

Comprehensive Plan Update For the City of Cherokee, Iowa

Prepared By:

Community ReDesigned
Omaha, NE

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Comprehensive Plan Principals

This plan was created in accordance with the following key principles:

1. The Cherokee Comprehensive Plan should be used as a guideline and decision-making tool for community development. This document is broad in its approach and is not intended for specific detailed design decisions.
2. The Cherokee Comprehensive Plan expects that public policy decisions, in concert with market forces, will determine the implementation timeline.
3. The Cherokee Comprehensive Plan is governed by the City of Cherokee's zoning and subdivision regulations.
4. The Cherokee Comprehensive Plan contains recommendations that promote quality development that is congruent with the vision and desires of the citizenry as discovered during this planning process.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

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.

Comprehensive Planning is a term that has historically been used to describe a process that determines community goals and aspirations for future development. The tangible output of this process is a document that leads to policy and practice changes. Often lost in the comprehensive planning process are the intangibles outcomes communities seek. 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.

Official Policy Guide

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.

Community Outreach

An essential element of any successful planning and design process is an extensive public participation effort and continued commitment from participants from the development of an initial vision through plan completion. This project placed a special emphasis on community-wide participation in the development process. The planning team and city staff put together and followed a unique participation process that included:

- Two 8-hour Visioning Workshop over two days. This forum allowed all Cherokee residents and interested parties to share their visions about the future of their community. Nearly 100 people shared their views over the two-day period. Represented were various sectors of the community, including property owners, business owners, elected officials, committee members, middle and high school students, and city staff, among others.
- A Community Cookout was conducted in Gillette Park. Although a light turnout from the public, the session became quite informative.
- Advisory Committee meetings addressing different areas of the comprehensive plan.
- An interactive project website, allowing Cherokee residents to stay informed and contribute ideas to the design team.

This significant amount of public interaction indicates the community's level of engagement in the project is fairly high. The plan reflects the participation and feedback provided by members of the Cherokee community.

The Cherokee Comprehensive Plan did just this, provided a framework for authentic participation to take place.

Cherokee Workshop Outcome

The workshops put residents through a variety of exercises and asked residents to dream about the future of Cherokee. Needless to say, Cherokee residents were not shy about sharing their visions. When asked what their dream for Cherokee was, answers included:

- Cherokee should be a 'better community'-not a 'bigger community'.
- The community should focus on retaining its population, which has been decreasing over the years.
- Cherokee should reinvent itself to provide innovative and higher technology jobs to attract young professionals.
- Cherokee is a place where career opportunities are available in a community that holds quality of life in high priority.
- Cherokee should be a place that is aesthetically pleasing – an inviting place where a family's basic needs are met and surpassed; and where there are lots of great things to do.
- Cherokee is a place a family would desire to live and acquire lifelong friends; provides opportunities to be successful in your life and to grow in the area through school, arts, and recreation opportunities.

The citizen-sourced process used in Cherokee converted these visions shared and heard into outcomes, or desired end goals, for this comprehensive plan. The product of these exercises yields thoughts, ideas, and beliefs about a desired end result. Getting folks to dream about their city is easy. Collecting and forming these ideas into patterns and logical groupings is a bit more challenging. Outcome-Based planning identifies reoccurring trends, common patterns, and unique planning concepts for Cherokee. In doing so, four distinct outcomes emerged:

1. Better not Bigger
2. Housing Opportunities
3. Economic Development
4. Community Appearance

Better not Bigger

It is important to recognize that every aspect of a community operates as a collective whole. Every seemingly independent piece of a community – transportation, housing, parks, schools, healthcare, employment, or economic development – is actually largely dependant on the other elements of the community. For example, better schools create a more educated workforce, which in turn lead to a more marketable economic climate, which ultimately leads to more business. As you begin to look at the connections within a community, it becomes clear that an enhanced quality of life to make a community ‘better’ is not totally subjective. In fact, the things and experiences that affect our individual lives are often a result of the collective system functioning well together. This outcome chapter further explores the tangible elements of and makes recommendations to enhance the quality of life in Cherokee.

Housing Opportunities

The lack of housing opportunities in Cherokee is stifling its economic growth. Community members repeatedly spoke of the demand for all levels of housing from first-time ‘start up’ homes, to mid-level ‘move up’ homes through independent living/active retiree condominiums. The Trimont was often mentioned as a model in need of replication. Of greater concern is high technology employer’s lack of the ability to recruit new ‘young professionals’ due to the lack of progressive housing. Of significant importance is Western Iowa Community College’s need for housing to advance its wind energy research program. Housing must become a top priority.

Economic Development

Innovation seems to be on the mind of many people in Cherokee. The community appears to understand that no longer is that “all encompassing”, high employer manufacturing plant going to land in our town. These single economic development “homeruns” are almost impossible to hit in today’s economy. Cherokee has been successful in attracting home-grown higher technology and research companies such as American Natural Soy, Foundation Analytical Laboratory, and the developing wind energy research program at Western Iowa Community College. Further, the community has the potential and the desire to create this niche as an economic platform for the future.

Community Image & Appearance

People of Cherokee are concerned about the way their community looks. Comments received from workshop attendees ranged from “the junkyard on River Road is ugly and we need to get rid of it” to ‘the river is beautiful’. More comments like these illustrate that people want a beautiful community in which to live. The clean up of vacant and abandoned lots as well as residential lots containing ‘junk’ is also a priority. A positive appearance enhances community attitude and is often expressed as a positive attribute in new economic development endeavors. Enhanced esthetics sustains and increases property values. A positive image enlivens the community’s spirit creates a regional perception of a community which is a great place to live, work and play.

Plan Organization

The Comprehensive Plan is organized into the following 10 sections:

Section 1: The Future of Cherokee- describes the community’s future vision in general terms. It provides a narrative sketch of how Cherokee will become a better place to live, work, and play over the next 15-20 years.

Section 2: Goals & Objectives- this section presents goals and objectives for the City as it strives to achieve the outlined vision.

Section 3: Land Use Plan- will illustrate and describe in general terms the types and locations of future land uses within the city limits and its growth areas. Recommended annexation will be discussed here as well.

Section 4: Residential Areas Plan & Policies- provides more specific recommendations to provide additional housing options and enhance existing neighborhoods over time.

Section 5: Commercial Areas Plan & Policies- provides more specific recommendations targeted for Cherokee’s commercial areas and organization of such uses.

Section 6: Transportation Plan & Policies- despite few transportation issues, this section documents the existing condition and future needs.

Section 7: Community Facilities & Policies- again, despite very few community facility issues, this section documents the existing conditions and minimal future needs.

Section 8: Parks, Open Space & Environmental Features- this section discusses the preservation and enhancement of the significant natural resources of the community.

Section 9: Implementation- this section presents specific actions that the City should pursue as it endeavors to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan.

Section 1: The Future of Cherokee

The Future of Cherokee

The City of Cherokee is at a crossroad in its future. The community residents understand it is a new era, a time to look forward and move forward with energy and optimism. As mentioned numerous times in the community workshops and on the virtual town hall, people want Cherokee to reinvent itself and become a proud community. The following Vision statement synthesizes the many weeks of input and discussion into a directional statement for the future.

