

# **CITY OF CHENOA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Prepared By

McLean County Regional Planning Commission  
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In Cooperation with the City of Chenoa

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# Chenoa City Council

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Commissioner Ed Straw, Parks & Health



# Executive Summary

The City of Chenoa is a community of over 1,800 residents located adjacent to Interstate 55 in northern McLean County. Chenoa has historically depended on agriculture for its economic base and has experienced limited growth since 1960. In an effort to spur additional growth, the city established a tax increment financing district (TIF) in 2007 and developed a plan for city redevelopment. Part of this process includes development of significant acreage within the city to be used for future commercial and industrial endeavors.

In order to provide direction for the future, city officials requested technical assistance from the McLean County Regional Planning Commission for the development of this comprehensive plan. This comprehensive plan is intended to serve as an advisory guide for future community development over the next 20 years or so. The plan is intended to be flexible and generalized in nature. It should provide guidance for development decisions but does not require strict adherence, as is the case with regulatory ordinances. Such ordinances should, however, be reviewed for consistency with the objectives and policies of this plan.

The comprehensive plan examines past and present trends in growth and development. The plan recommends future development that contributes to the local quality of life. Field surveys of existing land use and research of engineering reports, historical accounts, and census data provided the information needed to assess existing characteristics and trends. This assessment provided the basis to project future demands and formulate plans to address future needs. This information was also used to dissect existing conditions within the community, project future economic needs and formulate plans for the future. The planning process included input from city officials, community leaders and professional engineers.

The plan features nine components. These

include natural environment, community history, economy, population, housing, land use, transportation, community facilities and implementation. These components are addressed in separate chapters within the report.

A comprehensive plan serves as the initial step in the planning process. More follow-up action is required for successful implementation of the plan. The plan will also need to be periodically updated to reflect the changing needs of the community.

The area's favorable natural environment, including climate, topography, and soils, is a positive influence on development. It gave rise to the community's initial settlement and has supported an agricultural-based economy ever since. It also poses few major constraints for future development.

The city has taken additional steps to encourage more business in the area. In addition to establishing a TIF district, the City has also zoned parts of the city for commercial and industrial development.

The city also has a location favorable for business. Chenoa is located near a Interstate 55. It is also located near larger rural communities and urban centers, which is important in recruiting a regional workforce.

The plan recommends that community leaders continue to work with area economic development officials in actively reviewing the needs of existing business and in promoting the local quality of life. Chenoa offers many benefits of small town life, including among others clean air and a lower cost of living. Housing in Chenoa is relatively affordable. The majority of homes were built before 1960, with 335 having been built since, and 103 built between 1970 and 1980. According to the latest census data, homes in Chenoa range from less than \$50,000 to more than \$200,000. Average monthly mortgages in Chenoa are approximately \$800 per month.

Chenoa's population has fluctuated to varying degrees throughout its history. The

city realized slight increases in 1960, 1970 and 2000, but this has not been the norm. Current age distribution is favorable, with a strong representation of children aged 1 to 14 while those aged 24 to 44 make up close to 30 percent of the city's population. This suggests a substantial labor force for the foreseeable future. Population projections reflect a continuation of the community's more proactive stance on growth and development, combined with the community's many quality of life attributes.

Future demand for housing and supporting land uses and services will depend on the amount and rate of development in commercial and industrial areas and if those employed in those operations relocate to Chenoa. The land use plan identifies areas for future residential and commercial development as well as suggested locations for greenways, parks and open space.

A major challenge for the future will be to achieve development that continues to be contiguous to existing services but is more compact. Emphasis on implementing traditional neighborhood residential development and properly located commercial and industrial development will help meet this challenge.

The plan provides for significant areas of new development. It provides for new commercial and industrial development to the south. It also provides for new residential development in the southeastern part of the city. Land is also designated as residential reserve along Old Route 66 to the northeast and just to the southwest of the I-55 interchange. Additional commercial development is planned nearby along Route 24.

Chenoa's downtown is also a point of emphasis in the plan. Its current location and design make it appealing for live-work units, which would preserve the district's historical appeal and also contribute to rehabilitation of the area. The plan also promotes the preservation of the city's people-friendly neighborhoods and community gathering places.

The transportation portion of the comprehensive plan reinforces and compliments the land use plan. It provides for safe and conven-

ient movement of people and vehicles. Alternative modes of transportation such as pedestrian and bicycle transportation are also considered. A major focus of the transportation plan is preserving the existing street network and providing for the extension of streets that will be needed to maintain continuity and serve areas of future development.

The city has also begun planning the development of a bicycle trail network. The initial phase of the project will provide a bicycle and pedestrian trail along portions of historic Route 66.

The plan for community facilities discusses city hall, fire station, public library, parks, water, and sewer. The plan notes that the adequacy of both the city hall and library buildings should be closely monitored as the city's population increases. Both facilities are sufficient to serve the present population but could require expansion if population growth occurs. The new fire station opened in 2008 and should serve Chenoa and the surrounding area for some time.

The plan also notes that if the local population increases as projected, park improvements and/or expansion should be considered. A location to consider for a possible future park is the city's south side where open space is limited to the old Chenoa High School facilities. Additionally, the plan notes that state grant funding has been received to develop a bicycle-pedestrian trail adjacent to the Old Route 66 Corridor and that this trail should be integrated into the McLean County Historic Route 66 Bikeway.

With regards to the existing water system, the plan summarizes the existing facilities and notes that system expansions will be necessary to accommodate projected growth. The plan also notes that the wastewater treatment plant was built in 1981 and is nearing capacity according to city officials. The city's engineers have recommended capacity be increased to accommodate future population growth. An expanded facility could be built on land adjacent to the current wastewater facility.

The implementation component outlines

methods, responsibilities and policies for carrying out the plan. Implementation methods include legal tools such as zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations and the official map. Financial tools include public and private grants, capital improvement programs and tax increment financing as well as others. Administrative tools include annexation, utility extensions and intergovernmental agreements. The plan also notes the importance of public involvement and support for the plan, and recommends a local planning commission or oversight group be appointed to gauge the progress of plan implementation.



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