



# MASTER PLAN

CITY OF WILLIAMSTON, MICHIGAN

FEBRUARY 2015



# 2015 Master Plan

City of Williamston, Michigan

February 2015

**Prepared by the City of Williamston Planning Commission**

With the Assistance of McKenna Associates



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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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## INTRODUCTION

It takes only a brief look around the Williamston area and you can see why the first settlers chose, in the mid-1800's, to call this area home. In that same glance, you will also see why people are moving here today. The City and its neighboring townships have seen steady growth in both population and aggregate land and property value. The 2010 census showed that Williamston's population increased by 11.9% from 2000 which is much higher than Ingham County's population increase of 0.5% over the same period. Downtown Williamston has a thriving central business district that evokes memories of earlier times. While remembering and preserving the past, the City is continuing efforts to beautify this quaint downtown.

Williamston boasts an outstanding location. Situated between the state capitol in Lansing and the Detroit metropolitan area, Williamston has easy access to key parts of the state.

With Michigan State University (MSU) only minutes away Williamston residents also have access to one of the nation's premier universities. In addition to outstanding educational offerings, MSU provides the opportunity for residents to experience excellent cultural, artistic, and athletic events.

The Williamston Community School system has an outstanding and deserved reputation of excellence and achievement and has earned various awards and honors.

Preserving the dignity and charm of the community while maximizing the quality of life in Williamston are the anticipated outcomes resulting from updating this land-planning document.

It is no small task to build on the many assets of this community. It is even more difficult to channel or tap in to the current activism and interest that have generated a degree of positive momentum in the City. Neighbors are united in recognizing that their greatest asset, the City's charm, could be lost if development is not properly directed toward preserving and enhancing it. They have expressed in numerous forums that the overarching goal is to preserve the charm while allowing a level and type of growth that adds to the tax base, thereby providing funds necessary to maintain a high quality of life. Williamston residents recognize that a city with no growth runs the risk of becoming stagnant and unfairly burdens its residents to support increasing costs of municipal services.

Consequently, appropriate land planning will assist the City to grow at a pace and degree that is sustainable while preserving the character and charm seen by the first settlers and that has evolved through the years.

The Williamston Master Plan is intended to communicate to residents, property owners and developers, the type of expansion that the City is willing to consider for any land area. This Plan is a dynamic document that may change over time as the community develops and conditions transform, but in 2015, it reflects a vision that is shared by its citizens.

## GOALS

Achieving the overall objectives of preserving the charm of Williamston while allowing development that is a “win-win” situation for the current residents, new residents, the developers, and the City requires meeting specific goals. The City of Williamston has built this Master Plan around six (6) achievable goals designed to preserve the charm while guiding development.

These goals are:

1. Preserve the historic character and viability of the downtown city center.

Much of the charm of Williamston can be found in its downtown. From buildings with classic architecture to a real “main street” that has a beautiful, recently improved streetscape that helps define its image, the downtown is in many ways the heart of the community. Preserving the downtown as a viable shopping, dining, entertainment, retail, and commercial business center is a key goal.

2. Continue to strengthen the downtown as a regional cultural and entertainment center.

Attracting people to the downtown assists in preserving its viability. Building on the first steps taken in 2006 by a new community theatre group, the Williamston Theater, to establish a regional entertainment venue, Williamston has embraced the concept of expanding its welcome to other art forms to bring more people to the downtown. This attitude supports existing businesses and will encourage creation of new ones to capitalize on an increasing number of people coming regularly to the central business district. Successes include unique dining establishments, the connection to the Red Cedar River, and numerous special events like the Farmers’ Market, Cool Car Nights, Red Cedar Jubilee, and concerts in McCormick Park.

3. Establish a pattern of future land uses that will allow for residential, commercial and other business development opportunities in the future.

Williamston recognizes that a major community asset is its location in south-central Michigan, particularly its proximity to the State Capitol, Michigan State University, the City of Detroit, and Lake Michigan all connected by highway I-96. In addition, US 127, which is the gateway to northern Michigan’s countless tourist destinations, adds to the value of Williamston’s location. Although major opportunities for development in Williamston are at the I-96 interchange at Williamston Road, the community opposes having it evolve into an area that consists predominantly of “big-box” stores, convenience stores, motels, fast food, and franchise uses that characterize interchanges in many communities. Additionally, the community desires uses at the interchange that work in cooperation – not competition – with the downtown area while conveying the charm as soon as they take the exit.

4. Supply the infrastructure improvements necessary to support new development.

There is an axiom in land use planning that “retail follows rooftops”. In other words, if there are new homes being built, commercial and retail development will follow to take advantage of a growing market. For the City of Williamston, and by extension Williamstown and Wheatfield Townships, growth will require an adequate infrastructure system. Infrastructure expansion, primarily in terms of sanitary sewer, water, roads, and non-motorized transportation systems that meet the demands of the residents efficiently and effectively, is one of the primary goals.

5. Provide adequate public and private land for recreation, open space, and leisure-time pursuits.

Many factors coalesce to form the charm of Williamston. The quiet neighborhoods, good schools, excellent police protection, and other City services, along with the viable downtown, distinguish the City from all others in the region. Not to be overlooked are the benefits of natural areas to a community. Well-planned parks, adequate green space, healthy trees and friendly waterways enhance the beauty of the environment, provide areas for recreation and are essential components that improve the quality of life in a community. The proximity of the Red Cedar River and McCormick Park to the downtown core creates a unique, pedestrian-friendly environment with a variety of attractions in a concentrated area, including a band shell, river overlook, and tennis and pickleball courts.

6. Assure intergovernmental cooperation for future land use implementation.

Almost one-third of the land within the corporate limits of Williamston remains vacant. However, after deducting undevelopable areas such as wetlands and floodplains, few building sites remain. In order for the City and neighboring townships in the area to achieve full potential, development must occur in a sustainable way that fulfills the objectives of the respective Master Plans. Both neighboring Williamstown and Wheatfield Townships envision the portions of their townships immediately adjacent to the City as developing with low-density single-family housing sites. Their plans count on Williamston to provide the commercial and retail services to support those “rooftops”. Indeed, their visions are consistent with the goals of this Plan. However, for all these goals to be realized, a cooperative effort among the City and Townships must continue to occur.

While there are several specific action items listed in the *Goals, Policies, and Actions* section of the Master Plan, two are important enough to mention in this Executive Summary:

- i. The first priority is to **improve the entryways to the City**, particularly the entry from the south at the I-96 interchange, but also including the east and west entries to the City on Grand River Avenue, as well as that from the north. Making a specific, positive statement as people enter the community and receive their first impression is critical to expressing and preserving the charm of Williamston. The design, scale and physical presentation of the entryways will set the tone to presenting the desired image and brand of Williamston.
- ii. The second priority is **amending the Zoning Ordinance** when such amendments are needed to implement the policies of this Plan. While this Master Plan provides the land use direction in which the community wishes to go, the Zoning Ordinance is a means of implementing that direction. Without an effective Zoning Ordinance, the Master Plan will not be the community vision that it is intended to be.

## CURRENT AND EMERGING CONDITIONS

To be effective, a Master Plan needs to express what the community has been, what it currently is, and what it should be in the future. The Master Plan gives the City the ability to redirect itself if it sees the reality or current development trends are not consistent with the vision that the residents of the community had for their City. However, the timing of a Master Plan is crucial. It must be frequently reviewed and updated in order to direct desired outcomes over time.

An extensive portion of the Master Plan is devoted to assessing the current and emerging conditions. Those factors can be reviewed in the *Physical Features, Community Profile, and Public and Quasi-Public Facilities* sections of the Plan. Some of the salient points found in those sections are:

**Physical Features.** In general, Williamston has very few physical limitations that would hinder development. While there are some areas that are wetlands or in a floodplain, the City is well-suited for additional development.

**Population Growth.** The City of Williamston, after slightly losing population between 1980 and 1990, experienced a rebound with significant population growth during the 1990's and early 2000's. In large measure this growth corresponded to new housing developments within the City limits. During the 20 years from 1990 to 2000s, there were 527 housing units built within the City limits – an increase of 44.66% over that period.

**Projected Population.** Given Williamston's desirable quality of life, availability of developable residential land, and close proximity to employment centers in Lansing (State of Michigan) and East Lansing (MSU), modest population growth can be expected over the next several years.

**Population "Bulges".** Regardless of whether new housing developments occur in both the neighboring townships and the City, demographic trends indicate an increase in the population of two groups: young parents and "empty nesters." The former will have an impact on the local school district which may anticipate growth within the school district boundaries. The latter will have an impact on service needs, transit, passive recreation, walkability, and nearby retail opportunities. As today's parents move into "empty nester" status and become senior citizens, they will likely have more disposable income. This will result in increased opportunities for retailers and service providers within the City to capture that increased disposable income.

With a mixture of single and multi-family units in the housing stock, Williamston is in a good position to meet the housing needs of most economic segments of the population. The increase in housing construction that began in the 1990's has continued into 2014. Increases in the number of units has occurred in both single-family (attached and detached) and multi-family units. In the future, the community would continue to benefit from a diversity in housing types that attract a spectrum of housing buyers. For example townhomes or garden homes close to downtown with common maintenance provisions that appeal to Baby Boomers who are now retiring, seniors, and empty nesters would serve to attract new residents to the community and assist in retaining current residents as their lifestyles change, allowing them to "age in place."

The economy and the socio-economic characteristics of the City of Williamston are not projected to change significantly in the immediate future. The residents of the City and surrounding areas are primarily employed in "white collar" jobs. With only 8.2% of the labor force employed in manufacturing jobs as compared to 16.9% of the State, Williamston has felt less of an impact than the rest of the State as employment in manufacturing has declined in the recent decade.

## FUTURE LAND USE

The process of determining land use is a fundamental governmental practice. The ultimate outcome for all communities is to balance the needs of the citizens who want a high quality of life, while allowing property owners to use the best features of available land, ensuring compatibility among land uses, and sustaining a pleasant community in which to live and work. The Planning Commission must be fair and conduct objective planning processes which respect the needs and concerns of all affected people. In a comprehensive land planning process, the needs of all individuals must be considered. Consequently, the City must take into account the well-being of the residents who were active in the planning process as well as those who were not active. The City must seek to balance the financial impacts of land use, the costs for service delivery while the City has experienced shrinking revenues from the state, and the operations of the local government in order to optimize the health, safety and values of the community (quality of life). Some considerations are:

*Fusion of existing uses with proposed uses.*

Maintain the quality of existing land uses with the proposed uses.

*Community perception.*

Create a sense of community through compatible development.

*Environmental quality.*

Encourage and reward commercial development that meets environmentally acceptable standards.

*Economic integrity.*

Appropriately combine uses that enhance one another and, in effect, grow the tax base of the city.

Of course, the foregoing list is not exhaustive nor should it be considered rank ordered. However, the items are important considerations that the City must use to develop land use actions.

The Planning Commission and Williamston City Council made a clear decision based on information received through the planning procedure, personal experience, and a sound decision-making process to create this Plan to guide future land uses. The City further recognizes that this Master Plan is a guide to be used by present and future decision-makers regarding potential land use changes. Accordingly, the City realizes that this document projects changes up to 30 years into the future and that not all of the policies detailed in this report can or will be completed immediately.

The overall quality of life of Williamston is the driving force of the process. To the degree that no singular goal can be established, the City supports a multidimensional plan that reflects diversity in future anticipated development.





# CHAPTER 1: PHYSICAL FEATURES

## INTRODUCTION - PHYSICAL FEATURES

A description of a community's physical features is a good starting point for a plan. The location and type of the existing built environment has been influenced because of the area's physical features. All future development will also be influenced by these features.

The physical features of a community are generally not easy to change. Plans, therefore, are designed to accentuate the area's strengths and minimize the weaknesses of the area's physical setting.

