

February 14, 2022

TO: Flagstaff City Council

FROM: Michele James, Executive Director, Friends of Flagstaff's Future

SUBJECT: Flagstaff's Final 10-year Housing Plan

Friends of Flagstaff's Future (F3) would like to thank city staff as well as the Housing Commission and the many volunteers for all the hard work that went into creating the final 10-Year Housing Plan.

F3 provided extensive comments on the Draft Housing Plan in November 2021. We appreciate the discussions that followed with the Housing Section and the inclusion in the Final Plan of many of F3's comments. F3 found the "Response to Draft 10-Year Housing Plan Public Comments" document particularly helpful in understanding staff's evaluation of all the comments received from the public.

Going forward, we ask that the Council give special attention to the following concerns:

1. Strengthening the Connection Between the Plan's Overarching Narrative and the Strategies for Implementing it.

The Plan includes an excellent overarching narrative of the needs, concerns, and complexities related to affordable housing. We are particularly appreciative of the sections focused on Needs Assessment, Gap Analysis, and Housing-as-Infrastructure.

Our concern is that the issues outlined in these sections are not, at this point, linked to a specific strategy or initiative. For example:

The Zoning and Land Use section (pages 48-49) notes that 58% of the land in Flagstaff is zoned for single-family residential. It also notes that land use can create barriers to affordable housing supply, including zoning (p. 48). But it is not clear if (and where) in the Policy Initiatives and Strategies this concern is addressed. Does the Plan recommend that less land in Flagstaff be zoned for single-family residential (and more toward multi-family zoning, for instance)? It may be that the issue of land zoned for single-family housing is addressed in initiative Create 4.1. But the connection is not made clear in the document nor is it clear what initiatives, if any, address this concern. Are there other initiatives that address this concern?

We also recommend that the narrative text of the Plan be linked directly to the Policy Initiatives & Strategies *tables* that address identified needs and gaps.

The connection between the plan narrative and the strategies will lend clarity and increase the use of this document as a roadmap for the future and will greatly assist future staff, Council members, and community members going forward.

2. Prioritization of Initiatives & Strategies Needed

How will city staff and Council determine in which order individual or groups of initiatives and strategies should be addressed and funded? Prioritization of initiatives and strategies is extremely important in order to ensure timely implementation, address barriers, communicate in a timely way with the public, and assist future Councils in their work.

The strategies outlined in the Plan are interrelated and connected. Some initiatives cannot be completed until others are first completed. For instance, the strategy “Preserve 1.2” discusses the need to review city code to remove barriers associated with adaptive reuse for the creation of affordable housing. Is it fair to assume that this strategy would be one of the first to be implemented because some adaptive reuse may be dependent upon any potential barriers in the code being removed?

We applaud the Council for its recognition of the urgency around both affordable housing and climate change. We urge Council to keep both of these declared city emergencies on the front burner. We know staff changes and council membership changes. We urge Council to ensure that these two emergencies continue to be given priority as declared city emergencies.

F3 urges Council to clarify priorities related to the proposed Plan.

3. Implementation of the Plan

A plan is only as good as its implementation. This is where a level of uncertainty arises. How will the City ensure that this Plan is implemented, especially in regard to proposed development projects as well as other city issues that connect to the Plan?

It appears to F3 that the responsibility for ensuring the long-term implementation of the plan falls to the City Manager. That person, immediately and into the future, must ensure that staff and Council understand and implement the strategies outlined in this Plan.

F3 encourages the Council to clarify how the City will undertake the implementation of the Policy Initiatives & Strategies.

F3 is very pleased that stringent evaluation and reporting elements are included in the Housing Plan. Detailed annual reporting is absolutely essential to ensuring implementation of the Plan’s initiatives and strategies. Such reporting must look at both what has been achieved in a given year, as well as what hasn’t been achieved, the barriers involved, and strategies to overcome those barriers.

Thank you for considering F3’s comments. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our comments further, please contact Michele James (mjames@friendsofflagstaff.org).

Cc: Leah Bloom, City of Flagstaff