

Community Vision



Figure 2.01 - From the days of Cheney's earliest plans, residents have expressed several consistent themes in their hopes for Cheney, including a "small town feel" with an active downtown in the heart of the city. (Image source: City of Cheney)

Introduction

The City of Cheney is a unique and special place, and residents know it. This fact, perhaps more than any other, may ensure the survival of Cheney's essential qualities over time and in the face of change. Cities sometimes reach for prosperity, by sacrificing key resources or attempt to re-make themselves without regard for qualitative factors that may actually prove more important to long-term success. In adopting this plan, Cheney residents seek continued growth and vitality - in concert with the city's essential qualities.

Cheney is a small college town. The transition between city and country is well defined. Eastern Washington University is of vital importance.

Nearby farmlands, wetlands and open spaces are cherished. Cheney's downtown core is seen as the heart of the community. The City's traditional layout is compact, and residents appreciate the benefits this brings to their lives. These and many other attributes are seen as essential to Cheney's identity, and are valued as the foundation for the city's long-term well-being. It is the goal of this element and the rest of the plan to enumerate and build its values around those of the citizens of Cheney.

If the entire comprehensive plan represents the primary framework for policy formulation and decision-making over time, this element provides the framework for the plan. Intentionally broad- brush in nature, this vision element strives to express the wishes of the community at-large.

It has been written as indefinite enough to garner consensus, yet specific enough to retain its locality and relevance to the progress of the City. These pages articulate the long- range vision for the Cheney community as it relates to the Comprehensive Plan, and outlines the background related to its content and development. Though direction is well indicated here, individual chapters provide greater specificity through topical discussion and related goals and policies.

Primary Themes

The single over-arching theme in views expressed by participants in the development of Vision element – and one echoed in previous plans – is the appreciation for and desire to retain Cheney’s “small town” and collegiate feel. Its been a goal of this process to test past values, and in effect pose the same questions again and again: “What are Cheney’s essential qualities, and on balance, what energies must be spent to preserve, or enhance them?”

Cheney’s vision expresses a desire to manage growth in a way that maintains it as a small, compact, stable, traditional community with an attractive central business district and quiet residential areas. It expresses a desire for new development to be compatible with the existing urban framework; it envisions a continued role for the downtown as the hub of commercial, entertainment and cultural activities within the city, and it envisions maintaining a strong contrast between town and country. Cheney seeks a sustainable balance between vitality and preservation of key values; as the City’s 1997 comprehensive plan put it: “The city will plan for balanced growth that will protect the environment, extend equal opportunities to its citizens for economic development, promote a diverse housing environment, create a pleasant and vibrant Downtown district, preserve and showcase its historic properties, and enhance the character of the community.”

In-depth Involvement

This and the 2010 element was first developed based on earlier work, including a 2006 vision effort, another produced in 2008, and the City’s current comprehensive plan. It also reflects the thoughts and input received by scores of residents during the “Choices for Cheney: 2030” process that developed this the 2010 plan update. In short, it has effectively been checked, affirmed and refined by hundreds of comments, many resident hours, informal polling both in-person and via mail, and by innumerable other contributions. Readers are strongly encouraged to review the documents and narrative related to the public participation informing this document (see Appendix E). Appendix E will be amended to reflect the community involvement in “visioning” during the plan update.

It is perhaps a good sign that community input throughout the development of Cheney’s plan closely matches goals established in previous efforts. After all, one hallmark of small towns is stability and a sense of security - if only in contrast to the rapid change and pace of larger cities. That caring citizens - foregoing all other locales and electing to make their lives here - have so strongly repeated their love for “small town feel” and everything associated with stability, permanence, and community, affirms those qualities as genuine and lasting.

Element Structure

This vision element is presented at two levels. One - “A Generalized Vision” - reflects the highest-level community aspirations, creating a snapshot of Cheney and illustrating how the people, its institutions and the landscape interact in the year 2030-2037. The second portion examines those aspirations in greater detail, beginning to match, or bridge, between the generalized vision and the goal and policy set.

This vision element both supports and directs the comprehensive plan. By looking at the vision at these two levels, it helps make the transition from an idealized picture of Cheney’s future to a specific planning document designed to help the community achieve what it wants.

A Generalized Vision

This component of the vision was developed during individual interviews with community members, planning commissioners and city council members. It focused on their ideas for Cheney’s future, consolidating them and categorizing them by generalized topic.