## LOCATION

Williamston is located in the northeast portion of Ingham County in south central Michigan. The City encompasses 2,842 acres and was incorporated as a village in 1877 and as a city in 1944. Map 1: Regional Location show the location of Williamston in relation to the county, state and region. The City of Williamston is bordered by Williamstown Township to the north and west and Wheatfield Township to the south. Locke and Leroy Townships are located to the east.

The City is one mile north of Interstate 96 (I-96) which is the major transportation corridor between Lansing and Detroit. The City is 14 miles east of central downtown Lansing and 78 miles northwest of Detroit.

TABLE 1. PROXIMITY TO MAJOR CITIES

Chicago	200 Miles
Toledo	80 Miles
Detroit	75 Miles
Grand Rapids	70 Miles
Battle Creek	55 Miles
Saginaw	50 Miles
Ann Arbor	40 Miles
Jackson	35 Miles
Flint	35 Miles

## CLIMATE

Like most of Michigan, Williamston has a four-season climate. The coldest month of the year is generally January with an average temperature of 20.1° F. The warmest month of the year is generally July with an average temperature of 70.5° F. Three months of the year generally have an average temperature below freezing and four months have average temperatures above 60° F (July is above 70° F). The prevailing wind is from the southwest and January is the month with the highest average wind speed. The average annual precipitation is 29.7 inches with June and September being the months with the highest average precipitation (3.4"). January and February are the driest months with an average of 1.2 inches of precipitation. The average seasonal snowfall is 40.2 inches with January (10.7") being the month with the greatest snowfall.

## SOILS

The soil characteristics of an area are a key feature to consider as they impact the limitations of development: the load bearing capacity, shrink-well potential, and slope stability. . In general, construction can occur on almost any soil except for hydric soils but it can be difficult and expensive to build on some types of soils.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture performs county-wide soil surveys that detail the soils and their individual characteristics. A soil survey represents a basis for comparing relatively large areas for general kinds of land uses. Areas that are suitable or unsuitable for roads, buildings, recreation, and agriculture in terms of slope, wetness or other characteristics are identified.

Soil surveys break down counties by the many types of soils that exist and they group the soils into "associations" of related soils. Ingham County's Soil Survey, which was issued in August, 1979 and reissued in November, 1992, breaks the County into seven soil associations. Williamston contains two of these associations. The Marlette-Capac-Owosso Association and the Marlette-Oshtemo-Capac Association are found in the Williamston area. Each association is comprised of similar individual soils.

Many of the soils in the Williamston area have severe limitations relating to the construction of buildings or roads. Soils receive one of three ratings – slight, moderate, or severe. The rating is dependent upon the type and number of limitations a soil has that must be overcome to use that soil for a particular land use. A soil receiving a “severe” rating has the most limitations. It should be remembered that a soil rating is for a particular land use. A “severe” rating for roads and buildings is not necessarily a severe rating for agriculture.

Most but not all of the soil types received the severe rating due to excess wetness. The presence of soils with limited capabilities does not prevent the construction of buildings or roads – it does mean that additional care will be needed to ensure that a quality building or road is produced. In the case of soils with excessive wetness it means that buildings will likely need perimeter drains to keep water away from the foundation. During construction dewatering techniques may be used to dry out excavations during the installation of utility lines.

Again, a “severe” rating does not mean “no development”. It means that there are soil limitations that need to be considered during the planning and construction phases of a project.

Finally, it should also be remembered none of this information is a substitute for an onsite soil investigation and analysis. The information contained in this Plan taken from the Ingham County Soil Survey, is for broad general areas and is for planning purposes only.





Insert Map 1: Regional Location



## WETLANDS

Map 2 identifies likely or potential wetland areas. The map is taken from the National Wetland Inventory (NWI). The reason these areas are referred to as “likely” or “potential” is due to the fact that they have not been field verified. Soil scientists, wildlife managers and other professionals have developed the NWI based on an analysis of soil types, aerial photographs and topography. As with soils maps, their purpose is to assist the planning process by identifying general areas that may have wetlands. Nothing substitutes for on-site evaluations which should be performed to determine if areas are or are not wetlands.

Caution should be exercised prior to developing areas identified as potential wetlands. Areas that are, in fact, wetlands will prevent or limit many types of development. The major wetlands in Williamston are represented on Map 2. Wetlands on this map are from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Wetland Inventory Maps using aerial photographs. Some wetlands in the City may fall under the jurisdiction of the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Specific actions impacting wetlands may or may not be within the MDEQ jurisdiction. Prior to initiating any activity that may negatively impact a wetland, the MDEQ should be contacted to ensure that property protective measures are taken.

## TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL FEATURES

Like soils, the topography and the natural features of an area should be accommodated, even though certain topographical or natural features can be changed. The Red Cedar River is the most dominant natural feature in the area. The river flows from east to west and eventually connects with the Grand River near Lansing.

The Mill pond, near Williamston's downtown area, is an important feature of the City that was formed by damming the Red Cedar River. Deer Creek, which flows from the south, empties into the Red Cedar River across the river from the golf course. Several ponds, drains and gravel pits are in the surrounding area.

Williamston is relatively flat with elevations ranging from 850 feet above mean sea level at the Red Cedar River to 880 feet at areas throughout the city. A benchmark (which shows recorded elevations) on the southwest corner of Williamston Road and Rowley Road sites the elevation as 873 feet. South of Williamston on the northwest corner of Williamston Road and Linn Road the elevation is 886 feet.

## FLOODPLAIN

The 100-year floodplain, as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), is shown on Map 3. The floodplain designates areas which are susceptible to flooding – the 100 year designation means that during any particular year there is a 1% chance of the area flooding. The largest areas that are in the floodplain are adjacent to Deer Creek. These areas have base flood elevations of 864 feet. Areas along the Red Cedar River are also in the 100-year floodplain and have base flood elevations ranging between 863 feet in the western portions of the City and 868 feet in the eastern portions. Another potential flood area is located on Linn Road.



Insert Map 2: Wetlands



Insert Map 3: Flood Hazard Areas Map





# CHAPTER 2: COMMUNITY PROFILE

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## DEMOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Demographic analysis, or the study of the characteristics of a given population, is a fundamental element of master planning. Planning for future growth and development requires consideration of “how much” or “how many” – how many individuals will need City services, how much housing is affordable, how many new housing units will be built and other vital signs. It’s critical to understand these existing conditions and past trends in order to appropriately anticipate and plan for the future needs of the community.

The intent of a demographic analysis is to create a snapshot of the community: the population’s age, gender, education status, employment, and similar features. Differences in demographic characteristics may indicate issues or areas in which land use planning and public policies are warranted; may identify strengths or assets that can be further developed or emphasized; or may identify weaknesses or problems that need to be addressed.

## COMPARISON COMMUNITIES

For purposes of analysis, where appropriate, comparisons have been made with neighboring communities, Ingham County, and the State of Michigan. Neighboring communities included for comparison purposes are Williamstown and Wheatfield Townships. In many ways, these surrounding Townships face similar trends and challenges to those of the City of Williamston.

## DATA SOURCES

Most of the data presented comes from the 2010 US Census. In some cases, the most recent data comes from the 2012 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. The American Community Survey (ACS) is an ongoing statistical survey of the U.S. Census Bureau that is conducted every year and samples a percentage of the community on topics such as population, economics, housing, etc. and is considered a reliable source. However, in some specific cases, the data may contain inaccuracies due to sampling.

## POPULATION PROFILE

Part of the comprehensive planning process is to analyze population characteristics and trends to gain insight into the City’s future, and to see how these characteristics compare with those of neighboring communities and the county.

In this section, different aspects of Williamston’s population are analyzed. The future population is projected and compared with projections from previously mentioned surrounding communities and the County. In addition, gender, age, educational attainment and the types of jobs Williamston residents hold are reviewed.

## POPULATION PROJECTIONS AND HOUSEHOLDS

In 2010, the total population of Williamston was 3,854 individuals. This represents an increase of 413 individuals (12.0%) in the City’s population which was heavily impacted by the expansion of City limits in the late 1990s. Compared to the surrounding communities, Williamston gained a much larger increase in population in the last 20 years. In 2020, Williamston is projected to continue to experience a slight population increase but at a much lower rate of 3.5%. However, the projected percentage of population increase for Williamston by 2020 is identical to both Williamstown and Wheatfield Township and higher than Ingham County overall.

Table 2.1 Actual and Projected Populations, 1980-2020

	City of Williamston			Williamstown Twp.			Wheatfield Twp.			Ingham County		
	Number	Number Change	Percent Change	Number	Number Change	Percent Change	Number	Number Change	Percent Change	Number	Number Change	Percent Change
<b>1980</b>	2,960	-	-	4,074	-	-	1,707	-	-	275,523	-	-
<b>1990</b>	2,901	-59	-1.99%	4,375	301	7.39%	1,739	32	1.87%	281,913	6,390	2.32%
<b>2000</b>	3,441	540	18.61%	4,840	465	10.63%	1,894	155	8.91%	279,320	-2,593	-0.92%
<b>2010</b>	3,854	413	12.0%	4,978	144	2.85%	1,632	262	-13.8%	280,895	1,575	0.56%
<b>2020</b>	3,989	135	3.5%	5,153	175	3.5%	1,689	57	3.5%	287,372	6,477	2.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Tri-County Regional Data Center

Table 2.2 illustrates the population, number of households, and persons per household since 1980. The decreasing number of persons per household is a national trend attributed to the aging of the Baby Boom generation, families having fewer children, and families having children later in life.

Table 2.2 Persons Per Household, Williamston

	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2010</b>
<b>Population</b>	2,960	2,901	3,441	3,854
<b>Households</b>	1,085	1,162	1,393	1,605
<b>Persons/Household</b>	2.73	2.50	2.47	2.40

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

## AGE DISTRIBUTION

The age of a community’s population has very real implications for planning and development. Table 2.3 compares the age structure and median age of residents to give a nuanced view of the makeup of Williamston, in comparison to Ingham County. The median age is the mid-point where half the population is younger and half is older. Age structure analyzes which proportions of the City’s population are in which stages of life based on the following categories:

Pre-School	=	Under 5 Years
School Aged	=	5 to 19 Years
Family Forming	=	20 to 44 Years
Mature Families	=	45 to 65 Years
Retirement	=	Over 65 Years

Table 2.3: Age Structure Comparisons, 2010

Age Group	City of Williamston	Ingham County	State of Michigan
Pre-School	8.6%	5.7%	6.0%
School Aged	21.7%	21.1%	20.8%
Family Forming	33.9%	38.7%	31.6%
Mature Families	24.1%	24.1%	27.9%
Retirement	11.7%	10.4%	13.7%
Median Age	35.9 years	31.4 years	38.9 years

Source: U.S. Census Bureau

In general, Williamston, Ingham County, and the state of Michigan have similar age structures. Williamston tends to have a slightly larger percentage of pre-school children than both the county and the state. In terms of school aged children, all three entities have very similar percentages. This indicates that Williamston will have more a greater proportion of children entering the school system in the coming years than Ingham County or the state of Michigan.

In comparison to the state, Williamston has a slightly higher family forming population and fewer individuals in the retirement category. The median age of Williamston is approximately four years older than the county and three years younger than the state.

When compared to past age structures, as documented in the 2007 Master Plan, Williamston’s population is gradually aging with the greatest population increase in the mature families and retirement categories. This is part of a national trend, which is attributed to the aging of the Baby Boom generation. Although Williamston has a higher family forming population percentage than the state, has experienced a decline within family forming category as young professionals move away or relocate for employment opportunities in other areas. This projected age structure pattern will require a greater emphasis on senior services, and housing, recreational, and access opportunities that support an aging population.