A Statement of 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. It will become even more proficient in the use of resources and investing in the long term transformation and betterment of the community. The City will solve the housing issue with innovative techniques to provide all residents of Cherokee with a variety of housing options. The City will position itself to retain and attract young professionals and highly skilled craftspeople to be employed in higher skilled/technological jobs. Contributing to the success of both these aspirations will be the movement to significantly improve the appearance of the community through urban design and landscape architectural planning. Preservation and enhancement of the natural resources, particularly the Little Sioux River greenway, will help build a new 'resource-based' economy.

A Glimpse of the Vision

Over the next 15-20 years, the City of Cherokee will improve...

Enhance housing and neighborhoods through the...

- Stimulating development of multiple housing opportunities to maximize living options to enhance the city's economic development potential.
- Innovative creation of public-private partnerships to develop new residential units or redevelop existing stock.
- Diversification of the housing stock with regard to housing type, design, quality, and affordability.

- Creation of neighborhood improvement programs.
- Encouragement of 'conservation' style neighborhoods in environmentally sensitive areas.

Community Facilities through the...

- Provision of adequate public safety facilities and programs to continue the highest level of service now realized by Cherokee citizens for police and fire protection.
- Consistent maintenance to the City's streets and infrastructure.
- Consistent maintenance and planned upgrades to the domestic water system for fire protection.
- Environmentally sensitive/sustainable storm water management plans to filter water in contributing watershed of the Little Sioux River.
- Continued enhancement of the Cherokee Community Center to better provide for the arts and hosted events.
- Creation of city leadership and events planning.

Business and Industrial Areas through the....

- Encouragement of light industry which must be appropriately located so as not drain the City's resources for services.
- Encouragement of light industry that provides good paying jobs.
- Attraction of new 'high tech'/research and/or high skilled companies requiring young professional or technically trained workforce.
- Retention of existing businesses including retailers and service providers.
- An increased effort to attract event venues like the rodeo, jazz festivals, symphony, theatre and related opportunities.
- Continue promotion and development of the Downtown District including a new free 'Wi-Fi' program for businesses and tourists.

Parks, Open Space and Natural Resources through the...

- Protection of the Little Sioux River ecosystem through watershed protection programs.
- Creation of a 'natural resource-based' economy capitalizing on the

- river resource and community trail system.
- Development of a recreational greenway along the Little Sioux River to create a new 'heart' for the community and a 'spirit of progress'.
 - Expansion of the community-wide trail system for the enjoyment and health of the citizenry and attract regional interest.
 - Decommissioning of under-utilized and unsafe parks and reallocate such resources to the new 'Little Sioux Greenway' development.
 - Continued improvement and meticulous care of Spring Lake Park, the Bacon Aquatics Facility and Gillette Park....THE image-makers of the park system.

Transportation through the...

- Improvement and expansion of the City's network of sidewalks, trails, and bikeways to enhance pedestrian connectivity and safety.
- Construction of a new east-west roadway connector from Highway 59 to 11th Street, if feasible.
- Establishment of a uniform way-finding and signage system created by a new City marketing and branding effort such as in Des Moines, Mason City & Dubuque.
- Implementation of a corridor beautification program for Highway 59.
- Promotion of 'complete streets' concepts which provide balanced emphasis on automobiles, pedestrian and esthetics.
- Promotion of a rectilinear traffic grid and walk-able neighborhoods throughout the City.
- Reinforcement of the City's functional hierarchy of roadways.

City Administration through the...

- Creation of a Communication Plan to provide appropriate ways of engaging the community and obtaining quality feedback on an on-going basis.
- Enhancement of the City's website to make it more 'user-friendly' and informative.
- Exploring options to air City Council and other city business meetings in order to further engage the community in the local government process.
- Implement a 'city-leadership' program to foster future city leaders

- and entrepreneurs.
- Creation of an annexation plan to minimize costs of extending services and guide appropriate development.
 - Development of Neighborhood Plans for key neighborhoods in need of redevelopment and infill development.
 - Update of the City Zoning Ordinance to support the goals and objective of this Comprehensive Plan.

Section 2: Goals & Objectives

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.

This section presents the Plan's goals and objectives, which provide the framework for planning recommendations, policies and future project actions:

Goals describe desired outcomes towards which planning efforts and resource allocations should be directed as appropriate. They represent an ideal to strive for and challenges the City should seek to overcome.

Objectives describe more specific actions that should be undertaken by the City in order to advance toward the overall goals. They provide more precise and measurable guidelines for planning action.

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.

Goals and Objectives have been established for:

- Residential Neighborhoods
- Commercial Areas
- Community Facilities & Services

- Parks, Open Space, & Natural Resources
- Transportation & Connectivity
- City Image and Identity
- Plan Implementation & Administrative Action

Residential Neighborhoods

Goal 1

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

Objectives

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 2

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.

Commercial/Business Areas

Goal 1

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.

Objectives

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 DesMoines, 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 2

Enhance the appearance of commercial development throughout the City.

Objectives

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 greenroofs, 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.

Business Parks & Industrial Areas

Goal 1

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

Objectives

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.

Community Facilities & Services

Goal 1

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

Objectives

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 2

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

Objectives

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.

Parks, Open Space and Environmental Features

Goal 1

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.

Objectives

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.

Transportation & Connectivity

Goal 1

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

Objectives

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 2

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

Objectives

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 3

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

Objectives

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.

City Image, Identity and History

Goal 1

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

Objectives

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.

Plan Implementation and Administrative Action

Goal 1

Implement, monitor progress, and update the Comprehensive Plan.

Objectives

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.

Section 3: Land Use Plan

The Land Use Plan presents appropriate land uses for the future development of the City of Cherokee and its growth areas. The Land Use Plan is a result of extensive community input, sound planning principles, and is cognizant of local geography and existing land use. Cherokee's past land use development patterns have had a significant impact on the City's recent development to the northwest and southeast, and continue to influence land use decisions today.

Cherokee's most significant residential and commercial growth has occurred prior to 1970. The construction of new single-family home subdivisions significantly increased the housing stock for a 'higher end' price range. Lacking has been the construction of homes priced for 'first-time' buyers, and, at the other end of the spectrum, housing for seniors/active retirees. This void of housing options remains a deterrent to the economy and vibrancy of Cherokee today.

A map of the Future Land Use recommendations for Cherokee follows this section.

General Guide

The Land Use Plan is intended to be a general guide to growth and development within Cherokee and *is not* a development plan of rigid and finite recommendations. The Land Use Plan presents recommendations for improving and enhancing existing land use designations within the City's current municipal boundaries. Consideration should also be given to establishing an extraterritorial jurisdiction as permitted by Iowa State Law (Title IX Local Government, Subtitle 4 Cities, Chapter 414 Zoning, 2009 Iowa Code). This Plan allows for individual negotiations and the consideration of creative approaches to land developments that are consistent with the policies and guidelines included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Building upon Cherokee's existing land use patterns, the goal of the Land Use Plan is to reinforce the historic character of Downtown Cherokee and strengthen the positive characteristics of the residential neighborhoods while supporting and improving the commercial and industrial development throughout the City. As Cherokee continues to experience outward growth, the Land Use Plan should be used by City Staff, residents, businesses, and elected and appointed officials to inform future decision-making.

