CITY OF WILLIAMSTON
161 East Grand River Avenue, Williamston, MI; 517-655-2774
REGULAR PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING AGENDA
Tuesday, December 2, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

1. Call to Order
2. Pledge of Allegiance
3. Roll Call
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Audience Participation – maximum 5 minutes per presentation.
6. Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes of November 4, 2025
7. Action Items
   a. Consideration of 2026 Meeting Dates & Times
   b. Master Plan
   c.
8. Discussion Items
   a.
   b.
9. Correspondence Received/Information Only
   a.
10. Staff Reports
    a. City Manager - Project Updates
11. Audience Participation - maximum 5 minutes per presentation.
12. Planning Commissioner Comments
13. Adjourn to the Call of the Chair

In Accordance with Public Act 267 (Open Meetings Act), individuals with disabilities requiring special assistance planning to attend the meeting should contact the City Clerk at 517-655-2774 for accommodations. This request must be made two (2) business days in advance of the meeting. **The next regular meeting of the Williamston Planning Commission will be held on Tuesday, January 7, 2026 in the City Council Chambers at 6:00 p.m.**

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CITY OF WILLIAMSTON
PLANNING COMMISSION
NOVEMBER 4, 2025
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

1. Call to Order:
The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Williamston City Hall Council Chambers by Chairman Jeff Markstrom and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. Roll Call:
Chairman Jeff Markstrom, Commissioners Noah Belanger, Steve Panganis, Reynold Houle, and Spencer Good. Absent: Brandon Lanyon and Tim Ludwig.

Also Present: City Manager John Hanifan, Deputy Clerk Barbara Burke, City Attorney Timothy Perrone, citizens Ken Szymusiak and Andrew Keller.

Motion by **Panganis**, second by **Belanger**, to excuse Lanyon and Ludwig. **Motion passed by voice vote.**

4. Approval of Agenda:
Motion by **Houle**, second by **Good**, to approve the agenda as presented. **Motion passed by voice vote**.

5. Audience Participation:
Andrew Keller felt the Oakwood Construction project on Rowley Road, next to his property, was not following the site plan specifications on keeping vegetation. Manager Hanifan suggested Planning Commissioners drive out to view the site.

6. Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes of October 7, 2025:
Motion by **Panganis**, second by **Houle**, to approve the regular meeting minutes of October 7, 2025, as presented. **Motion passed by voice vote**.

7. Action Items:
None.

8. Discussion Items:

8a. Master Plan
Manager Hanifan said tonight's goal is to note any items for McKenna in updating the Master Plan. He will meet with McKenna tomorrow to review comments/topics discussed at tonight's meeting. He gave Commissioners an update on the timeline and noted this will be an action item at the December meeting.

10. Staff Reports:

10a. City Manager – Project Updates:
Manager Hanifan stated Tailgaters have obtained their water/sewer permits and the project is moving along. Oakwood also have their water/sewer permits and will be pouring pads this

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week. No update on the Storage Near Me facility on Corwin Road. There is a new architect for the Greater Lansing Veterinary Center project. The City replaced numerous sidewalks around town.

11. Audience Participation:

Andrew Keller said he has been trying to get "pocket parks" around the City added to the Master Plan. He felt property owners could place benches, etc., in areas unable to be developed. Manager Hanifan stated we cannot tell private property owners what to do with their land and the City is happy with our current Parks Plan.

12. Planning Commissioner Comments:

Commissioner Panganis said at last month's meeting a resident had asked about a noise ordinance for loading/unloading at the businesses near Williamston and Linn Roads. He asked if there was an update as it is continuing to happen. Manager Hanifan said additional data is needed (which business, time, etc.) to report to the Williamston Police Department.

Commissioners welcomed new Commissioner, Spencer Good.

13. Adjourn to the Call of the Chair:

Chairman Markstrom adjourned the meeting at 6:46 p.m.

Meeting adjourned at 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted: _____
Barbara J. Burke, Deputy Clerk

Date approved: _____

7a.
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Planning Commission	
2026 Meeting Dates	
1st Tuesday of the month at 6:00 p.m.	
January 6	July 7
February 3	**August 6 (Thurs)**
March 3	September 1
April 7	October 6
May 5	**November 5 (Thurs)**
June 2	December 1

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City of Williamston Master Plan

DRAFT: November 2025
for Planning Commission Review

MCKENNA

Acknowledgments

Thank you! The participation and cooperation of community leaders, residents, and members of civic organizations in the preparation of Williamston's 2026 Master Plan is greatly appreciated.

City Council

Tammy Gilroy, Mayor
Daniel Rhines, Mayor Pro-Tem
Terry Hansen
John Haynes
Steve Jenkins
Tim Ludwig
Scott VanAllsburg

Planning Commission

Jeff Markstorm, Chair
Noah Belanger, Vice Chair
Tim Ludwig, Council Representative
Spencer Good
Reynold Houle
Brandon Lanyon
Steve Panganis
John Haynes, Council Alternate

City Contributors

John Hanifan, City Manager
Holly Thompson, MMC, CMMC, City Clerk
Barb Burke, Deputy Clerk
Brooke Donnelly, DDA Chair

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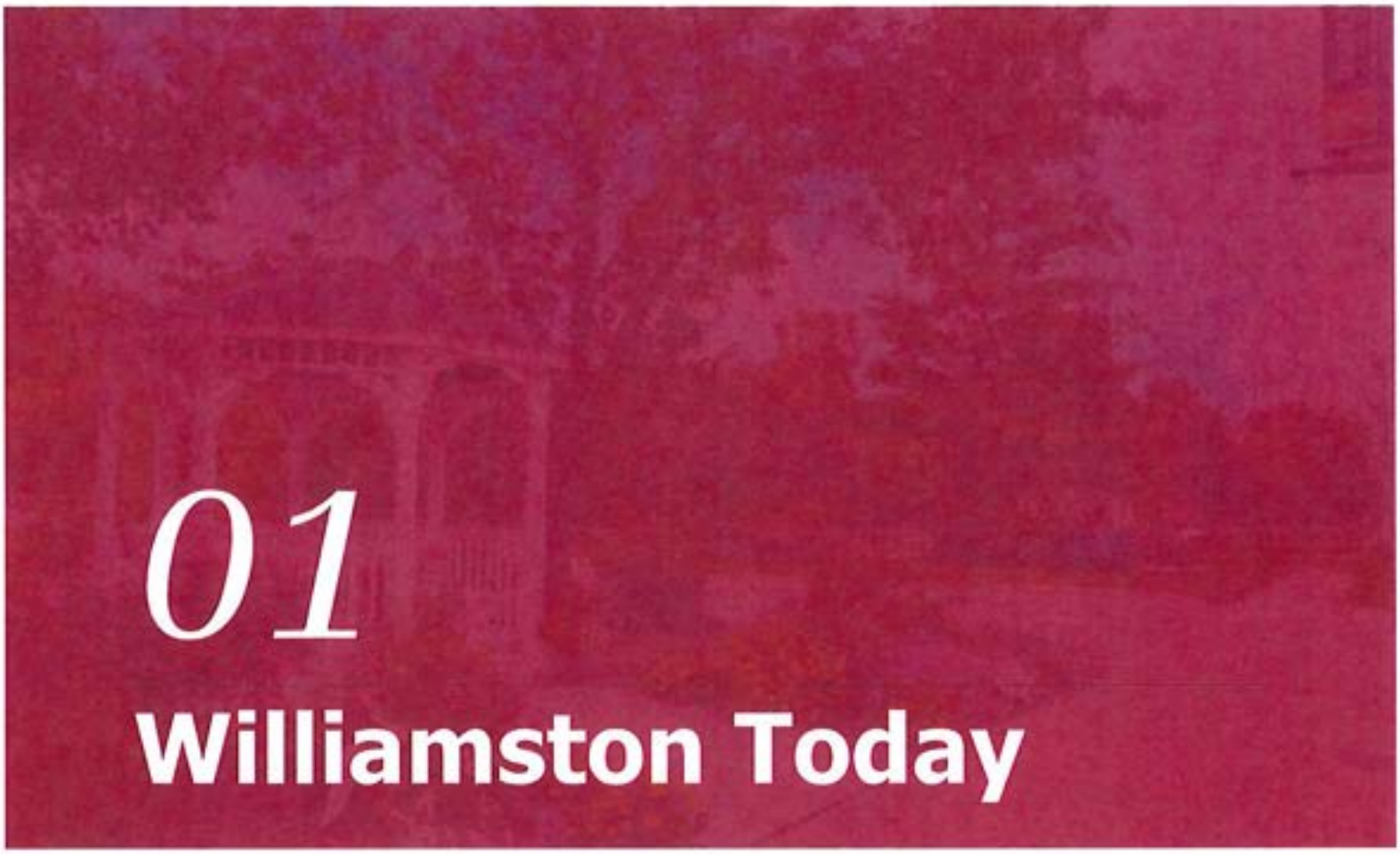


01
Williamston Today

Welcome to the Williamston Master Plan!

This Master Plan serves as a roadmap for Williamston's future—building on the community's unique character while guiding thoughtful growth and development. It focuses on expanding housing options, strengthening neighborhoods, enhancing the downtown core, improving transportation and infrastructure, and making the most of the area's recreational assets.

At its heart, the Plan reflects Williamston's commitment to a high quality of life for all residents. As the city grows and becomes more diverse, it is essential to plan for a safe, inclusive, and accessible community that remains true to its small-town charm. Guided by community input, detailed data, and proven planning strategies, this Plan provides a strong foundation for a vibrant, sustainable, and welcoming future.

Regional Analysis

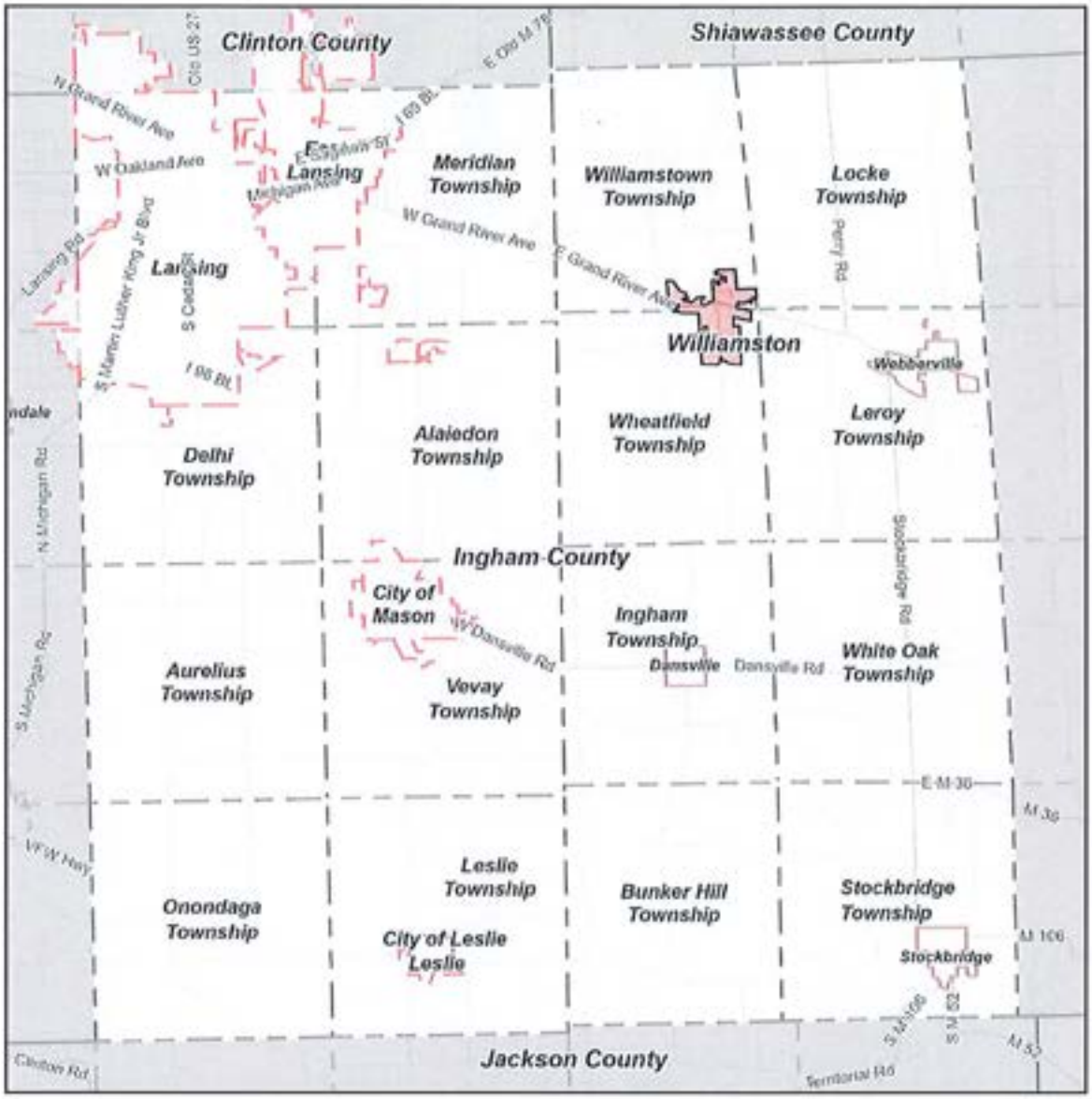
Located in Ingham County in Mid-Michigan, the City of Williamston sits 16 miles east of Lansing and spans 2.52 square miles. With its prime location along I-96 and regional route M-43, Williamston is easily accessible to the surrounding communities while maintaining its small-town charm.

Nestled along the Red Cedar River and is surrounded by high quality farmland, Williamston offers a scenic setting for both residential and commercial development. The river enhances the city's Downtown Core, providing a picturesque backdrop and premier outdoor recreation opportunities such as trails, parks, kayaking, and other activities.

Williamston's location between Lansing and Detroit gives residents access to major employment centers, cultural attractions, and educational institutions, including Michigan State University just minutes away. The city is also home to an exemplary school system, a vibrant historic Downtown, and a mix of commercial and industrial businesses.

With its blend of small-town character and modern conveniences, Williamston has become a highly desirable community for families in the Lansing region. It offers a peaceful, close-knit environment while ensuring easy access to jobs, entertainment, and essential services – making it the perfect place to thrive.

