

**CITY OF WILLIAMSTON, MICHIGAN
PLANNING COMMISSION**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
FOR AMENDMENTS TO THE ZONING ORDINANCE**

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that the City of Williamston Planning Commission will conduct a Public Hearing at 7:02 p.m. on Tuesday, December 1, 2020 via Zoom video conferencing software, in accordance with Public Act 228 of 2020. Instructions for accessing the meeting can be found at www.williamston-mi.us or by calling 517-655-2774. The Planning Commission will consider proposed text amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance pertaining to Buffer and Screening Requirements, Sign Dimension Requirements, and Solar Energy Systems.

The purpose of the Public Hearing is to grant a hearing to any person interested in the Proposed Amendments to the City of Williamston Zoning Ordinance, as previously amended, prior to the Planning Commission making its recommendation thereon to the Williamston City Council.

The effects of the proposed amendments are as follows:

Amendment of Article 7, Chapter 3, Section 74-7.305 of the Zoning Ordinance to strengthen and clarify buffering requirements in industrial districts.

Further, amendment of Table 13 of Article 8, Section 74-8.105, of the Zoning Ordinance to add a footnote "D" that pertains to the maximum sign area and number of ground signs in the PO-1 District; amendment to Table 14 of Article 8, Section 74-8.106.B.1 of the Zoning Ordinance to increase the maximum permitted area of ground mounted signs in the PO-1 District; and amendment of Article 8, Section 74-8.106.A.1.b of the Zoning Ordinance pertaining to Sign Design Standards and District-Specific Requirements for the PO-1 District.

Further, amendment of Article 5, Chapter 5, Section 74-5.502 of the Zoning Ordinance to include regulations on ground mounted solar energy systems on lots without a principal structure.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN as required by the City of Williamston's Zoning Ordinance and the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended. All related documentation may be reviewed at www.williamston-mi.us and written comments will be accepted via mail to City of Williamston City Hall, 161 E. Grand River Avenue, Williamston, MI 48895, or email to cityclerk@williamston-mi.us.

Any party having an interest in the matter may attend the Public Hearing and make their comments known to the Planning Commission. Individuals with disabilities needing special accommodations to fully participate in the meeting may contact the City Clerk to request the necessary assistance. This request must be made at least two (2) business days prior to the meeting.

Holly Thompson, City Clerk
CITY OF WILLIAMSTON

Chapter 3 **Buffer and Screening Requirements**

This chapter identifies buffering and screening requirements. Buffers and screens are required to mitigate potential negative off-site impacts, and are typically required along property lines to provide a transition between incompatible land uses. Development sites must also include general landscaping. Refer to [Chapter 2](#) above for those standards.

Section 74-7.301 Intent

Buffers and screening, whether consisting of landscaping, walls, or fences, shall be required to mitigate any potential negative impacts and/or nuisances (such as noise, glare, dirt, and litter) that a proposed land use may have on neighboring land uses, or to obscure unsightly items or areas from view off the site.

Section 74-7.302 Buffers in Single-Family and Two-Family Residential Districts

No buffer is required on parcels zoned R, R-1, or R-2, except as required elsewhere in the Ordinance.

Section 74-7.303 Buffers in Multiple-Family Residential Districts

In the R-3 district, a screening buffer shall be required whenever the rear façade of a building faces a property line abutting a single family residential district. In such cases, the following buffer shall be required:

- A. The required greenbelt shall be a minimum 15 feet wide.
- B. The required greenbelt shall include a minimum of two (2) deciduous shade trees, one (1) evergreen tree, one (1) ornamental tree, and eight (8) shrubs for every thirty (30) feet of greenbelt length. Trees and shrubs may be planted at uniform intervals, at random, or in groupings.
- C. Grass, ground cover, or other suitable live plant materials shall be planted over the entire greenbelt area, except for mulched areas around individual trees or shrubs.
- D. Breaks in the greenbelt for driveways or pedestrian paths may be permitted, provided that such breaks do not comprise more than 10% of the greenbelt length.

Section 74-7.304 Buffers in Office or Commercial Districts

In any office or commercial zoning district, an evergreen screening buffer shall be required wherever such district abuts directly upon land zoned for residential purposes. No buffer shall be required where a public road separates the zoning districts.