Flexible Growth

This plan strives to prevent over extending utilities and the premature conversion of agricultural land and open space to development. This Plan encourages first utilizing appropriate land within the City limits for new growth. This Plan is also intended to promote programs and policies for improving and maintaining existing residential, commercial, agricultural and open space / natural resource areas. Again, this is mainly true within the existing municipal limits where this plan recommends all growth can be accommodated for the next 15-20 years.

The Land Use Plan identifies the appropriate uses throughout incorporated Cherokee and its growth areas that will result in the community's orderly and efficient development. The primary land uses identified in the Land Use Plan include three residential uses, three commercial uses, parks and open space, public utilities, and public / semi-public uses.

Residential Land Use

Residential uses occupy the majority of the land within the City's incorporated areas and Cherokee should continue to develop as a primarily residential community. The City of Cherokee currently contains a variety of housing options including single-family detached, single family attached (duplex), multi-family and senior housing (for the purpose of this Plan, single-family attached and multi-family will be combined due to the few in numbers). Future residential development should further expand local housing options as was so clearly stated by the public.

To meet the goals outline, the Land Use Plan identifies four residential land use categories based on housing type and neighborhood character.

These categories are:

- *Single-Family Residential-* Detached single-family homes make up the predominate land use within the City and should continue to do so. Cherokee's existing single family neighborhoods should remain primarily single family in use and be enhanced with the provisions of upgraded sidewalks, lighting, street trees and other amenities where possible.
- *Multi-Family Residential-* This land use is comprised of a variety of housing types including apartments and some condominiums (Trimont). Although the majority of housing in Cherokee is single family detached or "attached" (duplex), some isolated multi-family residential development has occurred throughout the City. Multi-

family residences should also be used as a transitional land use in residential areas adjacent to commercial, industrial or high traffic thorough-fares such as Highways 3 & 59.

- *Transitional Residential-* Areas of intense use such as industrial parks or large commercial centers can have a negative impact on nearby single-family residential areas. Higher density residential uses should be used to buffer existing or future single-family residential areas from such intense uses. Transition residential uses could include a mix of single-family attached (duplex / four-plex) and multi-family development.
- *Conservation Residential-* The areas to the northwest and the southeast contain diverse natural resources and / or topographical changes that should not be extensively developed. When development occurs in these areas, residential and limited agricultural uses are most appropriate.

Each of these residential land use categories is discussed in further detail in the Residential Areas Plan and Policies section.

Commercial Land Use

Commercial uses are currently and should continue to be concentrated along the major corridors of the City, specifically Highway 59 and east Main Street. The Land Use Plan identifies three (3) commercial land use categories that vary in scale and character, providing an appropriate range of goods and services to the residents of Cherokee. These categories are:

- *Neighborhood Commercial-* Retailers in a neighborhood commercial area are comprised primarily by gas stations, dry cleaners, convenience stores, and banks, etc. Usually Neighborhood Commercial districts are distinct from larger Commercial Corridors, but in Cherokee, these uses intertwine. Usually not desired, but here a certain efficiency results from the consolidation of the majority of retailers all in one location. Other appropriate locations for Neighborhood Commercial would be on south Highway 59 and east Main Street. Enhanced design requirements should be employed to enhance aesthetics and blend with adjacent neighborhood character.
- *Downtown District-* Historic Downtown Cherokee is characterized by a traditional mix of commercial development. The downtown area has a mix of commercial service and retail uses and provides a unique pedestrian atmosphere not found in other commercial

areas of town. New infill development should contribute, and not detract, from this atmosphere. Pedestrian travel is convenient in this area as one can easily walk from store to store without use of a vehicle. The unique streetscape adds great value to the viability of this District and should be highly maintained.

- *Corridor Commercial*- This land use consists of primarily medium and large big box retail stores. Corridor Commercial areas are located primarily along Highway 59 north with some auto dealership and farm implement uses on south Highway 59. Such development should be restricted to these areas.
- *Light Industrial*- Light industry is usually less capital intensive than heavy industry, and is more consumer-oriented than business-oriented (i.e., most light industry products are produced for end-users rather than as intermediates for use by other industries). Light industry facilities typically have less environmental impact than those associated with heavy industry, and zoning laws are more likely to permit light industry near residential uses. It is the production of small consumer goods.
- *Industrial*- Industrial areas are primarily concentrated in the northeast and southwest portions of Cherokee. While industrial uses are generally supported, the current location of some industrial uses are in conflict with adjacent residential neighborhoods (such as River Road & South 6th-7th Street). This specific area should transition away from residential land usage and become low intensity industrial related uses such as warehousing, office/warehouse, etc. Where possible the industrial uses in this area should be relocated to dedicated industrial areas elsewhere within the City. If relocation is not viable, appropriate screening and buffering is recommended to minimize any negative impacts to neighboring residential areas such as noise, light, or air pollution. Redevelopment of the affected neighborhood with Transitional Housing types is also an option.
- *Business Park*- Northeast Cherokee along the Riverview Road is an area developing into a quasi-light industrial and office park complex. The opportunity to grow this area with future similar businesses which have easy access to Highway 3 and are “clean” in appearance could continue.

Park and Open Space

The City of Cherokee is fortunate to have an abundant of parks and open space for the leisure use of its citizenry. One of the most notable parks is

Spring Lake Park which is the park of choice for families and tourists alike. Newly developed Gillette Park and the Bacon Family Aquatics Center is a beautiful facility of which the community is very proud. The greatest potential lies with the development of the Little Sioux River environs.

A detail discussion of parks and open space uses can be found in the Parks & Open Space Plan.

Public/Institutional/Utility

The Land Use Plan designates areas for new and existing municipal facilities, schools, utilities, religious institutions, and other public agencies and service providers. These uses consists of publicly owned or publicly accessible property.

Growth Strategy

The Comprehensive Plan has provided the opportunity to carefully plan for undeveloped areas, enabling the City of Cherokee to be proactive in guiding future development. To promote more efficient and sustainable development, the Land Use Plan presents a “Growth Strategy” the City should utilize as future development occurs. Given the historical growth rate of Cherokee, the Land Use Plan does not recommend growth outside the revised municipal limits (after annexation). Further, this internal growth policy follows the public’s voice of creating a “better” community rather than a “bigger” community. Further, this ensures a more efficient use of tax payer dollars towards essential public services.

Primary Growth Area

New growth in Cherokee should be concentrated in the underutilized, vacant, agricultural or otherwise undeveloped areas that currently surround existing development within the City’s revised municipal limits (after annexation). Although most growth will be “green field” development, the redevelopment of older, marginal properties within the City, including brownfield sites, should occur. Near-term residential development should be accommodated within the revised city limits with priority sites being those already platted and/or served with utilities.

A goal of the Land Use Plan is to encourage and promote concurrent development within Cherokee. This area is where City infrastructure and community facilities already exist or could be the most easily extended, thus limiting the potential costs of new development to the City and developer.

Although the primary growth area should be developed predominately for single-family residential uses, it should not be developed exclusively as single-family residential area. The primary growth area should be developed to protect natural open space, environmental features and natural resources which give the land and the community its character. Other appropriate mix of uses would include support facilities such as diversity in housing types/prices and more convenient access to goods and services.

Target Annexation Areas

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. These industries have previously not been annexed into the City to provide maximum incentive to maintain and expand their locations in Cherokee. However these areas have a direct impact on the fiscal health of the city; both in terms of the City's ability to maintain services and facilities and in maintaining a viable bond rating. 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. Future annexations will also allow for better control of development and ensure that city services can be provided in an efficient manner. Annexations, if implemented, will have a direct impact on the City's tax rate and ability to make public improvements in the future.