Map 1: Regional Location



Regional Location

City of Williamston,
Ingham County, Michigan

June 5, 2024

LEGEND

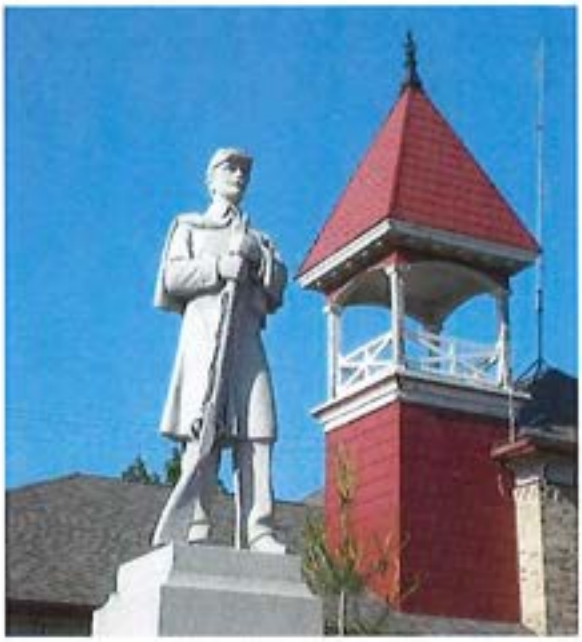
- City of Williamston
- Villages
- Cities
- Townships
- Ingham County
- Surrounding Counties

0 250 500 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. McKenna 2024.

MCKENNA

Williamston's Evolution



Williamston's development has been shaped by it strategic location along the Red Cedar River and Grand River Avenue, serving as key waypoint between Detroit and Lansing since the early 19th century. Originally settled in 1834, the area grew as a farming and milling community, with the Williams brothers platting the village in 1845. By the late 19th century, the arrival of the Howell & Lansing Railroad (1871) fueled industrial and commercial expansion, leading to Williamston's incorporation as a village and later as a city in 1945.

Over time, shifts in economic trends, including the decline of local industry in the early 20th century, led to a transition toward small businesses, tourism, and historic preservation. While modern growth has focused on commercial corridors and residential development, Williamston retains its historic downtown charm, supported by adaptive reuse, cultural events, and economic revitalization efforts. This Master Plan builds upon Williamston's legacy, ensuring that future development enhances community identity, economic resilience, and sustainable land use patterns.

Williamston Today

Williamston is a thriving rural-suburban community offering a relaxed and safe quality of life with strong local schools and proximity to Michigan State University (MSU). While historically a farming community, Williamston has diversified its economy across sectors such as education, healthcare, finance, and real estate, while maintaining its small-town charm and historic character. Many residents commute to nearby cities, making Williamston a bedroom community.

The walkable downtown district is a regional draw, featuring quaint shops, local restaurants, a historic movie theater, and live performing arts theater. Grand River Avenue, a key corridor in the region, runs through the heart of the city, making Williamston highly accessible. The city is becoming more built-out, within increasing demand for housing options and opportunities to age in place.

As Williamston continues to grow, careful planning is essential to preserve its historic charm while supporting responsible development. The Williamston Master Plan provides a framework for balancing growth with community values, ensuring the city remains a desirable place to live, work, and visit.

Historic District and Sites

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 solider at parade rest, stands in front of City Hall and is considered a contributing object.

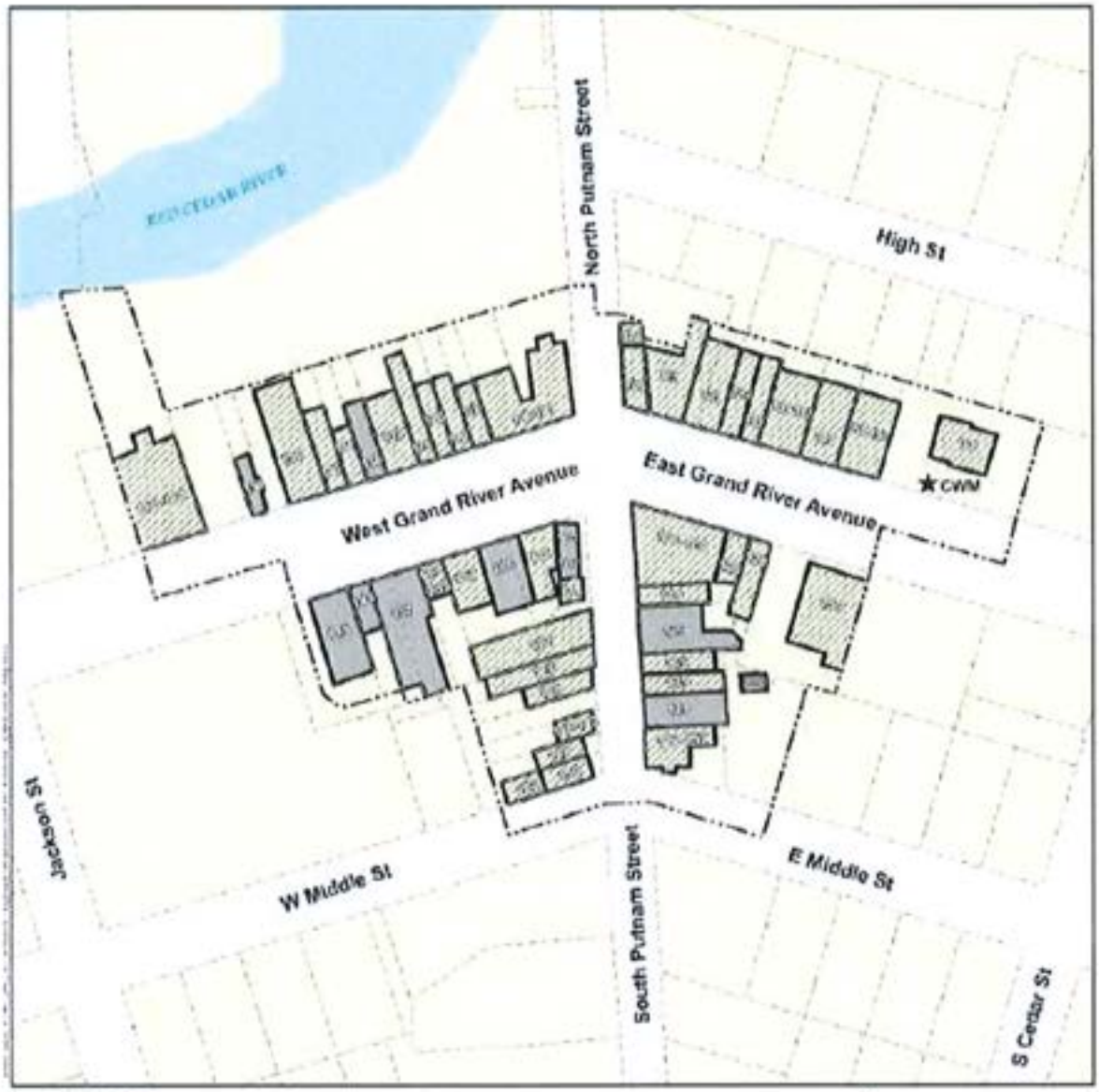
In June of 2014, the Michigan Historical Commission granted the city permission to erect a Michigan Historical Marker for the Williamston Downtown Historic District, Ingham County (local site 2260). The double-sided marker was erected in front of City Hall in the fall of 2014 and marks the eastern boundary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

Additionally, there are currently three buildings in Williamston that are on the State Register of Historic Sites:

- **Andrews Hotel.** 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.
- **Barrett Building.** 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.
- **George Beeman House.** 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.

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.

Map 2: Downtown Historic Context



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, which as previously mentioned, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and allows for funding opportunities for building rehabilitation.

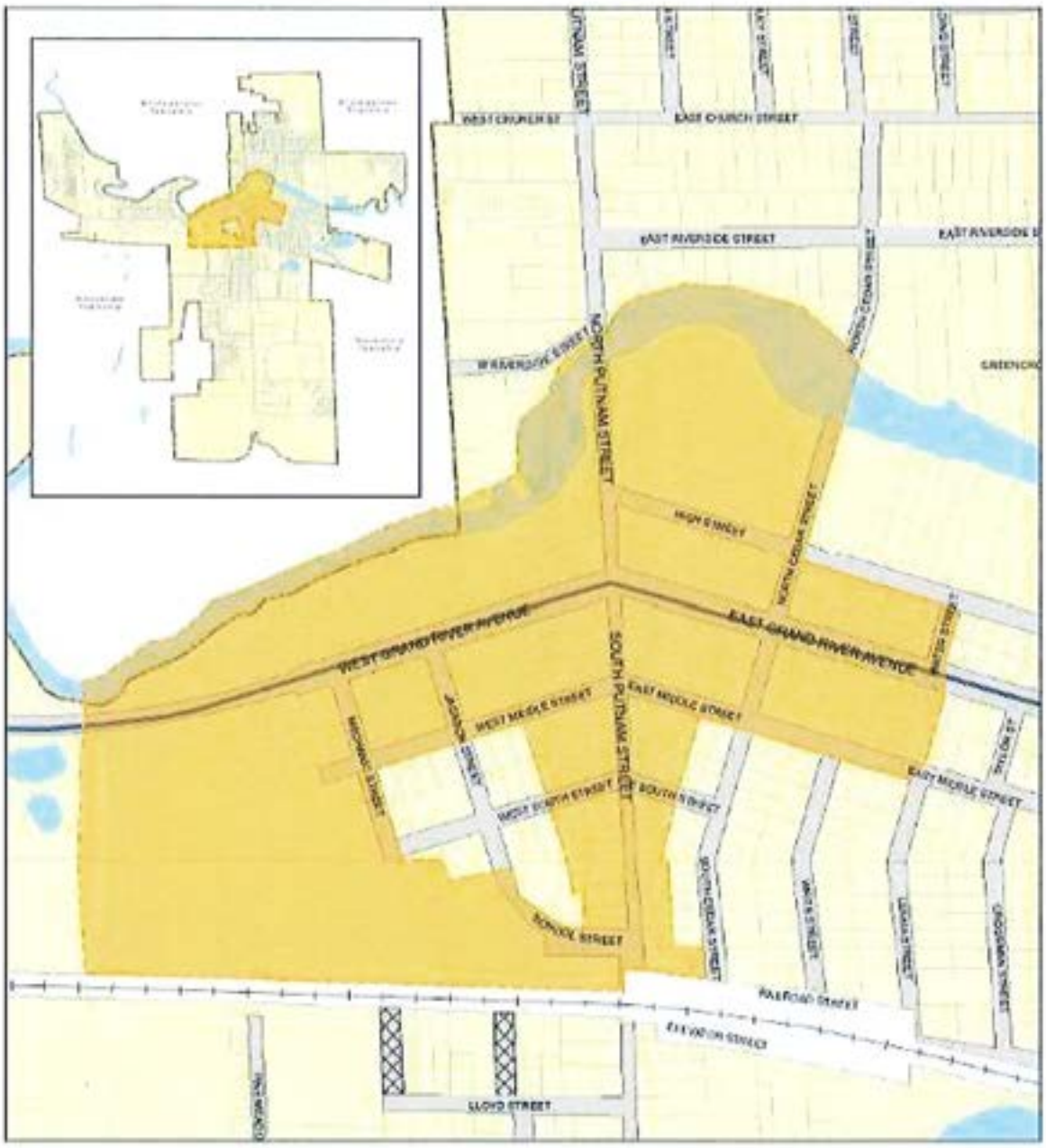
An overview of the DDA's goals are to:

- Stimulate private investment and economic growth;
- Draw local residents and visitors 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 which upgrade the district's identity and function; and
- 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 private investment;
- Making improvements to qualified applicants within the district; and
- Supporting and promoting the Williamston Farmers' Market.

Map 3: Downtown Development Authority Boundary Map



Map 4
Downtown Development Authority Boundary Map

City of Williamston, Ingham County, Michigan

July 30, 2014

LEGEND

- DDA Boundary
- Lakes, Ponds and Rivers
- Parcels
- Unimproved Right-Of-Way
- Williamston City Limit
- Railroad

McKenna Associates

Data Sources: City of Williamston, Ingham County, River's Edge GIS LLC

Economic Development Corporation / Tax Increment Finance Area

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:

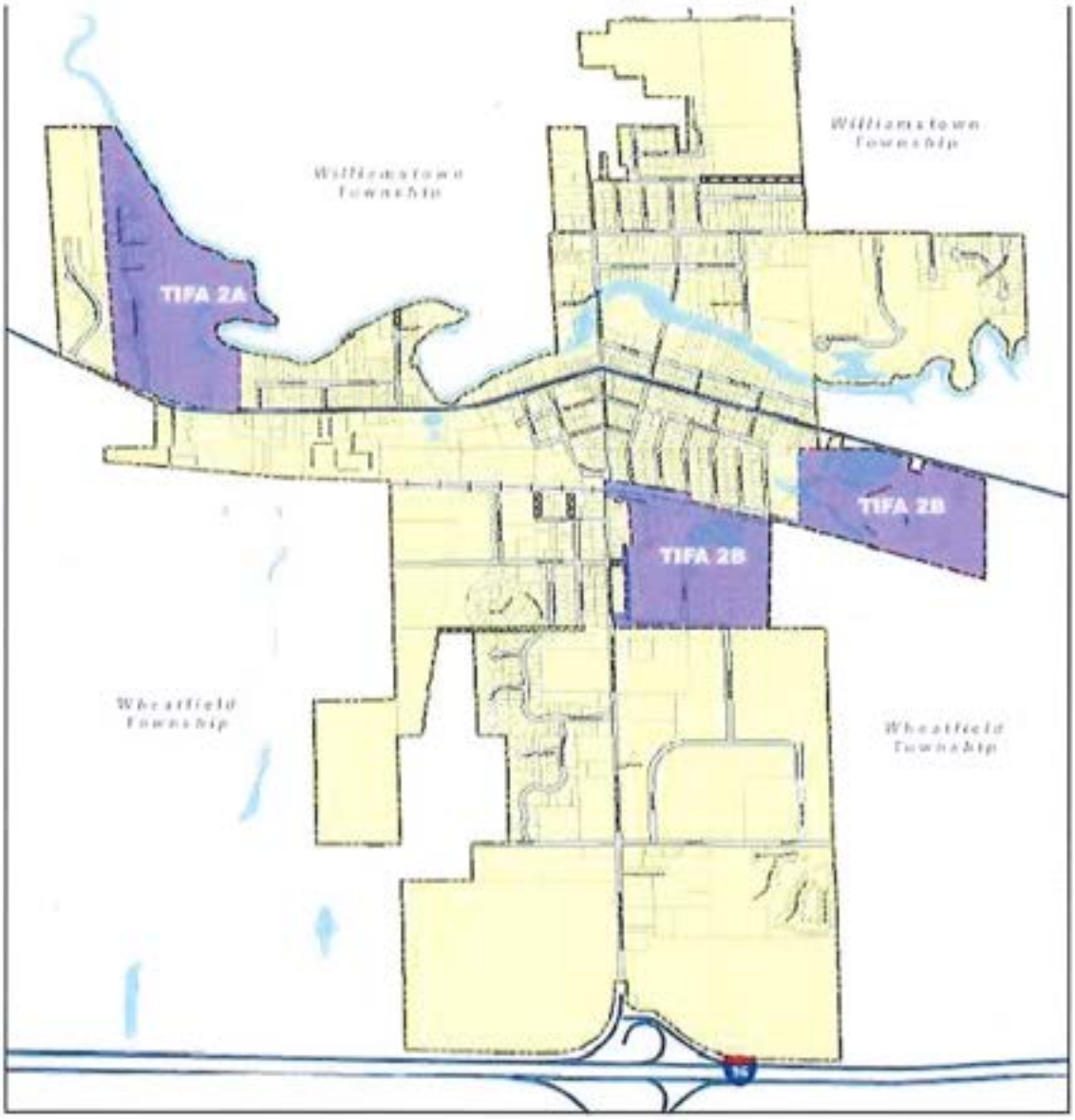
- Bringing targeted businesses to Williamston;
- Establishing relationships with developers; and
- Creating a balance between encouraging businesses to locate and expand in Williamston while maintaining its small-town character.

