



Council of the Cherokee Nation

Cherokee Nation Tribal
Council
17763 S. Muskogee Ave.
Tahlequah, OK 74464

Legislation Text

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CHEROKEE NATION COUNCIL HOUSE AND CAPITOL COMPLEX DISTRICT PUBLIC WELLNESS AND BEAUTIFICATION ACT OF 2026

BE IT ENACTED BY THE CHEROKEE NATION:

Section 1. Title and Codification

This legislative act shall be titled and codified as the “Cherokee Nation Council House and Capitol Complex District Public Wellness and Beautification Act of 2026,” and may alternatively be cited as the “Cherokee Nation Capitol Complex District Act of 2026.”

Section 2. Findings

The Council of the Cherokee Nation finds that constructing a dedicated Council House serves the mutual interests of both the Legislative and Executive Branches by maximizing administrative efficiency and optimizing the use of tribal land and governmental resources at the seat of government. This initiative reflects the shared commitment of the Legislative and Executive Branches to the disciplined stewardship and efficient use of the Nation’s fiscal and natural resources, ensuring that tribal assets are utilized to their highest and best use for the benefit of present and future generations of Cherokee citizens.

The Council further finds that consolidation of Council operations into a single, specialized structure will streamline legislative functions and provide a physical workspace reflective of the Council’s status as a separate and co-equal branch of government under the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation. The relocation of Council operations will also vacate space within the W.W. Keeler Tribal Complex, enabling more efficient and effective administration of expanding tribal programs and services and promoting the highest and best use of existing infrastructure.

The Council recognizes that disciplined long-term planning, coordinated land-use quality control, and comprehensive development standards are essential to the orderly growth and preservation of the Cherokee Nation’s governmental seat. The formal designation of the Cherokee Nation Capitol Complex District and the development of a non-binding Master Plan, as developed by the Principal Chief and subject to Council oversight, advance these objectives and reflect the Nation’s fiduciary responsibility to preserve its lands and fiscal resources for generations yet to come.

The Council further finds that public health, cultural vitality, and community wellness are enhanced through coordinated beautification, recreation, restoration, and memorial projects authorized under this Act, which

promote sustainable land stewardship, historic preservation, and long-term prosperity.

Section 3. Purpose

The purpose of this Act is to enhance the administrative efficiency and operational integrity of the Cherokee Nation government by authorizing the funding and coordinated development of vital capital projects through the responsible and efficient use of tribal resources; to formally establish the Cherokee Nation Capitol Complex District to provide a framework for disciplined long-term planning, land-use quality control, and the construction of facilities-including a dedicated Council House-that serve the governance, health, and wellness needs of the Cherokee Nation; and to amend the Cherokee Nation Justice Center Act of 2025 (LA 07-25) by amending said Act through the addition of a new paragraph to Section 6(A), as provided herein.

This Act is further intended to advance the sustainable management of the Nation's natural and fiscal landscape, consistent with the Council's constitutional duty under Article X, Section 2 of the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation to provide by law for the annual expenditure of public funds.

Section 4. Substantive Provisions

A. Definitions.

1. "Cherokee Nation Capitol Complex District" or "District" shall mean a geographic region consisting of all property owned by the Cherokee Nation in Tahlequah within the exterior boundaries defined approximately by: the intersection of South Muskogee Avenue and South 511 Road; south to the intersection of South Bald Hill Road and West 810 Road; west to the intersection of West 890 Road and South 490 Road; north to the intersection of South 490 Road and West Clyde Maher Road; and east to the intersection of Murrel Road and South Muskogee Avenue. The District includes the entirety of the Chief Wilma P. Mankiller Cherokee Nation Capitol Park and all other Cherokee Nation-owned property adjacent to the exterior boundaries described above, consisting of more or less 849 acres as depicted in Exhibit A to this Act.
2. "Council House" shall mean the primary site of operations of the Council of the Cherokee Nation within the meaning of Article VI of the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation, without limitation of the Council's authority to determine the time, place, and manner of its operations as it deems warranted.

B. Establishment of the District.

The Cherokee Nation Capitol Complex District is hereby established as a specialized land use and development district of the Cherokee Nation. The geographic boundaries of the District shall correspond approximately to the area depicted in Exhibit A, which is hereby incorporated by reference. Development within the District shall be guided by principles of coordinated planning, sustainability, and optimization of tribal property for its

highest and best use.

