

As you may have heard, the City is starting a comprehensive update of its zoning ordinance or Land Development Code (LDC). The purpose of this admittedly lengthy e-mail is to give you a brief overview of why this comprehensive overhaul is being undertaken, and to invite your help and participation in various Focus Groups to make this project successful. The e-mail is long in order to be as comprehensive as possible. Please bear with me!

You are receiving this e-mail because your name has been suggested for your possible interest in participation in this project. If you would prefer not to receive any further e-mails on this subject, please contact Roger E. Eastman, AICP, project manager, at reastman@FlagstaffAZ.gov and your name will immediately be removed from our contact list.

In July last year, the City of Flagstaff invited qualified planning consultants, urban designers and multi-disciplinary firms to provide professional services for the purpose of restructuring and redrafting the existing City of Flagstaff zoning ordinance to create an innovative and integrated zoning ordinance based on Smart Growth principles. After an extensive review of all applications, the firm of Opticos Design Inc. from Berkeley CA., supported by the firms of Lisa Wise Consulting, Jacobson and Wack, Hall Planning and Engineering, and Sherwood Design Consultants have been selected to work with the community and staff to produce the desired zoning code.

Those of you who have used the LDC or are familiar with it, know that while it has numerous strengths (for example, the natural resource protection standards applied within the new zoning districts have ensured the preservation of trees, slopes and floodplains in new developments and the City's exterior lighting standards led Flagstaff to be declared the First International Dark Sky City in October 2001), it is also complex and hard to use, inconsistent with the Regional Plan, out-dated, disorganized and disjointed.

The desired zoning code (it will have a new name) will be coherent, integrated, concise, consistent, innovative, and user friendly. It will also;

1. Be based on sound principles of Smart Growth, mixed-use and sustainable development.
2. Be consistent with the adopted Regional Plan and is coordinated with the future amendments proposed to the Regional Plan.
3. Be logically organized and easy to read and understand.
4. Include an extensive use of graphics to illustrate key points and minimize the amount of text.
5. Be consistent in terms of processes and requirements.
6. Reduce the number of zoning districts provided in the Code and on the zoning map where possible, by combining or removing districts.
7. Involve the public in a meaningful and effective way using appropriate public participation techniques.
8. Be easily expanded and amended in the future to respond to changing market and socio-economic conditions.

The importance of community involvement in the 15-19 month process of rewriting the zoning code was specifically called out as a necessity and was a determinant in the consultant selection process. Throughout the Zoning Code Rewrite process, there will be multiple opportunities for Flagstaff residents to stay informed and participate in the project. Indeed, a list of residents who have expressed an interest in working with staff and the consultant on specific areas of interest has already been established.

A number of Focus Groups are proposed as a way of involving the general public and citizen experts in the Zoning Code Rewrite project. Focus Groups will be formed for the following specific areas of interest for which there is not already an official City Commission, Committee or Board:

- Design guidelines
- Housing
- Building and Fire Code
- Fire – Wildland/tree issues
- Neighborhood Planning
- Downtown
- Economic Development/Business/Real Estate

Landscaping
Resource Preservation – Trees/slopes/floodplains
Lighting
Process and Procedures

Existing City commissions and committees such as the Traffic Commission, Historic Preservation Commission or Sustainability Commission will also be used as a venue for ensuring public input in the Zoning Code Rewrite project.

Members of the Focus Groups will not be appointed by the City Council – they are informal citizen groups formed to focus on a specific area of interest and to provide direction, comment and ideas to staff and the consultant during the Zoning Code Rewrite. They will be outcome focused with a strong emphasis on general issues rather than getting into the details of technical code review. Their primary role will therefore be to identify and frame the issues, to rationalize why an amendment is needed so that staff and the consultant can draft appropriate code language. Their membership will be as diverse as possible (members of the Focus Groups need not be City residents), and each group will include citizens with a range of related interests as well as City staff representing a diverse range of expertise.

From a core group of perhaps 6-10 citizens who agree to regular attendance at Focus Group meetings for as long as necessary and who constitute the principal members of the Focus Group, a chairperson will be selected who will serve on a Citizen Advisory Group (CAG). However, any citizen serving on the Regional Plan 2012 Citizen Advisory Committee may not be appointed to the CAG, but they may be a member of the Focus Group and participate in Focus Group meetings. Similarly, citizens currently serving on City Boards, Commissions or Committees may not serve on the CAG, but may participate in the Focus Groups.

Focus Group meetings will be open to the public and anyone may attend. While not technically required by the Open Meeting Law, all Focus Group meetings will be posted in the City's official public noticing locations, on the City website, and elsewhere in the City so that the public can be informed of the meeting and has a chance to attend. Action minutes will also be maintained so that all important decisions can be recorded. Minutes will be posted on the City website and kept on file for public review.

Please respond back to me at your earliest convenience, and preferably by no later than Friday March 20th, indicating whether you have an interest in serving on one of more of the Focus Groups listed above. If you are a representative for a particular interest group or organization, or you know of anyone else who you think may be interested in serving on a particular Focus Group, please forward that person's name and e-mail address to me with the name of the Focus Group on which you think they may be best suited to serve, and I'll contact them.

We are interested in forming these Focus Groups as soon as possible, and once we have a comprehensive list of names for each group, you can expect a follow-up e-mail from me inviting you to the first meeting of the group.

An inevitable question is; how long will the Focus Groups be meeting and what time commitment will Focus Group members need to contribute to this effort? As the Focus Groups are intended to only look at the big issues and will not get into detailed code review, most groups should be able to complete their initial work in a few meetings through the first few months of the project – late spring/early summer. As code chapters or sections are drafted later this year and into next year, the Focus Groups may meet again for a few meetings to ensure that their desired outcome has been achieved.

I realize that this is a wealth of information to provide to you in one e-mail on the subject of Focus Groups and the Zoning Code Rewrite project, and I thank you for patiently reading it through to the end! If you have any questions, please respond back to me via e-mail and I will ensure that you receive a prompt answer.

Your active participation in the Focus Groups associated with the Zoning Code Rewrite project is much appreciated. It will ensure that together as a community we can draft and produce a new zoning code for the City of Flagstaff that is not only consistent with the Regional Plan, but also is coherent, integrated, concise, consistent, innovative, and user friendly.

Thanks for your interest and participation in this important project. I look forward to your response by Friday, March 20th.

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