd, which was the primary access in the area from 1850 until the railroad came in the 1880s. These and other cultural resources will be managed for preservation and protection.



TRANSPORTATION AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Ponderosa Parkway Completion and Connection

Completion: Ponderosa Parkway currently ends at two driveways that enter San Francisco de Asis Catholic Church. In order to develop the properties north of Route 66 and south of the Catholic Church, the City will need to complete this connection because of requirements for secondary access. The City has an easement that allows for the completion of Ponderosa Parkway. Some of the developments, which may trigger construction of the road are under review. The properties along the south end of Ponderosa Parkway are a prime location for housing that fills a gap between East and West Flagstaff and has the potential to provide affordable housing.

Connection: Flagstaff has long considered a connection between Route 66 and Cedar Ave./Forest Ave. The connectivity and access provided by this route was analyzed in the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030's consideration of development scenarios. On the Regional Plan's Road Network Illustration, the major plan amendment proposes to remove a "Future Access" route that would have connected Gemini and Route 66 via a new alignment of Ponderosa Parkway. The removal of this road from the Regional Plan is being analyzed because Proposition 413 Initiative for the Greater Buffalo Park states that this road can only be constructed if deemed necessary for the new Veterans' Home.



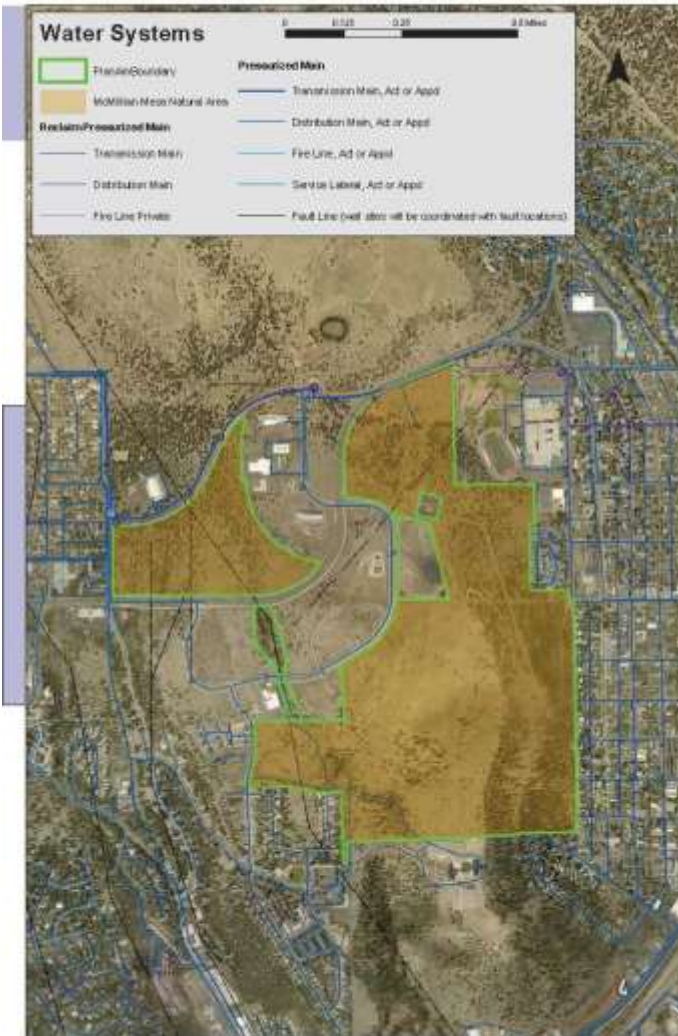
Scenario 1 Ponderosa Parkway is completed without a Connection to Gemini Dr.	According to the 2040 growth projections, traffic on Pine Cliff is estimated to increase by 150% compared to today's traffic.
Scenario 2 Ponderosa Parkway Completion and Connection to Gemini Dr. built	According to the 2040 growth projections, traffic on Pine Cliff would increase by less than 12% compared to today's traffic.

The photo to the left is the northwest driveway into San Francisco de Asis. The Ponderosa Parkway extension would travel through the meadow in the background.

