



“WILLIAMSTON – Discover the Charm”

**Request for Proposals
to prepare a
Zoning Ordinance
Comprehensive Amendment**

**City of Williamston
Ingham, Michigan**

Prepared by:
Lisa Hitchcock, City Manager
161 E. Grand River Avenue
Williamston, Michigan 48895
Phone: 517-655-2774
Fax: 517-655-2797
Website: www.williamston-mi.us

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REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS: ZONING ORDINANCE COMPREHENSIVE AMENDMENT

A. Request for Proposals (RFP's) - Statement of Intent

The City of Williamston intends to update its Zoning Ordinance and corresponding Zoning Map. Therefore, the City requests proposals from qualified land use planning consulting firms with the expertise to comprehensively amend the City's Zoning Ordinance and corresponding Zoning Map. The new ordinance and map shall be in compliance with State statutes and consistent with the guidelines outlined in the *Master Land Use Plan 2007* for the City of Williamston (hereinafter referred to as the *Plan*.)

While the City is developing the new zoning ordinance that is applicable only to the City of Williamston, the entire Williamston Area, which includes Wheatfield and Williamstown Townships, should be considered when developing the new ordinance. It is expected that the zoning map developed under this contract will not only depict the zoning classifications within the City's corporate limits, but will also show the township zoning designations of the area within approximately one-quarter to one-half mile of the periphery of the City.

Note: For the purposes of this project, it is assumed that when reference is made to updating the Zoning Ordinance, this shall include the updating of the corresponding Zoning Map.

B. Project Purpose

The City of Williamston wants to create a new zoning ordinance and zoning map that will promote a style of development that preserves the charm of Williamston while allowing development that is a "win-win" situation for the current residents, new residents, the developers and the City. The new ordinance should assist to preserve the historic character and viability of the downtown and help establish the downtown as a regional cultural and entertainment center. The current zoning ordinance is conventional (use-based) in that uses are segregated. The City desires to replace the current ordinance with a "form-based" code.

The form-based code should incorporate the key concepts of Smart Growth. These concepts promote mixed uses and pedestrian friendly development in many areas of town - a

SMART GROWTH PRINCIPLES

- Mix land uses
- Take advantage of compact building design
- Create a range of housing opportunities & choices
 - Create walkable communities
- Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place
- Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmentally sensitive areas
- Strengthen & direct new & infill development toward existing communities
 - Provide a variety of transportation choices
- Make development decisions predictable, fair & cost effective
- Encourage community & stakeholder collaboration in development decisions

Source: Smart Growth Network

style of development that was once common in America before the post-war suburban development boom. This supports land use that has homes within walking distance of gathering places such as parks and cafes as well as service and convenience establishments. The City also desires to preserve the area's extensive natural features, including the Red Cedar River area, land currently considered as farmland, open space, woodlands, animal habitat, streambanks and wetlands. We are not interested in development patterns that lead to spread-out, disconnected and auto-dependant land uses. We hope to implement a form-based zoning ordinance that will steer development to the most suitable places and organize it into better connected, more compact forms.

C. General City Information

The City of Williamston measures 2.1 square miles. It was incorporated from parts of Williamstown and Wheatfield Townships, which lie north and south of the City respectively. The Williamston area is located approximately 20 miles east of Lansing and 75 miles northwest of Detroit. Williamston's location provides the opportunity for residents to experience excellent cultural, artistic and athletic events.

The City proper contains a relatively compact development pattern with an intimate, small mid-western town setting. Residential neighborhoods have developed within a rectangular grid street pattern throughout the City. The focal point of the City is centered on its historic central business district situated along Grand River Avenue, between Water Street and Deer Creek. Incorporated as a village in 1871 and as a city in 1945, Williamston is now home to approximately 3,500 residents within the City limits. The City is centered in the Williamston Community Schools district; which encompasses the neighboring townships of Williamstown, Locke, Wheatfield, Leroy and Meridian as well as the City. The location of the school facilities and activities increases the impact on the City's infrastructure.