The City of Cheney will be stable and prosperous because our institutions, businesses, and community members work cooperatively with dedication and pride.

- *Cheney and Eastern Washington University will develop and maintain a strong, effective partnership acknowledging our mutually beneficial relationship*
- *Every community member will take responsibility for the well-being of our community*
- *Before we expand our boundaries, we will use the land we have efficiently, while retaining a small town feel and not crowding citizens*
- *By limiting expansion of the urban area we will encourage a vibrant downtown retail core and viable commercial areas*
- *We will encourage new development, but respect our heritage by preserving our historic buildings and districts*
- *Agriculture and its associated businesses and activities will continue to be an important component of our community*

We will manage our natural resources in a sustainable manner as the community grows.

- *Our City shall continue to protect the beautiful agricultural and natural lands surrounding our community*
- *We will respect the environment by preserving and enhancing the ecological systems that provide for us*
- *We will be educated on our resource consumption and make decisions that balance the needs of the population with the needs of the environment*

We acknowledge our population to be diverse in its needs and every community member will be respected and valued.

- *We recognize the Cheney community is not bound by the city limits, rather, it includes those in the surrounding area*
- *Long-time residents will be honored and new residents will be welcomed*
- *University students will be welcomed and encouraged to be involved in the community and businesses that serve them*
- *The downtown will be the heart of the community and it will have places to meet and events to celebrate our traditions and community*
- *Our children will understand the importance of community and protecting the environment and their presence and opinions will be highly valued*
- *We will provide a safe community that encourages people to know their neighbors and participate in social events*
- *Seniors will have the means to continue to be active both physically and socially in the community*

The City of Cheney will continue to provide a high level of service to its community members.

- *We will anticipate the needs of the community while remaining efficient, accessible, responsive, accountable, and financially responsible*
- *We will partner with Eastern Washington University and the Cheney School District to improve the economic well-being and quality of life in our community*
- *Our high-ranking public school system will continue to provide an excellent education to our children while enhancing our community with activities and facilities open to the general population*
- *Businesses that are beneficial to our city will be recruited and retained*
- *We will recognize the distinct neighborhoods within Cheney and allow them to develop with unique characteristics*
- *Cheney will encourage a variety of housing types, transportation choices, and recreation opportunities for all of our community members*
- *Multi-family dwellings will be encouraged in appropriate localities to limit sprawl and improve the effectiveness of city services*
- *Streets, sidewalks and cycle paths will be well maintained in order to increase access to all areas of our community for all its members*
- *Cheney will support an outstanding year-round parks system that engages and serves community members of all ages*

The Vision, in Detail

Based on community comment, this section provides a closer examination of the vision in terms of the community’s physical environment, the way the City provides services, and the ways in which Cheney’s residents, institutions, and businesses hope to interact with the town’s space and with each other to conduct their daily lives in 2030.

Overall City Form - Cheney is compact, centered, and diverse

Residents understand the importance of land use choices in maintaining the City’s most essential qualities, as well as helping to achieve its primary goals. Cheney residents envision a compact, walkable community with a strong urban boundary between urban and non-urban areas. Growth, both residential and commercial, is directed and mixed to support downtown as the center of the community, and it is managed to conserve or enhance environmental quality, the efficiency of community facilities and services, a healthy economy and the compatibility of adjoining land uses.

Cheney citizens cherish the characteristics of their existing neighborhoods, and wish to see those qualities continued in future residential growth. These qualities include walkability, connectivity with the existing street grid, street trees, sidewalks, affordability, and centrally-located, accessible neighborhood amenities such as parks, small retail, services and churches. All foster the sense of community, of “knowing one’s neighbor,” and relationships with the downtown core valued by Cheney citizens.

Housing - *Affordable, compatible*

Cheney residents recognize that every citizen should have an equal opportunity for adequate and affordable housing; as such, the City is committed to formulating its land-use, transportation, parks, environmental and public facilities regulations in such a way as to promote housing diversity in Cheney's existing and developing stock. Market forces may hold powerful sway over housing costs, but the provision of options regarding housing size, location and ownership offer cities important tools to ensure that residents have options as prices rise. Cheney's housing stock should also foster civic and neighborhood pride in the beauty and accomplishments of the past and a sense of identity based on the city's history. Housing units are one way Cheney can express itself as a distinct community.

