

# Our Vision for the Future

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## Community Values

3 Coconino County will continue to attract people with its quality of life, rural atmosphere, and  
 4 natural beauty. Its residents and visitors will have access to and enjoy an incredible system of  
 5 parks, forests, monuments, recreation and wilderness areas. Coconino County remains home to a  
 6 diverse mix of residents, celebrates a rich array of arts and cultures, and provides a wide range of  
 7 employment, housing, and lifestyle choices. Residents increasingly benefit from livable wages,  
 8 economic prosperity, and high-quality health care and educational opportunities. Social  
 9 connections, which help form our communities, stay inherent in the way we live, work and play.

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## Growth & Development

11 We will accomplish responsible growth by integrating new development in a way that respects  
 12 the environment, supports community values, and considers the long-term viability of  
 13 ecosystems and water sources. To help achieve this goal, we will rely on growth areas with  
 14 planned communities, integrated conservation design, and infill on vacant parcels. The County  
 15 will offer a variety of incentives to those who use sustainable building techniques, protect  
 16 environmentally sensitive features, and build in harmony with the land. Residents will be able to  
 17 choose from a wide range of housing types and expect new development in designated growth  
 18 areas that follow available and planned infrastructure for utilities and services. We continue to  
 19 respect property rights and recognize personal responsibility and stewardship to the land, as well  
 20 as reliance on ones' own self.



## Conservation & Environmental Quality

22 Value for the beauty of our distinctive natural landscapes, solitude, recreational opportunities,  
 23 and ecological function remains a priority; as a result, we will work to ensure their long-term  
 24 health and viability. There will be a thriving system of public and private lands that support  
 25 diverse native plant and animal communities, healthy riparian areas, grasslands, and forests with  
 26 excellent air and water quality. To safeguard the county's scarce water resources for future  
 27 generations, we will conserve and reuse whenever possible. Our public policies continue to  
 28 support the viability of working ranches, protect environmentally sensitive features and  
 29 ecosystems, and help conserve our natural resources and rural character.



## Community Partnerships

31 We will draw upon our strength as a community, embracing our diversity and acknowledging  
 32 our common goals. Private and public interests will continue working together successfully,  
 33 recognizing that a cooperative approach is necessary to create strong communities, conserve the  
 34 environment, and be fiscally responsible. Planning activities across jurisdictions remain  
 35 successful because of the high degree of coordination. The County will follow sound resource-  
 36 management practices, facilitated by ongoing engagement with local, state, federal, and tribal  
 37 agencies during the development of each other's plans and policies. Long-term strategic  
 38 partnerships will develop and implement plans that enhance and support our shared values.

## The Land Ethic

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41 In pursuing the long-term vision for Coconino County's future, everyone, be it government,  
42 businesses, organizations, landowners, residents, or visitors, has an ethical obligation to the land.  
43 This land ethic is fundamental to the Native American traditions of northern Arizona and to the  
44 North American conservation movement.

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*The mountains—I become part of it.*

*The flowers, the evergreen tree—I become part of it.*

*The morning moisture, the clouds, the bodies of water—I become part of it*

*The wilderness, the water drops, the pollen—I become part of it*

***Traditional Navajo Chant***

45

46 This chant reflects the perspective shared by many of Coconino County's residents that places  
47 the natural world in the center of daily life. Native American traditions of northern Arizona  
48 recognize the delicate interconnectedness of all components of nature and stress the importance  
49 of caring for the environment and finding personal balance with these forces.

50

*Whatever may be the equation for men and land, it is improbable that we as yet know all its terms. The answer, if there is any, seems to be in a land ethic, or some other force which assigns more obligation to the private landowner.*

*The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants and animals, or collectively: the land. A land ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land.*

*Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity. It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.*

*A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise.*

51

52 These ethics are integral to the Coconino County Comprehensive Plan, which is built upon our  
53 strength as community and establishes a solid set of Guiding Principles that allows us to achieve  
54 our vision. Assuming responsibility for the future of our lands is the first step in encouraging the  
55 kind of quality growth and development that will ensure the County's long-term value as a place  
56 of unsurpassed natural beauty and unique cultural resources.

***Aldo Leopold,  
Sand County Almanac***

## Living in Coconino County: Code of the West

The Code of the West, can be summed up into two words: integrity and self-reliance. This way of life is still defined by working hard to make a living, giving others a fair chance, knowing that some things are not for sale, and cooperating with neighbors in finding solutions to shared problems. It also means a deep love and appreciation of the landscapes and traditions that define living in the rural West. The Coconino County Code of the West is intended to offer an accurate portrait of the conditions in rural Coconino County and to help make the transition to living and doing business here as transparent and pleasant as possible. The County does not offer the same level of service that one expects from a municipal government. Services and infrastructure in rural and isolated areas may not be available at all, and when available, they may instead be provided by private companies, homeowners' associations, or a special taxing district. While levels of service vary throughout the County, regulations are applicable to all properties under County jurisdiction. Some of the specific conditions that may be encountered in the rural areas of the County are described below.