D. Background on City's Governing Documents & Codes Relevant to the Project

1. City of Williamston Comprehensive Plan. The latest version of the *Plan* was adopted on May 7, 2007 so it is relatively new. Developing the *Plan* was an important first step for the City in implementing a coordinated growth management program for the Williamston area. There was significant effort to bring broad input from all stakeholders during the project.
2. Zoning Ordinance. A top priority of the new *Plan* is to update the zoning ordinance to establish regulations and land uses that are consistent with the *Plan*. The current Zoning Ordinance was adopted on June 30, 1997. Over the years, the current ordinance has been revised on an as needed basis. The ordinance has proved to be disjointed and difficult to work with as certain sections of the ordinance conflict with other sections or are scattered throughout the ordinance.
3. Technical Review of Zoning Ordinance. In January of 2008, McKenna Associates, Incorporated prepared a technical review of the City's Zoning Ordinance that consists of an assessment of the ordinance and recommendations for the revision process as well as specific content suggestions.
4. Other important documents. It is important to note that as part of the Williamston Area's growth management efforts, the municipality also adopted the following planning documents:
 - *Williamston Parks and Recreation Plan 2005-2009*

- *MDOT's M-43/M-52 Access Management Plan adopted 03-24-08*
- *Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Amended Development & Tax Increment Financing Plan adopted 1981- last amended 2001*
- *TIFA 2A and TIFA 2B Amended Development & Tax Increment Financing Plans adopted 1985 – last amended 2004 and adopted 1985 – last amended 2008 respectively*

5. Small Town Design Initiative (November 2007) – Williamston was selected to participate in this program sponsored by MSU. It involved scores of community members in three interactive workshop sessions. The final report includes a CD of images and comments on them from participants.
6. Retail Development and Opportunities Plan (May 2006) – Three graduate students from the University of Illinois at Chicago did a review of the City (one of them grew up in E. Lansing) that provides useful suggestions for development and growth in the City.

It is critical that the new zoning be consistent with the goals and vision of the community as detailed in these and many other reports and companion documents available from the City that have been developed, many over the past ten years.

E. Scope of Services

The selected consulting firm will work with the City Planning Commission and key staff to develop a new zoning ordinance and zoning map that support the goals, policies and action items in the *Plan*. The Planning Commission will be the governmental body responsible for overseeing development and review of the new zoning ordinance and map, and it will then recommend the adoption of the final zoning ordinance and zoning map to the City Council.

Education of the City Planning Commission will also be a part of the scope of this project. The selected consultant will be responsible for educating the Planning Commission on the basics of planning and zoning principles and the concepts associated with *Smart Growth*. The consultant should compare and contrast these concepts with traditional zoning codes and relate how these concepts can be implemented in Williamston. For example, the consultant could explain how small neighborhood commercial or service uses could be successfully incorporated into residential neighborhoods. At least one educational session is to take place at the first meeting at which the consultants are introduced to the full Planning Commission. It will be the Planning Commission with whom the consultant works closest during this project.

The current zoning ordinance is conventional (use-based) in style. The City wants to create a zoning ordinance that will help the City achieve its vision for the future as outlined in the *Plan*. Some of the smart growth concepts that are applicable to Williamston are as follows:

- Assist in crafting language to allow mixed uses as indicated in the Future Land Use Map of the *Plan*
- Create “walkable”, mixed-use areas with higher density projects
- Provide a wide range of housing options and price points for citizens
- Reduce or mitigate the environmental degradation brought about by development
- Preserve open space and limit loss of natural lands, wildlife and farmland
- Help make development decisions that are predictable, fair and cost effective

While the Zoning Ordinance must be overhauled to achieve many of the goals in the *Plan*, it must also be revised because it contains archaic and often ambiguous language. This can

lead to undesirably broad interpretation of the regulations. Further, it is silent and gives no incentives to developers on some significant issues (e.g., appearance and landscape standards, screening & buffers, LEED principles or Green concepts, etc.) The consultant will be responsible for ensuring that all of the basic code elements are included in the new ordinance, which will most likely include the following sections:

- Definitions
- Use Classifications
- Development and Design Standards
- Parking Standards
- Signage Standards
- Lighting Standards
- Non-conformities
- Evaluation Criteria
- Review Procedures
- Administration
- Monitoring & Revisions
- Zoning District Map

The consultant will be responsible for recommending the organization and style of the ordinances. The zoning ordinance should be an efficient, easy-to-use document (hard copy and on-line) that will help implement the land use policies of Williamston. Mechanisms such as cross-referencing, illustrations & tables should be the primary methods to make the ordinance user-friendly. The consultant will have primary responsibility for drafting and redrafting the text of the zoning ordinance after receiving appropriate input from the community's citizens, stakeholders, Planning Commissioners, Council members and staff. In establishing the zoning ordinance, the Consultant should strive to follow the guidelines for developing a clear and user-friendly zoning ordinance noted in the side panel "Guidelines for Writing Smart Growth Zoning Codes.

Other considerations that we are looking for include:

- Consideration of a document with an approval process that gives each site plan/development points (like Grand Rapids' newly adopted ordinance)
- Incentives in the point system that align as much as possible with principles of LEED for all (commercial, industrial and residential uses)
- Gives incentives (probably using a point system) to developments that follow our Master Plan, that follow the Zoning Ordinance (versus asking for exceptions) and are Green
- Create single family-zoned areas that allow for multi-generational residents as baby boomers and their parents age and/or disabled veterans come home
- Give points/incentives to developments that are:
 - EPA energy star program certified
 - Affiliated with Green Built Michigan
 - Take principles from cutting edge research and guidelines from organizations such as NAHB (National Association of Home Builders) and ICC as they develop ANSI standards for green homes
 - Preserving good structure and retro-fitting to make green or LEED certified
- Language in zoning ordinance that promotes LED lighting, starting with the City

- Use themes of the Master Plan woven through the zoning ordinance
- Incorporate sustainable development concepts into developments

It is anticipated that the consultant will perform the following research/tasks before the actual writing of the ordinance:

- Establish a comprehensive participation, communication and information strategy to ensure appropriate volunteer, community, business, planning and staff involvement during the creation of the zoning ordinance.
- Perform a field survey to evaluate existing development comparing it to the current zoning districts and the Future Land Use Map to determine if re-classification of districts is necessary. If a re-classification of districts is necessary, then a new zoning map should be developed to be consistent with the new re-districting.
- Analyze the types of variances or exceptions requested in the past ten (10) years to determine if a pattern has developed that would give insight into some of the planning issues that should be addressed in the new ordinance and recommend specific language for those.
- Advise as to any applicable laws that will impact the issues to be addressed in the new zoning ordinance.

Drafting of the ordinance should begin after the aforementioned research/tasks are performed and any other research/tasks are performed as recommended by the consultant and agreed to by the City as outlined in a contract. Staff and the consultant must agree to the scope, outline and organization of the ordinance before the first draft has begun.

F. Deliverables

All items delivered as part of this project shall be the sole property of the City of Williamston. The consultant shall be responsible for the submittal and execution of the following:

1. Progress Reports and Research. The consultant shall be responsible for submitting monthly progress reports and research information relative to the project. The

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING SMART GROWTH ZONING CODES

- Use straightforward language and terms that are unambiguously defined & used consistently.
- Provide simple explanations that avoid unnecessary complexity. Try to keep each section of the code self-contained & avoid confusing cross-references, exceptions & footnotes (especially those that direct users to other places in the code or other documents).
- Use tables or graphics to communicate zoning criteria & development standards & avoid lengthy & repetitive text.
- Fit the standards to Williamston's local situation.
- Design a development review process that facilitates good development. Don't let a cumbersome review process kill off projects that will improve the community. Application fees, review timelines, environmental analysis, process steps, service fees & hearings should all be designed to help good projects gain approval.
- Allow for creative designs that may not conform to set standards but meet the goals of the code by providing an alternate design review process.
- Consider testing the draft code to see if the desired type of development could even be achieved.
- Select desirable standards for street widths & design where necessary.
- Adapt the language or concepts to fit Williamston's local codes style & indexing system.