Providing a safe, attractive, and healthful living environment is a function of local government. Cheney residents are committed to creating and maintaining such a community, thereby maintaining the high quality of life in Cheney.

Transportation - *Maintain roadways, build new options*

Residents of Cheney support the continued provision and maintenance of automotive rights-of-way, but envision, as opportunity and growth provide, an extensive network of foot and bike-paths, sidewalks, bicycle lanes and other infrastructure supporting non-motorized transportation. In addition, Cheney residents support the improvement of mass-transit options within City limits and between County urban centers. The City's land-use policies are to encourage growth supporting mixed-use, walkable options for residents. Because the relationship between transportation and land use is highly interactive, the current land use plan, the future land use map and the transportation plan must be carefully coordinated. The design, scale and placement

of new or improved roadways should act in concert with overall comprehensive plan objectives.

Shopping & Services - *Diversify, work to keep dollars local*

Cheney residents value the slower pace and smaller scale of their community, and appreciate that those qualities are reflected in the downtown core. At the same time, residents desire greater in-town choices for shopping and services. Residents recognize that factors of scale may act to limit the range of choices available in the downtown, and as such, support limited peripheral development where such development acts to support, and not diminish, downtown's central role as an evolving specialty retail, service and entertainment district. Residents appreciate the City's proximity to more urbanized areas and the large-scale services offered there; while residents would like to see greater retail, health care and service offerings within their community, they see no need to sacrifice the small-town quality of their hometown for the sake of things available in adjacent, larger cities.

Downtown - *Cheney's centerpiece, a hub for specialty retail, services, and entertainment*

Cheney's downtown is recognized as the heart of the community. Though this role has been a natural and functional product of the City's initial design, more recent factors including advances in transportation, shopping alternatives and regional growth have eroded downtown's traditional place as the key retail center for the town. Cheney residents recognize the need for Downtown to evolve in order to retain its vitality and centrality, and support this growth through a range of efforts, including investment to accommodate needed growth and infrastructure, residential occupation, and development of specialty retail. Downtown's

historic buildings and “main street” layout are key to the City’s identity and to the proper function of envisioned growth; as such, new buildings and rehabilitation of existing buildings in the Central Business District (CBD) should complement the architecture and placement of the historic stock.

Economic Development - Leverage EWU’s vitality, continue to diversify

Cheney residents envision a strong and healthy economy that builds on existing strengths of their community, including the presence of Eastern Washington University, the relative affordability of land and housing, and high quality of life factors. Key economic development opportunities related to EWU include reducing the “leakage” of student food and entertainment dollars to other communities, and the location and development of adjacent “village” and mixed-use housing to keep students in-town, and to help grow resident faculty numbers. Residents envision economic development strategies that provide incentives for business development related to and in support of EWU curricula, enhancing educational quality and providing the means for talented students to become talented Citizens of Cheney.

Residents envision aggressive economic development supporting the growth of downtown into a unique, specialty retail, entertainment and business district that keeps downtown active and vital; such development is also seen as helping to diversify Cheney’s economy as a whole.

Though residents highly value their existing quality of life, change is understood to be inevitable. To manage growth and leverage change for the betterment of its citizens, Cheney recognizes the need to work closely with the County government on matters related to long-range planning, including economic

development, transportation, environmental issues, housing, and land use.

Natural Environment - *Protected, with sustainable growth and development*

The citizens of Cheney recognize that their individual and civic livelihood depends on a non-depleting and inter-dependent relationship with the natural environment. In Cheney, growth and economic activity are to be balanced with finite resources; sensitive areas are to be protected from damage or fragmentation, and policies supporting compact growth, resource conservation, non-motorized transportation and sustainable building practices are encouraged. Cheney will work to uphold all regulations related to the protection of these vital resources, and will seek creative solutions that add value to these measures wherever possible.

Conservation of water and energy resources is to be promoted.

Cheney’s most valuable natural resources include the prime agricultural soils, the diverse variety of wetlands, wildlife habitat and the many staggered stands of Ponderosa pine that surround the City. The City and County must work cooperatively and undertake strong measures to prevent the destruction and loss of these areas to development. Natural features and systems in and around Cheney include geologic landforms, wetlands, streams, lakes, ground water recharge areas, vegetation and open spaces. Residents of Cheney believe in the inherent value of such features from both qualitative and utilitarian perspectives. A thorough evaluation of natural features and systems must occur prior to making even basic land use decisions. Cheney citizens insist that development works on balance to protect and enhance the aesthetic, biological, cultural, and utilitarian characteristics of the natural environment.