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

As shown in Table 2.4, Williamston is a highly educated community. In 2012, approximately 94% of Williamston residents over the age of 25 have completed four years of high school and approximately 70% have received some college, an associate, bachelor, and graduate or professional degree.

Since 2000, the City has experienced an overall increase in the education attainment of the population. From 2000-2012, the number of individuals who did not graduate from high school decreased by approximately 27%. Additionally, major increases were experienced in the number of individuals receiving an associate and graduate or professional degree. Overall, this is a positive indication for the city, as there is a positive correlation between educational attainment and income as well as a negative correlation between educational attainment and unemployment rates.

In comparison to the county and state, Williamston has a much lower percentage of those who did not graduate high school and a much higher percentage of individuals with an associate, bachelor, and graduate or professional degree.

Table 2.4: Educational Attainment of Population 25 Years and Older

Educational Attainment Level	Williamston		Ingham County	State of Michigan
	2012 (Percent)	Percent Change, 2000-2012	2012 (Percent)	2012 (Percent)
Did not Graduate High School	5.7%	-27.84%	8.9%	12.0%
Graduated High School	24.6%	+7.42%	22.6%	30.9%
Some College, No Degree	20.7%	-12.28%	24.3%	23.8%
Associate Degree	10.3%	+24.09%	8.5%	7.2%
Bachelor's Degree	20.8%	-11.48%	20.2%	15.8%
Graduate / Professional Degree	17.9%	+30.65%	15.6%	10.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census and 2012 5-Year ACS

## MEDIAN INCOME

The City of Williamston's median household income was \$56,050 in 2012. This figure is significantly less than the neighboring townships but higher than the county overall. However, as Table 2.5 indicates, the median household incomes have continually increased in Williamston, and the surrounding Townships since 1980.

Table 2.5: Median Income for Williamston and Comparison Communities, 1980-2012

	1980	1990	2004	2012
Williamston	\$17,976	\$30,765	\$50,040	\$56,050
Williamstown Twp.	\$32,317	\$49,716	\$80,035	\$102,273
Wheatfield Twp.	\$33,142	\$42,494	\$63,708	\$72,120
Ingham County	\$18,199	\$30,233	\$43,973	\$45,567

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year ACS 2012

## EMPLOYMENT

An increase in educational attainment may correspond with trends in the labor force's industry characteristics. The percentages of workers in each employment sector in 2010 jobs are shown in Table 2.6. This is an analysis of what occupations members of the community are employed in, regardless of where they work. Thus, commuters from Williamston to other areas are included in the analysis, but commuters from other locations coming into the City are not. The top four employment sectors for City residents in 2010 were:

1. Educational Services, Healthcare, and Social Assistance
2. Retail Trade
3. Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administration and Waste Management Services
4. Manufacturing

Table 2.6: Employment Sectors, Williamston 2012

Sector	Percentage
Agriculture	1.7%
Construction	1.6%
Manufacturing	8.2%
Wholesale Trade	2.6%
Retail Trade	14.7%
Transportation and Warehousing	1.9%
Information	2.7%
Finance and Insurance, Real Estate	7.0%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administration and Waste Management Services	12.0%
Educational Services, Healthcare, and Social Assistance	26.7%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation	7.4%
Other Services (Excluding Public Administration)	5.5%
Public Administration	8.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 5-Year 2012 ACS

In terms of commuting to work, the majority of Williamston workers (87.4%) drove their own personal vehicle to work. 4.2% of workers carpool, 1.3% use public transit, and 2.3% walk to work. On average, the commute time to work is 24.6 minutes which is similar to the State of Michigan average, 23.9 minutes.

## HOUSING PROFILE

The quality, affordability, and availability of a community’s housing stock has a significant impact on the vitality and quality of the community as a whole. The following analysis of trends relating to the number of housing units, new construction, the amount of owner-occupied, rental, and vacant units, housing values, monthly rent, and the age of housing helps evaluate the health of the city’s housing stock.

### HOUSING UNITS

The 2010 Census states that there are a total of 1,789 housing units in Williamston. Each housing unit represents one dwelling unit – a house, apartment, condominium, etc.

Mirroring the population gain in recent years, the city has also experienced an increase in the total number of housing units. In comparison to surrounding communities, Williamston has gained a substantial percentage of their housing stock, approximately a 16% increase from 2000-2010. Over the same period, growth in the number of residential units has also occurred in Williamstown Township and Ingham County but at a lower rate. Wheatfield Township experienced a reduction in the number of housing units during this period.

Table 2.7: Number of Housing Units: Williamston and Comparison Communities, 2000 - 2010

	2000	2010	Change in Number of Housing Units, 2000 - 2010	Change in Percent of Housing Units, 2000 - 2010
<b>Williamston</b>	1,533	1,789	+256	16.7%
<b>Williamstown Twp.</b>	1,726	1,950	+224	13.0%
<b>Wheatfield Twp.</b>	678	635	-43	-6.34%
<b>Ingham County</b>	115,056	121,281	+6,225	+5.41%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 and 2010



## HOUSING TENURE

Housing tenure describes how housing is occupied – by the owner, by a renter, or whether it is vacant. Table 2.8 shows that the majority of dwellings within Williamston, over 65%, are owner-occupied. In comparison to surrounding communities, Williamston has a smaller percentage of owner-occupied housing units (with the exception of Ingham County at 59%). Williamston also has the largest percentage of vacant units at 10.3%, most of which are classified as “for sale” or “for rent.” This indicates that stabilization of certain neighborhoods and the revitalization of others may be key priorities. This could also indicate an oversupply of certain types of housing.

Table 2.8: Housing Tenure Status: Williamston and Comparison Communities, 2010

	Total Occupied Dwellings	Owner-Occupied		Renter-Occupied		Total Vacant		Total Units
		Units	Percentage	Units	Percentage	Units	Percentage	
Williamston	1,605	1,063	66.2%	542	33.8%	184	10.3%	1,789
Williamstown Twp.	1,864	1,723	92.4%	141	21.5%	86	4.4%	1,950
Wheatfield Twp.	619	549	88.7%	70	11.3%	34	5.2%	653
Ingham County	111,162	65,852	59.2%	45,310	40.8%	10,119	8.3%	121,281

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010

## MEDIAN HOME VALUE

The value of the homes in Williamston is one measure of the quality of life in the community and the health of the economy. In 2012, the median home value in Williamston was \$130,800. This value is less than both surrounding townships but slightly higher overall than Ingham County. Additionally, Williamston has the lowest median gross rent. In the late 2000’s, a severe national recession impacted housing values nationwide. Michigan was one of the states most affected by this recession. Although housing values have recovered in recent years, many homes are still worth less in 2014 than before this recession.

Table 2.9: Median Value: Owner-Occupied and Gross Rent: Williamston and Comparison Communities, 2012

	Owner-Occupied	Median Gross Rent
Williamston	\$130,000	\$638
Williamstown Twp.	\$235,600	\$1,463
Wheatfield Twp.	\$179,900	\$690
Ingham County	\$125,400	\$748

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 5-YR ACS 2012 (In 2012 dollars)

## AGE OF HOUSING

The age of the housing stock is also an important indicator of the community’s residential stock as the condition of housing is often related in part to its age. Traditionally, the need for major repairs or rehabilitation becomes evident when housing reaches an age of 30 years, including plumbing, foundation, and roof repairs. Communities where a substantial proportion of the housing stock is over 30 years old typically initiate programs to encourage reinvestment. Further, since the 1960s, the demand for homes built with greater efficiency and other amenities has increased. Older homes also tend to lack features that support handicap access and may not be suitable for aging in place without significant retrofits.

Table 2.10: Age of Housing, Williamston, 2012

Year Structure Built	Number	Percent
2010 or Later	0	0.0%
2000 – 2009	243	14.0%
1990 – 1999	376	21.7%
1980 – 1989	281	16.2%
1970 – 1979	124	7.2%
1960 – 1969	227	13.1%
1950 – 1959	147	8.5%
1940 – 1949	24	1.4%
1939 or Earlier	312	18.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 5-YR ACS 2012

As shown in Table 2.10, approximately 48.2% of Williamston’s housing stock was constructed prior to 1980. This pattern is consistent with the fact that the City’s has experienced a major increase in its growth in the 1980s and 1990s. However, almost half the housing stock in Williamston may require substantial improvements to be suitable for a population that wishes to age in place. Williamston remains a desirable community in which to live, which encourages owners who own older homes to make improvements in order to preserve property values.

## HOUSING TYPOLOGIES

Williamston has one of the most varied housing stock typologies with only 54.8% being traditional single-family units. Williamston does have a high percentage of multiple-family housing units when compared to the surrounding townships. The housing stock in both adjacent townships is heavily weighed to single-family homes. Conversely, Williamston is more favorable for multi-family housing because of its walkability and proximity to retail and other services.

However, Williamston could still improve the diversity of its housing stock to attract additional residents in the future. The majority of new construction projects are for single-family residences or larger multi-unit apartment complexes, although there are some other housing types such as medium density townhouses. Townhomes, lofts, condominiums with common maintenance provisions, and senior housing appeal to other demographics including young professionals and empty nesters. The creation of these other housing typologies would aid in attracting new, younger residents to the community while providing assistance to current residents to retain in the City as their lifestyles change. The retention of high quality residential areas and the creation of new housing opportunities for various demographic groups are important in maintaining a diverse and inclusive community.

Table 2.11: Housing Typologies: Williamston and Comparison Communities, 2012

	Detached Single-Family	Attached Single-Family	Multi-Family (more than two units)	Mobile Home
Williamston	54.8%	8.1%	28.5%	8.6%
Williamstown Twp.	96.3%	2.0%	0.01%	1.6%
Wheatfield Twp.	96.3%	2.3%	0.08%	0.6%
Ingham County	61.9%	6.1%	29.4%	2.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: 5-YR ACS 2012



# CHAPTER 3:

## PUBLIC & QUASI-PUBLIC FACILITIES

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### INTRODUCTION – PUBLIC AND QUASI-PUBLIC FACILITIES

An inventory of a community's existing public and quasi-public facilities and programs is necessary to determine if the community's needs are being adequately met. It is also helpful to inventory the facilities to understand their goals and to determine how agencies, facilities or programs complement each other. The following are the major public/quasi-public facilities in Williamston.

#### CITY HALL

The Williamston City Hall, located at 161 East Grand River, was built near the end of the 19th Century. The building houses the City Manager, Clerk, Deputy Clerk, City Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer, Billing Clerk, and the Director of Community Development. City Hall contains offices, the City Council Chambers, a conference room, storage areas, and a restroom.

#### LIBRARY

Since 2006, the Williamston Public Library has been temporarily located at the Community Center (201 School Street). Discussion on the potential construction of a new library has occurred but no consensus has been reached on the subject.

#### WILLIAMSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

The Williamston Police Department is maintained by four full-time police officers and five part-time officers. The Police Chief is assisted by an Assistant Police Chief.

The department relocated their operations in January 2015 to a new facility, next to City Hall, at 175 E. Grand River Avenue. The Police Department also contains the office for the City Assessor. The site of the new police department is located on a lot that used to house a City building, which was damaged by a tornado in 2007 and removed soon after. The relocation of the Police Department, adjacent to City Hall and in the downtown core, has resulted in the creation of a stronger civic environment.

#### WILLIAMSTON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The Williamston Community Schools serve the City of Williamston, a large portion of Williamstown Township, the southwest portion of Locke Township, the northwest corner of Leroy Township, the northern half of Wheatfield Township and a small portion of both Meridian and Alaiedon Townships.

All of the district's facilities are located in the northern part of the city of Williamston. The school system's facilities consist of two elementary schools (two separate wings); Discovery (a pre-K through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade facility) and Explorer (3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> grades); the Williamston Middle School (6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades); and Williamston High School.

In addition to the Williamston Community Schools there are also several private and non-profit educational institutions to serve residents of the area.