- A. The required buffer shall be a minimum 15 feet wide.
- B. The required buffer shall consist of a staggered double row of closely spaced evergreens (i.e., no farther than 15 feet apart) which can be reasonably expected to form a complete visual barrier at least six feet in height within three years of installation.
- C. The entire area of the buffer shall be planted with grass or ground cover, except for mulched areas around individual trees or shrubs.
- D. A masonry wall or solid wood fence six (6) feet in height may be integrated into the buffer at the discretion of the site owner. If a wall or fence is used, the buffer may be reduced to eight (8) feet in width. If the wall option is chosen, one deciduous canopy tree shall be planted along the wall for each 30 linear feet or fraction thereof of required wall.

Chapter 3 **Buffer and Screening Requirements**

Section 74-7.305 **Buffers in Industrial Districts**

In the I-1 and I-2 zoning districts, a landscaped screening buffer shall be required on all sides of a parcel that directly abut land in any non-industrial zoning district, **or land that is used for any non-industrial purpose**. No buffer shall be required where a public road separates the zoning districts, but a buffer shall be required adjacent to a railroad where the land on the opposite side of the railroad is zoned ~~for residential use or used for residential purposes~~.

- A. The required buffer shall be a minimum 25 feet wide.
- B. The required buffer shall include a minimum of two (2) deciduous shade trees, three (3) evergreen trees, one (1) ornamental tree, and fifteen (15) shrubs for every fifty (50) feet of buffer length. Trees and shrubs may be planted at uniform intervals, at random, or in groupings.
- C. The entire area of the buffer shall be planted with grass or ground cover, except for mulched areas around individual trees or shrubs. A paved pedestrian path may be incorporated into the buffer.
- D. A masonry wall six (6) feet in height may be integrated into the buffer at the discretion of the site owner. If a wall is used, the buffer may be reduced to twelve (12) feet in width and only the deciduous tree plantings from item B above are required.

Section 74-7.306 **Buffers for Parking Areas**

Any parking area containing 10 or more spaces, whether privately or publicly owned, with direct frontage on a public street shall provide the following screening:

- A. Perimeter buffering shall be provided along the edge of any parking area located within 50 feet of a public street. The buffer shall have a minimum width of 6 feet, and shall contain one deciduous shade tree per 25 linear feet or fraction thereof, one ornamental tree for every 40 linear feet or fraction thereof, and a continuous hedge of deciduous or upright evergreen shrubs planted not more than 36 inches on center.
- B. For parking areas with frontage along Grand River Avenue between the Deer Creek Bridge and Mullet Street, or Putnam Street between the Red Cedar River Bridge and Railroad Street, the parking area shall be separated from the sidewalk by a decorative screen, consisting of brick pillars separated by black metal fencing, placed along the sidewalk edge of the required planting strip. The spacing and height of the pillars and fencing shall be consistent with existing screens in the downtown area.
- C. In all instances, the Clear Vision Area provisions of [Section 74-3.204](#) shall be observed for all parking area buffers.

Section 74-7.307 **Loading, Storage, and Service Area Screening**

Loading areas and vehicle service areas in any district that are visible from a residential district or a street shall be screened from the adjacent residential uses and from any public street. Such screening shall consist of one of the following four options: 1) a masonry wall six feet in height, 2) a completely obscuring evergreen hedge six feet in height, 3) a building wing wall, or 4) other means acceptable to the Planning Commission.

Section 74-7.308 **Mechanical Equipment Screening**

Mechanical equipment located in any zoning district (such as air compressors, pool pumps, transformers, sprinkler pumps, satellite dish antennae, and similar equipment) shall be screened on at least three (3) sides by evergreen or deciduous shrubs or trees. Insofar as practical, said screening shall exceed the

Article 7 Landscaping and Screening
Chapter 3 Buffer and Screening Requirements

vertical height of the equipment being screened by at least six (6) inches within two (2) years of planting.

Article 8 Signs

Note that the total area requirements of [Table 13](#) apply only to signs that are allowed with a permit. Signs allowed without a permit are not subject to the total quantity and area limitations of [Table 13](#).

Table 12. Type of Sign Permitted by Zoning District

TYPE of SIGN	SIGN DESIGN STANDARDS											
	RR	R-1/MH	R-2	R-3	PO-1	C-1	C-2	C-3	C-4	I-1	I-2	
Key: ✓: Permitted for all uses ○: Permitted for some uses. Refer to sign design standards. [blank]: not permitted												
Building Mounted Sign	○	○	○	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Section 74-8.106.A
Monument Ground Sign	○	○	○	○	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Section 74-8.106.B
Entrance Sign	○	○	○	○								Section 74-8.106.C
On-Site Directional Sign					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Section 74-8.106.D
A-Frame Sign					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			Section 74-8.106.E
Building Directory Sign					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Section 74-8.106.F
Temporary Sign	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Section 74-8.106.G