Cherokee's historical tax rate is relatively high in comparison to similar size cities in Northwest Iowa, while its property valuation is relatively low. (See Table 1 below.) If Cherokee had valuations similar to the comparably sized communities of Orange City, Sioux Center or Spirit Lake, Cherokee's tax rate could be \$3 to \$4 lower per \$1,000 valuation; while at the same time improving the quality of public services and facilities. The City of

Cherokee needs to evaluate whether the City should continue to maintain a relatively high property tax rate on residential and commercial properties of the City, or whether it is time to ask the City's major industries, as well as other urbanized property abutting the corporate limits to participate in the cost of public safety, parks, recreation, libraries and streets.

TABLE 1
 Property Tax Valuation / Levy Comparison***
 Fiscal Year 2011/2012

City	Population	Taxable Valuation	Tax Levy	Generated Revenue
Cherokee	5,253	\$119,008,915	\$17.44	\$2,075,515
Orange City	6004	\$153,941,101	\$15.13	\$2,329,128
Sioux Center	7048	\$192,742,865	\$13.77	\$2,654,069
Independence	5966	\$162,868,635	\$13.23	\$2,154,239
Algona	5560	\$200,239,756	\$14.04	\$2,810,852
Clarinda	5572	\$118,802,160	\$17.86	\$2,121,314
Harlan	5106	\$129,555,548	\$16.33	\$2,115,360

***Orange City, Sioux Center, Independence and Algona have higher valuations per capita than does Cherokee. Clarinda and Harlan. Tax rates in these four cities are respectively lower than Cherokee, Clarinda and Harlan.

Section 4: Residential Areas Plan and Policies

Cherokee is predominately a residential community of single-family neighborhoods. These residential areas should be protected from incompatible land uses and, as development occurs, new residential areas should be integrated into existing neighborhoods with respect to roadway and pedestrian connections, architecture, green space, and urban design. The City should concentrate its development inside the revised (after annexation) municipal boundary.

This Residential Areas Plan builds upon the Land Use Plan which illustrates the locations of the various residential areas.

***Single-Family Residential* Recommendations & Policies**

Recommendations

The majority of the City's residential areas are single-family neighborhoods, characterized by detached single-family homes on ¼ acre lots. Single-family residential areas are comprised of a mix of established neighborhoods and few newer subdivisions.

Single-family residential development should continue to be the most significant land use within Cherokee. The demand is significant for additional housing options according to the public input derived by this planning process, but should be quantified and qualified. Single-family residential areas should be buffered from incompatible uses and new development should respect the character of nearby residential areas.

Infill Development

This plan recommends that infilling of existing residential neighborhoods be a priority. Infill living units (single or multi-family) should be of a compatible architectural style and should be priced for "first-time" or "move-up" home buyers. This gentrification of older neighborhoods for younger home owners is a national market trend on which Cherokee could capitalize. Financing tools such as the non-traditional funding sources provided by Iowa Finance Authority, and the more traditional federal source of CDBG are a potential. Public private partnerships using TIF should also be encouraged.

Enhancing Existing Neighborhoods

Some of the older neighborhoods are in need of sidewalks, sidewalk repairs, street lighting upgrades or care of their street trees. Others need new street tree plantings.

Policies

1. Initiate market study to further quantify / qualify the demand for single-family housing.
2. Identify areas to meet the determined demand and prepare a neighborhood plan for incorporating these housing units into existing single-family neighborhoods or on their fringe.
3. Work with the Iowa Finance Authority to create financing mechanisms for the targeted purchasers.
4. Contact regional developers to initiate interest.
5. Promote the importance that developing new housing is a priority to the City officials. Follow through.

Multi-Family Residential **Recommendations & Policies**

Multi-Family Residential uses designated in the Land Use Plan identify areas to be developed and maintained as apartments and condominium (should the market demand).

Future multi-family should be limited to areas where it will serve as a transitional housing type between non-residential uses and single-family residential areas and along major roads as identified in the Land Use Plan.

Recommendations

1. Multi-family development should occur as a component of a larger development and integrated with surrounding land uses.
2. Height and bulk of multi-family development should not be out of character or dominate its surroundings.
3. Larger multi-family developments should be broken up into varying size buildings.
4. Avoid long "barrack" style buildings along major arterials.
5. Landscaped berms should be used to screen multi-family areas from abutting single-family areas. Berms should not exceed 3' height.

6. Development should meet minimum site and landscaping requirements. Again, Omaha's new code lists a minimum lot sizes for the R6, R7, and R8 MF zoning classifications. The landscaping requirement for those classifications are generally related to buffer yards and parking areas and are listed either with the other regulators for those districts or under the parking lot landscaping.

Policies

1. Initiate market study to further quantify / qualify the demand for multi-family housing.
2. Identify areas to meet the determined demand and prepare a master plan to market to potential private developers
3. Consider public/semi-public/private partnerships.
4. Work with the Iowa Finance Authority to create financing mechanisms for an economically viable project that will attract investors.
5. Contact regional developers to initiate interest.
6. Promote the importance that developing new housing is a priority to the City officials. Follow through.

Manufactured Housing (Mobile Homes)

(Definition: Pre-assembled living unit not anchored to a permanent foundation)

Recommendations & Policies

Cherokee has two manufactured housing areas. The Land Use Plan does not identify any new areas for manufactured housing. The Plan also does not anticipate the existing manufactured housing area on Highway 59 to remain over the long term. Numerous times during the public information workshops, community members indicated this area should be removed and the land brought to a higher and better use.

Recommendations:

1. Encourage the redevelopment of the redevelopment of the Highway 59 parcel to commercial use in the near term future.

Policies:

1. Stringently enforce all building codes for the public health, safety and welfare of those living in and near the area.

Conservation Development Recommendations & Policies

Traditional residential development is not appropriate for the areas to the southeast and northwest of the city. These areas contain steep terrain and, in the northwest, a unique landscape character and palette of natural resources exists.

Within these areas, the City should promote “conservation development” of residential properties. Conservation design techniques, similar to clustering, is aimed at preserving the landscape’s unique qualities and natural resources such as wetlands, floodplains, large wooded areas, or other natural systems. These techniques reduce minimum lot areas, but do not reduce the gross density of a development. Conservation development techniques will allow new development to minimize the impact on quality natural areas, preserving them for public enjoyment while maintaining the rural character thereby adding economic value to the homes (and development). While existing development may not adhere to conservation guidelines, the City should consider requiring this of all future development in the sensitive areas as indicated on the Future Land Use Plan.

Policies

1. Significant natural features should guide the development and form of the potential development area of the site.
2. Housing should be located to minimize impact to natural resources and maximize views.
3. Lot lines, street alignments, and trail locations should be governed by the form of the land.
4. Agricultural areas or pasturelands located within these conservation development areas should be permitted to remain in perpetuity.
5. Such existing agricultural uses should implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to protect natural areas and limit environmental impacts to neighboring property.
6. An ordinance should be developed which specifically identifies the characteristics of sensitive areas and identifies parameters for development within these areas. The City of Lincoln, NE has a very good “conservation-based development ordinance” which could provide a model for Cherokee.