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 rezone 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.

Map 4: Tax Increment Financing Area



Map 5
Tax Increment Financing Area (TIFA)

City of Williamston, Ingham County, Michigan

July 30, 2014

LEGEND

- TIFA Boundary Areas
- Unimproved Right-Of-Way
- Williamston City Limit
- Lakes, Ponds and Rivers
- Parcels
- Railroad

McKenna Associates

Data Sources: City of Williamston, Ingham County, Rivers Edge GIS LLC

02
Existing Conditions

Demographics

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.

For purposes of analysis, where appropriate, comparisons have been made with neighboring communities, Williamstown Township, Meridian Charter Township, City of Lansing, Village of Webberville, 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.

Most of the data presented comes from the 2010 US Census. In some cases, the most recent data comes from the 2020 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 and Households

Over the last decade, the population of Williamston has remained relatively stable compared to nearby communities, with a growth rate of 1%. This lower growth rate is comparable to that of the State as a whole. While the growth was relatively stagnant in Williamston, Ingham County grew at a rate of 3.4%, and some other communities in the region changed even more, with Williamston Township having the highest level of growth and the Village of Webberville having the greatest decrease. The smaller growth percentage for Williamston is likely due to the fact that the city has a generally older population.

Table 1: Population Growth Comparisons

	Michigan	Ingham County	Williamstown Township	City of Williamston	Lansing	Webberville	Meridian Charter Township
2010	9,952,687	281,365	4,975	3,783	115,634	1,474	39,669
2020	9,973,907	290,923	5,165	3,819	117,488	1,238	42,853
% Change	0.2%	3.4%	3.8%	1.0%	1.6%	-16.0%	8.0%

Source: 2010 and 2020 United States Decennial Census

While the population has slightly increased, the number of households overall has declined slightly, at a rate of -6.7%. This slight decline is consistent with the fact that the City's average household size has increased. This may indicate the presence of more multi-generational households, wherein grandparents move in with their adult children, or adult children stay at home with their parents for longer periods. In any given community, a number of things could create this trend; it may be caused by financial constraints which require people to consolidate their households, or a result of an aging population which needs more support from family members. Ultimately, the change in Williamston has not been dramatic by any means, but it is relevant especially when compared to nearby communities.

Table 2: Household Growth Comparison

	Michigan	Ingham County	Williamstown Township	City of Williamston	Lansing	Webberville	Meridian Charter Township
2010	3,843,997	108,723	1,742	1,828	48,515	530	17,169
2020	3,980,408	113,678	1,997	1,706	49,539	461	18,451
% Change	3.5%	4.6%	14.6%	-6.7%	2.1%	-13.0%	7.5%

Source: 2010 and 2020 United States Decennial Census

Table 3: Average Household Comparison

	Michigan	Ingham County	Williamstown Township	City of Williamston	Lansing	Webberville	Meridian Charter Township
2010	2.53	2.4	2.86	2.3	2.37	2.78	2.29
2020	2.45	2.4	2.57	2.31	2.35	2.69	2.3
% Change	-0.032	0.000	-0.101	0.004	-0.008	-0.032	0.004

Source: 2010 and 2020 United States Decennial Census

Age

According to the 2020 U.S. Census, the median age in Williamston is 39.9 years. That's a little older than the median ages for both Ingham County and the state of Michigan. Compared to nearby communities, Williamston lands somewhere in the middle.

The largest age group in town is adults between 20 and 44 years old—often considered the "family forming" years. This suggests that many residents are in a stage of life where they're starting or raising families. It's also worth noting that the number of retirement-age residents is nearly equal to the number of school-age children, showing a good mix of generations living here.

This mix of ages is important to think about when planning for the future. Because many people in Williamston are in their family-forming years, things like schools, parks, recreation programs, and family-friendly entertainment are especially important. At the same time, with a healthy population of older adults, it's also important to plan for things like senior-friendly housing, accessible transportation, and safe public spaces. These kinds of improvements help make Williamston a great place to live for people of all ages.

Table 4: Median Age Comparison

	Michigan	Ingham County	Williamstown Township	City of Williamston	Lansing	Village of Webberville	Meridian Charter Township
2020	39.8	32.4	49.5	39.9	32.8	35.5	36.9

Source: 2010 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Table 5: Population Age Groups

Age Group	2020	% of Population
Pre-School Age (Under 5)	339	8.6%
School Aged (5-19 years)	616	15.6%
Family Forming (20-44)	1,277	32.4%
Mature Families (45 to 64)	1,022	25.9%
Retirement (Over 65)	685	17.4%
Total	**3,939**	

Source: 2010 and 2020 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates

Economy

Employment

The following section shares information about where Williamston residents work and what types of jobs they have. The first table uses data from the 2020 American Community Survey and focuses on full-time workers over the age of 16 who live in the city—not necessarily those who work in the city.

There are **2,151 full-time workers** living in Williamston. The largest share—28.2%—work in Education, Health Care, and Social Assistance. Another 18.5% are employed in Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Rental Leasing. These industries represent a significant portion of the city's workforce and give a snapshot of the types of careers common among Williamston residents.

Table 6: Occupation of Residents by Industry

Sector	Number	Percentage
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, and Mining	0	0.0%
Construction	62	2.9%
Manufacturing	144	6.7%
Wholesale Trade	107	5.0%
Retail Trade	143	6.6%
Transportation and Warehousing, Utilities	49	2.3%
Information	16	0.7%
Finance, Insurance, and Real Estate	397	18.5%
Professional, Scientific, and Management, and Administrative and Waste Management services	170	7.9%
Education, Health Care, and Social Assistance	606	28.2%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation, and Accommodation and Food Services	108	5.0%
Public Administration	122	5.7%
Other	227	10.6%
Total full-time, year-round civilian employed population over 16 years	**2,151**	100%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Income

Median income is an important indicator for understanding the economic health and needs of a community. According to the 2020 American Community Survey, the median household income in the City of Williamston was $75,862—a 22.7% increase over the past decade.

This is a positive trend, especially when compared to neighboring communities, which have seen a range of income growth over the same period. An increase in median income can suggest that wages are rising for residents. It could also mean that a greater number of higher-income households are moving into the city, or that lower-income households have moved away—both of which can shift the median income upward.

The table below compares the median incomes of Williamston and nearby communities in 2010 and 2020, with 2010 values adjusted for inflation to reflect 2022 dollars.

Table 7: Median Income

	Michigan	Ingham County	Williamston Township	City of Williamston	Lansing	Village of Webberville	Meridian Charter Township
2010*	48,432	45,808	94,387	61,840	37,666	53,636	63,930
2020	59,234	55,253	123,102	75,862	44,233	56,696	72,156
% Change	22.3%	20.6%	30.4%	+22.7%	17.4%	5.7%	12.9%

**Adjusted for 2020 inflation using the Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index*

Housing

This section outlines the state of Williamston's housing stock. Information such as occupancy and tenure, housing types, and the age of homes helps build context about the City's built environment. These details can highlight current needs and areas where the housing market may not be meeting demand.

There are 1,821 housing units in the City of Williamston. Of these, 92.5% are occupied and 7.5% are vacant. A small percentage of vacant homes is generally healthy, allowing for reasonable turnover and the opportunity to welcome new residents. However, a high vacancy rate can lead to neglect and may signal that the housing market is out of sync with resident needs. Most economists agree that a healthy homeowner vacancy rate should be below 5%. In the surrounding region, vacancies have been declining as housing demand increases.

According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey (ACS), most of the vacant units in the city are vacant sold units. Additional vacant units are those listed for sale or rent.

Housing tenure refers to whether a home is owner occupied, or renter occupied. In Williamston, 66.4% of homes are owner-occupied. These residents are often more likely to stay long-term and invest in maintaining or improving their property. Renters, on the other hand, tend to be more mobile and are often younger or lower-income households.

Table 8: Occupancy and Tenure

Occupancy	Number of Housing Units	Percentage
Occupied Units	1,685	92.5%
Vacant Units	136	7.5%
Total Housing Units	1,821	
Tenure		
Owner-Occupied	1,119	66.40%
Renter-Occupied	566	33.60%

Source: 2020 United States Decennial Census

The table below categorizes housing types by unit density. In the City of Williamston, standard single-family homes on individual lots are the most common, comprising 57.8% of the housing stock. The next most common type is multi-family housing—which can range from a converted triplex to a large apartment complex—accounting for 22.7% of all units in the city.

Table 9: Type of Structure

Housing Type	Number of Housing Units	Percentage
One-family Detached	1,014	57.8%
One-family Attached	180	10.3%
Two Units	16	0.9%
Multi-Unit (More than 2 units)	398	22.7%
Mobile Home or other Type of Housing	145	8.3%
Total	1,753	

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

The age of a home doesn't necessarily determine its market value, but older homes are generally more expensive to maintain. In Williamston, 48.8% of the housing stock was built before 1979. These homes may require more upkeep, lack modern features, or need significant repairs. At the same time, older housing adds to the City's character and historical charm. However, the combination of a high percentage of aging homes and a 7.5% vacancy rate suggests that Williamston may have a mismatch between its existing housing stock and the needs of current or future residents. Some vacant homes may be outdated, undermaintained, or otherwise unsuitable, which can limit the City's ability to attract and retain residents. This points to a need for new or updated housing options that better meet modern standards and household preferences, while still preserving the City's unique character.

Table 10: Age of Housing Stock

Year Structure Built	Number	Percentage
2014 or later	30	1.68%
2010-2013	9	0.51%
2000-2009	340	19.08%
1980-1999	549	31.79%
1960-1979	269	15.09%
1940-1959	227	12.73%
1939 or earlier	359	20.14%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

Williamston has seen strong growth in home values over the past five years, following a decline between 2010 and 2015. This decline reflects a broader national trend, as the country was still recovering from the 2008 housing market crash during that period. In the last decade, 30 new homes have been constructed, however, other residential developments have been approved by the City. As shown in Table 13, the median home value dropped by 21.3% between 2010 to 2015, but then rebounded sharply rising by 45.1% between 2015 and 2020. This represents an overall 14.2% increase over the decade, adjusted for inflation.

When compared to nearby communities, Williamston's median home value lands near the middle. As shown in Table 14, it falls just below the State of Michigan average but remains above the countywide average. Nearby communities such as Williamston Township and Meridian Charter Township show higher values, while Lansing and Webberville show lower ones.

Table 11: Median Home Value 2010-2020, Adjusted for 2020 Inflation

Year	Median Value	% Change
2010	$150,500	-
2015	$118,500	-21.3%
2020	$171,900	+45.1%
2010-2020	-	+14.2%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator

Table 12: Median Home Values in Comparison Communities

	Michigan	Ingham County	Williamston Township	City of Williamston	Lansing	Village of Webberville	Meridian Charter Township
2022	$201,100	$173,600	$293,600	$199,600	$112,200	$141,900	$286,400

Despite this relative strength in home values, Williamston's 7.5% vacancy rate suggests uneven growth across the region. Some communities are seeing more rapid demand and price increases than others. While the overall demand for housing remains high across the region, recent trends have shifted the types of communities' people seek out.

Historically, Williamston's housing stock reflects the post-war suburban expansion, when people moved away from urban centers. However, in more recent decades, younger generations have gravitated toward cities and walkable neighborhoods with access to amenities. Williamston's proximity to Lansing puts it in a favorable position to capture future growth, especially as remote work increases flexibility in where people live. Smaller, character-rich communities like Williamston are increasingly attractive to people looking for a balance between small-town charm and regional access.

03

Existing Land Use

A clear understanding of current land uses allows the city to evaluate the compatibility of future development and delivering key public services. The existing land use survey serves as a comprehensive inventory of land use within the community, providing essential background data that informs the Master Plan. This information helps guide land use decisions ensuring that future growth aligns with the city's long-term vision and community needs.

Single-Unit Residential

Single-unit residential developments are located throughout the city, primarily in clusters and neighborhoods situated on the fringe of Downtown. These developments, typically detached homes, make up 58% of the city's housing stock. With its predominantly residential character, Williamston is considered a "bedroom community".

Multi-Unit Residential

Williamston has a variety of multi-unit residential developments, making up 32% of the city's total housing stock. These include single-unit attached dwellings, duplexes, and small and large multi-unit buildings. Larger developments, such as apartment buildings, feature multiple dwelling units on a single site. Most multi-unit residential areas are found in small pockets along the southern and northern edges of Downtown, as well as on the city's outer areas near commercial land uses.

Manufactured Home Park

Williamston has two manufactured home districts along Grand River on east and west edges of the city boundary. These developments provide an important housing option within the community, offering affordable and flexible living opportunities.