Table 13. Total Ground and Building Mounted Sign Quantity and Area Requirements by Zoning District

SIGN DIMENSION REQUIREMENT	SIGN DESIGN STANDARDS											COMMENTS
	RR	R-1/MH	R-2	R-3	PO-1	C-1	C-2	C-3	C-4	I-1	I-2	
-	1	1	1	1	2	3	3	3	3	2	2	Dimension requirements apply only to ground and building mounted signs.
Maximum total sign area per street frontage (in square feet)	12	18	18	18	D	B	B	B	B	C	C	

Footnotes to [Table 13](#):

- A. Maximum Number of Ground and Building Mounted Signs. The maximum number of signs per street frontage includes ground and building mounted signs. The maximum number of signs allowed per street frontage may be assigned to a side of the property or building without street frontage, but in no case shall the total number of signs on one side of the property or building be greater than the maximum allowed per street frontage.
- B. Maximum Sign Area in Commercial Districts. The total area permitted for building mounted and ground signs in commercial districts is 15% of the signable area of the building.
- C. Maximum Sign Area in Industrial Districts.
 1. Front Yards. The total area of signs permitted shall not exceed one square foot for each linear foot of lot frontage at the front lot line or 3 square foot per linear foot of building frontage along the front facade, whichever is greater.
 2. Side Street Yards. For sites with more than one road frontage, an additional 0.5 square feet per linear foot of lot frontage on the side street lot line or 1.5 square feet of per linear foot of building façade frontage facing the side street, whichever is greater, is permitted.
 3. Absolute Maximum Sign Area. The total sign area on any site in an industrial district shall not exceed 750 square feet, or the maximum permitted by the preceding subsections [1](#) and [2](#), whichever is less.

- D. Maximum Sign Area and number of ground signs in the PO-1 District. For the maximum permitted sign area for ground signs see Table 14 of Section 74-8.106.B.1. For the maximum number of ground signs permitted, see Section 74-8.106.B.3. Building mounted signs shall adhere to the provisions set forth in Section 74-8.106.A.1.

Article 8 Signs

Section 74-8.106 Sign Design Standards

- A. **Building Mounted Signs.** Building mounted signs, including wall, awning, and projecting signs shall comply with the following requirements, in addition to the maximum total sign area per street frontage requirement of [Table 13](#).
1. **District-Specific Requirements.**
 - a. *In RR, R-1, R-2, R-3, and MH Districts.* Nonresidential uses may have one building mounted sign with a maximum area of 8 square feet. Manufactured housing parks, multiple family, and townhouse uses in the MH, R-2, and R-3 districts may have one building mounted sign with a maximum area of 10 square feet per street façade.
 - b. *In PO-1 Districts.* The maximum building sign area shall be 0.5 square feet per linear foot of building frontage or 0.25 square feet for each linear foot of lot frontage, whichever is greater. **In such cases of two building mounted signs on the same street frontage, the maximum permitted building sign area of both signs combined shall not exceed the greater of 0.5 square feet per linear foot of building frontage or 0.25 square feet for each linear foot of lot frontage.**
 - c. *In C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-4 Districts.*
 - i. Wall signs on a street facing façade shall be located below the bottom of any second story window. No sign shall obscure significant architectural features of the building to which it is attached.
 - ii. Projecting or awning signs that are constructed as an integral part of the building may encroach up to 4 feet into a setback or right-of-way area.
 - d. *In I-1 and I-2 Districts.* Roof signs that attach to or project from the surface or roof of the building are permitted.
 2. **Materials.** All building mounted signs shall comply with the following requirements:
 - a. Building mounted signs shall be professionally constructed using high-quality materials such as metal, stone, hard wood, brass, or aluminum. The use of exposed neon tubing in conjunction with other types of materials to emphasize a name, logo, or other message is permitted, however, internal neon lighting or any other use of neon tubing is prohibited.
 - b. Internally lit plastic letters or plastic box signs are prohibited in the C-1 district.
 - c. To minimize irreversible damage to masonry, all mounting and supports should be inserted into mortar joints and not into the face of the masonry.
 3. **Multi-Tenant Signage.** A building with two (2) or more non-residential tenants may exceed the number of building mounted signs allowed per building as provided for in [Table 13](#), provided the following requirements are satisfied:
 - a. One building mounted sign is permitted per tenant subject to the following size requirements:
 - i. For a tenant occupying 1,200 square feet of floor area or less, a maximum of 24 square feet.
 - ii. For a tenant occupying over 1,200 square feet of floor area, the size is limited to a maximum of one square foot of sign area per 50 square feet of area occupied by the tenant or 40 square feet, whichever is less.

