

City of Cheney Planning Commission

Cheney Vision 2025



Introduction:

The Cheney Planning Commission began a visioning process in fall of 2005, to help the commissioners get a look at the “big picture.” It has been 10 years since the commission and the community have engaged in thinking about the long term. After working through numerous plats, rezones, conditional use permits and comprehensive plan amendments, the members thought it would be helpful to step back and look at where we have come from and where we might be going in the 20 years.

This visioning document has been prepared in a format that allows the addition of comments and notes which can be sent in to the Planning Department and considered with the other comments that are received. The first two sections, Assumptions and Values, has been fleshed out fairly well, but comments are needed to make sure these reflect where we are now. The next two sections, Goals and Strategies, are not as complete and need much more input.

Objectives of this project:

- Build a context for discussion and planning for Cheney’s future: what has happened in the past, what trends are expected to continue in the future, what new things will happen in the future.
- Identify what kind of community Cheney should be in 20 years.
- Improve communication and mutual understanding among the planning commission, city council and other boards, staff and the community.



1. Assumptions

These are statements of what CAN happen; we use the assumptions to define the limits of possibility and probability.

Population

- The City projects that population in 2025 will be 13,800, a 56% increase over the 2000 census population of 8,832. Strong population growth will continue for 5 years, with little or no growth in a 10 year period in the middle of the planning period.
- Washington State Office of Financial Management has projected countywide population growth (2000 to 2025) to increase somewhere between 15% (low projection) and 57% (high projection), with an intermediate projection of 34%. Cheney's share of this growth would be 10,156 (low), 13,866 (high) and 11,835 (intermediate). However, college-aged population in the state is projected to increase only 24% during that time period. Since Cheney's growth is so strongly correlated to EWU enrollment, this might cause Cheney's population growth to lag behind the state average. On the other hand, the growth that Cheney has seen since 2000 has already moved up to 10,070, which is nearly what OFM projected we would be have in 2025 in a low-growth scenario. For the purposes of this planning exercise, the City should use the 13,800 figure.
-

Land Use

- Commercial Center: Most commercial growth will continue to occur at the North end, but some redevelopment in the traditional downtown area will occur.
- Downtown Cheney is a designated historic district, and has the potential to be developed in a historically-sensitive way which will enhance the

- character of the traditional downtown. The traditional downtown area has suffered greatly due to the commercial growth on the North end.
- The 1997 Urban Growth Area is much larger than it needed to be, because it was based on inaccurate numbers and sprawl-promoting assumptions.
 - Design standards would help to improve the appearance of Cheney's residential and commercial areas.
 - Mixed-use (commercial & residential) could work very well in Cheney.
 - Cheney has planned for too much industrial land, much of which is undesirable or unusable for industrial development.
 - Although "big box" stores are not entirely bad, Cheney would be better served by a mix of smaller businesses. There is a trend for down-sizing the big-box stores as "neighborhood stores" rather than the super-stores that we have grown used to.
 -

Housing

- More and more non-students are living in rental housing in Cheney. This changes the type of person/family living here (who are not related to higher education) and has reduced the amount of rental housing available for students. Rental vacancy rates are approximately 3-5%.
- Roughly 70% of EWU faculty, staff and students do not reside in Cheney. This is a complete turnaround from the 1950's and 60's, when most university people lived in Cheney. This has reduced the connection of University faculty, staff and students with the Cheney community.
- A new trend has emerged in the last few years: houses in new single-family subdivisions are being purchased for rentals, often by parents for their college-bound children. This affects the character of the new single-family neighborhoods.
- In order to make Cheney a community where people would want to live, it is essential that good-quality and higher-quality single-family neighborhoods be provided. Also, protection of single-family neighborhoods from encroachment by rental housing and multi-family housing will be needed so long as Cheney is a college-town.
- People want choice in housing types – a large detached single-family houses on a large lot is only one such choice and is not desired by everyone, particularly older residents ('snow birds') or people looking for a pedestrian-oriented "New Urbanism" development type.
- Currently the rental housing market is extremely tight with vacancies rates approximately 3%.
- The ratio of single-family to multi-family residences has shifted toward multi-family in recent years. (insert percentages)Currently Cheney has

- approx. 50% of its housing units are single family and 50% are multifamily. This is quite different from other communities. Spokane for example has a ratio of 60% single family, 40% multifamily. One source indicates that in order to maintain a stable community the proportion of single family dwellings needs to be at least 52%.
-

Economy

- EWU is Cheney's primary economic engine, constituting 80% (?) of the local economy. The economic impact of EWU students is equivalent to the employment impact of an employer similar in size to the university itself.
- Job growth on the West Plains will continue to increase, especially around Spokane International Airport and Airway Heights.
- The future of Fairchild Air Force Base looks good for now; its loss would be a serious blow to the West Plains and the Spokane area as a whole.
- Encouraging people to live within close proximity to Cheney will improve the economic health of the community.
- The addition of home-grown businesses like Xn Technology, and from new industries like Haakon and Wilcox Farms moving in, has improved the economy by creating hundreds of stable, well-paying jobs.
-

Eastern Washington University

- The University has been here for over 100 years; steel and concrete buildings on campus are not likely to go away. The University will continue to grow, although at a slower rate than the recent past. This is going to be affected both by demographics and state funding. A period of no- or slow- growth in student enrollment is expected in the middle of the planning period.
- The current surplus of classroom space will be used up midway through the planning period (at about the same time the student population flattens out), so construction of new major buildings on campus is not expected. Technological improvements may also reduce the amount of space needed for future students.
- Dr. Jordan's goal to make Cheney an attractive place to go to school has been partially achieved, but there is still a long way to go.
- The relationship between the community and the University is generally good, particularly at the department level, but could be improved upon.