- ***Water and Wastewater:*** The County is not a water provider. There are areas in the County that are serviced by private water companies. If your property is located outside of these specific service areas, you or a commercial provider can haul water, or a well can be drilled. The quality and quantity of well water varies considerably from location to location and season to season. Long-term supplies are not assured. Wastewater is also an issue and most properties will require an approved septic system or other treatment process.
- ***Emergency Response:*** Response times in rural areas by law enforcement, fire suppression and medical emergency services can vary significantly and be very expensive. If the property you purchase is not in an established Fire District, you could be billed substantial fees for the cost of a response to a fire or medical emergency.
- ***Roads:*** While Coconino County improves and maintains an extensive network of roads, many of the roads in rural areas are privately owned and the repair and reconstruction of damaged roads and structures are the responsibility of the owners. Prospective property owners should anticipate joining an existing or forming a new private road association, road improvement district, or assuming the expense of maintaining and plowing the roads that are owned in common. The existence of a road to your property does not guarantee access in perpetuity unless and until you establish legal access. Emergency service vehicles may be delayed if they encounter problems navigating roads not built to County standards. In extreme weather conditions, roads can become impassable for several days and may further limit emergency response.
- ***Services and Utilities:*** Levels of service and access to utilities vary throughout the county. For example, electric service is not available to all areas of the County and costs to extend power lines can be prohibitive. Many property owners who choose to live “off the grid” use a generator or alternative power sources such as photovoltaic (solar) or wind-powered systems. Power outages are more common in rural areas of the county and loss of

101 electricity can interrupt your well water supply and wastewater system. It is important to be  
102 prepared to be without utilities for a week or more in rural areas. Trash removal and  
103 recycling may not be available and it is illegal to create your own trash dump or burn trash  
104 on your property. If there is not a commercial hauling service in your area, it will be  
105 necessary for you to transport waste to an established facility. Availability of  
106 communication services varies considerably from full service, DSL and cable, cellular  
107 service only, to no service at all. Regular mail, newspaper and or parcel delivery may not be  
108 available or may carry additional costs. It may be necessary to drive your children to the  
109 nearest publicly maintained road to catch the school bus.  
110

- 111 • ***Natural Hazards:*** The rural areas in Coconino County are desirable places to live, but  
112 the proximity to forests and other landscape features offer the potential for wildfires,  
113 wildlife encounters, dust, flooding from rain and snowmelt and limited seasonal access.  
114 Wildfires of unprecedented frequency and magnitude are expected to continue and may  
115 become more frequent over the coming decades.  
116
- 117 • ***Relationship with Neighboring Properties:*** Many county residents keep livestock,  
118 poultry and pets on their land. Living in rural areas means living with the smells and noises  
119 inherent in rural life. Arizona is an open range state, meaning that if you do not want cattle,  
120 sheep or other livestock on your property, it is your responsibility to fence them out. Dark  
121 skies are a treasured and protected resource in Coconino County and therefore,  
122 neighborhoods with little or no lighting should be expected. There may be existing  
123 easements on your property that may allow construction of roads, power lines, water lines,  
124 sewer lines, or similar utilities across your land. Easements are private agreements between  
125 property owners. Growth may not be so apparent in a county with so much rural property.  
126 Land uses, property ownership and other factors can change. Views can be obstructed by  
127 development on neighboring parcels. There is not a guarantee that surrounding publicly  
128 held lands will remain undeveloped as they can be traded or sold for future development.  
129
- 130 • ***Land Use Regulations:*** In addition to County zoning and building code regulations,  
131 State of Arizona law can affect the rights you have on your property. For example, you may  
132 not own the mineral rights on/under your property, nor should you assume that you have  
133 rights to surface water on your property. Most land divisions are completed through lot  
134 splits with minimal oversight from the County regarding access or infrastructure.  
135 Verification of your property lines should be obtained by a land survey from a registered  
136 land surveyor. Building and septic permits are required in all unincorporated areas of the  
137 County. Not all properties available for sale are legal for development. The County  
138 Assessor has many parcels that are recognized for the purpose of taxation that are not  
139 capable, for a variety of reasons, of being issued a building permit. It is important that due  
140 diligence be conducted to address these issues before purchase of a property. Additionally,  
141 it is important to refer to the County Zoning Ordinance for specific information on permitted  
142 and conditional land uses.  
143
- 144 • ***Commercial / Industrial Use:*** For existing businesses and ones seeking to relocate to  
145 Coconino County, it is important to realize that much of the County remains a rural,

146 undeveloped landscape. While established transportation corridors (interstates, state and  
147 national highways, railroads and airports) do exist, new development outside of incorporated  
148 areas will likely require the developer to provide roads and utility infrastructure.  
149 Additionally, telephone, cell phone, and Internet services may not be available or as reliable  
150 in some of the more rural areas of the County. Identifying properties in or adjacent to  
151 incorporated areas of the County may provide opportunities to reduce infrastructure and  
152 other start-up costs.