Article 8 Signs

- B. Ground Signs. Ground signs shall comply with the following requirements, in addition to the maximum total sign area per street frontage requirement of [Table 13](#).
1. Height, Area, and Setback. Ground signs shall comply with the height, area, and setback requirements of the following [Table 14](#).

Table 14. Ground Sign Dimension and Setback Requirements

Zoning District ⁴	Maximum		Minimum Setback Requirements
	Sign Height	Sign Area	
RR R-1 R-2 R-3 MH	6 ft.	30 sq. ft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 feet from the existing or planned right-of-way • 15 feet from the side property line
PO-1	6 ft.	16-40 sq. ft.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 feet from the front propertyline • 10 feet from a side property line
C-1	6 ft.	See Table 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 feet from the existing or planned right-of-way • 10 feet from a side property line
C-2C-2 C-3C-3 C-4C-4	10 ft.	See Table 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 feet from the existing or planned right-of-way • 10 feet from a side property line
I-1 I-2	12 ft.	See Table 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ½ of the front setback requirement for the zoning district. Refer to Section 74-3.102. • Must comply with the side and rear setback requirement applicable to principal buildings in the zoning district. Refer to Section 74-3.102.

2. Monument Base Required. All ground signs in the City shall be low-level monument style ground signs. Pole signs are not permitted. The ground sign shall be provided with a base that is at least 80% of the width of the sign. An exception to the monument base requirement may be provided if the ground sign is supported by two decorative posts on each side of the sign, and the vertical distance between the average grade at the sign location to the lowest point of the sign is no greater than three (3) feet; in such cases, the permitted maximum sign height shall be measured from the average grade at the sign location to the highest point of the sign.
3. Number of Signs. One ground sign shall be permitted per lot or parcel. Lots that have more than 100 feet of frontage on each of two (2) or more public streets shall be permitted one ground sign for each street frontage.
4. Corner Clear Vision Area. All ground signs shall be located outside of corner clearance areas pursuant to [Section 74-3.204](#).
5. Materials. Natural materials such as stone, decorative masonry, wood, or metal are preferred sign construction materials.
6. Landscaping. Low level landscaping shall be provided around the base of the sign, but shall not obscure any part of the sign message.

⁴ The monument ground sign regulations are applicable to residential developments (i.e., site condominiums, subdivisions, manufactured housing parks, and multiple-family residential developments) and nonresidential uses in the RR, R-1, R-2, R-3, and MH districts pursuant to Section 74-8.106(C).

Key: ■ Principal Permitted Use ○ Special Land Use [blank] Use Not Permitted

USE	RR (A)	R-1 (A)	R-2 (A)	R-3 (A)	PO-1 (E)	C-1 (F)	C-2 (F)	C-3 (E, G)	C-4 (E, H)	I-1 (I)	I-2	DEVELOPMENT STANDARD
State Licensed Residential Facility (6 or fewer residents)	■	■	■	○				○				Section 74-2.447
State Licensed Residential Facility (7 or more residents)	○	○	○	○				○				Section 74-2.447
RECREATION USES												
Assembly Structure for Viewing Outdoor Activities	○	○	○				○					
Campground/RV Park									○			Section 74-2.408
Golf Course	■											Section 74-2.417
Private Recreation (small indoor)						○	■	○				
Private Recreation (large indoor)							○			■		
Private Recreation (small outdoor)	■	■	■	■	■		■	■				Section 74-2.437
Private Recreation (large outdoor)	○						○					Section 74-2.438
Public Park or Recreation Facility	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Section 74-2.439
ANIMAL and AGRICULTURE USES												
Agriculture Bulk Collection, Storage, Distribution	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Section 74-2.404
Agricultural Operation	■											Section 74-2.405
Gardening and Cultivating of Plants	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■			
Greenhouse or Nursery (with or without retail sales)	○						■					Section 74-2.418
Keeping of Household Animals or Pets	■	■	■	■		■		■				Section 74-2.421
Kennel	○						○					Section 74-2.422
Pet Boarding Facility	○						■			■		Section 74-2.435
Stable, Private	■											Section 74-2.446
Stable, Public	○											Section 74-2.446
Veterinary Hospital or Clinic	○				■	○	■	○				Section 74-2.451
TEMPORARY, SPECIAL EVENT, and OTHER USES												
Accessory Building or Structure	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Accessory Commercial Uses to a Manufacturing or Processing (light) Principal Use										○	○	Section 74-2.401
Drive-Through Facility (accessory to any principal use)					○		○	○	○			Section 74-2.413
Home Occupation	■	■	■	■	■	■		■				Section 74-2.419
Nonresidential Parking		○	○	○								Section 74-2.429
Outdoor Storage (accessory)	○						○			■	■	Section 74-2.432
Solar Energy System (Principal Structure on Lot)	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	
Solar Energy System (Principal Structure NOT on Lot)	■	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	■	■	
Roadside Stand or Market						■		■	■			Section 74-2.445
Seasonal Outdoor Sales	■					■	■	■	■			Section 74-2.445
Temporary Use Permit	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Section 74-5.116
Temporary Construction	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	Section 74-2.449
Wireless Telecommunication Facility (Ord. 321; 2/28/11)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	■	■	Section 74-2.452