City Services - Paced growth according to capacity, affordability

Cheney residents enjoy the high-quality, affordable city services provided to them, and want to see these services maintained well into the future. As such, residents desire a full and accurate accounting of available capacities and resources upon which to base growth-related choices; the City should not expand in such a way as to compromise either quality, quantity or cost of essential services enjoyed today. Residents recognize the importance of a clean, well-maintained city, and support services that keep Cheney beautiful and functional. Citizens also support enforcement of existing codes in order to ensure all residents help maintain Cheney's clean, healthy environment.

Residents envision downtown evolving into a place where residents and students alike gather frequently to shop at specialty stores, engage needed services, enjoy fine dining and entertainment options, and work and do business with small-scale, entrepreneurial businesses. As today, residents envision a multitude of civic festivals, gatherings and events occurring annually in their downtown. Cheney's downtown will evolve and improve in relation to external factors and in relation to its adjacency with EWU; Cheney's downtown will remain the heart of the community.

Technology - Leveraging existing resources, establishing new ones

Cheney residents wish to take full advantage of existing technological opportunities available within the community. Many of these flow from the fiber optic network already in place - which is ripe for further enhancement and development. As part of this vision, residents want to see technology and related assets included and considered as part of all City investments, promotional activities and long-range objectives. Cheney residents recognize the importance of developing technological

infrastructure, seeing opportunities for entrepreneurial exchanges, new business, attraction of high tech companies, work force development, and numerous other capabilities. Cheney's vision includes an environment in which technology can thrive, contributing to the city's identity, efficiency, economy and collaborative abilities of local institutions and those they deal with world-wide.

Arts & Culture - Vital, growing, and uniquely Cheney

Cheney residents desire a cultural climate that honors and sustains the city's local distinctiveness. This includes and is shaped by Cheney's distinct buildings, its neighborhood design, scenic landscapes, nearby natural features, locally-produced products, churches, and the art, music and theatre scene. As part of Cheney's vision, the community wants to see arts and cultural assets included and considered as part of all City investments, promotional activities and long-range objectives. Cheney residents recognize the importance of developing the resources, capabilities, and expertise of the local arts and culture sector - for creating local distinctiveness, community regeneration, and economic development. As part of this, the community envisions growth of organizational capacity to further the preservation, development, and celebration of arts and cultural resources. Cheney residents see their community as home to a growing and vital arts/culture/heritage scene, one that not only leverages existing and exceptional resources, but celebrates them.

Parks & Trails - Active and passive uses, formal parks and greenbelt areas

Residents of Cheney recognize the tremendous value of their parks system and adjacent open spaces, and see them as a cornerstone of what makes Cheney special. Residents also prize the

variety of existing park types, in terms of recreational offerings, array of park sizes and placement throughout the City. Residents envision having these same essential amenities continue over time, with improvements and expansion following the pace of new and infill growth. Park-related improvements residents envision include more pedestrian paths to help activate and link existing parks together; the development of large, water and organized sports-based parks; specialty parks such as skateboard and dog parks, and more effective maintenance of existing facilities. Though not part of Cheney's parks system, the presence of the Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent wetlands, working farmlands, and trail networks are greatly valued, and seen as essential to Cheney's environment. Residents envision the City taking an active role in protecting such resources where appropriate and in concert with overall planning goals; they believe the City ought to support growing regional trail networks including the John Wayne and Fish Lake trails; the support the creation of interlinked "greenbelts" where opportunity provides, and, in general, expect that they, working with parks stewards, will continue to provide a diverse and active parks system that supports uses suitable to all stages of resident life.

An Engaged Community - Keeping Cheney involved, focused

As important as City government is in the provision of services and in forwarding overall goals of the community, residents recognize that they are ultimately responsible for the continued success of Cheney. The expression of values contained in this document is an important first step in maintaining and enhancing the City's many components, but as with all past accomplishments, implementation of plans begin with active, continued, and ardent citizen contributions. Without citizen time and resources, planning often ends with discussion and regulation. Due to this, Cheney

residents include themselves in their long-range vision: We, the citizens of Cheney, in view of the many riches of our community, recognize that these riches exist in large part due to the labors of those that have gone before us, and understand our obligation to add to that legacy. As citizens that cherish life in our beautiful small town, we are committed to maintaining these priceless advantages.