Commercial

Commercial development within Williamston includes a mixture of national retail chains, local businesses and office uses. Grand River Avenue serves as the city's primary commercial corridor, while other commercial development dispersed throughout the city. The city's vibrant historic, walkable Downtown is the core of commercial activity featuring entertainment, shopping and restaurants. This area is the heart of the city, showcasing Williamston's unique character and charm. It also acts as transition zone between the traditional historic Downtown and suburban style commercial and residential development.

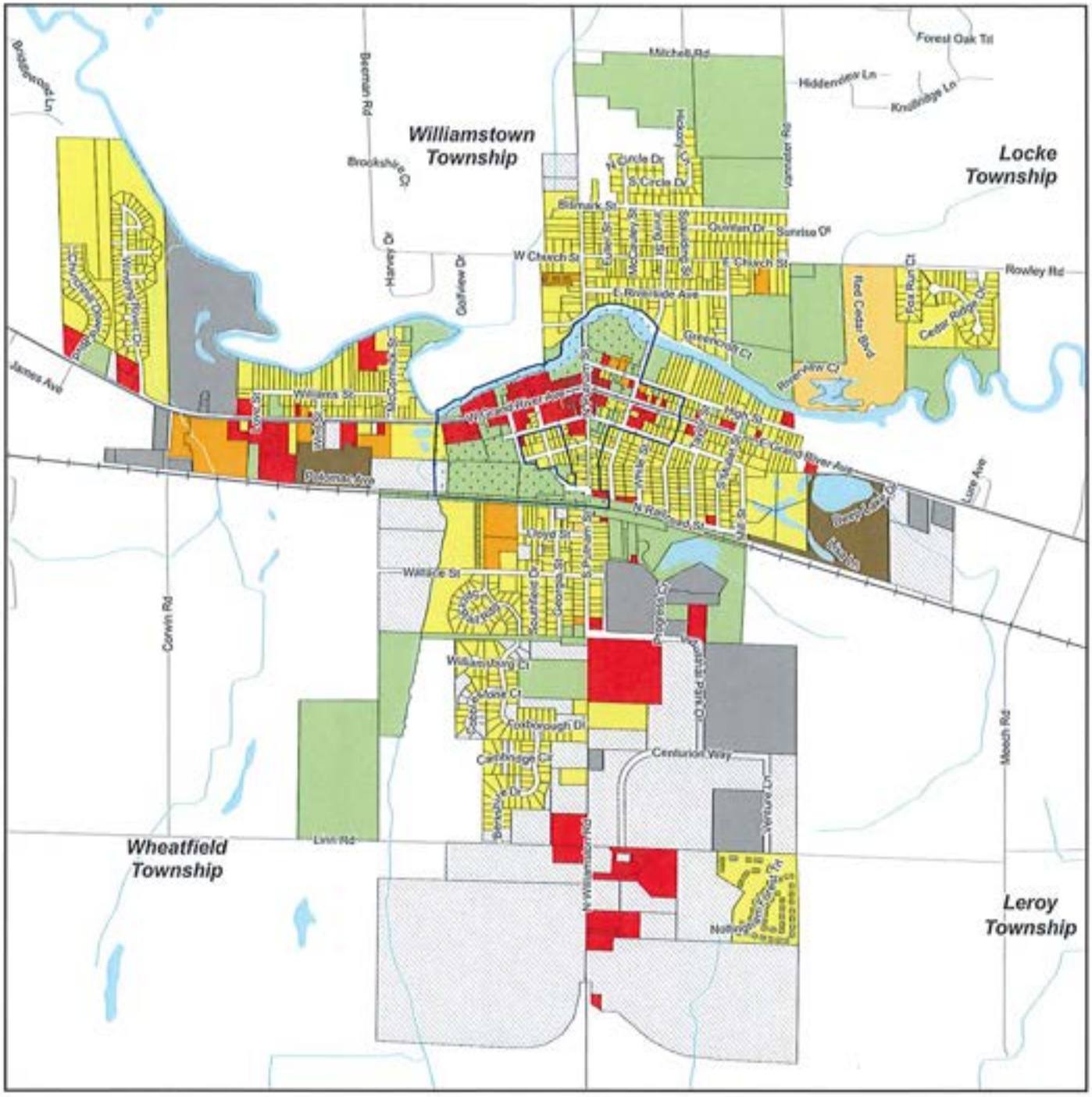
Industrial

Industrial areas in Williamston are designated for light manufacturing and related industries that provide employment opportunities. The city's primary industrial zone is located on the southern side of the city, between Downtown and I-96, and additional industrial properties are located on the eastern and western edges of the city along Grand River Avenue.

Industrial businesses in Williamston include light manufacturing, pharmaceutical and medical production, vehicle maintenance, and professional office buildings, among other uses. Much of the available industrial land is strategically positioned near I-96.

Public and Quasi-Public Facilities

Public and quasi-public facilities form the foundation of municipal governance, public safety, education, and community services. Key facilities include City Hall, the Police Department, the Library, and Williamston Community Schools. Together, these institutions strengthen the civic core, provide accessible learning opportunities, support workforce development and long-term community stability, and foster cultural and social engagement.



Existing Land Use

City of Williamston, Michigan

LEGEND

- Public/Tax Exempt
- Low Density Residential
- Medium Density Residential
- High Density Residential
- Mobile Home Park
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Vacant Land
- DDA Boundary

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Williamston, 2024. McKenna, 2025.

MCKENNA

04

Community Infrastructure & Sustainability

This chapter addresses key components of Williamston's community infrastructure, including its water and sanitary systems, parks and recreation facilities, floodplains, and soil resources. Together, these elements form the backbone of a healthy, functional, and sustainable community.

Recognizing elements like street trees, parks, and green spaces as integral parts of community infrastructure allows for a more holistic approach to managing and sustaining the city. This perspective is essential for maintaining a resilient and vibrant community amid evolving environmental conditions and future growth. This chapter also explores strategies to strengthen Williamston's infrastructure while promoting sustainability and protecting its natural assets.

Water and Sanitary Systems

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.

In 2006, the city brought a new well field "online". 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.

Parks and Recreation

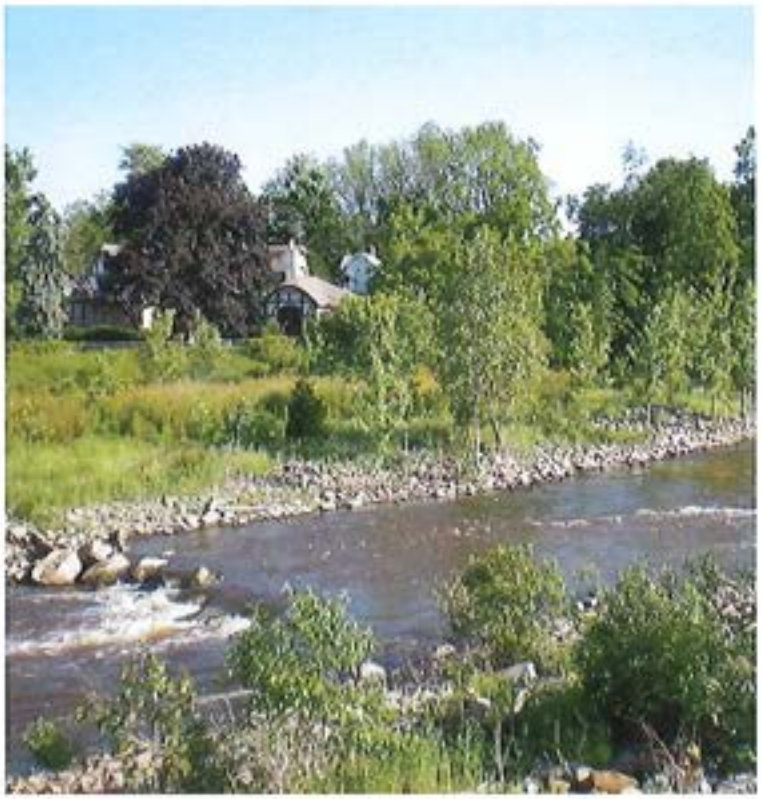
The city recently updated its *Parks and Recreation Master Plan*. This document details the recreational offerings and identifies recommendations needed to develop the park and recreation system into a vital component of the community. There are also a wealth of additional regional park and recreational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

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.

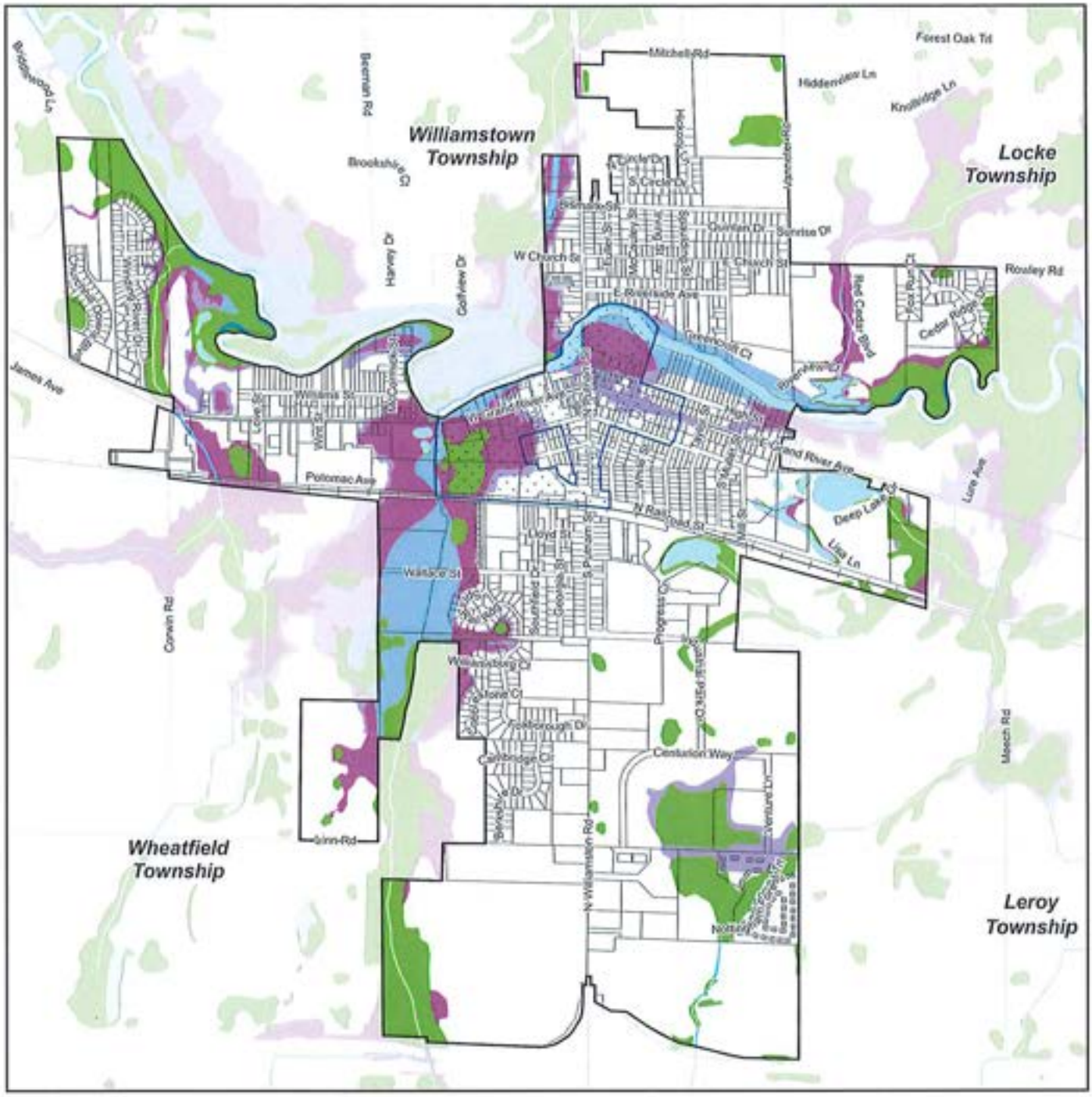
The Mill Pond, near Williamston's downtown area, is an important feature of the city that was formed by damming the Red Cedar River. Deer Creek, which flows from the south, empties into the Red Cedar River across the river from the golf course. Several ponds, drains and gravel pits are in the surrounding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

Williamston is rich in natural scenic beauty, with the Red Cedar River meandering through the center of the city. As such, the city is prone to river flooding, especially in years with heavy rain or snow events. The floodplain areas of the City should be acknowledged with proposed developments that will have an impact on surrounding floodplains and waterways. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) provides resources on the location of the City's floodplain, and other pertinent information on floodplain and flood mitigation efforts including grant funding opportunities.



Environmental Features

City of Williamston, Michigan

LEGEND

Floodplains

- 0.2% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- 1% Annual Chance Flood Hazard
- Regulatory Floodway

Wetlands

- Marsh, Swamp, Bog, Prairie
- River
- DDA Boundary
- City of Williamston

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Williamston, 2024. McKenna, 2025.

MCKENNA

05

The Community Vision

Williamston's Master Plan public engagement process was intentionally crafted to be inclusive, transparent, and participatory—ensuring the voices of community members, stakeholders, and City leadership were both heard and respected. The continued involvement of the Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and City Council members provided an additional layer of collaboration, bringing diverse perspectives together to review and shape the evolving draft Plan.

This collaborative approach fostered a sense of shared ownership, and contributed to the depth and credibility of the planning process. To broaden outreach and accommodate a wider audience, the City utilized an online survey, making participation accessible to those unable to attend in-person meetings or events. Through this multifaceted strategy—including digital outreach and face-to-face events—the City took a proactive stance in gathering meaningful input to inform and enrich the development of this Master Plan.

The insights gathered through this engagement process directly informed the Plan's content, leading to the refinement and updating of its goals and objectives. These revisions ensure that the Plan is more aligned with current community priorities, better addressing the needs, values, and future vision of Williamston's residents.

Public Engagement Feedback

Joint Visioning Session

As part of the Master Plan update, a joint visioning session took place on January 14, 2025, at Williamston Middle School. Attendees included members of the City Council, Planning Commission, Downtown Development Authority (DDA), and local residents.