Section 74-5.502 **Solar Energy Systems**

A. **Definitions.**

1. *Solar Energy System.* A solar photovoltaic cell, panel, or array that converts solar energy to usable thermal, mechanical, chemical, or electrical energy.
2. *Solar Storage Battery.* A device that stores energy from the sun and makes it available in an electrical form.

B. **Rooftop Solar Energy Systems.** Rooftop and building mounted solar energy systems are permitted in all zoning districts., subject to the following regulations:

1. Roof mounted systems shall not extend more than 4 feet above the surface to which it is affixed.
2. No solar energy system may protrude beyond the edge of the roof.
3. A building permit shall be required for installation of rooftop and building mounted systems.

C. **Ground Mounted Solar Energy Systems on lots with a principal structure.** Ground mounted and freestanding solar energy systems are permitted in all zoning districts **when located on a lot with a principal structure**, subject to the following regulations:

1. Location. The solar energy system shall meet the required front yard setback requirement for the district in which it is located, and be set back a minimum of 5 feet from any side or rear property line.
2. Height.
 - a. The height of the solar energy system and any mounts shall not exceed 10 feet when oriented at maximum tilt.
 - b. If the solar energy system is located in the front yard between the required front setback line and front building wall of the principal building, the maximum height for the system shall be 42 inches (3.5 feet). **Evergreen** Landscaping that is sufficient to buffer the equipment from view from nearby dwelling units or streets but that will not obstruct the energy collecting surface from solar energy shall be provided.
3. Building Permit. A building permit shall be required for any ground mounted solar energy system.
4. Area. No more than 20% of the total lot area may be covered by a ground mounted solar energy system.

D. **Ground Mounted Solar Energy Systems on lots without a principal structure.** Ground mounted and freestanding solar energy systems when located on a lot without a principal structure may be permitted as a special land use in the R-1, R-2, R-3, PO-1, C-1, C-2, C-3, and C-4 Zoning Districts providing that the following provisions and conditions are met:

1. Review and Approval Procedure. The proposed ground mounted and freestanding solar energy system shall undergo the special land use review and approval procedure outlined in Article 9 Chapter 3 in this Ordinance.
2. Adjacent Principal Structure. A ground mounted and freestanding solar energy system may be allowed to be located on a lot without a principal structure provided there is a contiguous lot with a principal structure under the same ownership. The ground mounted and freestanding solar energy system shall be used only to provide electrical energy to the principal structure located on the contiguous lot that is under the same ownership.

3. Location. The solar energy system shall meet all the required setback requirements of a principal structure for the district in which it is located.
 4. Height. The height of the solar energy system and any mounts shall not exceed 10 feet when oriented at maximum tilt.
 5. Area. The total surface area of a ground mounted solar energy system shall not exceed $\frac{1}{2}$ of the maximum lot coverage requirements of the district in which it is located. The Planning Commission shall have the option to reduce the maximum allowed surface area of the solar energy system to a size that does not exceed the energy consumption needs of the associated principal structure in order to ensure the mass and scale of the system is compatible with adjacent uses and is not obtrusive to the area.
 6. Building Permit. A building permit shall be required for any ground mounted solar energy system.
 7. Buffer. Landscaping that is sufficient to buffer the equipment from view from nearby dwelling units or streets, but that will not obstruct the energy collecting surface from solar energy shall be provided.
- E. Batteries. When batteries are included as part of the solar collector system, they must be placed in a secure container or enclosure when in use, and when no longer used shall be disposed of in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.
- F. Removal. If a solar energy system ceases to perform its intended function for more than 12 consecutive months, the property owner shall remove the collector, mount, and associated equipment and facilities no later than 90 days after the end of the 12 month period.