

A comprehensive plan establishes a vision for future growth over a 15 to 20-year period. Comprehensive plans are anticipatory, forward thinking, and long range in nature. A comprehensive plan is a tool that is designed and developed to help a community determine its needs and set goals and recommendations to direct future development. The plan should serve as the foundation for local planning programs, policies, and principles.

The “new” comprehensive plan recognizes that the most effective and implemented comprehensive plans are equal parts tangible (technical) and intangible (citizen-based). The Cherokee Comprehensive Plan and process epitomizes this new attitude towards planning. It was created in large part for citizens, by citizens, to meet the needs of the entire community. This comprehensive plan describes a future vision for Cherokee and

recommends a framework for attaining this vision. This framework was achieved through a process called Outcome-Based Planning.

Once adopted, this comprehensive plan update will replace the previous comprehensive plan prepared in 1979. This Mayor, and city council had the vision to implement this new plan to make sure the community is proactive in addressing the needs of its citizenry today and for the next 15-20 years. This plan establishes the ground rules for the implementation of private development and provides a framework to the city to evaluate such proposals. Additionally, this plan outlines those public improvements which should occur to transform Cherokee into a ‘better, not bigger’ community.

Comprehensive Plan Update Cherokee

“A place that welcomes visitors, has a program of *Inviting* activities, is physically and visually *Accessible*, and has an emphasis to transform Cherokee into a *better*, not bigger, *community*.”

The future of Cherokee

the Goals

The City of Cherokee’s Comprehensive Plan is an expression of the community’s desires and where the City wishes to find itself in the next 15-20 years. The goals and objectives presented are based on input received from: a) City staff and the Advisory Committee, b) community workshops, c) one-on-one discussions with citizens, and, d) the MindMixer virtual town hall website.

the Vision

The City of Cherokee will transform itself to improve the quality of life for its residents, its businesses and the regional image it portrays. The City will not make the mistake of thinking ‘bigger is better’, but rather, will strive to make a ‘better’ community of the resources it possesses.

Goals and Vision have been established for:

- Residential Neighborhoods
- Commercial/ Business Areas
- Business Parks & Industrial Areas
- Community Facilities & Services
- Parks, Open Space, & Natural Features
- Transportation & Connectivity
- City Image, Identity & History
- Plan Implementation & Administrative Action

1 Residential Neighborhoods

Goal: Provide a diverse housing stock that meets the needs of local residents while accommodating future growth.

1. **Perform** more detailed market study to quantify/qualify/prioritize the housing demands of Cherokee.
2. **Initiate** public, private or public/private partnership actions which will cause to develop the highest priority of housing type.
3. **Promote** the reuse of incompatible land uses in predominately residential areas (such as the area between 6th & 7th Streets, north of Beech street and South River Road with residential properties to the west).
4. **Diversify** the housing stock by encouraging appropriately scaled townhomes, condominiums and senior/ active retiree housing developments (the ‘Trimont’ was often mentioned as one model).
5. **Promote** the creation of new residential neighborhoods that are visually appealing and incorporate a wider range of styles.

Goal: Promote an enhanced character of established residential neighborhoods and enhance the overall health, quality, and image of Cherokee.

1. **Perform** more specific neighborhood redevelopment plans for transitional / marginal housing areas (i.e. 6th-7th, Beech-Elm & Euclid-Roosevelt, Cedar-Maple).
2. **Promote** the improvement and rehabilitation of deteriorated residential properties.
3. **Enforce** codes and strengthen codes to ensure removal of unsightly and unhealthy trash / junk from residential areas.
4. **Preserve** sound existing housing through regular, active code enforcement, and implementation of appropriate programs from the Iowa Finance Authority.

2 Commercial/Business Areas

Goal: Maintain areas of healthy commercial development throughout the City that provide a range of goods and services to local residents and attract visitors from the larger region.

1. **Maintain** a range of retail and service commercial activities throughout the City primarily within the downtown and along the commercial corridor of Highway 59.
2. **Discourage** commercial land use encroachment into existing or newly planned residential areas.
3. **Enhance** zoning ordinances to improve the use, appearance and cohesiveness of development.
4. **Establish** a way-finding signage system that directs motorists and pedestrians to key retail, office, industrial, and community facility destinations. Cities of Des Moines, Dubuque and Clinton, Iowa have implemented such systems.
5. **Minimize** curb cuts for driveways and access points along the Highway 59 corridor for safety and ease of traffic flow.
6. **Continue** to work with the Chamber in creating innovative programs for the Downtown District to improve business climate and entertainment/social activities.

Goal: Enhance the appearance of commercial development throughout the City.