Adapted from *Smart Growth Zoning Codes: A Resource Guide*, Smart Growth Network & the Local Govt. Commission, California, 2003.

consultant shall clearly communicate how the regulatory effects of the proposed ordinance may differ from the effects of the current ordinance. Background information regarding subjects addressed in the new ordinance, which are not addressed in the current ordinance shall also be submitted.

2. Draft Ordinances/Maps. Fifteen (15) copies of draft documents are required during the development stages of the project for review and use by the Planning Commission and staff.
3. Meetings. The consultant will be responsible for meeting with the Planning Commission and City staff on a regular basis. The number and frequency of the meetings will be determined in consultation with all parties before the project begins. The purpose of the meetings will be to establish objectives, discuss alternatives, provide direction and review progress. In addition, the consultant will be expected to attend periodic meetings of the Planning Commission and City Council.

The City Planning Commission meets the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers at the Williamston City Hall. The City Council meets the 2nd and 4th Monday of each month at 7:00 PM in the Council Chambers at the Williamston City Hall.

4. Final Work Products. The new zoning ordinance and zoning map must be provided in both print and electronic format that are compatible with the City's software. The consultant shall provide the following specific ordinance products:
 - Twenty-five (25) bound hardcopies of the final zoning ordinance developed with Microsoft *Word* in a 8-1/2" x 11" format
 - One black and white camera-ready original of each page of the ordinances as developed with Microsoft *Word* that are 8-1/2" x 11" in BOTH ordinance format and code format compatible with the City's existing code
 - The electronic *Word* version of the ordinances in BOTH ordinance and code formats shall be provided to the City on CD-ROM.

The final zoning map shall be included as part of the zoning ordinance document. The City shall be provided with the following map products:

- Twenty-five (25) copies of the final map folded & inserted into the bound hardcopies of the zoning code with approximate size of 24" x 36"
- Six (6) display-size maps with approximate size of 48" x 96" (two of which shall be mounted on an acceptable rigid backing for display and/or wall mounting)
- A digital version of the overall zoning district map in a format suitable for placing on the City's Internet website (similar to an Adobe PDF file.)
- A digital version of the individual parcel level for use in and compatible with the City's Geographic Information System, which uses the ArcView platform.

Specific details regarding the final deliverable document and map products will be discussed during the interview stage and will be detailed in the final contract.

G. Information Provided by the City of Williamston

The City will be responsible for providing the selected consulting firm with a hard copy of the following information immediately following the signing of the contract:

- Current zoning ordinance, as amended
- Current zoning map, as amended

- Williamston's 2007 Comprehensive Plan
- Williamston Parks and Recreation Plan
- MDOT's M-43/M-52 Access Management Plan
- Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Amended Development & Tax Increment Financing Plan
- TIFA 2A and TIFA 2B Amended Development & Tax Increment Financing Plans
- Small Town Design Initiative documentation
- Retail Development and Opportunities Plan

H. Budget and Timeline

The consulting firm for the Zoning Ordinance Comprehensive Amendment project will be retained by the City of Williamston. It is anticipated that the project will span the course of one year or less, commencing no later than the week of January 5, 2009.

I. Proposal Submission

Twenty (20) copies of the proposal must be received no later than 2:00 PM on December 4, 2008 and must be signed by an authorized official of the organization submitting the proposal.

All costs incurred for proposal preparation, presentation or contract negotiations are the responsibility of the consultant. Each proposal must be complete and the City reserves the right to reject any proposal received after the date and time due.

To be considered, proposals should include the information set forth below and must be received by the due date at the following address:

City of Williamston
161 E. Grand River Avenue
Williamston, MI 48895

Questions regarding the request for proposals should be directed to Lisa Hitchcock, City Manager, 161 E. Grand River Avenue, Williamston, MI 48895, (517) 655-2774, manager@williamston-mi.us.