C. Projects and Amount Authorized; Design.

1. Projects and Amount Authorized. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2026, the Council authorizes the sum of Twenty-One Million Dollars (\$21,000,000) for the projects described in this subsection, all of which shall be located within the District and are approximately depicted in Exhibit A. The precise allocation of authorized funds among the designated projects shall be determined by the Principal Chief, provided that written notice of such allocations is submitted to the Council.
2. Authorized Projects. The authorized projects names reflected in this subsection are so designated within the meaning of the Building and Facility Naming Act, as amended. The authorized projects include:
 - a. Council House. Construction of a Council House sufficient to accommodate the ordinary operations of the Council, including but not limited to public access, office space, conference space, common areas, parking, a Council chamber, and architectural and landscape elements reflective of Cherokee culture, to be located in or about 17675 S. Muskogee Avenue in Tahlequah. The design of the Council House shall be finalized through a collaborative process of input and consultation with the Principal Chief, with final design approval residing with the Council and communicated by the Speaker to the Principal Chief.
 - b. ᏓᏍᏗᏗᏗᏗ (Unadatlisodi / Gathering Place). Reservation of a future public recreation area resulting from demolition of surplus early childhood education-related structures known as “Children’s Village,” located on West Cherokee Street east of Betty Sharp Smith Street, including restoration of natural features. The area shall be reserved for future public gatherings and wellness activities, with future construction as additionally authorized under Cherokee Nation law or by amendment of this Act.
 - c. Sequoyah Sports Complex. Upgrades to the ballfields located at South Muskogee Avenue and Betty Sharp Smith Street to improve utility, safety, and enjoyment in support of Sequoyah Schools and controlled general public usage.
 - d. ᏓᏍᏗᏗᏗᏗᏗ (Unatsawesolvsdodi / Resting Place). Reservation of a public and employee gathering space resulting from removal of modular structures and restoration of natural features, reserved for future construction of outdoor respite and dining areas as additionally authorized under Cherokee Nation law or amendment of this Act.
 - e. Chief John Ross Ellipse and Memorial Site. Reservation of a public recreation and historical memorial space resulting from demolition and removal of modular structures located at approximately 17728 S. Muskogee Avenue, including restoration of natural areas and future installation of a pedestrian ellipse trail and public art memorializing Principal Chief John Ross, with pedestrian connectivity forming the Ross/Mankiller Trail within the meaning of the Cherokee Nation Trails Act.
3. Design of Other Projects. The Principal Chief shall advise the Council of the design of authorized projects described in this subsection, other than the Council House, for a period of notice and comment no less than thirty (30) days prior to the commencement of construction.

D. Master Plan for Capitol Complex District.

No later than December 31, 2026, the Principal Chief shall develop and maintain a non-binding “Cherokee Nation Capitol Complex District Master Plan.” The Master Plan shall:

- a. Identify existing infrastructure and the proposed highest and best use of properties within the District over a ten (10) year period;

- b. Include the general location and description of capital projects authorized under this Act;
- c. Be reviewed annually, with written reporting to the Council regarding implementation progress and projected fiscal impacts;
- d. Be reviewed and reissued beginning in Fiscal Year 2037 and each tenth fiscal year thereafter;
- e. Be updated to reflect substantial infrastructure changes; and
- f. Be made publicly available on the Cherokee.org website following a forty-five (45) day Council review and comment period.

E. Funding Sources.

Funding for the projects authorized herein may include dividends received from tribally owned corporations, grants, donations, enterprise revenues, taxes, special or general fund sources, and funds available pursuant to:

- a. The Housing, Jobs and Sustainable Communities Act (LA 04-25);
- b. The Public Health and Wellness Act (LA 27-25);
- c. The Artist Recovery Act Reauthorization (LA 05-25);
- d. The Cherokee Nation Justice Center Act of 2025 (LA 07-25), as amended herein.

F. Amendment to the Cherokee Nation Justice Center Act of 2025.

The Cherokee Nation Justice Center Act of 2025 (LA 07-25) is hereby amended by adding a new paragraph to Section 6(A) to read as follows:

Section 6(A)(4). Funds authorized by this section of the Act and determined by the Principal Chief on or after March 30, 2026, not necessary to construct the Cherokee Nation Justice Center or the District Courthouse described therein, are authorized for reallocation to construct the Council House described in the Cherokee Nation Council House and Capitol Complex District Public Wellness and Beautification Act of 2026, with written notice to the Council of such reallocation.

G. Appropriation and Fiscal Oversight.

Nothing in this Act shall be construed to limit or waive the authority of the Council of the Cherokee Nation under Article X, Section 2 of the 1999 Constitution of the Cherokee Nation, which mandates that the Council shall provide by law for the annual expenditure of funds and the source from which funds are to be derived to defray the estimated expenses of the government. All expenditures contemplated by this Act remain subject to appropriation by law.

H. Attribution to the Act.

Any program, activity, or publication relating to the purposes and policies of this Act shall be attributed to the “Cherokee Nation Capitol Complex District Act of 2026,” or comparable attribution as determined by the Principal Chief, and shall include appropriate signage.

Section 5. Provisions as cumulative

The provisions of this act shall be cumulative to existing law.

Section 6. Severability

The provisions of this Act are severable and if any part of provision hereof shall be held void the decision of the court so holding shall not affect or impair any of the remaining parts or provisions of this Act.

Section 7. Effective Date: Emergency Declared

It being immediately necessary for the welfare of the Cherokee Nation, the Council hereby declares that an emergency exists, by reason whereof this Act shall take effect immediately upon its approval and signatures.