Section 5: Commercial Areas Plan and Policies

Commercial areas comprise a vital component of a community's land use and provide a tax benefit that helps offset residential tax burdens. The health of a community's commercial areas is also a significant contributor to a community's image. It is important that the retail and service needs of Cherokee residents are provided at all levels.

Cherokee's commercial areas are primarily located within the downtown and along Highway 59. The commercial areas plan builds upon the Land Use Plan, which identifies six categories of commercial land use: Neighborhood Commercial, Corridor Commercial, Downtown District, Light Industrial, Industrial, and Business Park.

The locations of these commercial uses are illustrated on the Future Land Use Plan. General policies that apply to all commercial areas as well as growth are policies for commercial development are also discussed at the end of this section.

Neighborhood Commercial Recommendations & Policies

Neighborhood commercial centers serve local and closer in regional residents and provide the goods and services needed on a daily basis. In Cherokee, these "Neighborhood Commercial" districts are blended with the "Highway Commercial" districts.

Downtown District Recommendations & Policies

Downtown Cherokee is a traditional "Main Street" district with excellent turn-of-the-century architecture. The City of Cherokee Historic Preservation Committee has done an excellent job of inventorying the unique building stock with hopes of National Register designations. It is the historic architecture that gives this District its unique ability to market niche retailing to the greater Cherokee trade area.

Public and semi-public buildings also contribute to the District's character. The historic Carnegie Library (Cherokee Public Library), the Sanford Museum & Planetarium, and the former Illinois Central Railroad Depot are tourist worthy structures.

Policies

1. Prepare a detailed marketing and branding study for Downtown to identify niche market needs and create a vibrant new image to attract retailers.
2. Encourage upper level housing (such as in Wilson's TV & Appliance) to maximize building usage and to promote entertainment and social activities in the downtown.
3. Continue the high level maintenance on the streetscape.
4. Prepare downtown design district guidelines to preserve the unique architectural character.
5. Renovation of existing or construction of new buildings should reflect the predominant scale, height, massing, setback and proportion of traditional buildings within the downtown.
6. Additional off-street parking should be located on the side or rear of buildings in the District. Such parking should be screened from view with landscaping, a masonry wall, and/or decorative ornamental metal fencing with landscaping. The existing off-street parking lots should be improved to meet these recommendations.

Corridor Commercial Recommendations & Policies

Cherokee's only existing corridor commercial areas are located along Highway 59. The primary function of a corridor commercial area is twofold:

1. Serve the day-to-day needs of local residents; and,
2. Provide commercial uses serving a larger region

The types of stores found in a corridor commercial area include general merchandise and convenience retailers such as a discount department store, supermarket/grocery store, pharmacies, restaurants, banks as well as some of the retailers typically found neighborhood commercial. In larger communities, "big box" retailers and home improvement stores such as Menards, Home Depot and Lowes will be found.

In Cherokee's there is not the clear distinction/delineation of corridor and neighborhood commercial districts. This blending of services forms an efficient and defined shopping district with good visibility and accessibility. Though efficient now, should the commercial district spread further north or south on Highway 59, the "convenience" would dissipate. Compact growth is the key to retailer synergy and efficient use of public dollars towards infrastructure.

Policies

1. Restrict both corridor and neighborhood commercial land uses to the Highway 59 corridor within its revised municipal limits (south of Highway 3). Specific areas are shown on the Future Land Use Plan.
2. Do not allow commercial to further penetrate into residential areas.
3. Implement "transitional housing" between commercial land uses and single-family residential land uses.
4. New and redeveloped commercial areas should be encouraged to provide a higher level of design quality to meet the public's request of a "better looking community".
5. Encourage clustered commercial developments with shared parking.
6. All parking and loading areas should be screened with landscaped berms and/or a combination of landscaping and vertically walls.
7. Developments should be sited to allow for perimeter landscaping to buffer adjacent land uses.
8. Corridor commercial should continue to take its access from frontage roads. Minimize curb cuts.
9. Developments should employ Best Management Practices (BMPs) into their site design to reduce stormwater runoff and improve runoff quality.

Industrial, Light Industrial & Business Parks Recommendations & Policies

Industrial, Light Industrial and Business Parks are important to enhance the tax base of Cherokee. Although little land is presently dedicated to these uses, additional land is identified in the Future Land Use Plan to accommodate economic development opportunities.

Industrial

These land uses are more intense land uses which usually have greater demand on the City's infrastructure. Additionally, these uses have a large employment base which contribute to the local economy of a City. It is important that these land uses be separated from commercial and residential area. These users should also not negatively impact the local environment. For Cherokee specific, the only classification of this type located within the municipal limits is the HyVee Distribution center's new addition. Tyson Manufacturing located just outside the current municipal limits also meets this classification status.

Light Industrial

These land uses are less intensive industrial uses that do not overtax municipal facilities and infrastructure. Light industrial users tend to be smaller service and consumer-oriented businesses as opposed to manufacturers. Like industrial uses, light industrial users can also negatively impact the environment and the quality of life for residents living in adjacency to these properties.

Business Parks

Business park areas are typically office uses, incubator businesses, or similar uses. While business park development is not as intense as light industrial uses the usually have a more aesthetic setting. Enhanced landscaping, lighting, pedestrian walkways, and improved architectural facades are commonplace.

Policies

Policies related to the promotion of healthy and sustainable business park and industrial development include:

1. Industrial and light industrial uses should only be located adjacent to major Highways such as Highways 3 and 59 to maximize their visibility and access to transportation while minimizing through traffic on the local street network.
2. Business Parks should be located in close proximity to these major highways for convenient access. These uses should be in a defined land use area separated from single-family residential.
3. Access points along arterial streets to business parks should be consolidated, minimizing access points for safety.
4. Landscaping and green spaces should be used to provide buffer between business and industrial uses and adjacent residential areas.
5. Off-street parking and loading area should be screened with attractively landscape berms or similar buffering.

6. All new developments should be encouraged to design attractively landscaped public rights-of-way with street trees, parkway lighting and sidewalks on both sides of the street.
7. In business parks, the use of design standards should be encouraged to establish a consistent style of design within the individual businesses.

Section 6: Transportation

Input related to the City's roadways and traffic were identified throughout the community outreach program for this Comprehensive Plan. The good news is, all positive comments were received. The good majority of input stated that transportation was adequate for the circulation needs of Cherokee and only minor improvements were needed. The most significant and repeated of these "improvements" was the need for better directional signage. A secondary item was the need for continued maintenance on existing streets.

For future transportation improvements, the following nationally and recognized state definitions and standards should be considered.

Streets

The city should protect, enhance, and reinforce the existing functional hierarchy of its roadways, which is comprised of local streets, collectors, and major and minor arterials. These different street types have different functions and characteristics and serve a specific purpose with the community. Streets should be designed to accommodate pedestrian and bicyclists while focusing on accommodating the land uses bordering the street.

When designing, constructing, and classifying roadways by function, there are several factors to be taken into consideration including:

- Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) as provided by the Iowa Department of Transportation;
- Land uses abutting each street;
- The amount of signalized and controlled intersections, access points, driveways and curb cuts to the street;

- The purpose of the street;
- Rights-of-way width;
- The number and width of traffic lanes; and
- Connections a street has to other streets with Cherokee.