1. **Establish** design and improvement standards for commercial areas to guide the scale, appearance, orientation, setback, and overall character of new development.
2. **Implement** a landscape buffer ordinance that promotes the use of plantings, trees and other green elements to buffer parking areas.
3. **Beautify** the Highway 59 corridor a line of shade trees on both sides of the street to form a continuous/near continuous line of trees to create a natural ‘gateway’ into town and help establish a natural resource based brand to Cherokee.
4. **Encourage** new development to utilize “green technology”, Low Impact Development (LID) techniques, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as green roofs, solar energy, bioswales, and pervious paving materials to reduce storm water runoff and improve stormwater quality.
5. **Create** an ordinance requiring site buffering of service areas, drives, buildings, and incompatible uses. The City of Mason City, Iowa has just completed a major revision to its zoning ordinance which includes the latest concepts in buffering.
6. **Revise** the signage ordinance to be more comprehensive, addressing a larger body of sign types, establishing context sensitive regulations. Ordinance should use illustrative examples to describe clear and concise guidelines. Again, the City of Mason City would be a good model ordinance for signage.

3 Business Parks & Industrial Areas

Goal: Improve the local economy by supporting existing industrial businesses within the City and promoting light industrial, high-technology/research employers to Cherokee.

1. **Continue** to support local economic development efforts of the Chamber of Commerce, the Cherokee Industrial Corporation and the Cherokee Area Economic Development Corporation to market and promote the City, local businesses, and development opportunities.
2. **Promote** the creation of an “entrepreneurial development center” targeted at recruiting a higher skilled, semi-professional or professional workforce. Focus on young workforce attraction/retention.
3. **Encourage** and facilitate the remediation and redevelopment (if applicable) of brownfields (i.e. scrap metal ‘junkyard’ on river road).
4. Improve the appearance of the existing industrial areas including buildings, parking areas, streets, and screening/buffering.
5. **Ensure** new development occurs where adequate municipal services and facilities are present to serve new development.
6. **Ensure** adequate infrastructure exists within all industrial areas including telecommunications (voice/data), water, wastewater, electricity, stormwater detention, etc.
7. **Encourage** new development to utilize “green technology”, Low Impact Development (LID) techniques, and Best Management Practices (BMPs) such as greenroofs, solar energy, bioswales, and pervious paving materials to reduce storm water runoff and improve stormwater quality.

4 Community Facilities & Services

Goal: Continue to provide the highest possible quality of City services and maintain adequate infrastructure and utilities throughout the community.

1. **Maintain** adequate sites for the City Hall, Police & Fire Stations, Library and other City facilities; constructing, renovating, expanding, and relocating facilities when necessary for efficiency.
2. **Work with** other public agencies, including the local school district and Western Iowa Community College (WIT) to maintain adequate sizes and facilities for the provision of public services.
3. **Continue to** maintain adequate levels of fire and police protection throughout the City.
4. **Identify** sites for the expansion of community facilities as development occurs and demands for services increase.

Goal: Maintain balanced land use and an equitable distribution of the costs of growth while providing expected facilities and services.

1. **Prohibit** “leap frog” development and establish a strategic annexation policy.
2. **Annex** contiguous property when economically feasible and meets the recommendations / criterion of the Iowa Department of Economic Development, City Development Board.
3. **Establish** impact fees to fully pay for the extension of City services and infrastructure improvements.
4. **Require** developers in future growth areas to oversize utilities and infrastructure to accommodate other planned growth and development. Permit and facilitate the reimbursement of over-sizing costs borne by the initial developer through recapture agreements.
5. **Require** developers to donate land and /or money to ensure the provision of necessary land for public improvements and facilities, in coordination with the service providers.
6. **Continue to** budget for and implement improvement, expansion and maintenance of infrastructure provided by the City of Cherokee.
7. **Investigate** options for implementing Low Impact Development (LID) techniques and Best Management Practices (BMPs) throughout the City to limit the amount of runoff and improve water quality entering the Little Sioux River.

5 Parks, Open Space and Environmental Features

Goal: Protect, enhance and expand the City’s parks, open space and environmental features to improve the community’s health, environment, appearance, image, character, economy and overall quality of life.