## HISTORIC DISTRICT AND SITES

The City of Williamston also features a Downtown Historic District which contains all the historic commercial buildings forming the core of the City's central business district. The district focuses on Williamston's central four-corner intersection of Grand River Avenue and Putnam Street and extends along the first blocks of those streets outward from that intersection (see Figure 3.1). The district's buildings are commercial in character, except for City Hall. The buildings date generally from the early 1870s to the 1950s and are predominately Italianate, Second Empire, Late Victorian, and Commercial Brick. The district contains 47 buildings, and all but seven contribute to its historic character. In addition, the City's 1916 gray granite Civil War Monument, topped by a figure of a Union soldier at parade rest, stands in front of City Hall and is considered a contributing object.

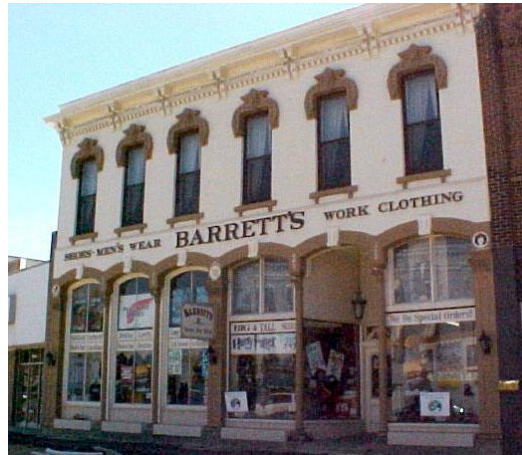
In June, 2014, the Michigan Historical Commission granted the City permission to erect a Michigan Historical Marker for the Williamston Downtown Historic District, Ingham County (local site 2260). The double-sided marker was erected in front of City Hall in the fall of 2014 and marks the eastern boundary to the Downtown Historic District.

Figure 3.1: Downtown Historic District



LEGEND  
 - - - Williamston Downtown Historic District Boundary  
 ▨ Contributing  
 ■ Non-Contributing  
 □ Parcels  
 ★ CWM Civil War Monument

City Source: City of Williamston, 2009



Additionally, there are currently three sites in Williamston that are on the State Register of Historic Sites – the Andrews Hotel, the Barrett Building and the George Beeman House. No sites in Williamston are on the National Register of Historic Sites. Ingham County has a total of 39 sites listed on the National Register and 125 sites listed on the State Register of Historic Sites. Generally, if a site is on the National Register it is also on the State Register.

The Andrews Hotel, located at 105-108 West Grand River Avenue, was placed on the State Register June 6, 1977. This large, three-story brick commercial structure was built by Charles Andrews in 1887. Designed in the Italianate style the Andrews Hotel became a resting place for travelers and their horses between Lansing and Detroit.

The Barrett Building, at 111 West Grand River Avenue, was placed on the State Register July 26, 1978. This two-story commercial brick structure in High Victorian Italianate style was the site of the Frederick Barlow jewelry store and John Crossman's drug store.

The George Beeman House located at 3150 S. Williamston Road was placed on the State Registry on February 23rd, 1981. It is a three-story, eleven-room brick veneer structure built in the Second Empire style. Built by George Beeman in 1876, it is the only home of its style in the area. Mr. Beeman was one of the first settlers of Wheatfield Township and was a prominent citizen working at brick making in the summers and operating a sawmill in the winters.

#### WILLIAMSTON DEPOT MUSEUM

The railroad depot was built in the 1880s was moved to its present location in 1983. Today it is the home of the Williamston Depot Museum. Renovations to the structure have been ongoing since the structure was relocated. Work on exhibits is ongoing and includes archaeological and historic displays. In addition to displays, the facility also has a meeting room, limited kitchen facilities and is the home of the Chamber of Commerce.

Museum funding comes from a variety of sources including loans, fund raisers, service clubs and the Downtown Development Authority. Currently the Depot Museum is run by the Williamston Depot Board and the Friends of Historic Williamstown. The Depot is looking into establishing itself as a nonprofit organization. The Museum has a working relationship with Michigan State University and Community Education. An archaeological "dig" of Native American sites along the Red Cedar River is going to be sponsored by the Museum in the future.

#### NORTHEAST INGHAM EMERGENCY SERVICES AUTHORITY

The Northeast Ingham Emergency Services Authority (NIESA) provides fire and EMS services. Fire protection coverage includes the City of Williamston, Williamstown Township, Locke Township and Wheatfield Township. This area covers 97.2 square miles.

Ambulance service is provided to the same communities serviced by fire protection service plus Leroy Township and the Village of Webberville. The total area covered by ambulance service occupies 131.4 square miles.

Williamston has a NIESA station, located at 1296 W. Grand River Avenue, which is maintained by 28 volunteer firefighters supported by 10 non-firefighting members. No full-time personnel are employed.

## COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Williamston places considerable emphasis on community development. With a Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and an Economic Development Commission/Tax Increment Finance Authority (EDC/TIFA), Williamston strives to promote and encourage development.

The majority of *non-City* sponsored projects are under the direction of the staff and DDA/EDC/TIFA boards. These include assisting in the economic vitalization of downtown, the coordination of festivals, the Williamston Farmers' Market, streetscape development, and promotional marketing of the downtown and tax increment finance areas.

## DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

Williamston's Downtown Development Authority (DDA) was formed in 1981 and is comprised of a nine person board. The boundary of the DDA area is shown on Map 4 with TIFA districts (Map 5). Funding is derived from tax increment financing, revenues from DDA properties, and donations and grants.

The Williamston Downtown Historic District is also located within the DDA. The District is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and it allows for funding opportunities for building rehabilitation.

An overview of the DDA's goals are to:

- Stimulate private investment and economic growth in the downtown district;
- Draw local residents and visitors to downtown during both business and evening hours and weekends;
- Encourage community and recreational activities which utilize the downtown district;
- Implement wayfinding and gateway signage;
- Provide marketing and branding, including physical improvements, to the downtown district which will upgrade its identity and function.
- Promote cooperation, appreciation and understanding between various agencies, organizations and individuals that share a common interest in the continued success, economic stability and prosperity of Williamston's downtown district.

Specific projects in which the DDA is involved include:

- Improving the downtown streetscape, including landscaping;
- Promoting economic revitalization and a vibrant downtown atmosphere;
- Decorating the downtown area for festivals, holidays, and events like Red Cedar Jubilee;
- Implementing façade improvements by providing matching grant dollars for façade improvements to qualified applicants within the district; and
- Supporting and promoting the Williamston Farmers' Market.

Insert Map 4: DDA Boundary Map



Insert Map 5: TIFA Map





## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Williamston Economic Development Corporation (EDC) was formed in order to attract new businesses and streamline processes so that new businesses could have a quick "start-up" time.

The EDC consists of a nine person board, appointed by the Mayor, and its executive director. The purpose of the EDC is to attract businesses to the area by providing ample space to locate, provide infrastructure to meet the needs of businesses, and create an atmosphere that encourages businesses to both locate and expand in Williamston.

Goals of the EDC include the following: bringing targeted businesses to Williamston, establishing relationships with developers, and creating a balance between encouraging businesses to locate and expand in Williamston while maintaining its small town character.

The Tax Increment Finance (TIF) Districts are created and managed by the Tax Increment Finance Authority (TIFA). Under Michigan statute, the TIFA board consists of the same board as the EDC with the only difference being that each entity has a different treasurer.

The TIFA funds projects through TIF districts which capture taxes generated when improvements are made to land or infrastructure within the district.

The Williamston I-96 Industrial Park is an example of a TIF District. This certified industrial park has many features that help attract businesses to Williamston, including a highly trained work force, interstate access, proximity to Capitol City and Detroit Metro Airports, multiple trucking firms in Ingham County, and port facilities in Detroit. Utilities at the park include 4" high pressure natural gas lines, 13,500 KW electric service, telephone service, Internet access and municipal water and sewer service. Other advantages include the community's business-friendly atmosphere, educational attainment levels of the area workforce, proximity to Michigan State University, fire and police protection, and ambulance service. For any site that is vacant and repurposed for a different use, it may be appropriate to re-zone the site to a more appropriate zoning district.

In addition to the I-96 Industrial Park, the EDC is interested in developing other areas in Williamston. The TIFA 2A District includes some residential neighborhoods and various businesses.

## WILLIAMSTON AREA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

The Williamston Area Chamber of Commerce is located at 369 West Grand River Avenue, in Williamston's downtown. The Chamber's service area is not limited to the City of Williamston, but extends past the City limits to the four surrounding townships and the Village of Webberville. While most businesses are in the "Williamston Area" others are located in Okemos, Mason, Lansing, East Lansing, and other areas. The Chamber of Commerce consists of a president, vice president, treasurer, a secretary of record and eight directors. A part-time executive secretary and supporting secretary handle the day-to-day operations.

## WATER AND SANITARY SEWER SYSTEM

Improvements that have been made to the City's water system include drilling a new well (#5) in 1978; installing new pumps in wells 2 and 3 in 1988; constructing a 400,000 gallon spherical elevated water storage tank in 1989; drilling a new well (#6) in 1990; and adding a 12" waterline connecting pumps 2 and 3 to Corwin Road and West Grand River Avenue in 1992 and 1993.

The City recently (2006) brought a new well field "on line". Located on the west side of the City, north of Linn Road, this well field is designed to meet the City's water needs for the foreseeable future. A Wellhead Protection Overlay District has been adopted into the City's Zoning Ordinance to protect the well fields and aquifers from pollution.

The entire city is served by sanitary sewer. Infiltration and inflow (I & I) of storm water and ground water into the system remains an on-going problem. The City has taken significant steps to reduce I & I through disconnecting downspouts; performing a television analysis of portions of the system to identify points of inflow; and, replacing portions of sewer line. Through these continuing efforts the City hopes to improve the system and extend the capacity of the plant by reducing the amount of water that is treated unnecessarily.

## RECREATION

The City recently updated its *2014-2019 Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. This document details the recreational offerings and identifies recommendations needed to develop the park and recreation system into a vital component of the community. There are also a wealth of additional regional park and recreational facilities surrounding Williamston which provide residents with alternative recreational opportunities. Map 6 identifies City Parks and labels other community recreational facilities.

### Williamston Parks and Recreation Inventory

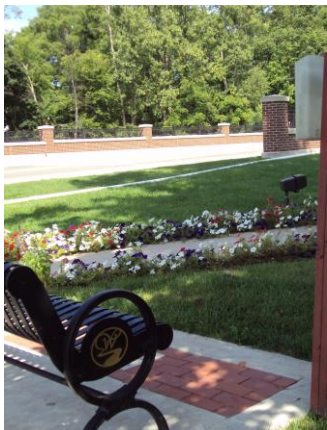
1. **McCormick Park.** McCormick Park is centrally located within the City of Williamston on North Putnam Street.



2. **Deer Creek Park.** Deer Creek Park is located on Mechanic Street. The park is linked to a football field and track that is owned by the school district.
3. **West End Park.** West End Park is a wetland/retention area that is located off Grand River Avenue. The area serves as a wetland habitat and provides an area for wildlife watching.
4. **Memorial Park.** Memorial Park is located on Highland Street next to the Elementary School.
5. **Old Mill Park.** West of Putnam Street Bridge is Old Mill Park that includes the Red Cedar River boardwalk, informational signage, a historical plaza, and gazebo.
6. **Thurlby Park.** A small strip of land near the City's Waste Water Treatment Plant which provides minimal public access to the Red Cedar River, just downstream of the downtown area.
7. **Williamston Community Schools Recreation Resources.** The Williamston Community School District operates two elementary schools (Discovery and Explorer), one middle school and one high school. All of these schools are located within the City of Williamston. These school sites are designed primarily to meet the needs of the students, but do provide extensive recreation facilities and opportunities for school district residents, which includes all City of Williamston residents. The schools have indoor and outdoor recreational facilities such as gymnasiums, basketball courts, baseball diamonds, football fields, a track, a pool, tennis courts, and soccer fields.