153  
154 Further discussion of these issues is found throughout the *Comprehensive Plan*.

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# Guiding Principles

157

## 158 Introduction

159 Coconino County features some of the most spectacular **LANDSCAPES** and diverse  
 160 environments in the Southwest. Its canyons, mountains, forests, **WOODLANDS**, wetlands,  
 161 grasslands, and vast **OPEN SPACES** support an incredible range of **ECOSYSTEMS**. These  
 162 ecosystems contain all the **SPECIES** and **HABITATS** in a given area that interact together with  
 163 the physical environment to form interdependent natural communities. The species that live  
 164 here, the habitats they live in, and the complex **ECOLOGICAL PROCESSES** that guide their  
 165 interactions have developed over millions of years. They are unique to this area. Sustaining our  
 166 ecosystems and the processes that maintain them is essential to our well-being and particularly  
 167 important as we face impacts from climate change including reduced snow pack, more severe  
 168 weather and changes to vegetation and habitat. In fact, a significant part of our economic  
 169 viability ultimately depends on the health of these ecosystems; their flowing **SPRINGS** and  
 170 rivers, clean water, dramatic landscapes, and abundant wildlife.

171 As expressed in “Our Vision for the Future”, county residents desire thriving communities and  
 172 viable economies that exist in harmony with our unique natural environment. This plan  
 173 integrates Conservation-based Planning principles, to ensure that **LAND USE** decisions meet  
 174 human needs while maintaining the County’s ecological integrity. Since we are a part of nature  
 175 and our actions affect the health and vitality of ecosystems, we are responsible for proper  
 176 **STEWARDSHIP** of the natural environment. Through Conservation-based Planning and  
 177 adhering to the Decision-making Principles discussed herein we can succeed in creating vibrant  
 178 communities that coexist with healthy, productive, natural ecosystems.

179

## 180 Traditional Tribal Principles

181 For many hundreds of years before the arrival of Europeans to northern Arizona, indigenous  
 182 people lived and cared for its land and water. Today, Native Americans make up a significant  
 183 portion of the County’s population, and their perspective on the stewardship of nature is very  
 184 valuable. According to traditional beliefs, people do not own the land, but rather belong to it,  
 185 and have the obligation to care for it. The land is alive and nurturing, respectful stewardship is  
 186 mutually beneficial to both humans and the land. Although this perspective may differ from the  
 187 way land is owned and used in Coconino County, the traditional principles of stewardship and  
 188 sustainability align with the guiding principles listed below and applied throughout this  
 189 *Comprehensive Plan*. Indeed, sustainability is the cornerstone of this plan and ultimately centers  
 190 around Seven Generations Principles. In this way, our vision for the County aligns with native  
 191 perspectives as the County strives to make land use decisions that do not compromise the ability  
 192 of future generations to enjoy the same quality of life we have today.

193

## 194 Conservation-based Planning

195 Coconino County has adopted conservation based planning in order to fulfill “Our Vision for the  
 196 Future” including long-term sustainability Conservation-based planning also supports our desire

197 for quality neighborhoods where residents can live, work, play, gather, and enjoy our unique  
 198 landscape and open spaces. By looking beyond the boundaries of a single parcel, conservation-  
 199 based planning can unite a community with a system of **GREENWAYS**, trails, and protected  
 200 natural lands. It can also help ensure that ecologically sensitive areas such as **WETLANDS** and  
 201 **FLOODPLAINS** remain connected to adjacent **RIPARIAN AREAS** and stream corridors. This  
 202 approach not only offers recreational opportunities and neighborhood amenities, but also  
 203 maintains quality habitats and **WILDLIFE CORRIDORS**.

204 The greatest ultimate benefactor of conservation-based planning is the general public. Not only  
 205 will their tax dollars be spent more wisely by substantially reducing the costs associated with  
 206 long-term infrastructure maintenance, ecosystem services, and **MITIGATION** measures, but they  
 207 will also benefit from added open space and amenities. Likewise, maintaining natural vegetation  
 208 and topography can minimize flooding and **EROSION**, filter pollutants from stormwater  
 209 **RUNOFF**, and allow runoff to **PERCOLATE** into the soil and replenish underlying  
 210 **GROUNDWATER** supplies.

211 Overwhelmingly, residents are attracted to Coconino County because of its unique natural  
 212 environment. Changes to our surroundings need not destroy **HABITAT CONNECTIVITY** or  
 213 natural communities. Conservation-based planning seeks to protect, improve, and restore the  
 214 ecosystems that we share.