- The University brings an enormous amount of people to Cheney for special events (Seahawks summer training, EWU athletics, summer camps, etc...), positively affecting local business but also affecting public services, traffic and so on.
-

Community Character

- Cheney is becoming a bedroom community for employment occurring on the West Plains and in Spokane.
- Cheney is still a “college town” with probably 80% of its population related in some way to the University. But Cheney is more than just a college-town.
- Some amount of growth is necessary and desirable, but higher rates of growth can cause services to deteriorate and costs to rise. The Forsythe report shows that the revenues derived from residential development are not enough to cover the costs of serving the new development.
- People want a healthy life-style and will look for places to live where a healthy life-style is possible/encouraged.
- People want a community with a high quality of life.
-

Transportation

- People want safe sidewalks, trails & bike paths for a healthy life-style and as an alternative to automobiles.
- Cheney’s public transit is currently adequate (particularly the Eagle-Pass agreement between EWU and STA), but improved transit circulation within Cheney could be better.
- The BNSF and UP railroad tracks create problems with access to the area south of Cheney which need to be addressed.
-

Parks and Open Space

- People want open space in single-family neighborhoods as well as in multi-family areas.

- People want to have things to do in the community – parks and recreation, private sector entertainments, etc... Some of this is already available through the City and the University.
- Parks and Open Space are a significant part of “quality of life.”
-

General

- The planning assumptions in the Growth Management Act should be considered in planning Cheney’s future:

The legislature finds that uncoordinated and unplanned growth, together with a lack of common goals expressing the public's interest in the conservation and the wise use of our lands, pose a threat to the environment, sustainable economic development, and the health, safety, and high quality of life enjoyed by residents of this state. It is in the public interest that citizens, communities, local governments, and the private sector cooperate and coordinate with one another in comprehensive land use planning. Further, the legislature finds that it is in the public interest that economic development programs be shared with communities experiencing insufficient economic growth.

-



2. Values

These are statements of what SHOULD happen; we use the values as a general ethical roadmap for moving forward.

1. Cheney should retain its small town character.
2. Higher education brings unique resources and qualities to the community.
3. Quality of life is essential: safe streets, parks, recreation, open space.
4. Cheney needs stable, safe single-family neighborhoods.
5. We need residents who identify with and who have ties with Cheney.
6. The traditional downtown area is the “heart” of Cheney.
7. Historic preservation creates value for the community.
8. Connectivity among parks, schools, and opens paces is important
9. Cheney should be a “walkable” community.
10. People need a choice of housing types.
11. Cheney should have a balance of residential, commercial and industrial land uses.
12. Quality design of development, both residential and commercial, is needed.
13. A little growth is a good thing. Rapid growth is not desirable.
14. We should conserve the natural environment surrounding Cheney.
15. The cost of growth should be borne by the new people, but not to the extent that it would stifle growth.
- 16.



3. Goals

These are statements of what Cheney will have ACCOMPLISHED by the year 2025. These goals conform to the assumptions and are shaped by the values.

1. Make Cheney the kind of community where families will want to live, particularly EWU faculty and staff.
2. Create environments in Cheney which will attract university students to enroll at EWU and to live in Cheney.

3. Increase the amount of commercial and industrial activity in Cheney, with emphasis on commercial businesses “scaled” to Cheney’s needs (i.e. a mix of smaller businesses is preferred over “big box” stores).
4. Maintain strong, effective, synergistic relationship between the City and the University.
5. Preserve the historical assets of Cheney.
6. Follow the GMA Planning Goals:

RCW 36.70A.020 Planning goals.

The following goals are adopted to guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations of those counties and cities that are required or choose to plan under RCW [36.70A.040](#). The following goals are not listed in order of priority and shall be used exclusively for the purpose of guiding the development of comprehensive plans and development regulations:

- (1) Urban growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- (2) Reduce sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- (3) Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
- (4) Housing. Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
- (5) Economic development. Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.
- (6) Property rights. Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
- (7) Permits. Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
- (8) Natural resource industries. Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses.
- (9) Open space and recreation. Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
- (10) Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life,

including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

(11) Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

(12) Public facilities and services. Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development shall be adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

(13) Historic preservation. Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures, that have historical or archaeological significance.

7.



4. Strategies

These are statements of HOW Cheney will go about achieving the vision goals.

1. Use focus groups to further define the assumptions, values, goals and strategies. Groups could include:
 - a. developers, realtors
 - b. retail sector
 - c. long term residents of Cheney
 - d. University staff (who live here or have worked here for long time)
 - e. University Students
 - f. Senior citizens

g. Volunteer organizations (Lions, Tillicum, Kiwanis, greek organizations)

2. Adopt regulations which will improve the cost-revenue effect of residential development. These could include required densities, development incentives, revising levels of service or impact fees, for example.

3. Continue to support revitalization of Cheney's traditional downtown area.

4. Study what parameters commercial businesses use when they decide to invest where they do, then compare these to Cheney and work on meeting these parameters.

5. Adopt regulations which will protect the quality of single-family neighborhoods.

6. Adopt policies which will support EWU and its effort to make Cheney a place where students want to live and go to school.

7.