The pool manager and two employees of the Red Cedar Recreation Association (a non-profit of which the Williamston Community Schools are the fiduciary) as well as the high school and the middle school athletic directors all provide significant community recreation service. School facilities are used by community members on many occasions when not in use for school functions. The Williamston Community Pool is a good example of a school-based asset that is primarily used by area residents and less for school functions.



8. **City Hall Pocket Park.** A pocket park is currently located at City Hall. Another is planned for land owned by the Downtown Development Authority east of the bridge over the Red Cedar River on the north side of Grand River Avenue near the Sun Theatre. These can provide islands of relaxation adjacent to development and can assist in channeling visitors from parking to local businesses.
9. **Community Center/Senior Center/Library.** Located at 201 School Street is the Williamston Community Center. As early as 1874, various combinations of buildings housed the Williamston public schools at this location until new facilities were constructed on the north side of the City. The City of Williamston currently owns and operates the existing structure. Today, the building functions as the community center with separate space designated as the Senior Center which provides services and activities for the City's seniors. The building also houses the Williamston branch of the Capital Area District Libraries system. A local group of citizens also operate the Williamston Food Bank out of the building. These operations provide highly valued services year-round to Williamston area residents.

While the City recognizes and values the services that the organizations in the Community Center provide to all City residents, efforts have been ongoing to find a more fiscally viable alternative to maintain and operate the building. Public-private partnerships with an individual or corporation could provide additional sources of revenue by allowing some for-profit businesses to operate within the building alongside the senior center, library and food bank. A private party could also be allowed to operate or purchase the building, provided that certain conditions were met that would allow the senior center, library and food bank to remain. The conversion of the building to a mixed-use operation that provides services to the neighboring residents and the community as whole is also feasible, provided that the mix of uses are compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.

Insert Map 6: Recreation Map



# CHAPTER 4: TRANSPORTATION

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## INTRODUCTION

This section considers the system of roadways, pedestrian ways, and the modes of transportation. The ability of people and goods to efficiently flow without unexpected stops or unprecedented congestion is an important part of the quality of life in a community as well as a vital part to a community's economic well-being and growth. Examination of traffic volumes, access points, pedestrian circulation, and conditions of the street network is an integral part of the Master Plan.



The City of Williamston is located near or intersected by several significant transportation corridors, including Grand River Avenue (State Highway M-43), Interstate 96, and Williamston Road/Putnam Street. With its proximity to Michigan State University and the metropolitan Lansing area and one of the main thoroughfares of the state of Michigan, I-96, stronger connectivity to the east and south could greatly improve access and awareness for the downtown core. This includes not only roads for personal vehicles but non-motorized options such as bike paths and sidewalks.

## PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

The Capital Area Transportation Authority (CATA) provides public transportation throughout the Lansing Region including the City of Williamston. Fares are based on the age of the rider and the route used.

CATA has three routes that serve Williamston. One route connects Williamston and Webberville with the Capital Loop in Lansing and the Meridian Mall in Okemos. This route has morning and evening service on weekdays with no service on weekends.

A second route also connects Williamston and Webberville with East Lansing along Grand River Avenue. Riders can connect from this route to buses that service downtown Lansing and Michigan State University in East Lansing.

The third route is not a structured service with regular stops. Williamston Redi-Ride is an advance registration, door-to-door service that is similar to cab service. Redi-Ride provides service Monday through Friday from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm and on Saturdays from 8:30 am to 4:00 pm. An expansion to the routes and a more frequent drop off/pick up service may improve ridership and could benefit the Williamston community.

## NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION

A high-quality non-motorized transportation system may consist of a series of interconnected sidewalks, trails, bike paths, and other means by which the public can travel without using automobiles. This kind of system provides not only alternative transportation options but also provides many recreational opportunities. An improved non-motorized transportation system has many benefits for the residents of Williamston who would utilize the system, including:

- Increased ability for those without a driver's license or a vehicle to access areas inside and outside of the City that would otherwise be inaccessible.
- Increased safety for those who rely on non-motorized transportation.
- Increased transportation alternatives.
- Encouragement of healthy lifestyles for residents.

Non-motorized transportation in Williamston currently consists of sidewalks along most streets, pathways in several city parks, and a pedestrian bridge over the Red Cedar River that connects the east end of High Street to the Williamston Community Schools. However, not all elements of the system are fully compliant with the standards of the American with Disabilities Act (ADA). It is a goal of this Plan to develop additional non-motorized paths within the City, especially in conjunction with new development and the redevelopment of sites, in order to provide a complete pedestrian system.

## COMPLETE STREETS

The City adopted an ordinance in 2011 to encourage Complete Streets. Environmentally, complete streets encourage the use of trees and other native vegetation and provide infrastructure for stormwater management. Complete streets also provide opportunities for physical activity and active, non-motorized transportation. The following are three guiding principles for a complete streets policy:

1. Develop connectivity of the street network to increase accessibility for users and provide linkages to connect community focal points, including residential districts, civic facilities, commercial nodes, and recreational areas.
2. Promote safe travel for users, especially for children (safe routes to school), persons with disabilities, and the elderly.
3. Encourage alternative methods for stormwater collection (also known as low-impact development), including cross slopes, curb profiles, bioswales and pervious pavements.

In order to provide greater walkability and access for residents and visitors of Williamston and improve environmental conditions, the following recommendations should be considered by the City and incorporated into future capital improvements:

- Sidewalks installed in neighborhood residential and commercial areas, compliant with ADA regulations.
- Use decorative pavers, or striping, for dedicated crosswalks, including ramps.
- Introduce seating, trash receptacle and landscaping elements at major intersections to signal drivers to watch for potential pedestrian crossings.
- Incorporate greater landscaping and vegetation (especially trees) into streetscape design to enrich the environment and provide a relief to urban heat islands.
- Develop cross slopes and curbs to influence the movement of stormwater to vegetated areas where it is absorbed and filtered.



## ROAD NETWORK

The main east-west thoroughfare is Grand River Avenue which passes through the heart of downtown Williamston. Grand River Avenue serves as a connector to Lansing, East Lansing, and Okemos from Williamston and Webberville.

Grand River Avenue is designed as a four lane arterial. As a design criteria, when an arterial exceeds 10,000 traffic movements per day, only then is additional capacity is typically necessary. The only portion of Grand River Avenue that exceeds 10,000 Average Daily Traffic counts (ADT) consistently is the downtown segment. Therefore, immediate additional capacity is not needed at this time. The situation bears watching, however, and the Michigan Department of Transportation [MDOT] plans to continue to monitor traffic counts along Grand River Avenue. The City has discussed with MDOT the feasibility of converting Grand River Avenue from four (4) to three (3) lanes, which would allow for a center turn lane and additional on-street parking, bike lanes, and pedestrian circulation. MDOT has facilitated similar 4-to-3 lane conversions throughout the State and is willing to work with the City if Williamston pursues the 4-to-3 lane conversion of Grand River Avenue.

The main north/south street that runs through downtown is Williamston Road. It serves as a connector to the I-96 interchange located two miles south of the City. As Williamston Road moves north from the I-96 interchange, and nears the downtown, its name changes to Putnam Street. Between 1990 and 1994, Williamston Road experienced an increase in daily automobile volume of approximately 454 percent. This increase is directly related to increased use associated with new housing developments and population increases noted between 1990 and 2010. The building of the Plymouth Landing subdivision on the south side of the City has been a major contributor to the increased traffic volume on Williamston Road/Putnam Street.

While Williamston Road has not yet exceeded its design capacity, as the population around the I-96 interchange continues to grow, changes in traffic volume will need to be closely monitored. The issue of overcapacity on this portion of Williamston Road may need to be addressed in the future. I-96 connects to Grand Rapids and Detroit. Currently, over 50,000 automobiles travel by the Williamston I-96 exit per day. As Williamston continues to develop as a destination point a greater percentage of those vehicles can be expected to exit I-96 and enter Williamston via the Williamston Road corridor.

## BRIDGE

Currently one vehicular bridge across the Red Cedar River exists in Williamston. The bridge is located on N. Putnam Street, which links the area to Grand River Avenue and I-96. The nearest alternate bridges are on Zimmer Road (to the west) and Dietz Road (to the east). In 2005 the bridge was completely replaced to ensure its continued operation as a major north-south route into the foreseeable future.

In 1994 it was thought that future development in the area would likely require a second bridge over the Red Cedar River in Williamston. There have been some discussions and preliminary plans assessing the need for another bridge. While the need and desirability of another bridge remain, the reality is that funding for such a project is likely to be difficult to obtain. This is due to the current rate of development coupled with an overall uncertainty in future economic development throughout Michigan.



# CHAPTER 5: LAND USE

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## INTRODUCTION – LAND USE

This land use section contains two key elements. It presents the existing land use map (ELU) and the future land use map (FLU). For a community to plan for its future it is necessary to analyze the existing land uses by type and pattern. The future land use pattern will be influenced by the rate of population growth; the rate of economic development; and, the community’s goals.

## EXISTING LAND USE

The existing land use of the City of Williamston was determined by first analyzing the land use codes incorporated in the tax parcel database which is part of the city’s Geographic Information System (GIS). The next step was to conduct a visual survey from aerial photographs. This review was augmented by both field inspections and considerable input from a variety of staff members. The purpose of this exercise was to produce a map that illustrates how the land is currently being used. The existing land use is shown in Map 7.

*Exempt* – This class contains property that is tax exempt. Typically, that is land that is in public ownership such as parks, schools, or other public properties.

*Commercial* – The commercial category includes areas with or without structures, where goods are distributed or personal business services are provided. This includes the retail sales of goods and services to local residents and consumers attracted from outside the community. The downtown commercial district, as well as single lot or highway, retail, wholesale and office space are included in this category.

*Industrial* – Industrial includes areas where raw or unfinished materials or commodities are used to produce a product. This includes industries whose manufacturing processes may cause emissions that are potentially detrimental to surrounding land uses.

*Residential* – These are areas where dwellings and their accessory buildings occupy the major portion of the land. They include the following subcategories:

- **Low Density Residential** – An area in which a predominance of the structures are single-family or duplex dwelling units.
- **Medium Density Residential** – An area in which a building contains 3 or 4 separate living quarters.
- **High Density Residential** – An area in which a building contains 5 or more separate living units.

*Developmental* – Parcels in this category have been designated for future development. There are only a couple of large, undeveloped areas left within the city limits. However, these tracts of land, at the I-96/North Williamston Road interchange, represent highly visible sites with tremendous potential for influencing future development not only in Williamston but in the surrounding area.

As shown in the following table, there are 1,252 acres in the City comprised of 1,464 individual parcels. Of the total land area, 480 acres (38.3%) are vacant and available for development.

TABLE 5.1. LAND USE ANALYSIS

CLASSIFICATION	NO. OF PARCELS	AREA (ACRES)	PERCENT OF TOTAL
<b>Public / Exempt</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>19.7%</b>
<b>Commercial (Total)</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>9.0%</b>
<i>Commercial Developed</i>	<i>124</i>	<i>90</i>	<i>6.2%</i>
<i>Commercial Vacant</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>2.8%</i>
<b>Industrial (Total)</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>15.9%</b>
<i>Industrial Developed</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>128</i>	<i>8.7%</i>
<i>Industrial Vacant</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>109</i>	<i>7.2%</i>
<b>Residential (Total)</b>	<b>1,229</b>	<b>607</b>	<b>40.5%</b>
<i>Residential Developed</i>	<i>1,125</i>	<i>499</i>	<i>33.2%</i>
<i>Residential Vacant</i>	<i>104</i>	<i>108</i>	<i>7.2%</i>
<b>Developmental</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>14.9%</b>
<b>CITY TOTAL</b>	<b>1,468</b>	<b>1,252</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: City of Williamston – GIS Database



Insert Map 7: Exiting Land Use



# CHAPTER 6:

## GOALS, POLICIES & ACTIONS

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### INTRODUCTION – GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

The goals and objectives of the Master Plan will provide a framework that will guide future land use decisions. The community outreach, analysis, and research identified several issues which will impact the future development of Williamston. The following goals, each with their respective list of objectives, provide guidance on how the City of Williamston should direct future development.