215

## 216 **Ecological Framework**

217 **BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY** (or “biodiversity”) is the cornerstone of healthy, vibrant  
 218 ecosystems that have the ability to recover from disturbances. Ecosystems respond to land use  
 219 decisions and to climate fluctuations, which profoundly affect fire cycles, temperatures, and  
 220 precipitation patterns and amounts. Changes to an ecosystem can reach a critical point where  
 221 they cause dramatic reductions in species populations or shifts from one biological community to  
 222 another over a very short period. Abrupt declines in populations may be difficult to predict  
 223 because problems may not be evident until a key **THRESHOLD** is reached or exceeded.  
 224 Threshold responses can be caused by human-triggered events such as **POLLUTION, HABITAT**  
 225 **FRAGMENTATION, DEVELOPMENT**, and overuse of land and water resources. Exercising  
 226 caution in land use decisions is important because approaching thresholds are not always  
 227 apparent; nor are their triggers.

228 Given the natural setting of the county and the importance that residents place on ecosystem  
 229 health, it was determined that the eleven (11) Decision-making Principles, outlined by the  
 230 Ecological Society of America <sup>1</sup>, were the appropriate foundation on which to develop the goals  
 231 and policies of this comprehensive plan. These Decision-making Principles are grounded in the  
 232 science of ecology that describes how ecosystems function and thrive across time.

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<sup>1</sup> Dale, V.H., S. Brown, R.A. Haeuber, N.T. Hobbs, N. Huntly, R.J. Naiman, W.E. Riebsame, M.G. Turner, and T.J. Valone. 1999. Ecological Principles and Guidelines for Managing the Use of Land. Ecological Society of America Committee on Land Use

## 234 **Decision-making Principles**

235 It is the following decision-making principles, applied through the broader lens of land use  
 236 planning, that form the basis of the goals and policies expressed in each chapter of the  
 237 Comprehensive Plan. The County’s role in implementing the *Comprehensive Plan* involves  
 238 applying these principles to land use planning, particularly when evaluating the anticipated  
 239 impacts of proposed developments. While each site and situation requires a unique planning  
 240 approach, these principles offer a predictable, systematic means of enhancing our environment  
 241 (both natural and built) and avoiding, minimizing, or mitigating the negative impacts of  
 242 development. These principles are especially useful to County planners when conducting  
 243 preliminary assessments for proposed projects.

### 244 ***1. Assess impacts of local decisions in a landscape context.***

245 Although land use planning occurs at the landscape level, decisions are often made at the site  
 246 level. However, because ecosystems and habitats are dynamic and interactive, land use changes  
 247 often have effects beyond the boundaries of a site. Using the best available scientific  
 248 information in making land use decisions will help ensure that the cumulative effects of human  
 249 use do not compromise the landscape.

### 251 ***2. Make land use decisions that are compatible with the natural potential of the 252 site and the landscape.***

253 Land uses should consider the physical, biological, cultural, aesthetic, and economic constraints  
 254 of the site and the landscape. Uses that are compatible with the site’s “natural potential” such as,  
 255 its water, vegetation, and soil resources, are usually cost-effective in the long term. Incompatible  
 256 uses, on the other hand, often destroy habitat or degrade resources, ultimately resulting in higher  
 257 costs. An example of a common but incompatible use is supplementing the natural resources of  
 258 an area by adding nutrients through fertilization or adding water via irrigation.

### 260 ***3. Avoid or mitigate for the effects of human use and development on eco- 261 logical processes and the landscape.***

262 We can avoid, minimize, or mitigate the negative impacts of development by applying good  
 263 planning and design principles at the appropriate scale. At a local scale, siting a structure  
 264 without considering ecological processes may disrupt wildlife movement corridors or destroy a  
 265 particular habitat. More regional impacts include changes to watershed processes caused by  
 266 altering drainage patterns as part of a development project.

### 268 ***4. Identify and preserve rare or critical ecosystems, habitats, and associated 269 species.***

270 Rare or critical ecosystems support environmentally sensitive habitats and ecological processes  
 271 that are key to the overall health and biological diversity of these ecosystems. To understand the  
 272 factors that affect them, we must inventory critical components including; vegetation and soil

273 types, landforms, wildlife, and hydrologic and geologic features, among others. This  
274 information is required to make science-based land use decisions.

275

276 **5. *Minimize the fragmentation of large contiguous areas of habitat and***  
277 ***maintain or restore connectivity among habitats.***

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278 Many ecosystem processes require large areas of unfragmented habitat. If this habitat is  
279 fragmented into smaller pieces or disconnected from the larger landscape, it can become  
280 threatened, jeopardizing the survival of species. Because some species require different habitats  
281 during different seasons, maintaining connectivity is important between different habitat types.  
282 In addition, because land management and political boundaries do not define habitats and  
283 ecosystems, coordination between planners and resource managers is critical.