Key topics of discussion included the downtown district and opportunities for expansion, the future use and character of residential neighborhoods over the next five years, industrial land development, and the Williamston Road Overlay District, among others. Ideas and suggestions were gathered for each topic, and at the conclusion of the session, participants voted on their top priorities for the Master Plan update. The results of the vote are as follows:

Expanding Downtown Williamston

The top priorities for expanding downtown are **historic architecture**, **filling empty storefronts**, and expanding the **DDA south to include the icehouse**. There is also strong support for **supporting businesses in place** and **bringing in new businesses**. Other suggestions, such as maintaining the current DDA boundaries and protecting residential corridors, received fewer votes.

- Focus on historic architecture – 17 votes
- Fill empty store fronts – 12 votes
- Expand DDA south to include ice house – 8 votes
- Support businesses in place – 9 votes
- Bring in new businesses – 7 votes
- Create more appeal – 7 votes
- Keep DDA same boundaries – 4 votes
- Priority on existing structures – 4 votes
- C-3 Zoning General Construction – protect residential corridor – 1 vote
- Be progressive – 1 vote

Residential Neighborhoods

The top priorities for residential zoning in the next 5 years are **protecting residential integrity on Grand River** and **understanding barriers to development**. Other ideas, like rezoning office spaces on Williamston Road and promoting multi-use housing, received fewer votes. Additionally, there was support for educating developers through open houses to facilitate development.

- Protect residential integrity on Grand River – 13 votes
- Understand barriers to development – 10 votes
- Rezone office on Williamston Rd. – 5 votes
- Educate developers/open house – 5 votes
- Stress multi-use housing – 4 votes

Industrial Land Development

The most popular ideas for industrial park vacant land development are **keeping the area as is** and **changing the I-1 use to include things like breweries.** There is also significant support for creating a **mixed-use area with I-1 and I-2 zones.** Fewer votes were given to rezoning for special land use or exploring **solar farm opportunities**.

- Keep zoning and the industrial park as is – 12 votes
- I-1 Change use to include things such as brewery – 11 votes
- Mixed use of I-1 and I-2 – 10 votes
- Rezone to mixed use-special land use – 7 votes
- Solar farm opportunity – 2 votes

Williamston Road Overlay District

The top priority for the Williamston Road Overlay District is ensuring **design standards align with desired aesthetics**. Other key priorities include **prohibiting drive-throughs north of Linn Rd., limiting building size,** and promoting **mixed-use developments** with commercial space on the first floor and residential above. Fewer votes were given to signage standards or making the area north of the Baptist Church residential.

- Design standards fit with aesthetics we want – 27 votes
- No drive-throughs north of Linn Rd. – 14 votes
- Limit building size – gross sq. ft. maximums – 10 votes
- Mixed use 1st floor commercial/upper as residential – 8 votes
- Signage standards – 4 votes
- Make north of Baptist Church residential – 3 votes

Community-Wide Survey

To launch the planning process, a citywide postcard featuring a survey QR code was mailed to all Williamston residents in July of 2024. The survey remained open through September and received 470 responses—representing about 12.5% of the population, a strong turnout that reflects an engaged and informed community.

Results reveal a population that values Williamston's historic downtown, established neighborhoods, and park system. Residents expressed interest in enhancing parks and recreation options, including more walking and biking trails and new park activities. While most are satisfied with current housing, many support expanded options—especially on undeveloped land in the city's northeast and south areas.

Overall, the community shows a desire to maintain Williamston's small-town charm while improving quality of life through thoughtful development and expanded amenities.

The following is a brief summary of the results, with full survey results located in the appendix:

Demographics

The survey first asked about participants' connection to the City of Williamston. Most respondents (77%) identified as homeowners, followed by full-time residents (54%). Others indicated ties such as attending local institutions (26%), working in the city (12%), renting a home or owning a business (both around 6%). A few selected "other."

When asked how long they've lived in Williamston, the largest group reported 20+ years (29%), with newer residents (0–5 years) close behind at 24%. Other ranges included 6–10 years (20%) and 11–20 years (19%). About 8% reported not living or owning property in the city.

These results suggest a healthy balance of long-term residents with historical knowledge and newer residents bringing fresh perspectives.

Transportation Priorities

Survey respondents reported a range of commute times: 42% travel less than 10 minutes to work, while the remainder commute longer distances, reflecting a mix of local employment and out-of-area commutes.

When asked to prioritize transportation improvements within Williamston, respondents identified the following needs, ranked by importance: enhanced pedestrian safety (57%), improved bicycle infrastructure (38%), reduced automobile congestion (25%), beautified roadways (25%), public art installations (16%), better connections to public transit (14%), and improved local public transit services (13%). These responses highlight community preferences for safer, more walkable and bike-friendly streets, alongside aesthetic and transit enhancements.

Parks and Recreation Objectives

Survey participants expressed strong interest in expanding passive recreation and conservation areas (61%) and off-road bike trails (51%). Other popular amenities included neighborhood pocket parks and playgrounds (36%) and youth and senior recreation programs (35%).

When asked if current amenities meet community needs, respondents felt playgrounds (76%), performing arts spaces (68%), picnic areas (66%), athletic fields (65%), and parklands (63%) are sufficient. Lower satisfaction was noted for sand volleyball (44%), tennis courts (43%), paved walking/biking paths, and public restrooms (both 40%).

The most frequently visited parks were McCormick Park (99%), Old Mill Park (37%), Memorial Park (26%), Volunteers Community Park (23%), Dahlstrom Memorial Park (16%), and Red Cedar Landing (15%). Overall, 74% of respondents are satisfied with the current number and variety of parks and recreation amenities, while 26% are not.

Respondents prioritized preserving natural and cultural spaces, expanding walking trails and paved paths, enhancing existing facilities, ensuring ADA accessibility, and increasing recreational programming and events.

Future Development and Housing Priorities

The survey then asked respondents to rate their level of priority for economic growth efforts and gave participants the options. Survey respondents prioritized economic growth focused on developing more mixed-use, walkable areas (56%) and expanding downtown (45%), with less emphasis on adding housing (17%) and retail space (10%).

When asked if current housing meets their needs, 38% said yes, 20% felt housing is generally too expensive, and 19% said their housing is suitable for now but may not be in the future. Overall, there is a clear desire for more diverse housing options.

Regarding housing styles, traditional single-family homes were favored near respondents (47%), followed by cottage courts (41%), duplexes (22%), and townhomes (23%). This supports the desire to maintain Williamston's character while introducing more variety.

On beautification, respondents prioritized preserving natural spaces (68%) and enhancing existing parks (40%), with less support for new parks (29%) or public art (13%), indicating a preference for improving current amenities over new additions.

Vision Statement

The City of Williamston is unique in many ways, boasting an exceptional historic Downtown Core, abundant parkland and outdoor recreation opportunities, scenic riverfront areas, and thriving mix of industrial and commercial businesses. Williamston's rich history and strong sense of community make it a desirable place to live for generations.

Goals and Objectives

Williamston is updating its Master Plan to ensure a high quality of life for residents while preserving and enhancing the City's unique character. This Plan will guide the community toward a vibrant small-town future with an active downtown, diverse recreational opportunities, preserved historic sites, and continued growth in residents, businesses, and institutions.

This section outlines the goals, objectives, and policies to direct local decision-makers in evaluating future land use proposals. Each goal is a broad, forward-looking statement that expresses the community's aspirations and values. These goals are intentionally general, setting the overall direction for public policy, planning, and private development. Paired with each goal is a set of specific objectives designed to provide measurable, actionable steps toward achieving that vision. The objectives translate ideals into practical strategies that help ensure future growth aligns with the priorities of Williamston's residents, enhances quality of life, and preserves the character that makes the city unique.

Recognizing its rural, small-town charm, Williamston has established the following goals to prepare for a sustainable and prosperous future:

Goal #1: Vibrant Neighborhoods for All

Foster welcoming, resilient neighborhoods by supporting well-maintained homes, encouraging diverse housing options, and investing in areas that need revitalization - ensuring every resident feels safe, valued, and proud of where they live.

Objectives

1.A: **Strengthen Downtown Housing Options.** Encourage mixed-use development that includes upper-story residential units to increase downtown vitality and housing diversity. Promote affordable and workforce housing options to ensure downtown living is accessible to a wide range of residents.

1.B: **Encourage Housing Diversity and Affordability.** Support a range of housing types within mixed-use areas, including apartments, townhomes, live-work units, and affordable options. Offer density bonuses or other incentives for developments that include affordable or workforce housing.

1.C: **Promote Neighborhood Revitalization and Reinvestment.** Identify and prioritize investment in neighborhoods by improving infrastructure, enhancing public spaces, and supporting community-led beautification efforts. Rehabilitate vacant or deteriorating properties as funding and partnership opportunities become available.

Goal #2: A Thriving, Welcoming Downtown

Cultivate a dynamic and inclusive downtown that celebrates local businesses, supports civic engagement, and enhances the City's historic charm and visual appeal—making it a gathering place for all generations.

Objectives

2.A: **Support Local Businesses and Entrepreneurship.** Provide incentives and resources for small business development, including start-ups, minority- and women-owned businesses. Partner with local organizations to offer business support services such as training, mentorship, and access to funding. Encourage year-round programming (e.g., markets, festivals, pop-ups) to increase foot traffic and visibility for local vendors.

2.B: **Enhance Downtown Aesthetics and Historic Character.** Invest in streetscaping improvements, including lighting, landscaping, public art, and wayfinding signage that highlights Williamston's heritage. Support the preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings in alignment with the City's character and design standards. Require cohesive architectural and design standards that reflect the community's unique identity.

2.C: **Increase Pedestrian Comfort and Accessibility.** Improve sidewalks, crosswalks, and barrier-free access to ensure downtown is walkable and inclusive for people of all ages and abilities. Expand outdoor seating, shade, and gathering spaces to create a welcoming environment for residents and visitors. Encourage bicycle infrastructure, parking, and transit connectivity to and within downtown.

2.D: **Activate Public Spaces and Encourage Community Events.** Expand use of downtown public spaces (ex: plazas or green areas) for cultural events, live performances, and community activities. Partner with local artists, schools, and civic groups to create interactive or rotating displays and programs. Support initiatives that encourage multigenerational and diverse community participation.

2.E: **Foster Partnerships and Leadership in Downtown Revitalization.** Work closely with the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), Chamber of Commerce, and local stakeholders to align strategies and investments. Regularly engage the public in planning and decision-making processes to ensure development reflects community priorities. Monitor progress through data collection and public feedback to adapt strategies as needed.

Goal #3: Inclusive Parks, Recreation, and Community Spaces

Expand and improve parks, recreation, and public facilities to ensure all residents—regardless of age, ability, or income—have access to high-quality, sustainable spaces for wellness, connection, and lifelong enjoyment.

Objectives

3.A: **Expand Access to Parks and Recreation Facilities.** Develop / upgrade parks and green spaces in underserved areas to ensure equitable access for all residents, particularly in high-density or lower-income neighborhoods. Create safe, well-lit pedestrian and bike pathways connecting residential areas with parks, the downtown and community destinations. Upgrade existing parks to meet the diverse needs of the community, including facilities for youth, seniors, and people with disabilities.

3.B: **Ensure Accessibility and Universal Design.** Implement universal design principles in all new and existing parks, ensuring spaces are accessible to individuals with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities. Install ADA-compliant amenities such as accessible pathways, restrooms, picnic areas, and playgrounds with adaptive equipment. Regularly assess and update facilities to meet or exceed accessibility standards and engage the community in identifying barriers to access.

3.C: **Create a Range of Recreational Opportunities for All Ages and Abilities.** Design parks and community spaces that cater to a wide variety of recreational activities, including sports fields, walking trails, playgrounds, fitness stations, and outdoor gathering spaces. Support multi-generational programming that encourages family-friendly activities and promotes social inclusion across age groups. Incorporate diverse and adaptive recreational facilities, such as inclusive playgrounds, sensory gardens, and fitness equipment.

3.D: **Promote Sustainable Practices in Parks and Community Spaces.** Integrate environmentally sustainable practices such as native landscaping, stormwater management, energy-efficient lighting, and renewable energy sources into park and recreation facility designs. Develop community gardens within parks to promote local food production and environmental education.

3.E: **Improve Maintenance and Safety of Public Spaces.** Update as necessary the regular maintenance schedule to keep parks and community spaces clean, safe, and well-maintained, with attention to accessibility and safety features.

Goal #4: Thoughtful Mixed-Use Development

Encourage well-designed, sustainable development that blends housing, offices, and retail to meet the needs of residents, reflect Williamston's character, and contribute to a vibrant, walkable community.

Objectives

4.A: **Promote Context-Sensitive, High-Quality Design.** Adopt and enforce design guidelines that ensure new development complements Williamston's charm, character, and architectural heritage. This includes human-scale buildings that enhance walkability and integrate well with surrounding neighborhoods. Discourage auto-oriented uses such as drive-throughs in mixed-use areas where they undermine walkability, create visual clutter, and conflict with the City's goal of fostering vibrant, pedestrian-friendly corridors.

4.B: **Support a Balanced Mix of Uses.** Zone for developments that combine residential, commercial, and office space in walkable, connected areas. Encourage vertical mixed-use (e.g., housing above shops or offices) in key corridors and in the downtown. Incentivize developments that fill gaps in needed services such as healthcare, childcare, and local retail.

4.C: **Enhance Walkability and Connectivity.** Require pedestrian-friendly site design with direct sidewalk connections, street trees, lighting, and reduced setbacks. Improve connections between mixed-use areas, neighborhoods, parks, and schools through safe, multi-modal infrastructure. Discourage land uses that disrupt the pedestrian environment, such as drive-throughs and wide front-facing parking lots, particularly in areas designated for walkable, mixed-use development.

4.D: **Incorporate Green Infrastructure.** Encourage the use of green building practices and low-impact stormwater design, where feasible. Support redevelopment of underutilized or vacant properties (infill) before expanding into undeveloped land. Require the inclusion of open space, plazas, or green buffers within mixed-use developments to promote community gathering and active living environments.

4.E: **Foster Collaboration and Community Input.** Actively engage residents, business owners, and stakeholders in planning efforts to ensure new developments reflect community priorities. Encourage pilot projects or temporary uses (e.g., pop-up shops, markets) to test and refine mixed-use concepts before long-term investment.

Goal #5: Sustainable Economic Industries

Support industrial, research, and technology development that aligns with community values, fosters local job growth, and strengthens Williamston's long-term economic health.

Objectives

5.A: **Encourage Green and Low-Impact Industries.** Attract and retain businesses in clean energy, advanced manufacturing, agri-tech, and research sectors that minimize impact on adjacent uses, especially when located near residential uses.