Police, Fire, and Emergency Services

The removal of the Ponderosa Parkway Connection from the Road Network Illustration will have a negative impact on fire, police, and emergency medical services response times for several neighborhoods, including Switzer Mesa, the north end of Sannyside, Shadow Mountain, and North of Hospital neighborhoods. Fire Station #2 is located on Ponderosa Parkway below the edge of the mesa and the Guardian Medical Service's new facility is located on Gemini Dr. Without the Connection of Ponderosa Parkway and Gemini, engines and ambulances will have a more circuitous route that will pass through numerous residential areas. This will add several minutes to response times, even after the connection between Pine Cliff and Ponderosa Parkway is completed. It will also eliminate an alternative route in case of traffic jams that impede the travel of emergency vehicles, and increase noise on occasion in the Switzer Mesa neighborhoods.





WATER DEMAND, CAPACITY, AND PRODUCTION

Water Demand and Capacity

Development on McMullan Mesa was anticipated to need just over 200 GPM (gallons per minute). Based on current land use and the proposed Natural Area, demand is anticipated at just under 200 GPM. Because of needed fire flow, the area was designed carry 2,000 GPM. There is no expected change in demand or capacity of water based on the proposed Natural Area.

Waterline Access

The majority of existing waterlines exist within the existing roadway right-of-ways. However, there are some that connect the San Francisco de Asis school/church to Pinecliff Dr and Gemini Rd. No new waterlines are desired or expected within the proposed Natural Area.

However, the City of Flagstaff will need continued access to the existing lines that pass through the proposed Natural Area.



Existing waterline through Natural Area



Well house near Lake Mary

Water Production

McMullan Mesa is currently being evaluated for the placement of new City wells. The mesa is a volcanic flow over multiple fault lines. Wells along fractures and fault lines can produce more water because the ground in that vicinity is often more porous, allowing higher quantities of water to flow. Potential well sites will be coordinated strategically with fault locations. The entire mesa, within and outside of the Natural Area, is being evaluated for its water production potential.

Once the construction is complete, the wells can be contained in a small house made of native rock. There will be little noise created during operations, unlike the more remote and older wells that often run on diesel power since wells in the vicinity of the mesa can be connected to the electric grid. The initial drilling of a well takes between six months and a year. Total disturbance within the Natural Area would be approximately one-half acre with offsite construction staging. There is the potential to take advantage of new, directional drilling technology. This method could start with a surface location that worked best with the surrounding land uses, drill down, and then drill to the side to intercept the fracture lines that yield the most water.

WASTEWATER AND STORMWATER

Wastewater Creation and Capacity

Development on McMillan Mesa was anticipated to contribute 606,000 GPD (gallons per day). Based on current land use and the proposed Natural Area, the area is anticipated to contribute approximately 604,000 GPD. All wastewater flow goes into the 15-inch sewerline in Switzer Canyon, consistent with the original Specific Plan for McMillan Mesa. There is no expected change in wastewater creation or capacity based on the proposed Natural Area.

Stormwater Capacity

There is no specific drainage conveyance structure that was sized for McMillan Mesa development that would have its capacity directly affected by the proposed Natural Area's changes in development. Therefore, there are no expected changes to any downstream stormwater facilities based on the proposed McMillan Mesa Natural Area.

Potential Stormwater Infrastructure

There are opportunities within the Natural Area to generally improve stormwater quality or reduce downstream effects. The general area north of Hemlock Way has been identified for a potential detention basin in past plans. This location has some existing stormwater infrastructure and has historically experienced flooding issues. Another specific area that could benefit from future stormwater infrastructure improvements is along the proposed Natural Area's eastern border, against Isabel St. The slopes against Isabel St are soft and sediment frequently ends up in the street or in nearby resident's yards during heavy rain events. Geologists are currently evaluating the mesa, among other areas throughout the City, for locations that have high water flows beneath the surface. This evaluation will also tell them specific areas that work well for water recharge. Coordinating drainage features with these strategic locations would be beneficial. These features can be designed to look natural. The City's Stormwater Division would like to reserve the right to make future stormwater infrastructure improvements for detention, treatment and recharge in the proposed Natural Area.