284

285 **6. *Minimize the introduction and spread of non-native species and use native***  
286 ***plant species in restoration and landscaping.***

287 Non-native organisms often have negative effects on native species, as well as on the structure  
288 and functioning of ecological systems. The cost of preventing their introduction and spread can  
289 be far less than the cost of restoring the long-term damage they can cause to aquatic and  
290 terrestrial ecosystems. Likewise, it can also be less than the cost of controlling non-native  
291 species after they become established.

292

293 **7. *Conserve use of non-renewable and critical resources.***

294 To preserve the long-term health of our communities and economies, it is important to conserve  
295 critically important resources such as water and to reduce our reliance on non-renewable  
296 resources such as oil and gas.

297

298 **8. *Avoid land uses that deplete natural resources.***

299 Reducing or depleting resources such as water, soil, wildlife, or natural vegetation alters  
300 ecosystems in significant and fundamental ways. Depleting these resources disrupts natural  
301 processes in ways that are often irreversible.

302

303 **9. *Avoid polluting our communities and environment.***

304 Vibrant communities and ecosystems are either free of pollutants or they contain them at levels  
305 that are too low to disrupt natural processes. Land use decisions should limit the levels of  
306 pollution entering our landscapes.

307

308 **10. *Consider land use decisions over time horizons that encapsulate the natural***  
309 ***variability of ecosystems.***

310 Because the factors affecting ecosystems vary, planning must consider the extreme and  
311 catastrophic events that occur over long periods. In the case of climate, such events would  
312 include floods, drought, and exceptionally high or low temperatures. For example, drought and  
313 flood cycles can differ in magnitude and time scale: El Niño/La Niña cycles occur every 7 to 10  
314 years, Pacific Decadal Oscillations occur every 30 to 50 years, tropical storms occur very  
315 erratically and infrequently, and long-term climate changes occur over hundreds to thousands of  
316 years. The recent return to drier conditions illustrates the importance of not over-committing an  
317 important natural resource (such as water) that all organisms need to survive.

318  
319 ***11. Evaluate the effects of land use decisions cumulatively and over time.***

320 Long-term changes caused by land use decisions can be delayed and cumulative. Impacts may  
321 not be apparent for years or decades; in some cases, we may not recognize them until they reach  
322 a threshold when impacts are dramatic. A series of seemingly innocuous, site-specific changes  
323 in land use can combine to produce cumulative effects that we cannot attribute to a single,  
324 landscape-scale event.

325  
326 **Precautionary Principle**

327 Although scientific knowledge is useful, it does not always provide clear, certain, and timely  
328 answers to important questions about potential environmental impacts. The precautionary  
329 principle<sup>2</sup> recognizes that our understanding of ecosystems is complicated by many factors.  
330 When certain activity threatens human health or the environment, precautionary measures should  
331 be taken regardless of whether all cause-and-effect relationships are fully established. In some  
332 instances, we must simply make a “no regrets” decision. In doing so, our decisions should be  
333 based not only on the best available scientific information, but also on sound professional  
334 judgment and open discussion of both the long-term advantages and consequences.

335 Ultimately, we need a decision-making framework that minimizes risks to people and the  
336 environment. Likewise, we can also benefit from a conservation-based planning process.  
337 Although science cannot always provide definitive answers to land use and development  
338 decisions, we can and should commit to good planning, collaboration, and foresight. The  
339 **INTEGRATED CONSERVATION DESIGN** methods described more fully in the Growth  
340 Chapter of this *Comprehensive Plan* offer us an important set of tools for creating quality  
341 developments as the county continues to grow.

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<sup>2</sup> Environmental Research Foundation, 1998.

# The 2015 Plan

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## 347 Overview

348 Planning allows us to make conscious, informed choices about our future. Since 1973, counties  
 349 in Arizona have been required to develop plans that address land use, circulation, housing, public  
 350 services and facilities, conservation, rehabilitation, and redevelopment. The county's population  
 351 determines the specific requirements that must be included in a comprehensive plan. In 1998  
 352 and subsequently in 2000, the State Legislature passed Growing Smarter and Growing Smarter  
 353 Plus legislation that enhanced land use planning statutes and expanded requirements.

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354 The *2015 Coconino County Comprehensive Plan* is an update to the *2003 Coconino County*  
 355 *Comprehensive Plan* elements and includes the addition of the two new elements; Economic  
 356 Development and Sustainability & Resiliency. These elements were added at the request of the  
 357 Board of Supervisors in order to better address long-term quality of life and livability for  
 358 residents. The *2015 Comprehensive Plan* continues to be founded upon conservation-based  
 359 planning and the ecological principles from the previous comprehensive plan. However, the  
 360 *2015 Comprehensive Plan* specifically articulates these as the County's **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**  
 361 from which the **GOALS** and **POLICIES** are derived and ultimately provide the direction for  
 362 positive managed growth.