Goal statements are general in nature and represent land use related ideals that the City wishes to achieve. They represent the ultimate purpose of an effort stated in a way that is broad and not measurable. Goals express a consensus of community direction to public and private agencies, groups, and individuals.

Following each general goal is a set of objectives. Objectives are more specific and are intended to provide a means to attain the stated goal. Objectives take the form of more measurable standards and identify the way in which the goal can be attained. In some instances, they are specific statements which can be readily translated into detailed design proposals or actions.

### GOALS, POLICIES, AND ACTIONS

#### Goal 1: Housing

*Maintain the viability of housing in strong neighborhoods and improve lower quality housing.*

Objectives:

- Work with residents and landowners to fix blighted and abandoned homes
- Address the needs of aging population to allow Williamston residents to age in place and stay comfortable in their homes.
- Encourage and adopt codes that support new housing and remodeled housing stock that provide the amenities and features desired by young professionals, young families, and empty nesters.
- Enhance the quality of life in residential areas through: high standards of housing design and construction; provision of high quality public rights-of-way in single family areas; attractive parks and recreation facilities within convenient walking distance; and continued high level of community neighborhood services.
- Use stricter, more uniform and comprehensive enforcement of the property maintenance code, code enforcement upon transfer or sale, landlord licensing, and expand housing rehabilitation to upgrade housing conditions.
- Encourage new, quality multi-family housing in and close to the downtown.

## Goal 2: Downtown

*Support businesses, civic life, and aesthetics of the downtown.*

### Objectives:

- Establish the downtown as a regional cultural and entertainment center.
- Improve the appearance of commercial corridors, entrances into the downtown, and continue to promote McCormick Park as a community resource and gathering space.
- Encourage façade improvements in downtown and continue to refine façade standards for downtown buildings.
- Provide adequate parking in the DDA.
- Encourage attraction and retention of new businesses, like cafes, bakeries, dining establishments with outdoor seating, and produce markets.
- Preserve Williamston’s unique identity through downtown events and festivals.
- Encourage the re-use of vacant or abandoned commercial properties.
- Continue to retain municipal services within walking distance of the downtown.

## Goal 3: Community Facilities and Recreation

*Continue to provide all segments of the population with high quality and affordable community services and facilities, including expanding recreation facilities and opportunities in the City.*

### Objectives:

- Place emphasis on upgrading and enhancing existing parks and trails, and establishing new parks and recreation facilities in order to enhance the local identity, image, and property values and attract young families.
- Maintain and, where possible, improve community services including police and fire protection, regularly scheduled maintenance of street and utility systems, snow removal, and senior citizen services.
- Inventory water and sanitary sewer lines to identify lines in need of expansion or replacement and make improvements as needed.
- Continue to work with the community to assure a thriving community center, library, and senior center that meets the community’s needs.

## Goal 4: Commercial and Office Development

*Promote a well-planned and integrated system of commercial and office uses which will serve the needs of City residents, enhance the image of the City, and strengthen the City’s tax and employment base.*

### Objectives:

- Direct commercial development so as to protect the integrity of adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- Where appropriate, promote trails and non-motorized pathways / pedestrian amenities / wider sidewalks that connect the City core and neighborhoods and to generate greater pedestrian activity in commercial corridors.
- Maintain high standards of site design for all commercial and office uses, including frontage beautification, buffering devices, landscaping, walkway linkages, controlled vehicular access, and attractive signs – all of which will promote long-term commercial stability.



- Establish a business incubator; investigate and implement venture start-up financing for new business; and, facilitate the provision of business management assistance.
- Encourage the City's role in the marketing of sites for redevelopment.

### Goal 5: Industrial Development

*Maintain and enhance the City's industrial uses in a way that is consistent with community values, compatible with surrounding land uses, and preserves and augments the tax base of the City.*

#### Objectives:

- Keep and continue to improve and develop the City's industrial park (water, sidewalks, etc.).
- Diversify industrial zones to respond to the marginal market for industrial land in the City.
- Apply high standards for site improvements or redevelopment, assuring adequate parking, loading and unloading areas, landscaping, and controlled signs.
- Require buffering, building setbacks, screening, outside storage controls, and control of effluents to minimize off-site impacts, particularly on adjacent residential areas.
- Encourage appropriate development of vacant or underutilized land parcels within industrial districts through marketing and the site plan review process.

### Goal 6: Planning and Administration

*Ensure ongoing interest in and implementation of the City's Master Plan.*

#### Objectives:

- Periodically revise or replace the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to conform to the Master Plan or when otherwise needed.
- Involve the Planning Commission in the recreation planning process.
- Meet and cooperate with adjacent communities through exchange of information on development and redevelopment issues and coordinate intergovernmental land use implementation.
- Prepare plans for specific issues or areas of concern, such as neighborhood plans and housing maintenance programs.
- Update the Master Plan on a regular basis.
- Prepare an accessible, non-motorized plan (pedestrian and bicycles) of trails and linear parks and other means of safe routes to school for Williamston citizens, business, and police to reinforce a commitment to young families and elderly citizens.

## Goal 7: Complete Transportation System

*Maintain a safe, efficient vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit transportation network to minimize conflicts among transportation users, promote accessibility throughout the community, and accommodate the circulation needs of all users, especially those with limitations to mobility.*

### Objectives:

- Improve the overall quality of public rights-of-way with paving, lighting, sidewalks, landscaping and controlled public and private signs.
- Utilize pedestrian walkways, where possible, to link various land use types such as shopping and offices to residential areas, parks, and community activity centers.
- Fix and maintain city streets to make them safely passable by cars and bicycles.
- Reduce the number of site access drives along major roadways by encouraging the use of common entrances and shared parking facilities
- Collaborate with CATA to improve bus stops, for design and access.
- Plan for safe and efficient bicycle circulation within the City and its downtown, parks, and neighborhoods and encourage businesses to incorporate bicycle friendly facilities on their site.
- Implement a Complete Streets policy to guide in the development of safe and effect travel for all users of the public right-of-way.
- Improve existing sidewalks where needed, and construct additional sidewalks in areas most in need.
- Analyze traffic conditions; i.e. during rush hour, school district traffic patterns; sporting events, etc. and development plans to improve and make safer traffic flow and circulation.
- Pursue consideration of converting portions of Grand River Avenue from 4 to 3 lanes, allowing for a dedicated turn lane and on-street parking.

## Goal 8: Aesthetics and Identity

*Improve the appearance and identity of the City of Williamston.*

### Objectives:

- Develop strong visual gateway statements at key entry points into the City through signs, banners and landscaping.
- Develop a corridor plan for Grand River Avenue.
- Encourage more trees and other design features that can be functional and serve as traffic calming in neighborhoods and along corridors.
- Adopt architectural standards for all commercial zoning districts.
- Maintain the historical architectural character of existing buildings and ensure that the development of new buildings is consistent with the City's established downtown architectural character and building design themes.
- Encourage the preservation of existing vegetation and trees on public sites and all rights-of-way, and promote additional street tree plantings, particularly along major thoroughfares.
- Encourage through incentives for property owners to upgrade and maintain the environmental quality of their sites and buildings, promoting LEED-based design.

# CHAPTER 7: FUTURE LAND USE

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## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents Williamston’s plan for the long-term development of the land within the City. In general the plan considers development of the City over the next 20 years. The plan also indicates those uses and developments that are planned for and phased in over the next five years. The future land use plan consists of the text in this chapter, and the Future Land Use map (Map 8), which is included at the end of this chapter.

The City will likely entertain requests for changes in zoning district classification over the life of the Master Plan. When reviewing requests for zoning changes and special use permits, the City should assure that the request complies with the future land use plan, as well as the goals and objectives, and the overall Master Plan. When a requested zoning change does not comply with the future land use plan, the request should be denied until such time as the Master Plan is amended.

## VISION FOR FUTURE LAND USE

Williamston does not want to be another faceless municipality along our nation’s interstate highway system. It does not want to have a string of fast food restaurants lining the main entrance to the City punctuated by gas stations and motel chains leading to “big box” retail stores. It wants to retain the “small town feel” with unique downtown stores and residential neighborhoods between which a person can walk or bicycle.

As the City of Williamston and the neighboring townships grow with new residential units, there are increased opportunities for commercial and retail establishments to grow and prosper. Williamston’s challenge is to promote a level of controlled growth, the character of which does not detract from the charm of the City while also adding to the tax base. In addition, that growth should be located in areas that require minimal investment in new infrastructure. New developments should be well connected to the remainder of the City and tie into the existing non-motorized network. The growth should not foster urban sprawl, burden the natural environment or require significant extension of roads, water lines, sewer lines and police protection into currently unserved areas.

## FUTURE LAND USE CATEGORIES

The Future Land Use map generally contains the same categories as the Existing Land Use map, except that a “mixed use” category is designated on the Future Land Use map. The categories on the Future Land Use map are as follows:

**Low Density Residential:** The Low Density Residential areas are characterized by a wide range of single- and two-family housing choices which include single-family residential uses, duplexes, and accessory dwelling units. Most of the land in Williamston is classified as Low Density Residential.

**Medium Density Residential:** The Medium Density Residential areas are characterized by 3-4-unit residential structures that can be either owner-occupied or renter-occupied.

**High Density Residential:** The High Density Residential areas are designed to accommodate multi-unit residential structures, such as apartment buildings. The purpose of these areas is to allow more intensive residential use with various types of multi-unit dwellings.

**Mobile Home Park:** The Mobile Home Park areas contain existing mobile homes approved by the City of Williamston and the State of Michigan.

**Local Commercial:** Local Commercial areas are located in the downtown area and are designed to cater to the local population while also serving as a shopping, entertainment, and dining destination for visitors. Most of the parking in the Local Commercial areas is on-street or in a public lot. The Local Commercial area is characterized by its walkability, pedestrian-friendly development, and dense mix of compatible land uses. Commercial uses that are of a size and scale intended to serve a regional population are discouraged in the Local Commercial area.

**General Commercial:** General Commercial areas are located outside of the downtown area along Grand River Avenue and N. Williamston Road. The General Commercial areas are typically of a size and scale intended to serve a regional population, and are oriented to automobile traffic.

**Industrial:** Industrial areas are located in established industrial parks or along Grand River near the city limits. Most industrial areas are either established industrial uses or vacant with the expectation of developing as industrial uses in the future. Because some of the Industrial areas are in close proximity to established residential uses, special care must be taken to ensure proper buffering and compatibility between adjacent uses.

**Public:** Public areas are areas owned or expected to be owned by a public entity such as the City of Williamston or the Williamston Community Schools. Most of these areas are dedicated to providing services to the community.

**Park/Open Space:** Park/Open Space areas are areas owned or expected to be owned by a public or non-profit entity for the purposes of conservation or recreation.

**Mixed-Use:** This use is defined as residential, professional office, and commercial. Mixed-use incorporates most of the aforementioned existing mix of land uses especially along North Williamston Road leading into the City.