Streets within the City of Cherokee's transportation network can be divided into four functional classifications:

- Major Arterials
- Minor Arterials
- Collectors
- Local Streets

A map depicting the various street classifications in Cherokee follows this section.

Major and Minor Arterials

Regarded as the backbone of the urban street network, arterial streets have a limited number of access points and signalized/traffic-controlled intersections. Arterials are designed to move large volumes of traffic at higher speeds than collector and local streets. Arterials are generally characterized by wider traffic lanes and slightly higher speed limits.

With regard to arterial streets, the Plan recommends:

1. Minimized curb cuts and using intersection collectors and local streets for access into properties; and
2. The continued enhancement of arterials through necessary road care. Widening with additional lanes is not warranted and should be scrutinized. Too often the long term cost of such improvements is not considered. Highway 59 will have sufficient capacity well into the future.

Collectors

The function and purpose of collector streets is to “collect” the traffic from the local street system and distribute traffic between neighborhoods within the community and provide access to the arterial street system. Collectors are intended to primarily serve vehicle trips to and from the neighborhoods within which they are located. They are not designed to be used as traffic routes to pass through the City of to travel lengthy distances.

Collector streets are often bordered by business and residential land uses containing driveways to the street. The section of a collector street running through the corporate limits of a municipality is typically the responsibility of the municipality. Additional sections of a collector street which are outside of the municipal limits of Cherokee are the responsibility of the county or state.

Local Streets

A local street includes all remaining streets not classified in a “higher” street network. Local streets are shorter than other types and are often broken up by stop signs and other traffic control devices. Trips on local streets are typically short in length and often head to the nearest collector street. Uses not requiring a high rate of visibility like residences are most likely to be found along local streets. Of all the street types in the street “hierarchy”, local streets have the slowest speeds and the narrowest right of ways.

Street Trees

Street trees are one of the quickest and most affordable ways to enhance the appearance of a community. Tree-lining Highway 59 for example, would instantly create a positive and unique image entering the community. The City of Cherokee should encourage the planning of street trees in all parkway areas along major and minor arterials, collector and local/neighborhood streets. The cost of this program is recovered over time by increased property values of those newly tree-lined streets. Further, the positive atmosphere created by these tree-lined streets are impossible to ascertain, but evidence shows people feel their neighborhood is more valuable.

Sidewalks & Trails

Sidewalk and trail connections throughout the city are important and should be maintained throughout Cherokee. Sidewalks and trail connections should be completed in conjunction with development and other improvements to public rights-of-way. Incremental improvements should be made to eventually eliminate gaps or inconsistencies in the City's pedestrian infrastructure. Recommended ordering of priorities are:

1. Continuation of the Middle School Trail on Highway 59 to Bluff Street.
2. Linkage of Highway 59 & Bluff Street intersection northeast along newly acquired railroad R.O.W. to Roosevelt Street.

Attractive Streetlights

As Cherokee exemplified in its downtown streetscape renovation, ornamental streetlights can have an enormous affect on improving the appearance and character of the community. Streetlights are used to illuminate roadways and signs for motorists, as well as sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities.

Major and minor arterial roadways are generally designed to accommodate vehicular traffic volumes, causing the pedestrian realm to be secondary. The City should strive to maintain a pedestrian friendly atmosphere along its roadways, especially Highway 59.

Gateway Signage

In an effort to announce one's arrival into the City, gateway features should be employed at key locations. Gateway features can be achieved through signage or sculptures at the ground level. Attractive landscape plantings and lighting should be considered at the existing Cherokee entry signs.

Parkways and landscaped boulevards provide attractive locations for gateway signage. Their prominent location along the roadway allows gateway signage to be highly visible to motorists traveling through the corridor. City boundaries and key intersections may provide ideal locations for gateway features.

Gateway signage should be implemented in a well-designed and tasteful manner. Signage should be easy to read for motorist without dominating the adjacent landscape setting.

Policies

Consistent with many of Cherokee's established residential neighborhoods, a conventional grid street pattern with minimal use of cul-de-sacs should be promoted. Such a grid pattern encourages efficient traffic circulation and superior connectivity between areas. A conventional street pattern may facilitate the efficient provision of infrastructure and create more walk-able environments

Policies related to the promotion and enhanced roadway connectivity in Cherokee include:

1. New development should connect to existing streets and street stubs, and have a minimal number of cul-de-sacs or “dead-end” streets.
2. Developments should be able to accommodate change and future growth through exceptional vehicular and pedestrian linkages and circulation.
3. Inviting streetscapes and tree lined streets should be created to add a “higher image quality” as was so strongly requested by the citizens of Cherokee during the input workshops. Further, these enhance tree plantings add value to real estate and create more desirable neighborhoods. Street trees are proven to reduce traffic speeds as well.
4. Local (neighborhood) streets are too wide in Cherokee. Revisions to the ordinances should be considered to make street widths approximately 25-30’ maximum. Putting local streets on a “road diet” will reduce long-term maintenance; reduce traffic speeds; and improve the aesthetic of the community/neighborhood. Public safety will not be jeopardized. Parking should be restricted to one side of the street with this new reduced width.
5. A conventional street grid should be implemented in conjunction with other streetscape amenities to create a unique identity for Cherokee. Image improvement is highly in demand by the citizenry.

Section 7: Community Facilities

The City of Cherokee contains a number of community facilities providing residents and visitors with a variety of services. Community facilities include city hall, public library, schools, public safety (police and fire), recreation facilities and others. These facilities and services are essential to the community and enhance the quality of life. Often residents stated during the community input process that they felt “safe” in Cherokee and that “we have a very good school system”. These are important statements, building blocks, to future community “betterment”.

Other community facilities such as the Cherokee County courthouse and other non-city agencies do exist and provide additional public services for community “betterment”. It is essential the City of Cherokee continue the positive working relationship and close communication to minimize overlap and unnecessary expenses.

Library

The public library is located at 215 South 2nd Street. The facility is ideally located in the midst of the Downtown District providing convenience to users. The library has changed since it's 1905 dedication as an Andrew Carnegie Library by meeting the needs of the community in technology and media distribution. The library appears to be meeting the needs of the community and no input has been received indicating major needs other than continued funding for top-line operations, management and resources.

Public Safety

Police Department- The Cherokee Police Department, located at 239 W. Maple Street, consists of 8 sworn officers, a civilian administrative assistant, 13 reserve law enforcement officers, and a police K-9 that is trained in narcotics detection. All law enforcement officers are trained by standards set by the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy. Additional training is received through attendance at specialized schools, seminars, and in-service training. The Cherokee Police Department provides and participates in various community prevention programs as well as additional services to the community. A few programs include, child safety seat program, business and residential security assessments, the STEP program and D.A.R.E.

Input sessions with the Police Chief, indicated a continual need for budget to upgrade cruisers and necessary equipment. Interestingly also, he noted that creating a "high quality of life" in Cherokee is necessary to recruit young officers to a slightly lower pay grade than if they went to a larger community. The concept of a "better community, not a "bigger" community was evident. Additional input by the community noted that they feel "safe" in Cherokee, which is a tribute to the public outreach and responsiveness of the police and fire departments.