1. **Review** the “Cherokee Green Space” long-range master plan prepared by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) (Division of the USDA) for appropriateness to create a significant new “heart” to the community. Update as required.
2. **Determine** and implement a significant phase one project, as recommended by the “Cherokee Green Space” long range master plan (noted in #1 above) to “change the face” of the Cherokee in the eyes of the residents and surrounding region.
3. **Brand** a new “natural resource based economy” for Cherokee to attract regional recreational tourism. Promote in concert with high technology/research business recruitment as complimentary with /desired by a young workforce.
4. **Enhance** the maintenance and facilities in Spring Lake Park to return the park to its original elegance. This is Cherokee’s ‘signature park’.
5. **Continue** the high level of maintenance in Gillette Park and Bacon Family Aquatic Center.
6. Central Park is under-utilized due to its secluded and minimally maintained landscape. It is recommended that the area be transformed more to a water quality / stormwater filtration area to enhance water quality (contaminants from the golf course & high school athletic fields) prior to entering the Little Sioux River. Allow trail to remain and connect to the city-wide trail system. Mowing should be limited to areas immediately adjacent to the trail. Provide bench in this mowed area for trail users just north of the bridge.
7. **Decommission** Triangle Park which provides little recreational benefits and is a safety concern.
8. **Do not accept** low quality lands or open space related stormwater components (detention/retention areas) for parkland. Create a unified signage system.
9. **Continue to work** with Cherokee Public Schools to provide appropriate recreational facilities and activities for residents.

6 Transportation & Connectivity

Goal: Improve the safety and efficiency of vehicular and pedestrian movement and improve connectivity within the City.

1. **Evaluate** roadway extension projects and support only when said projects enhance local circulation.
2. **Study** the feasibility and appropriateness of an east-west connector from Highway 59 to 11th Street in northwest Cherokee. Construct only when, and in concert with, the development of the single- family residential neighborhoods in this area.
3. **Review** city standards to reduce new street widths and encourage street tree plantings in parkways.
4. **Implement** sidewalks/trails along Highway 59 to connect the Middle School trail to Bluff Street.
5. **Implement** a continuous shade tree planting line along Highway 59 for aesthetic enhancement and create a new image/gateway into the community.
6. **Budget** for an on-going street replacement and maintenance as part of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

Goal: Continue to expand the City’s trail system and connect various segments into an integrated trail network.

1. **Continue to** link parks, community facilities, commercial and residential areas, the Downtown District and the Little Sioux Greenway as identified in the Future Land Use Plan.
2. **Establish** a uniform signage system for the trail system.
3. **Work with** the Cherokee Public Schools to continue/expand the “walk to school” routes.

Goal: Provide a safe and coordinated pedestrian/bicycle transportation network that connects community residents to key amenities throughout the City.

1. **Establish** a program to construct new sidewalks in established areas of the City where sidewalk network is incomplete.
2. **Ensure** that all new developments construct sidewalks.
3. **Budget** for on-going sidewalk repairs of City-owned sidewalks as part of the Capital Improvement Plan.

7 City Image, Identity and History

Goal: Enhance the appeal and image of the City and strengthen its identity through better design, development and visual improvements.

1. **Establish** a new brand for the City of Cherokee and regionally market. Build off the theme of a “natural resource based economy” and “high technology/research commerce”.
2. **Enhance** gateway features at all entry points into the City utilizing the current signage and landscaping elements to signify entry into Cherokee and to create a “sense of arrival” to a distinguished community who “cares about its image”.
3. **Maintain** and improve the quality of the historic areas through economic development efforts that strengthen the City’s turn-of-the-century character.
4. **Continue** to study the repurposing of the historical Illinois Central Depot.
5. **Continue** to promote (regionally & nationally) the uniqueness of the Sanborn Museum and its historical origin.
6. **Study** the potential of implementing architectural tours of the historic neighborhoods for a tourism opportunity.
7. **Work with** the State of Iowa to preserve and interpret the Mental Health Institute campus and significant architecture for a tourism opportunity.
8. **Enforce** codes to remove parking in public rights-of-way on non-hard surfaced areas and require appropriate landscape treatment.

8 Plan Implementation and Administrative Action

Goal: Implement, monitor progress, and update the Comprehensive Plan.

1. **Undertake** an annual review and maintain a five-year action plan to prioritize objectives and assess accomplishments of preceding years.
2. **Make available** existing and/or new financial resources to implement the Comprehensive Plan.
3. **Consider** any input and involvement of the City Council and various City committees, local organizations, including school districts, and individuals during the Comprehensive Plan review and amendment process.
4. **Continue** the community on-line “virtual townhall” known as “Plan Cherokee” to continue community dialogue and input on various City actions and budget.
5. **Make copies** of Comprehensive Plan document available for review at Cherokee City Hall and Public Library.
6. **Utilize** the Comprehensive Plan in the day-to-day operation of the City.
7. **Undertake** a comprehensive review of city ordinances that will require updates to adhere to City policy established by the Comprehensive plan.
8. The City should immediately implement and continuously update a capital improvement plan to prioritize and coordinate construction and financing of major City projects.
9. There are industrial areas immediately adjacent to the municipal limits that should be considered for annexation. Cherokee is currently providing these areas with utility services and other essential public services. Annexation of these properties, as well as other urbanized properties adjacent to the city limits, will further standardize the City boundaries and equalize the cost for city services between residential, business and industrial properties in the Cherokee community.