Unlike the 1994 and 2007 Comprehensive Plans, which suggested a more defined mix of residential, commercial, industrial and professional uses along the North Williamston Road corridor, this mixed use category envisions something different, centering on a performance-based zoning development that meets the community goals. The community goals are outlined in the Executive Summary and are discussed in detail in the *Goals, Policies, and Actions* section. As the community goals are the cornerstone of this Master Plan, key points which promote the advancement of the mixed-use category include the following:

- Promoting development that enhances the City by discouraging “strip” development from the interchange into the downtown.
- Reducing urban sprawl by directing development inside or close to the City limits.
- Encouraging the City to develop as a “walkable” community throughout.
- Providing buffers between adjacent land uses.

The “mixed-use” category also provides elements that serve to support the community goals:

- 1) Development can only occur with an applicant meeting all the conditions set forth by the City, while giving the applicant a degree of creativity in design. This is the essence of “performance based zoning”. Final approval is retained at the discretion of the Planning Commission, based on the Master Plan, the Zoning Ordinance, and other City documents, while leaving some freedom for a developer to use the architectural and state-of-the-art tools at their disposal.
- 2) Mixed-use category gives the City more flexibility than exists with strict one-use for one area future land use maps.
- 3) Control of nearly all stages of development still remains with the City, including details of a site plan, based on the Zoning Ordinance.
- 4) The process is “transparent” with the developers appearing before the Planning Commission which produces an excellent record of what actions are required for approval and construction of a development.

The category “mixed-use” is defined as an area that the City anticipates will develop in the future as either a residential, professional office or commercial use or some combination of those uses. The “mixed-use” category eliminates the need to impose artificial lines on the map to distinguish between future residential, office and commercial zoning districts and encourages a performance based approach to land use regulation. A performance based regulation measures a proposed plan by how well it supports the stated goals of the plan. In this case, the stated goals of the plan include design that does not encourage “strip development” from the interchange into the City, directing development inside the City limits, encouraging walkable designs and providing buffers between adjacent uses. A future amendment to the zoning ordinance could take the concept further into the regulatory document.

The “mixed-use” category could support the rezoning of a single parcel or a mixed use development proposal. A mixed-use development could be done as a Planned Unit Development (PUD) or a Planned Residential Development (PRD) with the current Zoning

Ordinance or as a “Mixed-Use Development” (MUD) in a future Zoning Ordinance. It may appear at first glance that the “mixed-use” category on the future land use map is an invitation to uncontrolled development. However, the performance based “mixed-use” category provides for the type of development that will meet the community goals.

The Zoning Ordinance must be updated to include the “mixed-use” category of land use, in order for the “mixed-use” category or the transitional areas to have any effect. The future land use map provides a “roadmap” as to the type and location of development the City wants to encourage. Unless that is translated into the pertinent sections of the zoning ordinance, the effectiveness of these suggestions, or the entire future land use map, is greatly diminished.

## ZONING PLAN

One of the most influential strategies that can be used to implement a Master Plan is the system of regulatory measures established by the community to guide future development and land use. These regulations include the Zoning Ordinance, land division controls, and development standards. However, simply creating and using such regulations is not sufficient to actually implement the Master Plan. The ordinances must contain specific procedures and techniques that are created to achieve the objectives and eventually the goals of the future land use plan.

The future land use categories in the Master Plan provide the foundation for evaluating future zoning requests. Zoning actions that are inconsistent with the future land use map usually receive unfavorable review by the courts, if challenged. The Master Plan should always be the first source of information and policy guidance in the evaluation of zoning change requests and new development proposals.

The following is a brief discussion of the regulations and standards that the City employs to guide future development and land use.

### Condominium Regulations

During the recent past, site condominium developments have become a popular alternative to subdivisions as a way of developing land, in part due to changes in the State’s condominium regulation. The popularity of this type of ownership continues to grow. The City should expect site condominium development proposals, and encourage their use when appropriate.

### Zoning Regulations

Zoning is the primary regulatory tool used by the City to implement the Master Plan. According to Section 203(1) of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended), “A zoning ordinance shall be based upon a plan designed to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare...” Strict enforcement of zoning regulations and standards will allow the City to develop and redevelop in a coordinated manner, one site at a time.

### Rezoning to Implement the Master Plan

The land use classifications on the Future Land Use Map provide the basis for evaluating future rezoning requests. Zoning actions that are consistent with the Future Land Use Map usually receive favorable judicial review if challenged. The Master Plan should always be the first source of information and policy guidance in the evaluation of zoning change requests and new development proposals.

### Planned Development

Planned development involves the use of special zoning requirements and review procedures that provide design and regulatory flexibility, so as to encourage innovation in land use planning and design.

Planned developments generally achieve a higher quality of development than might otherwise be possible. Applied judiciously, they are an effective zoning technique to achieve development in accordance with the goals and objectives of the Master Plan and the vision of the community.

Planned development can be used to encourage innovative and traditional neighborhood development on some of the large, undeveloped parcels in the City. Planned development usually includes an incentive component and an ability to negotiate certain items in light of this incentive. Often mixed-uses are allowed as an incentive for higher quality.

### Overlay Zoning

Overlay zoning allows the City to impose a new set of regulations on a special area within an existing zoning district. In an area where an overlay zoning is established, the property is placed simultaneously in the two zones, and the property may be developed only under the applicable conditions and requirements of both zones. Thus, the overlay zoning has been used in other communities to address special conditions and features, such as historic areas, wetlands, and environmentally sensitive areas, without disrupting the underlying zoning plan.

### Relationship of Future Land Use and Zoning

A zoning plan is required by the Michigan planning and zoning enabling acts. Section 33(d) of the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, PA 33 of 2008, as amended, requires that the master plan prepared under that act shall serve as the basis for the community's zoning plan. The Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, PA 110 of 2006, as amended, requires a zoning plan to be prepared as the basis for the zoning ordinance. The zoning plan must be based on an inventory of conditions pertinent to zoning in the municipality and the purposes for which zoning may be adopted (as described in Section 201 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act).

The zoning plan is a key implementation tool to achieve the vision of the Master Plan. In order to realize that vision, the City must ensure that ordinances and regulations permit the type and style of development recommended by the Master Plan.

### Districts and Dimensional Standards

There are 15 zoning districts in the City, each of which is described in the current Zoning Ordinance. The uses permitted in each district are described. In addition, the Zoning Ordinance's schedule of lot, yard, and area requirements defines specific area, height, and bulk requirements for structures in each zoning district. The Zoning Map is also a part of the Zoning Ordinance and illustrates the distribution of the defined zoning districts throughout the City.

### Relationship to the Master Plan

This Master Plan establishes the vision, goals, objectives, and policies for growth and development in Williamston for approximately the next 20 years. It includes a specific strategy for managing growth and change in land uses and infrastructure over this period, and, as required by statute, will be periodically reviewed and updated at least once each five years. This section, along with the rest of the Master Plan, is intended to generally guide future changes to the Williamston Zoning Ordinance.

The following is a list of proposed Master Plan land use designations and their corresponding zoning district. Not all of the Master Plan's future land use categories will match up with the current location or regulations of the zoning district that they most closely correspond to. Recommended revisions the Zoning Ordinance are discussed below.

MASTER PLAN FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATION	ZONING DISTRICT
Low Density Residential	RR, R-1C, R-1S, R-2
Medium Density Residential	R-3
High Density Residential	R-3
Mobile Home Park	MH
Local Commercial	C-1
General Commercial	C-2, C-3, C-4, PO-1
Industrial	I-1, I-2, PO-1
Public	-
Park / Open Space	-
Mixed-Use	All residential, office, and commercial districts

### Recommended Changes to Zoning Ordinance

This Plan recommends the following changes to the Zoning Ordinance:

- Create a mixed-use district.
- Develop design standards for the downtown core.
- Revise the Zoning Map to match the Future Land Use Map.



Insert Map 8: Future Land Use



# CHAPTER 8: IMPLEMENTATION

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## INTRODUCTION

The Williamston Master Plan and its goals, objectives, and strategies recommend a future vision for the community. This vision is to build upon the City’s existing assets and make the most of opportunities that can attract new development and residents to the community while protecting the City’s natural beauty and resources. To put it simply, the plan for Williamston is to create an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable community where people want to live, work, visit and play.

The goals and objectives of this plan should be reviewed often and be considered in decision making by the City. Successful implementation of this plan will be the result of actions taken by elected and appointed officials, City staff, the Downtown Development Authority, the Planning Commission, public agencies, and private citizens and organizations.

## ACTION PLAN

This section identifies and describes actions and tools available to implement the vision created in this Plan. Broadly stated, the Plan will be implemented through:

**Planning and Zoning:** Evaluation of the City’s Zoning Ordinance, and if necessary, amendments to regulations are necessary to implement the recommendations of this Plan. Continuous evaluation of the recommendations of this Plan must occur at regular intervals to ensure that the overall vision for the future development of the City remains relevant.

**Civic and Transportation Improvements:** Civic improvements are generally funded through public funds and are tangible “bricks and mortar” projects. Improvements to the City’s motorized and non-motorized circulation system also fall into this category.

**Economic Development:** This category includes the economic and physical development of the City. These improvements include a wide range of activities from physical development activity to promotion and marketing, and may be completed by public or private entities, or some combination thereof.

The tables on the following pages present a detailed summary of all of the recommended implementation activities, who is responsible for completing the activity, and available funding resources for each activity.

## KEY

Priority		Timeframe		Responsibility (Color)	
A	Most Important	1	W/in one year		Project Lead
B	Very Important	2	1-3 years		Key Participant
C	Important	3	3+ years		Contributor

## RESPONSIBILITY (ABBREVIATION)

<b>IC</b>	Ingham County
<b>DDA</b>	Downtown Development Authority and/or EDC
<b>BO</b>	Business Owners
<b>MDOT</b>	Michigan Department of Transportation
<b>SM</b>	State of Michigan
<b>WPS</b>	Williamston Public Schools
<b>HO</b>	Homeowners
<b>CM</b>	Community Members
<b>CC</b>	Williamston City Council
<b>PC</b>	Williamston Planning Commission
<b>PRC</b>	Williamston Parks Commission
<b>TRI</b>	Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
<b>COC</b>	Williamston Chamber of Commerce
<b>CS</b>	City Staff
<b>CATA</b>	Capital Area Transit Authority

## FUNDING

<b>Public</b>	Includes public funds from the City operating budget, County, and State funding. May also include local government bonds and grants.
<b>Private</b>	Includes funds from private sources such as grant monies, corporate funding, or property owners
<b>DDA/TIF</b>	Tax increment financing provided by an authorized body.