363 The adoption of this *2015 Comprehensive Plan* signifies that all land use decisions must be  
 364 consistent with the plan's goals and policies. The *2015 Comprehensive Plan* is not a regulatory  
 365 document and does not grant entitlements. It is however a plan for future growth and is intended  
 366 to guide the **PLANNING and ZONING COMMISSION(P&Z)** and the **BOARD of**  
 367 **SUPERVISORS (BOS)** when making decisions in the pursuit of coordinated, appropriate and  
 368 harmonious development in the unincorporated area of Coconino County. Likewise, it helps  
 369 residents and landowners determine how to achieve their interests in a way that is consistent with  
 370 these goals and policies.

371 Like its 2003 predecessor, this Plan integrates conservation from the outset and addresses ways  
 372 to protect our natural landscapes from the adverse effects of unmanaged development. However,  
 373 it broadens the means of such protection by encouraging greater awareness of resource  
 374 protection, building healthy communities, and providing specific goals and policies.  
 375 Conventional zoning practices have focused exclusively on the separation of land uses,  
 376 prohibiting more creative development patterns. This plan, encourages flexibility to mix  
 377 different, but compatible, land uses. The Plan outlines how and where the County should grow  
 378 and develop in the future. It recognizes private, public, state and Tribal lands in the mix of  
 379 landownership and the important role they play in the environmental health and overall quality of  
 380 life for residents in the county. It also recognizes the importance of coordination and  
 381 cooperation with Tribal Nations and large ranching entities to ensure achievement of mutual and  
 382 harmonious outcomes. This Plan strives to create robust and healthy communities, both  
 383 physically and fiscally, by encouraging focused and strategic growth in and around existing  
 384 communities or with well-planned new development. By doing this the County can more  
 385 appropriately conserve ecosystems and wildlife corridors, promote sustainability and integrated

386 conservation design, preserve the quality of the rural lifestyle, and the cost effective  
387 improvement and expansion of necessary infrastructure to create a strong diverse economy. .

388 An important goal of this *Comprehensive Plan* is to give developers and landowners a higher  
389 level of predictability by directing growth and land use patterns as well as calling for changes to  
390 the Zoning and Subdivisions Ordinances. This benefits them by providing the information they  
391 need to proactively address issues that could otherwise be time-consuming and costly to resolve.

392

## 393 **Development of This Plan**

394 Updating this Plan followed the same process as the 2003 Plan. It was a collaborative effort  
395 between the Coconino County Community Development Department, a citizen’s Comprehensive  
396 Plan Committee (CPC), an Interagency Workgroup, technical experts, a Science Advisory Group  
397 (SAG), and the public. The Board of Supervisors appointed the 15 member CPC who  
398 represented diverse perspectives and met monthly to discuss, review, and make  
399 recommendations on all sections of the Plan. In addition, a Management Team met weekly to set  
400 the agenda and prepare materials for the CPC and the public.

401 Over the course of this 18-month project, the County also consulted with representatives of state  
402 and federal land management agencies. This Interagency Workgroup was consulted to ensure  
403 that the Comprehensive Plan would complement and support related land use plans. In addition,  
404 the Science Advisory Group, made up of experts from various technical fields, were also  
405 consulted to ensure that the Plan’s goals and policies were consistent with its overarching  
406 conservation objectives. This group’s input assures both the CPC and the public that the  
407 Comprehensive Plan is based on the best available scientific information. Additionally, the  
408 County worked with “collaborators” from a wide variety of fields, including housing, economic  
409 development, public health, and transportation.

410 County residents also played an important role in updating this Plan. The County held over two  
411 dozen open houses where the public was encouraged to review and provide feedback on the  
412 entire Plan. These community members, agencies, organizations, and individuals brought a wide  
413 range of perspectives to the planning process.

414

## 415 **Scope and Limitations of This Plan**

416 Although “Our Vision for the Future” extends to the next two decades and beyond, the goals and  
417 policies of this Plan are intended to serve for 10 years. The plan covers all areas of the county  
418 although the County’s jurisdiction over land use only applies to unincorporated privately held  
419 (FEE-SIMPLE) land. This said however, many of the policies of this Comprehensive Plan  
420 support the collaborative efforts necessary to protect the integrity of all lands.

421 Although the Comprehensive Plan’s policies direct the future development of private land it does  
422 not change zone classifications, overlay districts, or Area Plans existing on private property at  
423 the time of the effective date of this Plan. Zone changes and conditional use permits must be  
424 consistent with the goals and policies of the this Plan as well as those of the applicable AREA

425 **PLAN, RURAL PLANNING AREA**, and the **FLAGSTAFF REGIONAL PLAN 2030**. This  
 426 plan does not change existing entitlements. Although this plan does not encourage development  
 427 in all cases, it recognizes that owners are entitled to development rights in accordance with  
 428 existing zoning.