5.B: **Foster Local Job Growth and Workforce Development.** Collaborate with regional partners, schools, and training institutions to align workforce skills with future-ready industries. Support apprenticeships, internships, and career pathways in STEM, skilled trades, and green technologies for local residents.

5.C: **Ensure Compatibility with Community Values and Land Use.** Require new industrial development to demonstrate compatibility with nearby residential, commercial, and natural areas through thoughtful design and mitigation strategies. Prioritize redevelopment of brownfield or underutilized industrial sites to reduce sprawl and protect natural resources. Maintain buffer zones, green infrastructure, and traffic management plans to reduce environmental and neighborhood impacts.

5.D: **Promote Innovation and Entrepreneurship.** Create space and support for start-ups and research-driven businesses through incubators, co-working spaces, or shared labs. Partner with universities, research institutions, and regional agencies to attract tech and innovation investments to Williamston. Encourage public-private partnerships that advance sustainable technologies and community-beneficial innovations.

5.E: **Strengthen the City's Economic Resilience.** Diversify the local economy by supporting a balanced mix of industries that can adapt to changing market and climate conditions. Develop an economic sustainability strategy that addresses long-term infrastructure needs, resource use, and environmental risks. Monitor and adapt economic development policies to reflect emerging technologies, job trends, and community input.

5.F: **Promote Williamston as a Business Destination.** Develop marketing materials that highlight the City's commitment to sustainability, quality of life, and strategic location to attract workforce talent and companies. Attend and host regional economic development events to attract mission-aligned businesses and investors.

Goal #6: Connected, Complete Streets for Everyone

Build and maintain a safe, accessible transportation system that supports walking, biking, transit, and driving—empowering people of all ages and abilities to move freely and safely throughout the community.

Objectives

6.A: **Enhance Safety and Accessibility for All Users.** Design and retrofit streets to include features like sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes, curb ramps, and pedestrian refuge islands. Prioritize improvements at high-traffic areas, school zones, and locations with a history of crashes. Implement traffic calming measures (i.e., curb extensions, raised crosswalks, and narrowed lanes) to reduce vehicle speeds in pedestrian-priority areas.

6.B: **Expand and Improve Pedestrian and Bicycle Infrastructure.** Complete gaps in the sidewalk and trail network to ensure continuous and accessible routes throughout Williamston. Develop a citywide bicycle network with separated bike lanes, signage, and secure bike parking at key destinations. Create safe and scenic walking and biking connections between neighborhoods, the downtown, parks, schools, and public facilities.

6.C: **Support Equitable Access to Transportation.** Identify and remove barriers to mobility for seniors, people with disabilities, and residents without access to a car. Coordinate with regional partners to improve public transit options and explore on-demand or shared mobility services, including CATA. Ensure street design standards are inclusive and ADA-compliant and regularly evaluate accessibility needs through community feedback.

6.D: **Promote Sustainable Infrastructure.** Integrate green infrastructure such as rain gardens, street trees, and permeable pavement into projects to manage stormwater and reduce the heat island effect. Prioritize maintenance and repair of existing streets before expanding roadway networks into undeveloped areas.

6.E: **Develop and Implement a Complete Streets Policy.** Adopt a formal Complete Streets policy that requires all transportation projects to consider the needs of all users and modes. Align local ordinances, zoning, and capital improvement planning with Complete Streets principles. Track progress with performance measures such as sidewalk mileage, bike lane coverage, accessibility ratings, and user satisfaction.

Goal #7: Strong Community Identity and Sense of Place

Celebrate Williamston's unique heritage, natural beauty, and welcoming spirit by enhancing public spaces, promoting community pride, and fostering a shared identity that residents and visitors alike can cherish.

Objectives

7.A: **Highlight Williamston's History and Cultural Heritage.** Preserve and promote historic buildings, and sites through signage, storytelling, and public art. Support community events and partnerships that celebrate local history, traditions, and cultural diversity.

7.B: **Enhance Public Spaces and Gateways.** Improve key entry points into the city with attractive signage, landscaping, and public art that reflect Williamston's character. Upgrade parks, plazas, and civic spaces to serve as vibrant, inclusive gathering places for all ages and backgrounds. Encourage community-inspired design in public infrastructure, such as benches, murals, or decorative lighting, including alley activation in the downtown.

7.C: **Promote Community Pride and Engagement.** Launch initiatives that encourage residents to participate in beautification efforts, such as neighborhood clean-ups, garden contests, or mural projects. Celebrate community achievements and milestones through banners, online campaigns, or recognitions in public spaces. Engage youth and schools in projects that promote civic pride and intergenerational connection.

7.D: **Support Local Arts and Creative Expression.** Partner with local artists and organizations to integrate art into everyday spaces—such as utility boxes, crosswalks, and park features. Provide spaces and funding opportunities for performances, exhibitions, and arts education accessible to all.

7.E: **Strengthen the City's and DDA's Branding and Communication.** Develop and consistently use a cohesive city / DDA brand - logos, messaging, and visuals - that reflect Williamston's identity and values. Promote local stories, events, and achievements through coordinated marketing efforts, social media, and partnerships with community organizations.

06

Transportation & Mobility

Land use patterns and transportation systems are inherently interconnected, shaping how people and goods move throughout a community. The ability to travel efficiently – whether by car, bicycle, or on foot – plays pivotal role in both quality of life and economic growth. Proximity to well-connected transportation networks influences where new development occurs, but as traffic demands increase, the capcity of existing infrastructure can be strained.

Williamston is strategically located along several key transportation corridors, including Grand River Avenue (M-43), Interstate 96, and N.Williamston Road/Putnam Street. Its proximity to Michigan State University and the Lansing metropolitan area makes regional connectivity essential for both residents and businesses. Strengthening links to the east and south could further enhance access to the downtown core, attracting visitors and supporting local commerce. A well-functioning transportation system goes beyond roads for vehicles. Pedestrian circulation, bike paths, and sidewalks are components of a balanced networks that supports mobility, safety, and accessibility.

Existing Transportation Analysis

Functional Classification of Roadways

Every road serves a different purpose, whether it's helping people get across town quickly or connecting them to their neighborhood. To make sure roads are designed and used the right way, transportation agencies group them into categories based on how they function. This system, called *function classification,* is used across the country and is guided by federal standards. Roads are classified differently depending on whether they're in rural areas, small towns, or growing cities. Knowing the functional classification of roads helps local governments determine how roads should be built, what type of traffic they should carry, and what residents and officials can expect from them. These classifications also support project identification and prioritization when planning improvements to the transportation system.

The following map identifies the functional classification of the roadways in the City of Williamston:

Road Network

City of Williamston, Michigan

LEGEND

National Functional Class

- Interstate
- Minor Arterial
- Major Collector
- Local
- Non-Certified
- DDA Boundary
- City of Williamston

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Williamston, 2024. McKenna, 2025.

MCKENNA

Interstate

Interstates represent the highest level of roadway classification and are designed to move large volumes of traffic quickly over long distances. Interstate 96 (I-96) is a major freeway connecting Williamston to Lansing and Detroit, influencing local travel patterns and economic development.

Minor Arterials

Minor arterials serve shorter trips and connect smaller geographic areas than principal arterials. In urban areas, they often link neighborhoods, commercial districts, and community institutions while also connecting to the larger arterial system. In rural areas, minor arterials link towns and key destinations such as parks or resorts. These roadways may carry local bus routes and offer moderate travel speeds, serving both mobility and access functions.

Grand River Avenue (M-43) is the city's primary east-west corridor, providing access to downtown, commercial areas, and regional destinations.

North Williamston Road/South Putnam Street is a primary north-south connector between I-96 and downtown Williamston.

Major Collectors

Major collectors play a critical role in connecting neighborhoods and local roads to the arterial network. These roads balance the need for land access with the efficient movement of traffic. In urban areas, they often pass through residential and commercial districts, while in rural areas, they link towns, schools, and other significant destinations to the broader roadway system. In Williamston, roads such as Linn Road, Middle Street, Church/Rowley Road, North Putnam Street, School Street, Riverside Avenue, and Highland Street are classified as major collectors.

Local Streets

Local roads make up the majority of the roadway network by mileage. They provide direct access to homes, businesses, and farms but are not intended for through travel. Their primary role is to connect properties to collector or arterial roads. Local roads are often narrower, operate at lower speeds, and are designed to discourage cut-through traffic.

Sidewalks

Overall, Williamston has a well-connected and expansive sidewalk network. Sidewalks in the City are located throughout the residential areas both sides of the street. Additionally, the Downtown Core includes wide sidewalks on both sides of the street that provides pedestrian access to shops and restaurants.

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.

CATA offers commuter services from Meridian Mall, Mason and Williamston/Webberville to downtown Lansing during weekday morning and afternoon rush hours. The Williamston/Webberville Limited pick-up customers in those communities, and then travels directly to downtown Lansing, making limited stops for a faster commute.

Future Transportation Improvements

Road Network

Williamston is served by a well-connected road network, with strong regional access provided by Interstate 96, as well as several minor arterials and local streets that support internal circulation. This network connects key destinations including residential neighborhoods, commercial corridors, local schools, and the historic Downtown Core.

Grand River Avenue is the City's main east-west thoroughfare and a designated minor arterial. It serves as a vital connector between Williamston and nearby communities such as Lansing, East Lansing, and Okemos. Within Williamston, Grand River Avenue passes directly through Downtown and supports both local and regional traffic. While past traffic counts have indicated higher volumes in the Downtown segment, the corridor overall has historically remained within acceptable capacity thresholds. As development continues in and around the city, traffic volumes on Grand River Avenue should continue to be monitored in coordination with MDOT to evaluate whether future improvements are necessary.

North Williamston Road/South Putnam Street, the City's primary north-south corridor, connects directly to the I-96 interchange located just two miles south of the city. As it enters Downtown, Williamston Road transitions into Putnam Street. This corridor plays a significant role in moving traffic between the highway and Downtown Williamston and has seen past increases in volume due to new residential growth. While the road remains functionally adequate at present, future traffic increases from additional development near the interchange or in southern portions of the city may warrant improvements. This corridor should also remain a focus area for long-term traffic monitoring and infrastructure planning.

Interstate 96 provides direct access to both Grand Rapids and Detroit, making Williamston well-positioned for regional connectivity. With over 50,000 vehicles passing the Williamston exit each day, the city has an opportunity to capture more of this regional movement as future development, tourism, or economic activity expands.

There is currently one vehicular bridge across the Red Cedar River, located on North Putnam Street. This bridge is a critical north-south link that connects neighborhoods and regional traffic to Downtown and I-96. While it was fully replaced in 2005 and is in good condition, the City has previously considered the need for a second bridge to provide additional capacity and redundancy. Though funding for a new bridge remains uncertain, the idea of a second crossing could be reevaluated as part of long-term planning if development pressures increase in areas near the river.

Truck Routes

The city is situated in a prime geographic location for the safe and efficient movement of goods and services, which is essential to Williamston's local economy. Delivery trucks, service vehicles, and freight carriers support commercial activity, construction, and essential services throughout the city. As such, ensuring that these vehicles have appropriate routes to reach their destinations—while minimizing conflicts with residential areas, pedestrians, and sensitive land uses—is a key part of long-term transportation planning.

This section outlines the role of truck routes in Williamston and highlights current patterns of truck movement. The purpose is to guide future decision-making around street design, land use compatibility, and infrastructure investments that can support freight access while protecting the quality of life in neighborhoods and the walkability of the Downtown Core. As Williamston continues to grow, thoughtful planning for truck access will help reduce wear and tear on local streets, enhance safety, and ensure that goods and services can continue to move reliably through the community.

Williamston is served by a network of county and state-designated truck routes that facilitate regional freight movement and local deliveries. **Map 8** displays the current truck route designations, which include a mix of interstate highways, state highways, and county all-season routes. These corridors are critical for supporting commerce, reducing wear on local streets, and maintaining access to key destinations such as industrial areas and commercial centers.

Key truck routes include:

- **Interstate 96**, which forms the southern boundary of the city and provides a vital east-west connection to Lansing, Detroit, and Grand Rapids. It is the most significant freight corridor in the region and connects directly to Williamston Road via Exit 117.
- **Williamston Road / Putnam Street**, a County Class A Route (green line) that connects the I-96 interchange to Downtown Williamston. This corridor is a primary north-south access point and handles significant truck traffic related to both regional access and local deliveries.
- **Grand River Avenue**, a **State Highway (M-43)** shown in red, runs east-west through the center of Williamston and connects to surrounding communities like Webberville, Okemos, and Lansing. It is designated for truck travel and functions as the City's main commercial corridor.
- Additional County Class A Routes include:
    - Meridian Road and Zimmer Road to the west
    - Dietz Road and Perry Road to the east
    - Linn Road and Sherwood Road running east-west

These county-designated all-season routes are not subject to seasonal weight restrictions, making them suitable for year-round freight travel. Other county routes within the planning area are subject to spring load limitations and may require restrictions during thaw periods. There are currently no designated "No Truck Routes" within the city limits, according to the map, though care should be taken to monitor truck activity on local streets not intended for heavy vehicle traffic.

As development continues near the I-96 corridor and commercial activity grows along Grand River Avenue, the city should continue to coordinate with the Road Commission and MDOT to evaluate the performance of truck routes, address pavement durability, and ensure that freight traffic remains compatible with residential neighborhoods and walkable downtown streets.

Map 4: Current Truck Route Designations

LEGEND

- Interstate Highway
- State Highway
- County All Season Routes-No seasonal load limitations
- County Class 'A' Routes-Subject to spring load limitations
- County Class 'B' Routes-Subject to spring load limitations
- County Class 'A' Routes-Subject to Class 'B' limitations
- County STAA Routes
- No Truck Routes
- Road Commission

Existing Non-Motorized Infrastructure

Non-motorized transportation includes all the ways people move around without a car—such as walking, biking, or using a scooter. A high-quality non-motorized system helps connect neighborhoods, schools, parks, and Downtown Williamston with safe, accessible, and enjoyable routes. These systems are not only practical but also support healthy lifestyles, provide low-cost transportation options, and enhance the overall experience of moving through the community.

In Williamston, most residential neighborhoods include sidewalks, and Downtown features wide, walkable sidewalks that support shopping, dining, and events. Several City parks offer walking paths, and a pedestrian bridge over the Red Cedar River provides a vital connection between the east end of High Street and the Williamston Community Schools campus. These existing elements form the foundation of a walkable community.

