

Essential Public Facilities

Introduction

Essential Public Facilities (EPF) are characterized by their long, useful life which requires significant expenditures to construct. Such facilities may include, but are not limited to airports, state education facilities, regional parks, state or regional transportation facilities, state or local correctional facilities, solid waste handling facilities, in-patient facilities including substance abuse facilities, mental health facilities, secure community transition facilities, and group homes. Given their critical contributions to the health, safety and welfare of citizens, it's important for all communities to plan for and maintain the function of such facilities. But often, given the difficult programmatic issues associated with essential facilities, they may be difficult to site, expand, or maintain in context of other development patterns.

The following pages contain an overview of Cheney's existing public facility infrastructure, and future needs based on future land use considerations.



Figure 12.01 - *New facilities deemed necessary to basic community services but that may be difficult to site, such as jails, airports, solid waste, correctional or wastewater systems, are required to meet special siting procedures under State law. (Image source: City of Cheney)*

This chapter also contains a discussion on future essential public facility's needs, to guide City decisions related to land use. Future improvements in infrastructure, educational facilities and solid waste facilities, should reflect current land uses, as well as those supporting long-range goals. Written policies presented here and in the other chapters, are provided to lead the full range of City implementation measures, including future infrastructure needs including capacity, improvement, replacement, and expansion of public facilities.

This chapter does not feature a goal, policy and program framework unique to this plan. Instead, it introduces the State's GMA requirements regarding Capital Facilities, as well as the siting and management policies developed with Spokane County.

Growth Management Act

In accordance with the requirements of the Washington State Growth Management Act, and following an extensive policy review process by the Spokane County Steering Committee, the Spokane County Commission has adopted a series of county-wide planning policies to guide the preparation of City and County Comprehensive Plans. Included therein are policies addressing the siting of “public capital facilities of a countywide or statewide nature,” as specifically required by the GMA. These policies commit the GMA planning jurisdictions of Spokane County to develop a common siting process for these facilities.

The GMA further requires local governments to develop a process for identifying and siting “essential public facilities” and to incorporate that process into their local comprehensive plans. As indicated and defined by the State, 1 essential public facilities can be difficult to site, and their location in a community may be locally unpopular. Local and state governments are charged by GMA with the task of ensuring that such facilities, as needed to support orderly growth and delivery of public services, are sited in a timely and efficient manner.

EPF Definition

Any facility owned or operated by a unit of local or state government, by a public utility or transportation company, or by any other entity providing a public service as its primary mission may qualify as an “essential public facility” (or EPF). In general, an essential public facility will be characterized by the following:

- 1) It is a necessary component of a system or network which provides a public service or good; and
- 2) It may be difficult to site because of significant opposition

Essential public facilities of a county-wide nature are those which serve a population base extending beyond the host community - which may include several local jurisdictions within Spokane County or a significant share of the total county population. Such facilities may include, but are not limited to, the following examples: airports, state education facilities, regional parks, state or regional transportation facilities, state or local correctional facilities, solid waste handling facilities, in-patient facilities including substance abuse facilities, mental health facilities, secure community transition facilities, and group homes. Other facilities meeting the basic definition above and whose sponsor desires to utilize this siting process may be qualified as essential public facilities by completing the designation procedure described below.

Essential public facilities of a state-wide or regional/county-wide nature may include, but are not limited to, those facilities listed above which serve a multi-county population base; or other large public or private facilities appearing on the Office of Financial Management (OFM) list to be maintained under RCW 36.70A.

EPF Approach

The Spokane County Regional Siting Process for Essential Public Facilities is intended to address the siting of essential public facilities not already sited by a local comprehensive plan and for which discretionary land use action is required. This siting process set forth below is also intended to meet GMA requirements, as well as the intent of the county-wide planning policies. A final objective is to enhance public participation during the early stages of facility siting, and to reduce the time spent analyzing unacceptable sites thereby producing earlier siting decisions, free of political contention that are also consistent with community/county goals.

EPF Siting Process

The City of Cheney, an incorporated entity for Spokane County and political subdivision of the State of Washington, in conjunction with the remaining incorporated small towns and cities and with the City of Spokane and Spokane County has entered into an agreement to develop and initiate a regional siting process for siting essential public facilities of a state-wide or regional/county-wide significance. This document officially titled “Spokane County Regional Siting Process for Essential Public Facilities” with an effective date of 2002, and as thereafter amended, is adopted by reference and is on file at the City of Cheney Planning Department, 112 Anderson Road, Cheney, WA.

This siting process may be amended, upon recommendation by the Spokane County Board of County Commissioners, through established procedures approved by all incorporated entities of Spokane County.