429

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## 430 **Interfacing with Other Plans**

431 This Comprehensive Plan is the long-range policy document that serves as the “blueprint” for  
 432 growth, development and conservation in Coconino County. Planning for the future occurs  
 433 simultaneously at the regional, county, and local levels. Agencies such as the **ARIZONA**  
 434 **STATE LAND DEPARTMENT**, the **U.S. FOREST SERVICE (USFS)**, the **BUREAU of LAND**  
 435 **MANAGEMENT (BLM)**, and the **NATIONAL PARK SERVICE (NPS)** develop plans for  
 436 managing their lands. For example, the State Land Department coordinates with jurisdictions on  
 437 general and comprehensive planning efforts. The BLM Arizona Strip Field Office is currently  
 438 working on a plan for travel management, and the Forest Service is revising the Forest Plan for  
 439 Coconino National Forest and the revised Forest Plan for the Kaibab National Forest was  
 440 approved in 2014. The adopted general plans for the incorporated cities and towns as well as the  
 441 land use plans adopted by Tribal Governments and Communities should be referred to for  
 442 specific direction within their respective jurisdictional boundaries.

443 The Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030 serves as the general plan for the City of Flagstaff, applying  
 444 not only to Flagstaff, applying but also to about 460 square miles surrounding the city. This  
 445 boundary coincides with the **FLAGSTAFF METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**  
 446 **(FMPO)** boundary. Like this *2015 Comprehensive Plan*, the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030  
 447 contains goals and policies to guide growth. Its themes of concentrating development and  
 448 protecting open space are consistent with those of this plan. The Board of Supervisors adopted  
 449 the Regional Plan in 2013.

450 The Board of Supervisors has adopted nine (9) Area Plans and one (1) Rural Planning Area Plan  
 451 in Coconino County. As official amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, compliance with  
 452 goals, policies and design requirements in the Area Plans hold equal weight to the goals and  
 453 policies of this Comprehensive Plan. Area Plans are created and vetted through a public process  
 454 and reflect the local residents’ vision for future development, and focus on the unique  
 455 characteristics and concerns of the area. The nine (9) Area Plans and the one (1) Rural Planning  
 456 Area listed below are being readopted and incorporated into this *2015 Comprehensive Plan* by  
 457 reference:

- 458 • Doney Park/Timberline/Fernwood Area Plan (adopted 2001)
- 459 • Fort Valley Highway 180 Corridor Area Plan (adopted 2011)
- 460 • Kachina Village Area Plan (adopted 2009)
- 461 • Mountaineer Area Plan (adopted 1991)
- 462 • Bellemont Area Plan (adopted 1985)
- 463 • Parks Area Plan (adopted 2001)
- 464 • Valle Area Plan (adopted 1999)
- 465 • Red Lake Area Plan (adopted 1992)

- 466 • Oak Creek Canyon Area Plan (adopted 1989)
- 467 • Diablo Canyon Rural Planning Area Designation (adopted 2005)

468

## 469 **Using This Plan**

470 The Comprehensive Plan guides County regulations and directs the provision of infrastructure  
 471 and services in the County. In the course of recommendations and decision-making, the  
 472 Planning and Zoning Commission and the Board of Supervisors apply the Plan’s “Our Vision for  
 473 the Future”, goals and policies to review and approve specific projects. The Commission and  
 474 Board may also choose to impose certain conditions for project approval; to further reflect and  
 475 implement the Plan’s goals and policies. Additionally, County departments use the Plan to  
 476 provide guidance in developing annual work programs and budgets. The County uses the  
 477 Comprehensive Plan to guide decisions about expanding major infrastructure such as roadways  
 478 or investing in government buildings, parks, and other facilities.

479

## 480 **Implementation of This Plan**

481 The **ZONING ORDINANCE** and **SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE** are the primary planning tools  
 482 for implementing the Comprehensive Plan. Both ordinances provide for orderly growth,  
 483 environmental protection, and adequate facilities and services. Both also specify that the  
 484 approval of a zone change, subdivision, or conditional use permit depends on consistency with  
 485 the Comprehensive Plan and Area Plan if applicable. The ordinances contain detailed  
 486 development standards for implementing the Comprehensive Plan’s goals and policies. These  
 487 ordinances provide predictability for development while ensuring compliance with this plan.

488 The Implementation Plan chapter of this Plan identifies specific **ACTION ITEMS** that should or  
 489 will need to occur in order to facilitate the implementation of this Plan. Implementation will  
 490 require collaboration between Departments within Coconino County as well as other  
 491 jurisdictions and agencies. The Implementation Plan will be reviewed periodically to track the  
 492 County’s progress and to establish and prioritize action items.

493

## 494 **Future Amendments**

495 The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a dynamic document that must be periodically  
 496 updated in response to changing regional and community needs and new adopted plans and  
 497 studies by various agencies. As such, the Comprehensive Plan will be reviewed periodically to  
 498 ensure its consistency with the overall vision for Coconino County and to track progress on  
 499 implementation of the goals and policies. It will also undergo a more thorough review and  
 500 update or readopt at least once every 10 years in accordance with statutory requirements. These  
 501 reviews provide opportunities to assess changes in the county, update background data, and  
 502 change implementation priorities as needed.