Williamston can also benefit from regional coordination. The MDOT University Region Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and the Williamstown Township Master Plan both identify the need for better regional trail and bike route connections. Williamston's location along major routes such as Grand River Avenue positions it well to become a hub for local and regional non-motorized travel.

Looking ahead, potential strategies to enhance non-motorized transportation include:

- Conducting a sidewalk and trail gap analysis
- Improving ADA compliance across the network
- Exploring opportunities for bike lanes or shared road markings
- Enhancing wayfinding signage for trails, parks, and Downtown
- Partnering with regional and state agencies to connect to future trail corridors

By investing in a connected, accessible, and comfortable non-motorized system, Williamston can provide more travel options for all ages and abilities—while supporting community health, safety, and long-term sustainability.

Sidewalks

The City of Williamston has a well-established and connected sidewalk network, especially in neighborhoods surrounding the Downtown Core. This network provides safe and convenient pedestrian access to public amenities such as parks, schools, civic spaces, and local businesses.

Sidewalks play a key role in the broader non-motorized transportation system, which includes pathways, trails, and other means of travel not reliant on cars. An expanded and well-maintained sidewalk system enhances mobility, safety, and equity, especially for residents who may not drive, such as youth, seniors, or individuals with disabilities. It also supports public health by encouraging active transportation and recreation.

As the City continues to grow, the sidewalk system should be extended and enhanced to:

- Connect neighborhoods with schools, parks, and commercial areas;
- Improve ADA compliance across the network;
- Address safety at crossings and major intersections; and
- Provide safe, accessible routes near new development and redevelopment sites.

While sidewalks are present along most local streets, there are still opportunities to fill in gaps, improve older segments, and better link the system to trails and regional bike routes. A future sidewalk and non-motorized gap analysis could help prioritize these improvements. In doing so, Williamston can continue building a community where walking is not only possible, but enjoyable and safe for all.

Bicycle Transportation

With its compact size, quiet residential streets, and active Downtown, the City of Williamston has strong potential to support safe and accessible bicycle transportation. Biking provides an affordable, healthy, and environmentally friendly way to travel, and it enhances local access to schools, parks, and shops—especially for youth, seniors, and residents without a car.

Currently, Williamston does not have a formal network of bike lanes, but the existing street network and public parks provide a foundation for future improvements. Sidewalks, informal park paths, and the pedestrian bridge over the Red Cedar River already support some local biking activity. As the City grows and reinvests in its infrastructure, there is an opportunity to create a dedicated bicycle network that is safe, connected, and family friendly.

Protected Bike Lanes

As a long-term goal, the city supports the creation of protected bike lanes, physically separated from vehicle traffic, on key corridors where bicycle travel and safety are a priority. Protected lanes increase comfort and safety for riders of all ages and abilities and are a recommended best practice on higher-volume or higher-speed streets, especially near schools, parks, and commercial areas.

Protected bike lanes should be considered on key corridors, including but not limited to:

- Williamston Road / Putnam Street, connecting I-96 and Downtown
- Streets near schools and parks, where youth cycling is likely

These facilities can be phased in as part of road reconstruction or repaving projects, and should be designed with attention to context, space, and traffic patterns.

Neighborhood Bike Loops (Low-Traffic Enhancements)

On calm residential streets with low traffic volumes and slower speeds, the city may consider neighborhood bike loop routes to support recreational biking and local connections between neighborhoods, downtown, and parks. These loops do not require major street reconstruction and could incorporate wayfinding signage and painted wayfinding symbols or "neighborhood greenway" branding.

This approach supports a low-stress, family-friendly biking environment while prioritizing protected infrastructure on major corridors.

Regional Connections and Amenities

Williamston's location along Grand River Avenue also positions it well to tie into regional non-motorized networks, as identified in the MDOT University Region Non-Motorized Plan. The city should coordinate with MDOT and Williamstown Township to explore future trail or bike route connections that extend beyond City limits. In addition, the city can support cyclists by installing bike racks, repair stations, and wayfinding signage in Downtown, parks, and near schools.

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:

- 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.
- Promote safe travel for users, especially for children (safe routes to school), persons with disabilities, and the elderly.
- 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 Enhancements

Improving roadway conditions and design is essential to ensuring Williamston's transportation network remains safe, attractive, and accessible for all users. Road enhancements go beyond routine maintenance to include aesthetic improvements, multimodal access, traffic calming, and stormwater management features. These enhancements support community goals related to walkability, economic development, safety, and neighborhood character, particularly along corridors that serve as gateways, downtown connections, or major residential routes.

As Williamston continues to grow, the City should prioritize enhancements along high-visibility or high-use corridors to improve both functionality and visual appeal. Improvements may include new pavement, curb and gutter, sidewalk upgrades, pedestrian crossings, street trees, bike facilities, and decorative lighting or signage. Coordination with MDOT and the Ingham County Road Department will be essential for projects on state- and county-managed roads.

Priority Corridors for Enhancement

Grand River Avenue

Grand River Avenue is Williamston's primary east-west corridor, connecting the City to Lansing, East Lansing, and surrounding communities. It also functions as a commercial corridor and cuts through the Downtown Core. Enhancing this corridor with landscaping, improved crosswalks, decorative lighting, and signage can strengthen its role as a welcoming gateway and improve the pedestrian experience. As the City's central thoroughfare, Grand River Avenue is a strong candidate for context-sensitive design improvements that balance vehicular traffic with pedestrian and bicycle activity.

Williamston Road / Putnam Street

This key north-south corridor connects Williamston directly to the I-96 interchange and runs through the heart of the community. It serves regional traffic as well as local residents and visitors accessing Downtown. With increased development activity near the interchange and along this corridor, Williamston Road is a strong candidate for future improvements such as intersection upgrades, expanded sidewalks, street trees, and enhanced lighting. As a major entrance into the city, enhancements along this route can reinforce Williamston's identity and improve both safety and visual character.

Recommended Roadway Enhancements Approach

Rather than identifying specific road projects at this time, the city should take a strategic and flexible approach to roadway enhancements. This means prioritizing corridors like Grand River Avenue and Williamston Road for future study and improvement while allowing for adjustments based on future development, funding opportunities, and evolving community needs.

Enhancements may include a mix of features such as pedestrian infrastructure, curb and pavement improvements, ADA upgrades, traffic calming, and green infrastructure. The city should coordinate closely with MDOT and the Ingham County Road Department to identify shared priorities and secure funding, especially on state and county roads.

As future projects are considered, the City can use criteria such as pavement condition, safety data, proximity to community destinations, and public feedback to evaluate where enhancements will have the greatest impact. This approach ensures that roadway design supports Williamston's long-term vision while remaining adaptable to changing circumstances.

Gateways

To reinforce Williamston's sense of place and establish a strong community identity, formal gateways can be created at key entry points to the city. These locations provide an opportunity to visually define the city's boundaries and offer a welcoming first impression for residents and visitors alike.

Future gateway enhancements could include welcome signage, landscaping, and decorative features such as light posts, public art, and banners that reflect Williamston's character and charm. Gateway features at strategic locations can help strengthen the city's image and enhance visibility, including:

- Grand River Avenue
- Williamston Road / Putnam Street

These corridors serve as the main entry points into the community from surrounding areas and carry both regional and local traffic. Enhancing these gateways will support branding and contribute to a more cohesive visual identity for Williamston.

07

Future Land Use Plan

The Future Land Map and associated use categories 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.

Traditional Residential:

Primarily consists of single-unit and two-unit residences, with accessory dwelling units (ADU's) as appropriate. Small-scale, neighborhood serving amenities and services are also common.

Most of the land in Williamston is classified as Traditional Residential, which reflects the community's historic residential fabric.

Appropriate / Desired Land Uses:

- Single-unit detached homes.
- Two-unit dwellings (duplexes or conversions).
- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- Limited neighborhood-serving uses such as: civic, educational, and community facilities; religious or institutional uses; parks and playgrounds; community gardens and open gathering spaces.

Building Location / Design:

- Residential structures oriented to front the street with porches or stoops.
- Garages are detached or located at the rear or side of homes.
- Architecture has visual interest and detail, no blank or flat facades.
- Use of durable materials, with a preference for traditional textures (ex., brick, wood).
- Designs respect the existing character of surrounding homes and neighborhoods.
- Preserve architectural interest and variety of homes (i.e., new "cookie cutter" type developments are not appropriate).

Connectivity / Mobility:

- Well-connected sidewalk network with safe and accessible crossings.
- Traditional local street grid that promotes multiple routes and short blocks.
- Prioritization of walkability to neighborhood parks, schools, and other key destinations.
- Calm, low-speed streets that prioritize the safety of pedestrians and cyclists.

Additional Key Considerations:

- Reinvest and rehabilitate historic buildings and structures.
- Buffers and/or transitions where Traditional Residential abuts more intense uses.
- Sufficient stormwater management: ensure that infrastructure (sewer, water, utilities) meets current and future needs.
- Maintain affordability of the housing stock.
- Provide tree lawns in the rights-of-way with trees lining the streets.

Pocket / City Residential:

Compact, walkable residential areas located near the downtown or clustered throughout the City. These areas promote higher residential density in a context-sensitive, human-scale environment, supporting a range of housing types. Encourages infill development that complements surrounding land uses and preserves existing neighborhood character.

Appropriate / Desired Land Uses:

- Multi-unit residential buildings (e.g., townhomes, small apartment buildings).
- Live/work units and small-scale mixed-use structures.
- Courtyard housing and stacked flats.
- Accessory dwelling units (ADUs).
- Limited neighborhood-serving uses such as: civic, educational, and community facilities; religious or institutional uses; parks and playgrounds; community gardens and open gathering spaces.

Building Location / Design:

- Buildings typically oriented toward the street or internal shared open space to enhance walkability.
- Emphasis on pedestrian access and active, engaging building façades.
- Architecture includes high-quality materials, articulated façades, varied rooflines, and design features that complement nearby developments.
- Garages and parking areas are de-emphasized: located at the rear of buildings/lots; integrated into the side or rear portions of the building footprint; and/or shared or structured parking may be appropriate in denser developments.

Connectivity / Mobility:

- Strong pedestrian and bicycle connections to adjacent neighborhoods, downtown, schools, parks, and public amenities.
- Continuous, accessible sidewalks enhanced with landscaping, lighting, and seating where appropriate.
- Transit accessibility, with clear, direct pedestrian routes to stops.
- Bicycle infrastructure (bike racks, signage, bike lanes) where feasible.
- Streets prioritize low-speed traffic and pedestrian safety.

Additional Key Considerations:

- Serves as a transitional zone between the downtown core and lower-density neighborhoods
- Emphasis on thoughtful site design and shared community spaces to foster a neighborhood feel.
- Supports a diverse population, including young professionals, seniors, and smaller households.
- Use of design standards or form-based codes to ensure consistency and compatibility.
- Parking is managed to support walkability: on-street parking or small shared lots preferred over large surface lots.
- Stormwater and infrastructure systems are designed to accommodate increased density without negative impacts.
- Redevelopment or adaptive reuse where appropriate to enhance neighborhood vitality.

Manufactured Housing Park:

These areas contain existing manufactured home developments approved by both the City of Williamston and the State of Michigan. They are well-designed and managed manufactured home communities that offer affordable housing options in a park-like, landscaped setting. Provides community cohesion, safety, and long-term housing stability within a low-maintenance environment

Appropriate / Desired Land Uses:

- Manufactured homes (single-wide and double-wide units permitted based on layout and site requirements).
- Shared green spaces and landscaped open areas
- Community amenities such as: playgrounds; walking trails; gathering spaces or pavilions; and clubhouses or common-use facilities.

Building Location / Design:

- Individual lots oriented to internal / private roads.
- Uniform spacing between units for landscaping and access.
- Durable, high-quality exterior finishes, with consistent skirting and architectural features (ex: porches, window trim).
- Clear lot boundaries with appropriate fencing or landscaping for delineation.
- Green buffers or screening between homes and adjacent land uses.
- Utility connections (water, sewer, electric, gas) are discrete, reliable, and safely maintained.

Connectivity / Mobility:

- Internal road network that supports safe vehicular circulation and emergency access.
- Safe pedestrian infrastructure including sidewalks where feasible or shared-use paths.
- Connection to the broader city street network to integrate with surrounding neighborhoods and destinations.
- Access to public transportation, shuttle services, or other mobility options where available.
- Emphasis on safety, with adequate lighting and signage throughout the development.

Additional Key Considerations:

- Standards for appearance (skirting, porches, landscaping); stormwater management; buffer between parks and other residential or commercial uses; rules to maintain maintenance; utility and service delivery; parking; safety (lighting, access); ensuring long term affordability.
- Appearance standards (ex: skirting, porches, roof pitch, and landscaping).
- Long-term stormwater management systems provided and maintained.
- Management rules and oversight for ongoing property maintenance and community upkeep.
- Adequate utility and service delivery (trash, recycling, snow removal, emergency services).
- Parking areas provided for residents and guests, without dominating the streetscape.

Downtown:

Williamston's Downtown, centered around the intersection of Grand River and Putnam, is the core of the community. It is a vibrant, walkable, and mixed-use district designed to meet the daily needs of residents while also attracting visitors with unique shopping, dining, and entertainment experiences. The area is characterized by its historic architecture, pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, and strong sense of place. Downtown Williamston plays a vital civic role as a gathering space and destination for community events and interaction: a true "third space" beyond home and work.

Appropriate / Desired Land Uses:

- Retail shops, grocery stores, restaurants, cafés, and personal service establishments.
- Arts, cultural and entertainment uses (galleries, performance spaces, theaters, etc.)
- Upper-story residential (apartments, condos, or live/work units). Existing one-unit dwellings.
- Office spaces (professional services, creative offices, etc.). Boutique lodging (small inns or hotels).
- Civic and institutional buildings (e.g., city hall, library, community center).
- Flexible public spaces for events, markets, and festivals.
- Outdoor cafes, plazas, and pedestrian-oriented spaces.

Building Location / Design:

- Buildings are built to the sidewalk with little or no front setback, creating a continuous streetwall and active street frontage.
- Ground floors have large, transparent windows with pedestrian entrances directly opening onto the sidewalk.
- Architectural design preserves and enhances the historic character of the district.
- Use of high-quality materials and articulated facades is present.
- Signage is context-sensitive and appropriately scaled.
- Rear or upper-floor additions are compatible with existing structures and maintain an historic feel.
- Improvements are at a pedestrian scale and done with aesthetic charm that invites exploration and gathering.