Sewerline Access

The majority of sewer mains exist within existing road right-of-ways. The southern half of the existing development north of the Natural Area containing the Northern Arizona Center for Entrepreneurship and Technology, and some of the USGS facilities is currently served by a pressure sewer that connects to a gravity sewer toward the north end of this existing development. There is a desire from the City of Flagstaff Water Services department to eliminate all pressure sewers. There is therefore a plan to serve this area with a gravity sewer by connecting the developed area to the sewer main within Forest Ave. This connection would cross a portion of the Natural Area. This gravity sewer will not interfere with the functionality of the Natural Area once in place but the City of Flagstaff will need to have access to it as it passes through the Natural Area.



Existing drainage feature north of Hemlock Way



Existing drainage infrastructure on Isabel St

Stormwater Maintenance

There are numerous FUTS throughout the Natural Area. The City's Stormwater Division needs approximately 30 feet around each trail for maintenance of the drainages and engineered features, and an allowance for the possibility of creating new stormwater related infrastructure that would help their functionality. Aside from FUTS, all other existing drainage features will need regular maintenance, even if little additional investment occurs.



Existing drainage infrastructure along a FUTS

Appendix B: Public Written Comments Received

Topic	Comment
Disturbance	I support minimal disturbance on all open space lands.
Disturbance	I strongly support keeping McMillan Mesa as minimally developed as possible in keeping with the wishes of the voters. Maintain the natural wilderness of the area minimizing impacts.
Management - hunting	Remove bow and arrow hunting on the Mesa. Very concerned with the safety of people's lives who may be in the crossfire as it is a recreational area.
Management – Parking	Would like to see a few parking spots provided in a small area of the parking for the Veterans' home.
Management - Trails	City should fund open space improvements – hire high school crews to maintain trails.
Management - Weeds	Right-of-way weeds and utility line areas weeds need to be eradicated to protect existing plants on the mesa.
Management – wildlife	Do not consider wildlife fencing, the wildlife do not need and deserve the south side of the Mesa. If wildlife Passover could work build that.
Roads	Ponderosa Parkway completion is okay but not through the open space to Cedar. An arterial road would destroy the intent of the voters.
Roads	Extending Ponderosa Parkway will help bring traffic up from Route 66.
Roads	Traffic calming on Cedar Hill would help with wildfire on the road. People drive faster than the speed limit on Cedar Hill.
Roads	Do not build the Ponderosa Parkway Connection to Gemini.
Roads	Work with the Church to consider completion only. Prefer Scenario 1
Roads	Do not want to see Ponderosa Parkway extended across the Mesa.
Roads	Statement about Veterans' home being able to build roads outside of their 10 acres is wrong. Section 2 and 3 appear to say no road building or motorized trails on the "property" except for the 10 acre VA home. Statement on Transportation and Emergency poster at presentation says VA can build roads outside of the 10 acres. Please get this clarified before any land is deeded to the federal government.
Roads	I had to have Sarah relook at the language in the ordinance that specifically made comment to roads "deemed necessary for the Veteran's home."
Roads	Please do not allow the road to proceed through the open space – Ponderosa Parkway Connection.
Roads	If the Ponderosa Parkway Connection is deemed necessary, make it a winding slow road – not a bus or truck route, etc.
Roads	Ponderosa Parkway Connection – Just because a road is drawn on a map doesn't mean it stays "residential."
Roads	I live on Ponderosa Parkway and would prefer that there is less traffic on the street, but would prefer that no development, roads, etc. is done on the new open space.
Roads	I do not support bisecting the protected area with the Ponderosa Parkway Connector.

Roads	Do not use outdated and ridiculous formulas for how many cars per housing unit – which translates into transportation issues. Example: Hub development requiring only 225 parking spaces for 641 bedrooms. Every university student will have a care. This is 2018 people, not 1998.
Roads	Don't build roads in Scenarios 1 or 2. [Ponderosa Parkway Completion and Connections
Sewer	If a gravity sewer is needed for NACET, try to use already disturbed lands like the FUTS corridor. Avoid the open space.
Stormwater	Mosquitos in retention ponds.
Stormwater	Consider mosquito treatment in all retention ponds where water accumulates
Water production	Prioritize digging any new wells in private lands or non-open space lands. Avoid open space for digging wells
Water production	Concerned about water - new well infrastructure on open space area of Mesa. Needs to be a short link to existing waterline.
Water production	Look for water sources outside open space