## PLANNING AND ZONING

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			CITY	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TIF/DDA
Create a new zoning district for the Mixed-Use Future Land Use category.	A	1	CC/PC			●		
Coordinate with the Tri-County Planning Commission's ongoing Grand River corridor plan.	A	1	CC/PC	DDA	CM	●		●
Revise the Zoning Map to match the Future Land Use Map.	A	2	CC/PC			●		
Develop design guidelines for the downtown core.	A	2	CC/PC	DDA	BO	●		●
Review and update this plan every five years.	C	3	CC/PC		CM	●		

## CIVIC AND TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			CITY	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TIF/DDA
Target key gaps in sidewalk infrastructure and install new sidewalks when possible, using Safe Routes to School funds and other funding sources.	A	1	CC	IC SM WPS	CM	●	●	●
Develop a non-motorized plan for trails and sidewalks.	A	2	CC/PC	IC SM DDA	CM	●		●
Promote the commuter bus route and work with CATA to increase service.	A	2	CC	IC TRI CATA		●	●	●
Improve both pedestrian and vehicular safety at the intersection of Grand River Avenue and Putnam Street through traffic calming measures and additional pedestrian scale amenities.	B	1	CC / PC	DDA		●		●
Investigate, with MDOT, the potential to reduce Grand River Avenue from four lanes of vehicular travel to two lanes of vehicular travel with a turning lane / boulevard and other complete street elements such as bike lanes.	B	2	CC / PC	DDA		●		●
Install decorative gateway elements at the four key entrances to the City.	B	2	CC	IC TRI DDA		●	●	●
Investigate the feasibility of burying the power lines along Grand River Avenue in the downtown area.	B	2	CC	DDA	BO	●	●	●
Investigate the possibility of a joint bike-share program with Okemos, Webberville, and other surrounding communities.	C	3	CC	IC LT DDA		●	●	●

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT	PRIORITY	TIMEFRAME	RESPONSIBILITY			FUNDING		
			CITY	OTHER GOV'T	PRIVATE	PUBLIC	PRIVATE	TIF/DDA
Develop a marketing strategy for downtown Williamston.	A	1	CC	DDA	BO	●	●	●
Continue and increase ongoing efforts to develop and market the I-96 Industrial Park.	A	1	CC	DDA IC	BO	●	●	●
Build recreational and non-motorized transportation infrastructure to increase Williamston's appeal to potential new residents.	A	1	CC	DDA IC SM	BO CM	●	●	●
Design wayfinding signage to encourage travelers on I-96 and Grand River Avenue to visit downtown Williamston.	A	2	CC	DDA IC TRI	BO CM	●	●	●
Construct a "gateway" along Grand River Avenue, including signage and decorative elements.	A	2	CC	DDA IC MDOT		●	●	●
Participate in MSHDA programs to develop new, dense typology housing, especially in the downtown area and along Grand River Avenue.		2	CC	SM	CM	●	●	●
Compile a registry of redevelopment sites in the City and market them to developers and businesses.		2	CC CS	DDA IC TRI	BO CM	●	●	●
Leverage the local commuter bus routes, I-96, and other transportation infrastructure to bring new businesses and residents to Williamston.	B	2	CC	DDA CATA	BO CM	●	●	●
Market vacant land in the City for new residential development.	B	3	CC	DDA TRI	BO CM	●	●	●





# APPENDIX A:

## PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & SURVEY RESULTS

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### INTRODUCTION – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation is a vital part of the comprehensive planning process. For the 2014 Master Plan Update, a replication of the survey from the 2007 Master Plan was created and posted on the City website. Hard copies were made available in City Hall. The survey was made available to take from March 14 to April 18, 2014. Additionally, a public hearing for the adoption of the Master Plan Update was held in the fall of 2014.

### SURVEY OVERVIEW

The survey was developed to generate citizen input regarding two primary issues. The first part of the survey related to the perception held by respondents about services and the current state of the City. The second part was designed to solicit input relative to what direction the City should take for future growth and development.

The original 2007 survey was developed with considerable input from the Planning Commission and City professional staff. The input enabled the survey to be crafted in such a way as to focus on key elements that are of interest to the citizens and the City.

For purposes of comparison, the exact same questions from 2007 survey were used in 2014. Using the same survey allows for the City to see what it has accomplished in the past 7 years and if the desires of residents and stakeholders are still in line with the future vision of the City. The following tables contain both the 2007 and 2014 survey results. Qualitative responses were also analyzed and used to develop the goals and objectives section of this Plan.

In 2007, 130 individuals responded and in 2014, 189 individuals responded to the survey. Part I focuses on current conditions in the City while Part II places on emphasis on the future vision for Williamston.

### PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SUMMARY

**Part I:** In general, there is approval of the current state of the City and municipal services. The survey respondents overwhelmingly approve for the way police protection (Williamston Police Department) and emergency services (NIESA) are being provided. Downtown parking and lighting, overall City services and park and recreation facilities are all basically well-received.

On the issue of the condition of streets and sidewalks, respondents were much more negative, giving those issues a poor or very poor rating, particularly for those residents who live in areas where the streets and sidewalks have not yet been repaired.

In general, residents are satisfied with the neighborhood street lighting but this amenity could be improved.

The one City service that was widely criticized was water service. Many residents are not satisfied with the quality of the water both in terms of being very “hard” and having excessive iron in the water, as well as being overpriced for the perceived return of poor quality water. However, the water system had been going through major changes in the months preceding the survey, so the responses may have been reflective of those changes.

**Part II:** The statements relative to how the City should look in the future generated general agreement with the concept of the downtown as a regional, cultural, and entertainment center with local amenities and community attractions. The statements that received more negative comments pertained to attracting national “name brand” businesses downtown and that the City should retain its current character by limiting growth and development.

## PART 1: CITY SERVICES AND THE CURRENT STATE OF THE CITY

The first part of the survey pertained to the respondents’ opinions about current services and the state of the City. Respondents were asked to provide opinions on fourteen (14) different issues. Their possible responses ranged from “very good” to “very poor”. The option of responding with “No Opinion” was also offered. The following table presents the results. City services that saw a higher number of “very good” and “good” responses since the 2007 Master Plan survey are highlighted in gray.

TABLE A.1: CITY SERVICES AND THE CURRENT STATE OF THE CITY

	<i>Very Good</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Poor</i>	<i>Very Poor</i>	<i>No Opinion</i>
<b>Police Protection</b>	49.72%	30.73%	13.41%	1.68%	0.56%	3.91%
<b>Emergency Services (NIESA)</b>	51.40%	27.93%	6.70%	0.00%	0.5%	13.41%
<b>Street Condition</b>	2.23%	18.99%	36.31%	30.73%	10.61	1.12%
<b>Neighborhood Street Lighting</b>	6.70%	35.20%	36.87%	10.61%	3.35%	7.26%
<b>Downtown Street Lighting</b>	31.84%	48.60%	10.61%	3.91%	1.68%	3.35%
<b>Sewer Service</b>	11.17%	31.84%	26.82%	5.03%	4.47%	20.67%
<b>Water Service</b>	6.70%	26.26%	25.14%	15.08%	8.94%	17.88%
<b>Sidewalks</b>	6.70%	24.58%	46.93%	12.85%	8.94%	0.00%
<b>Park and Recreation Facilities</b>	21.23%	45.2%	24.58%	5.59%	1.68%	1.68%
<b>Building Services (Permits, etc.)</b>	3.35%	15.64%	18.99%	4.47%	1.68%	55.87%
<b>Zoning Code Enforcement</b>	2.23%	12.85%	21.79%	6.15%	5.03%	51.96%
<b>City Hall Business Hours</b>	7.82%	36.31%	27.37%	1.68%	0.56%	26.26%
<b>Downtown Parking</b>	10.06%	39.11%	38.55%	8.38%	3.91%	0.00%
<b>Overall City Services</b>	10.61%	44.69%	36.31%	3.35%	0.00%	5.03%

Categories that resulted in the most positive responses in 2014, including “very good” and “good” were:

- Police Protection;
- Emergency Services (NIESA);
- Downtown Street Lighting;
- Park and Recreation Facilities; and
- Overall City Services.

This indicates that there is a strong public perception that the City is doing a good job in providing services and recreational opportunities, and that the current state of the City is similarly well perceived.

Areas with the most negative responses, including “poor” and “very poor” were:

- Street Condition; and
- Sidewalks.

Other areas that received a high number of “average” responses and would benefit from improvements include:

- Neighborhood Street Lighting; and
- Downtown Parking.

In general, there were fewer negative perceptions than positive perceptions. However, as the Master Plan is developed it is important that particular attention and emphasis is placed on improving those services that did not score as highly with the respondents.

## PART 2: WHAT SHOULD THE CITY LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE?

The next section of the survey pertained to what the City should look like in the future. The respondents were given a series of 17 statements to which they were asked to state whether their opinions were in strong agreement, strong disagreement or fell somewhere in-between. The intent was to gauge how strongly respondents felt about some key issues concepts that need to be addressed as the City of Williamston plans a course for future growth and development. At this point no specific design concepts were presented. As the planning process continues it is intended that residents will be asked to provide input on specific projects.

The following table provides a listing of the 17 statements and a breakdown of the responses that were received. Statements that received more responses in the “strongly agree” and “agree” categories since 2007 are highlighted in gray. This indicates the community has a strong desire to see these happen and is reaffirming the 2007 Master Plan goals and vision.

TABLE A.2: WHAT SHOULD THE CITY LOOK LIKE IN THE FUTURE?

	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Appearance and community impact of new development are more important than the type of use.	12.96%	36.42%	14.81%	32.72%	3.09%
The downtown area should be mainly a combination of unique niche businesses and local goods and services.	27.78%	50.62%	7.41%	13.58%	0.62%
The downtown area needs a mix of unique niche business as well as national “name brand” businesses.	5.56%	35.80%	11.11%	39.51%	8.02%
The City should be a destination point attracting more visitors to the downtown to dine and shop.	38.27%	52.47%	6.79%	2.47%	0.00%
It is important to preserve the appearance of the Community Center regardless of the future use of the building.	17.90%	27.16%	15.43%	28.40%	11.11%
The City should retain its current character by strictly limiting growth and development.	3.70%	20.99%	11.11%	50.62%	13.58%
City services should be consolidated in one location.	12.96%	39.51%	33.95%	12.96%	0.62%
The City needs an expanded tax base through growth to continue to provide services at the current tax rate.	14.81%	46.91%	22.84%	12.35%	3.09%
Industrial and non-retail commercial growth should be encouraged.	17.90%	51.85%	11.73%	14.81%	3.70%
The City should encourage residential growth.	17.90%	62.96%	11.11%	7.41%	0.62%
The City should work cooperatively with neighboring townships to plan for growth.	30.86%	61.11%	4.94%	3.09%	0.00%
The traffic flow on South Putnam/North Williamston Road needs to be improved.	18.52%	28.40%	24.07%	27.78%	1.23%
The City needs additional housing for senior citizens.	8.02%	17.90%	56.79%	13.58%	3.70%
A variety of housing types should be encouraged in addition to traditional single family homes including duplexes, apartments, condominiums etc.	13.58%	39.51%	17.90%	22.84%	6.17%
The prime entryway to the City (North Williamston Road at the I-96 interchange) should be improved to establish a community image.	29.63%	46.30%	11.73%	12.35%	0.00%
Williamston should make the City more walkable with additional pathways.	38.89%	33.33%	13.58%	13.58%	0.62%
The City should promote cultural events and amenities (theatre project, etc.).	45.68%	40.12%	7.41%	4.94%	1.85%

Statements that received a positive response, including “highly agree” or “agree” had an emphasis on creating and maintaining the downtown as a destination point for a combination of unique niche businesses and local services for shopping and dining; expanding the tax base to include industrial, non-retail commercial growth, and residential growth; working cooperatively with neighboring communities, establishing a community image, expanding pathways for increased walkability, and providing more cultural and community events.

In comparison, respondents did not agree with statements with an emphasis on preserving the appearance of the Community Center, encouraging national “name brand” businesses in the downtown, and strictly limiting additional growth and development.

## DEMOGRAPHICS OF THE RESPONDENTS

The following table provides demographic information about the survey respondents. It is important to note that those within the 18-24 age range were underrepresented when compared to the City’s overall population. Additionally, many more females took the survey than males. In 2007, the difference between male and female survey takers was much smaller. The majority of the respondents were Williamston residential homeowners.

TABLE A.3: DEMOGRAPHICS

<b>Age of Respondents</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Under 18	1.06%
18-24	2.12%
25-34	14.29%
35-44	33.33%
45-54	22.22%
55-64	16.40%
65-74	9.52%
Over 75	1.06%

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Male	34.39%
Female	65.61%

<b>Years as a Resident or Business Owner</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Less than one year	3.70%
One to four years	12.70%
Five to nine years	16.40%
Ten to fourteen years	13.23%
Fifteen to nineteen years	11.64%
Twenty years or more	34.92%
Not a resident or business owner in Williamston	7.41%

<b>Interest in the City</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Residential Homeowner	61.90%
Apartment/home renter	8.47%
Business owner (non-resident)	4.76%
Business owner (resident)	4.76%
Apartment building owner	0.0%
Live in Wheatfield Township	5.82%
Live in Williamstown Township	14.29%