503 Additionally, requests for amendments may be submitted by individuals or initiated by the  
 504 County. Amendments will be reviewed to determine general consistency with all of the Plan  
 505 elements.

506 Although the **ARIZONA REVISED STATUTES** specify requirements for reviewing proposed  
 507 amendments, they leave the definition of “major” to the discretion of each jurisdiction. There  
 508 are three types of amendments to this plan:

509 **Major Amendments:** Major amendments shall be heard once per calendar year; to be  
 510 considered by the Planning and Zoning Commission at their regular meeting in October. The  
 511 application deadline for a major amendment to the Comprehensive Plan shall be May 1<sup>st</sup> of each  
 512 year. Major Amendments are subject to a 4-5 vote of the Board of Supervisors and require  
 513 outreach to all internal and adjacent jurisdictions. Additionally, major amendments are subject to  
 514 referendum. Coconino County defines an amendment to be a Major Amendment if it meets any  
 515 of the following:

- 516 • Changes to the text that conflict with or alter one or more of the goals and policies in  
 517 this Plan
- 518 • A proposal which represents a substantial alteration to the county’s land use mixture  
 519 and balance.
- 520 • Addition of a new element or a substantial change to 1 or more chapters of the  
 521 Comprehensive Plan prior to the required full 10-year update.
- 522 • The addition of a new Area Plan or a new Rural Planning Area.
- 523 • The establishment of a Land Use Map, Growth Boundary, or Activity Center under the  
 524 County’s jurisdiction.

525 **Minor Amendments:** Minor amendments can be considered at any time of the year and are  
 526 subject to simple majority vote of the Board of Supervisors. The following also constitute a  
 527 minor amendment:

- 528 • Revisions or updates to an existing Area Plan or Rural Planning Area that meet the  
 529 Comprehensive Plan’s vision, goals and policies.
- 530 • Changes mandated by any new state laws.
- 531 • Text changes and corrections that do not compromise the intent or impact the  
 532 substantive mixture and balance of the Plan.
- 533 • An amendment to address planning errors or a planning oversight.
- 534 • A change to a map, location-based policy or other specific policy within an Area Plan.
- 535 • Any other changes to the Coconino Comprehensive Plan that do not fall under the  
 536 Major Amendment criteria listed above and are not Administrative Amendments.

537 ***Administrative Amendments:*** Administrative Amendments are minor corrections made  
 538 under the authorization of the Planning Director to keep the plan as current as possible, such as  
 539 the following:

- 540 • Updates to formatting, typos, URL links, references to other reports or studies that may  
 541 be amended, and similar edits.
- 542 • Correction of a scrivener’s error that occurred in mapping or in text that did not reflect  
 543 the Board action on a property or policy.

544

## 545 **Approval Criteria**

546 Both major and minor amendments to the Comprehensive Plan must address the following  
 547 amendment approval criteria:

- 548 • The amendment constitutes an overall improvement to the County.
- 549 • The amendment will not adversely impact a portion of the county or the existing  
 550 character (i.e., visual, physical, environmental, and functional) of the immediate area.
- 551 • The amendment is supported by “Our Vision for the Future” and other goals and  
 552 policies of the plan.
- 553 • The requested change must benefit the county or a specific community.
- 554 • Conditions have changed substantially since the last update; such conditions may  
 555 involve surrounding land uses.
- 556 • The subject property or concept was misinterpreted or overlooked in the Plan.
- 557 • The amendment will effectively help implement the Plan’s other goals or the county  
 558 vision.
- 559 • The identified site is appropriate for the proposed use.

560 By reference, this plan honors the Flagstaff Regional Plan 2030. Amendments made to the  
 561 Regional Plan shall follow the process outlined in that document and are subject to review by the  
 562 Planning and Zoning Commission, and approval by the Board of Supervisors. Amending the  
 563 Regional Plan therefore brings compliance with this Comprehensive Plan and does not require  
 564 the amendment of both documents.

565 Minor amendments and rezoning cases can be reviewed together and heard sequentially at the  
 566 same hearing. Major amendments and rezoning cases can be reviewed together, however, the  
 567 rezoning case will not be heard by the Planning and Zoning Commission until the referendum  
 568 period is complete.

569 The burden of proving that the change constitutes an improvement to the Comprehensive Plan  
570 and that the vision and applicable goals and policies are still met under the proposed amendment  
571 lies with the party requesting the amendment. Likewise, rezoning and subdivisions should be  
572 compatible with the intended future land use pattern in the Comprehensive Plan and be  
573 consistent with the vision, goals and policies. Therefore, conformance with the Comprehensive  
574 Plan does not require that the County approve of all development projects in areas in which  
575 development is premature.

DRAFT