Fire Department- The Fire Department, located at 300 W. Elm Street, consists of 25 volunteer firemen, two paid driver/dispatchers and a chief. The Department is manned five days a week, with split shifts Monday through Friday. Equipment consists of four pumpers, one aerial truck, one tanker and an equipment van. Throughout all the input received, no comments were received to any major needs of this department, however, additional garage bay space should be evaluated. Obviously,

maintaining adequate budget to upgrade fire trucks and necessary equipment should remain a priority of the City of Cherokee.

Schools

Cherokee is noted regionally for its fine school system. Numerous times during community input, it was noted by residents that locating to and remaining in Cherokee was to a large measure due to the quality of the public school system. The offices of the Cherokee Community School District are located in Washington High School at 600 W. Bluff Street. The district enrolls approximately 940 students in four schools. Washington School is a class 2-A high school serving students in grades 9-12. Cherokee Middle School, built in 2001, serves grades 5-8. Roosevelt Elementary School serves students in kindergarten to grade 4. The Early Childhood Learning Center serves students ages 3 and 4. Noted as an important factor in the “quality of life” of Cherokee, continued coordination of policies and budget strategies to ensure the maximum efficiency of both the City of Cherokee and the School District is recommended. Given the declining population of Cherokee, no major expansions are anticipated at this time. Continued high quality maintenance of facilities and investment in curriculum programs is essential.

City Services

During the planning process, the City's various departments were asked to offer their input with regard to current and anticipated needs. Feedback received from specific departments is discussed below.

Water System- Cherokee is currently served by three elevated water pressure tanks of 1 million gallon, 400,000 gallon and 150,000 gallon, domestic water needs and fire protection. A fourth elevated water pressure tank is planned southeast of the city in the future near the current landfill. This will enhance water pressure south of the river and better accommodate future development. Water lines throughout the city are being upgraded to ensure continuous loops water systems for sustained pressures during fire protection. This upgrade program as well as the future elevated water pressure tank should continue at its current pace. A city-wide water system map follows this section.

Wastewater System- the municipal wastewater treatment plant and collection system has adequate capacity for future City's growth. The industrial wastewater plants aeration tanks, however, were reported to be

in need of upgrading. The City is currently working with Tyson and the IDNR on a water quality study to regulate future effluent into the Little Sioux River.

A city-wide sewer collection system map is in the process of being updated and will be amended to this plan as a supporting document at a later date.

Cherokee County Regional Airport

The Cherokee County Regional Airport is located within the city limits on the south end of Cherokee on HWY 59 and has a 3,800 foot hard surface runway that is 75 ft wide and a turf runway that is 2,700 ft long and 100 feet wide. The airfield has two GPS approaches, 46 hangers, five tie down spots and an automated weather station. The terminal is open 24 hours a day with internet for pilot briefings and flight planning. The airfield has both aviation gas and jet fuel that is available 24 hours with a credit card. The airport also has two courtesy cars available to pilots to do business in Cherokee County.

The airport is in the process of acquiring land north of the airfield and securing the runway protection zone. Acquisitions are anticipated to be completed in 2012 and will allow the hard surface runway length to be extended to 4,000 feet.

Section 8- Parks, Open Space & Environmental Features

The parks, open spaces, and environmental resources in a community contribute significantly to the overall quality of life, image, character, desirability and aesthetic of that community. They are truly one of THE key features that can make Cherokee “better”. These areas provide places for residents and visitors alike to recreate and enjoy nature. The City of Cherokee operates four primary parks- Spring Lake, Gillette, Triangle and Central Park.

The recommendations for the Parks and Open Spaces are intended to protect and enhance Cherokee’s natural areas, expand the park and trail system where appropriate and create new efficiencies.

Cherokee has more than adequate supply of park space (200 + acres) to meets its need well into the future. The National Recreation & Park Association standard for park space to properly serve a community is approximately 10 acres/1000 population (or approximately 60 acres for

Cherokee). In addition to this dedicated park acreage, the High School and Middle School provide recreational open space and sports field facilities usable by the community. This joint-use is encouraged and should continue.

Current parks & facilities include:

- *Spring Lake Park*- this is Cherokee's most noteworthy historic park. The park is often spoke of as the "third place " to go after home and work as noted during the community input sessions.

Recommendations:

- New "Yacht Club" be constructed to replace the former building.
 - Although geese are a sanitary problem, they are part of the history of the park and generations of families. Population control and enhanced maintenance is necessary.
 - Improve maintenance in general. Determine areas of turf to transition to natural "prairie in the making" to mowing and enhance environment. Public education.
 - Develop uniform park signage.
- *Gillette Park*- one of the newest parks in the system, is Cherokee's newest "signature park" together with the Bacon Aquatics Center creates a great destination for families and entertainment venues.

Recommendations:

- Continue high level of maintenance.
 - Develop uniform park signage.
 - Promotion of community/entertainment events
- *Triangle Park*- is regarded as having little or no value and an "unsafe" place to be according to public input.

Recommendations:

- Declassify from park to public open space.
 - Remove equipment and any signage.
- *Central Park*- is a passive use park ideally located on the future city-wide trail system. Recommendations:
 - Improve maintenance of area to enhance usage.
 - Remove picnic tables.
 - Replace bench adjacent to trail (north of bridge).
 - Reduce mowing south of the bridge. Maintain a mowed 5'-8' wide band adjacent to the entire trail.

- *Community Center*- is a well-maintained facility, which is used for public events. The new auditorium provides a permanent location for the performing arts of Cherokee and seasonal events. Public sentiment is strong for this facility. An addition and renovation of the entire facility to allow for family events, banquets and community celebrations is being considered to maximize this facility. However, a more immediate demand for kitchen and restroom upgrades should be discussed. A feasibility study evaluating both options should be considered.
- *Fairgrounds*- is an important icon for Cherokee. The Cherokee Chamber of Commerce PRCA Rodeo is an, which draws nearly 5,000 people to the community over a three-day period each year. The economic development opportunities of this event are unlimited. A strategic marketing plan should be built around this event to optimize community image and tourism dollars. Continue to reinvest tourism dollars into the fairgrounds to increase the capabilities of the event. This event should be coordinated with city-wide activities and downtown promotions. Cherokee has an opportunity to build off this brand. The greenspace horse arena also promotes the equestrian activities in the Cherokee area.
- *Wescott Park*- this area lies within the floodway of the Little Sioux River and is frequently damaged by flood water. The park should be redesigned to a more appropriate use such as “floodplain prairie” to reduce future maintenance costs and the high expense of mowing. This newly designed natural area should become a component of the “Little Sioux Green” project. The relocation of the ballfields should be considered.
- *Little Sioux River*- this natural feature has the potential to transform the image and economy of Cherokee. During public input, it was a common theme that people enjoy “the greenway” but are not quite sure what to do there. It was said “there is too much of it” and that there is “no specific place to go”. Canoeists from the four state area come to float this scenic river. Walking trails over the years have been left to deteriorate. Many cities such as Lanesboro, MN have rebuilt their economy around natural resource based recreation. Cherokee has this same opportunity to create a regional biking and canoeing trail system as illustrated in the “Little Sioux Green” master plan created by the USDA/NRCS approximately ten years ago. This plan is dramatic and exciting plan, which should be reassessed as part of this comprehensive planning process for the City. The plan should be revised as

necessary and a strategic implementation plan prepared. If there is a “silver bullet” to solve the identity problem of the community, this could be the answer. More study is required and funding resources identified; but this Comprehensive Plan highly recommends the creation of a Little Sioux Greenway as THE catalyst to the future economy of Cherokee.