J. Proposal Format

Proposals should include the following information:

1. Cover Letter. The cover letter should outline your firm's understanding of the assignment and must be signed by an authorized official empowered to commit the firm to a contractual arrangement with the City.
2. Professional Staff. Outline the names of the principals and key personnel who will be assigned to the project and provide professional resumes of each key member of the project team. Also, please include a brief statement of the availability of key personnel of the firm to undertake the proposed project.

Identify any sub-consultants who may be working on the project and submit a professional resume for each key sub-consultant. Please note that the primary consultant will be required to assume responsibility for all services offered in the primary consultant's proposal, regardless of which firm provides them. The primary consultant

shall be the sole point of contact with regard to contractual matters, including payment of any and all charges resulting from the contract. Any proposed subcontracting shall be stated in the proposal or approved by prior mutual agreement of the contracting parties.

The project is anticipated to take approximately one year commencing no later than the week of January 5, 2009. Any key persons identified by your firm must be contractually committed to the work until the project is completed and approved. If a principal of the firm and other associates are to work on the project as a team, please indicate the percentage of time each key team member is to devote to the project and outline the methods to be used for coordinating project work among members of the team. It is expected that a principal of the firm will be present during the interview phase of the project.

3. Qualifications and References. Include a narrative of the firm's qualifications for the proposed project, including the types of services for which the firm is qualified. The narrative should describe the firm's specific experience working with growth management techniques such as *Smart Growth*, *New Urbanism* and *Traditional Neighborhood Development*. Provide a list of recent projects completed by the firm that demonstrate similar competencies that will be needed for this project. For each past project, include the name, title and phone number of a representative whom the City may contact to discuss your experience.
4. Project Approach and Timeframe. Provide a detailed description of the firm's approach to the project broken down by task. For each task, describe the activity, the method for conducting the activity, the intended results, products, any work or activity to be conducted by the City or its representatives, and the anticipated timeframe using a Gantt-type chart that shows by the month or week, expected completion for each project element to illustrate when each task will be undertaken and completed. Included in this section may be a discussion on any substantive or innovative ideas used in other similar projects, which you feel is applicable to this project.
5. Conflict of Interest. Provide a list of any work contracts in which your firm is currently involved with adjacent communities or with private developers doing work in Williamston and provide a list of any projects that could be considered or could create a real or perceived conflict of interest.
6. Resources. Indicate all resources, other than those listed in Section G of this RFP, your firm will need to have the City supply in order to properly complete this project.
7. Fees. Provide your firm's fees for performing the services required as detailed in your proposal. Identify the total cost for completing each work task. Include in the budget an itemized cost for each staff member assigned to the project and subcontractors, if applicable. Include a time chart by month or week to illustrate when each task will be undertaken and completed. The overall contract cost shall be stated as a total not-to-exceed fee for the services outlined. This contract cost shall include the hourly billing rates of the staff who would serve the City, together with any added costs for direct or indirect expenses such as printing, mileage, data or sub-consultants.

K. Evaluation of Proposals

The City will evaluate submitted proposals based on the following criteria:

- Adherence to the information requested in this RFP

- Understanding and approach to the project
- Respondent's qualifications, experience and reputation
- Evaluation of prior experience on similar or related types of projects
- Unique resources, such as specific experience in a very similar or innovative planning or regulatory technique that may be beneficial to the project
- Cost of the project related to the scope of work. The lowest cost proposal may or may not necessarily be selected. This is not considered a bidding process, but a method of securing the best consulting firm that can provide the services and work product most advantageous to the City of Williamston. The City reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to waive any irregularities in the proposal review process.

The City will schedule interviews with two or three selected firms. As part of the interview, respondents will be expected to make a short presentation on the firm's experience and approach to the project. Respondents should also be prepared to answer questions related to their experience and their proposal. Upon completion of the interviews, the Planning Commission will make a recommendation on which firm shall be selected to work with the City on the project. The City Council has final authority to award the professional services contract with the consultant selected for the project.

**Thank you for your interest in
the development of a new zoning ordinance
for the City of Williamston!**