Connectivity / Mobility:

- Pedestrian movement is prioritized with wide sidewalks, safe street crossings, pedestrian-scaled lighting and streetscape furniture.
- Bicycle access and bike parking are encouraged and integrated where feasible.
- On-street parking and strategically located public parking lots to support business access while preserving the pedestrian environment.
- Traffic calming measures (e.g., narrower streets, slower speeds) enhance walkability.
- Integration of transit access where possible to support local commuters and visitors.

Additional Key Considerations:

- Preservation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings to retain the cultural heritage and architectural diversity of the city.
- Streetscape improvements (e.g., benches, planters, public art, decorative lighting) enhance the aesthetic appeal and civic function of the downtown.
- Promote placemaking strategies to foster a welcoming and active environment for both residents and visitors.
- Public spaces are programmed for events, markets, and seasonal activities.
- Upper-story residential is encouraged to support a vibrant, round-the-clock, downtown environment.
- Signage and wayfinding systems are coordinated, clear, and appropriately scaled to enhance the downtown experience for both locals and tourists.

Neighborhood Mixed Use:

Neighborhood node where residential and small-scale commercial/light civic uses blend, creating places where residents can meet daily needs close to home. Grocery stores, services, small retail near housing support walkability and reduce the need for vehicular travel. These areas provide a transition between purely residential areas and higher activity areas.

Appropriate / Desired Land Uses:

- Small grocery stores or convenience stores. Corner shops, cafes, and local retail.
- Personal services (e.g., salons, dry cleaners, tailors).
- Professional offices (e.g., law, medical, accounting).
- Residential uses including single-unit detached homes; townhomes and duplexes; apartments/lofts; live/work units; and senior housing.
- Civic and community uses childcare centers; libraries; pocket parks, etc.
- Reuse of existing residential buildings for appropriate non-residential purposes (e.g., small offices, boutiques).

Building Location / Design:

- Buildings oriented moderately close to the street to support walkability.
- Pedestrian entrances facing the street or sidewalk.
- Mixed façade treatments to break up building mass and reflect neighborhood scale.
- Parking located behind or to the side of buildings (not in front).
- Vertical mixed-use encouraged (e.g., commercial on ground floor, residential above).
- Design that bridges residential and commercial character (e.g., residential scale and materials on upper floors).

Connectivity / Mobility:

- Continuous sidewalks and accessible pedestrian infrastructure, with well-marked pedestrian crossings.
- Dedicated bike lanes or multi-use paths.
- Sufficient but unobtrusive parking; shared parking encouraged.
- Access to public transit or future transit opportunities.
- Prioritization of pedestrian and cyclist movement over vehicular flow.

Additional Key Considerations:

- Thoughtful placement of uses to minimize conflicts (e.g., service areas away from residences).
- Landscaping and buffering where more intensive uses abuts residential.
- Design guidelines to maintain and reinforce neighborhood character.
- Allowance for incremental growth and small-scale redevelopment.
- Parking and loading area management to reduce visual and functional impacts.
- Limitations on noise, lighting, and hours of operation for commercial uses.
- Stormwater management and environmental sustainability practices (e.g., rain gardens, permeable paving).
- Emphasis on human-scale development and street-level activity.

Mixed Use:

A vibrant, walkable, and architecturally cohesive environment featuring a blend of residential, professional office, retail, and institutional uses. This district serves as a transitional area between residential neighborhoods and higher-intensity commercial corridors and some industrial areas. It is designed at a human scale to foster pedestrian-friendly activity throughout the day and into the evening, with strong connected to other areas of the city.

Appropriate / Desired Land Uses:

- Residential, with a preference on missing middle type housing (minimum 300 feet from the highway). Hotel / lodging facilities. Live/work units.
- Restaurants, cafes, and retail shops.
- Medical and professional services.
- Professional and corporate offices, educational facilities.
- Institutional and community facilities (e.g., libraries, small clinics, educational centers)
- Mixed-use buildings with ground-floor commercial and upper-story residential or office.
- Light industrial and/or maker spaces in appropriate areas (ex: adjacent to I-96 as a buffer zone).
- Slightly higher intensity commercial uses (that are more regional in nature) are applicable only within the immediate area north of the I-96 interchange, on the parcel that is currently being developed as a future gas station and convience store.

Building Location / Design:

- Buildings to front the street with minimal setbacks to reinforce the pedestrian realm and streetscape.
- Range of building sizes and heights: multi-story buildings encouraged, especially with vertical integration of uses. Transitions in height and massing to buffer lower-density residential areas.
- Parking is generally located behind or beside buildings, not in front. However, when adjacent to residential uses or districts, parking should be located away from residentail areas and well screened. Maximize shared parking lots / structures.
- High-quality materials and design to ensure compatibility with adjacent neighborhoods and areas.
- Clear architectural standards to support a unified and attractive identity for Williamston.

Connectivity / Mobility:

- Prioritize walkability with continuous sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian-scale lighting.
- Multi-modal access encouraged, including bike lanes.
- Strong physical and visual connections to adjacent residential neighborhoods and other areas.
- Internal circulation for large developments to mimic traditional street grids and link to destinations and public spaces.
- Shared parking areas and access management to reduce curb cuts.
- Connectivity to the downtown core (along Williamston Road) and I-96 interchange area via safe, complete streets.

Additional Key Considerations:

- Eliminate "strip commercial" patterns (including the area along Williamston Road, north of Linn Road) by encouraging coordinated, integrated site designs.
- Auto-oriented uses such as drive-thrus, gas stations, and commercial buildings with excessive surface parking (north of Linn Road) are inconsistent with the City's vision for a pedestrian-friendly, visually cohesive community.
- Encourage infill and redevelopment within City boundaries to reduce urban sprawl.
- Preserve and enhance environmental features where present (e.g., tree-lined streets, drainage corridors).
- Phased development that ensures infrastructure and mobility systems scale with new growth.
- 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. See the Zoning Plan for additional details.

Industrial:

Areas designated for manufacturing, warehousing, logistics, research, office, and other light industrial activities that support the city and region's economy. These areas are located primarily within established industrial parks or along Grand River Avenue near the city limits and are designed with high standards of site planning, aesthetics, and environmental performance.

The focus is on clean, green, and modern industrial development with minimal off-site impacts. Sensitive transitions required where industrial uses are near existing residential neighborhoods or other incompatible land uses. More intensive industrial uses that may generate off-site impacts (e.g., noise, odors, heavy traffic) are only permitted under specific conditions and reviewed as special land uses.

Appropriate / Desired Land Uses:

- Light manufacturing and assembly operations.
- Warehousing and distribution centers.
- Research and development (R&D) facilities.
- Industrial service providers (e.g., equipment repair, fabrication).
- Office.
- No heavy industry or highly polluting operations.

Building Location / Design:

- Large-footprint buildings set back from major roads and/or screened from public view.
- Loading docks and service areas located at the sides or rear of buildings.
- Use of durable, clean, and modern exterior materials.
- Landscaping buffers and screening walls or berms to reduce visual and noise impacts.
- Site design to minimize truck circulation impacts on adjacent properties.
- Parking does not dominate the site frontage.

Connectivity / Mobility:

- Direct access to major arterials or freight corridors to minimize cut-through traffic in residential areas and the downtown.
- Internal circulation that accommodates large trucks and emergency vehicles.
- Safe pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure where appropriate, particularly along the edges of sites or near workforce entry points.
- Clearly marked truck routes to limit conflicts with local traffic.
- Transit access for employees, where feasible.
- Safe pedestrian crossings and designated walkways for worker access to buildings or parking areas.

Additional Key Considerations:

- Strong environmental protections including management of air emissions, stormwater, noise, and lighting. Siting that avoids environmentally sensitive areas such as floodplains or wetlands (unless mitigation is provided).
- Buffers or transitional landscaping between industrial and non-industrial areas.
- Clear and effective signage and wayfinding for both logistics and emergency access.
- Industrial development to support local job creation and align with the City's broader economic development goals.
- Ongoing site maintenance, screening, and landscaping enforcement to preserve long-term visual and environmental quality.

Open Space and Park Land:

Natural green spaces that offer recreation opportunities, enhance environmental quality, support biodiversity, and increase the city's scenic value. These areas provide respite from the built environment and promote physical and mental well-being and are intended to preserve natural landscapes, wildlife habitat, and waterways.

Land is typically owned, or expected to be owned, by a public entity for conservation or recreation purposes. Several of these spaces are key parts of Williamston's park and green infrastructure network.

Appropriate / Desired Land Uses:

- Public parks (both active and passive recreation areas).
- Multi-use trails and greenway corridors.
- Natural features: wetlands, floodplains, riverbanks, and woodlands.
- Playgrounds, informal play areas, and outdoor gathering areas.
- Community gardens and urban agriculture spaces.
- Nature preserves and ecological restoration zones
- Stormwater retention/detention ponds designed as visual and ecological amenities.

Building Location / Design:

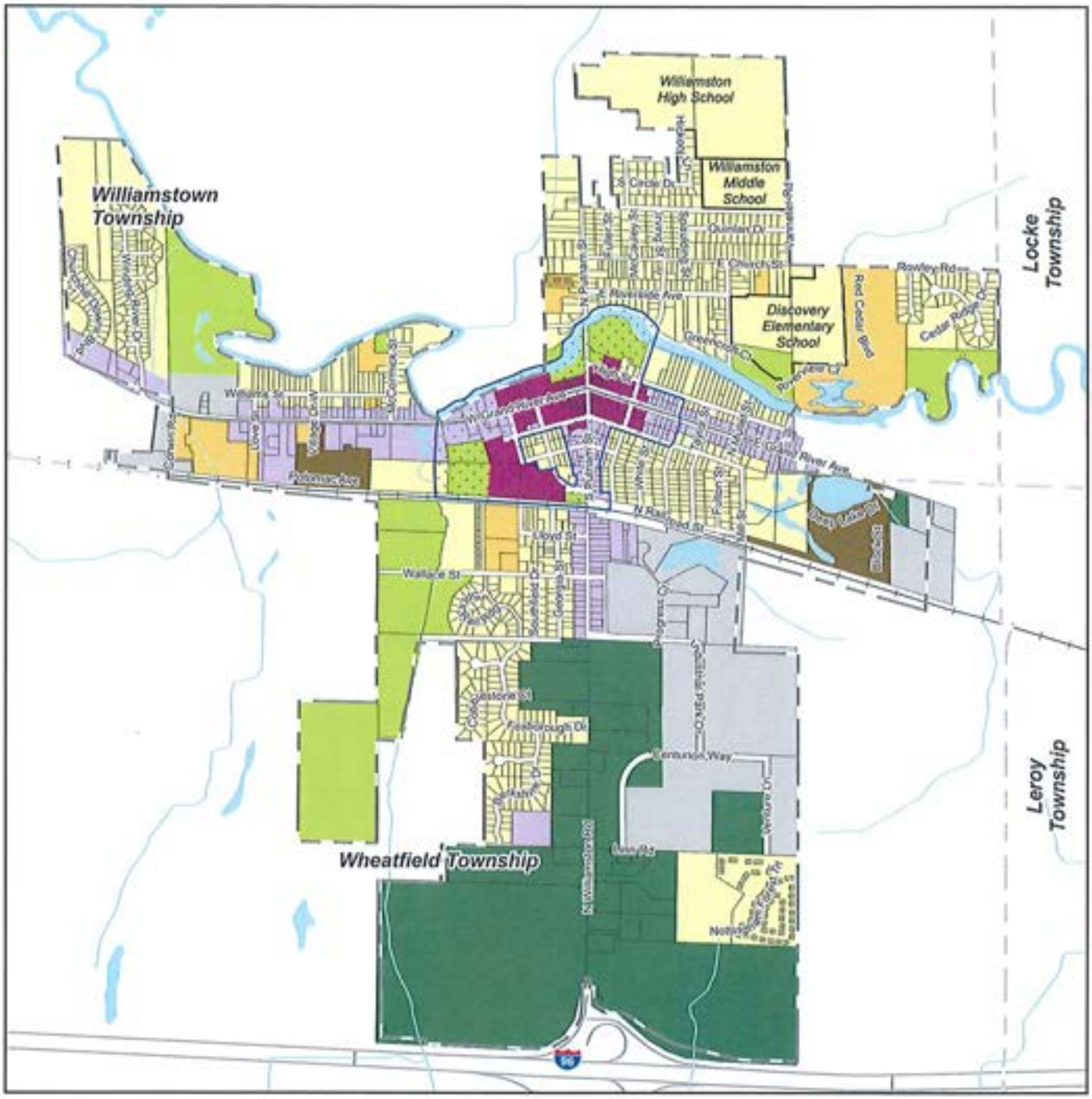
- Buildings and structures are minimal and modest in scale (ex: restrooms, shelters, picnic pavilions, trailheads, maintenance facilities, etc.).
- Structures use natural materials and blend into the landscape.
- Siting maximizes scenic views and preserves sensitive environmental features.
- Parking is limited, appropriately screened, and designed for low environmental impact.
- Trailheads and access points are clearly marked, welcoming, and ADA accessible.

Connectivity / Mobility:

- Trail networks that connect to neighborhoods, schools, downtown, and other destinations.
- Prioritize walking and biking access via greenways, sidewalks, and shared-use paths.
- Safe and visible crossings at road intersections.
- Wayfinding signage and interpretive elements to enhance user experience.
- Connections also support habitat corridors and ecological linkages.

Additional Key Considerations:

- Preservation of natural features, including floodplains, wetlands, wooded areas, and scenic vistas.
- Habitat connectivity and biodiversity.
- Water quality protection through green infrastructure and sustainable stormwater design.
- Areas designed with universal accessibility.
- Balance active recreational uses (e.g., sports, playgrounds) with passive uses (e.g., nature observation, quiet walking areas).
- Integrate native landscaping.
- Lighting, where used, is minimal and dark-sky compliant to reduce ecological disruption.



Future Land Use

City of Williamston, Michigan

LEGEND

- Traditional Residential
- Pocket / City Residential
- Manufactured Housing Park
- Neighborhood Mixed Use
- Downtown
- Mixed Use
- Industrial
- Open Space / Park Land
- DDA Boundary

0 500 1,000 Feet

Basemap Source: Michigan Center for Geographic Information, v. 17a. Data Source: Williamston, 2024. McKenna, 2025.

MCKENNA