- *Trails-* Segments of trails exist throughout the community, however, none of these trails interconnect to form a continuous system. The Spring Lake trail and the MHI trail are heavily used trails in the community. In addition, the “Safe Routes to Schools” program was successfully used to construct one of the trail segments along Highway 59 and Indian Street. The recent acquisition of the abandoned railroad right-of-way running from the Downtown District to Highway 3 was an excellent decision by the City. This trail has the potential to connect neighborhoods, schools and the Downtown creating a more walk-able neighborhood(s). This trail should be connected to future infill development in the northeast quadrant of Cherokee. The entire trail system is more definitively shown on the Future Land Use Plan. Again, the Plan illustrates the importance of linking nearly all neighborhoods of the community to the focal point “Little Sioux Green”. The community trail system also links to the State of Iowa’s Mental Health Institute’s on campus trail system which already a popular recreational resource of the community. A more detailed trail system plan denoting more specific locations of trails, their classifications, amenities and probable cost should be undertaken for capital improvement planning purposes. Trails are the number one recreational resource in demand today across the United States and will continue to be so into the future.
- *Golf Course-* The Cherokee Country Club is a popular course for the community. Under private ownership, the course is the location of the annual Sioux Valley Golf Tournament bringing recognition and tourists to the community. Despite these apparent successes, the course experiences an annual revenue shortfall. This course follows the national downward trend in the rounds of golf now being played in the United States. It would be in both the interests of the golf course ownership and the City to proactively prepare a new business plan for the Country Club and chart a course for its future.

Section 9: Implementation

The Comprehensive Plan sets forth an agreed-upon “road map” for growth and development within the City of Cherokee over the next 10-15 years and beyond. The Plan is the product of considerable input by the community, the City staff, Comprehensive Plan Advisory committee and the elected officials. The completion of the Comprehensive Plan is only the first step in the long-term process of achieving the community’s vision for a “better”, not “bigger” Cherokee.

Plan Adoption and Use

Cherokee’s updated Comprehensive Plan will serve as the official policy guide to long-range public improvements, land use, and development. This document, with periodic updates as required by State of Iowa law, will provide the City with a decision-making framework. It is essential that the Plan be adopted by the City Council and then be used on a regular basis by City staff, boards, and commissions to evaluate all proposals for improvement and development within the community in the years ahead.

Review of Land Use & Development Controls

Zoning is an important tool in implementing planning policy. It establishes the types of uses to be allowed on specific properties, and prescribes the overall character and intensity of development to be permitted. Adoption of this Comprehensive Plan update should be followed by a review and update of the City’s various development controls including zoning, subdivision regulations (if applicable), signage, landscaping and other related codes and ordinances.

It is essential that all development controls be consistent with, and compliment, this Comprehensive Plan update. The City may have existing ordinances that contradict new or revised policies or prohibit desired improvements.

Further, this Comprehensive Plan update sets forth policies regarding the use of land within the City and establishes guideline for the quality, character and intensity of new development to be promoted in the years ahead. The Plan’s policies and guidelines should greatly assist the City in formulating new zoning and development code regulations that can better reflect the unique needs and aspirations of the Cherokee community.

Capital Improvement Plan

The City should immediately implement and continuously update a capital improvement plan to prioritize and coordinate construction and financing of major City projects.

Intergovernmental Coordination

The City of Cherokee should assume the leadership role in implementing this Comprehensive Plan update. In addition to carrying out the administrative actions and many of the public improvement projects called for in this Plan, the City may choose to administer a variety of programs available to local residents, businesses and property owners.

However, in order for this Comprehensive Plan update to be successful, it must be based on a strong partnership between the City and other public agencies, school district, various neighborhood groups and organizations, the local business community, and the private sector.

The City should be the leader in promoting the cooperation and collaboration needed to implement this Plan. The City's "partners" should include:

1. Other governmental and service districts such as the school district, Cherokee County, utility providers, Iowa Department of Transportation, etc.
2. Local and regional institutions such as the Chamber of Commerce, Cherokee Economic Development Corporation (CEDC), Cherokee Industrial Corporation (CIC), and various community action programs, churches, and religious institutions.
3. Local banks and financial institutions, which can provide assistance in upgrading existing properties, facilitating desirable new development and packaging assistance programs for residents and businesses.
4. Builders and developers, who should be encouraged to undertake improvements and new construction that conforms to this Plan and enhances the overall quality and character of Cherokee. If local builders & developers are not interested, regional companies should be recruited to move the City forward.
5. The Cherokee community, since all residents and neighborhood groups were encouraged to become involved in this planning process, should be given the opportunity to voice their opinions on improvements and development decisions within the community at public hearings.

Enhance Public Communications

The City should prepare a brief summary and/or “poster version” of this Plan and distribute it widely throughout the community. If the “poster” was to be created, such should be prominently displayed in frequented public buildings like City Hall, the Library and Post Office. It is important that all local residents, businesses and property owner be familiar with the Plan’s recommendations and be noted that the community’s input during this process was “listened to” and incorporated as feasible.

The City should also consider additional techniques for responding quickly to public questions and concerns regarding planning and development. For example, the City might prepare a new informational brochure on how to apply for zoning, building, subdivision and other development oriented permits and approvals. It might also consider special newsletter or continue the “Plan Cherokee” website to focus on frequently asked questions and concerns regarding planning and development or new City projects.

Implementation Action Agenda

The City should prepare a detailed implementation “action agenda” which highlights the improvement and development projects and activities to be undertaken during the next few years. For example, the “action agenda” might consist of:

1. A detailed description of the projects and activities to be undertaken;
2. The priority of each project or activity;
3. An indication of the public and private sector responsibilities for initiating and participating in each activity, and;
4. A suggestion for the funding sources and assistance programs that might potentially be available for implementing each project or activity.

In order to remain current, the “action agenda” should be updated once a year.

Regularly Update the Plan

This Comprehensive Plan update is not a static document. If community attitudes change or new issues arise which are beyond the scope of the current Plan, the Plan should be revised and updated accordingly.

Although a proposal to amend the Plan can be brought forth by petition at anytime, the City should regularly undertake a systematic review of the Plan. Although annual review is desirable, the City should initiate review of the Plan at least every two or three years. Ideally, this review would coincide with the preparation of the annual budget and capital improvement program. In this manner, recommendations or changes relating to capital expenditures or other programs can be considered as part of the upcoming commitments for the fiscal year. The annual update of the City's "action agenda" could also be coordinated with the overall Plan review process.

Routine examination of the Plan will help ensure that the planning program remains relevant to community needs and aspirations. To maintain the Plan as a useful and pertinent policy guide, the City should:

1. Post copies of the Plan document on-line and make copies available for public purchase;
2. Provide assistance to the public in explaining the Plan and its relationship to private and public development projects and other proposals, as appropriate;
3. Assist the City Council in the day-to-day administration, interpretation and application of the Plan;
4. Maintain a list of current possible amendments, issues or needs that may be subject to change, addition or deletion from the Comprehensive Plan;
5. Coordination with, and assist the Planning and Zoning Commission and City Council in the Plan amendment process; and,
6. Establish a Comprehensive Plan oversight advisory group (including key community leaders) to receive annual updates and give feedback.

End