



Memorandum

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council, City of Grosse Pointe Woods
FROM: Laura Mangan, AICP, NCI
SUBJECT: Zoning Ordinance Update: Overview, Timeline, and Discussion of the First Articles
DATE: September 10, 2026

INTRODUCTION

Following the adoption of the 2024 Master Plan in January 2025, the City of Grosse Pointe Woods was awarded a \$50,000 grant from the Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA). The funding comes as part of MSHDA's Housing Readiness Incentive Grant Program, which provides funding to eligible applicants to implement actions that encourage increasing housing supply and affordability.

The City is using the awarded funding to update its Zoning Ordinance to promote housing readiness, reduce administrative burdens, and align regulations with the recently adopted Master Plan. McKenna was selected to carry out the technical Ordinance update, in close communication with the City.

WHY UPDATE THE ZONING ORDINANCE?

Updating a Zoning Ordinance is the natural next step after adopting a Master Plan, to ensure that the Plan is properly implemented by up-to-date regulations. The 2024 Master Plan offers a series of aspirational Future Land Use districts in its Future Land Use Plan, which offers a guide as to how the City can move towards its social, economic, and environmental goals through land use policy.

The Zoning Ordinance is the primary tool for implementing a Master Plan, so there should be a clear connection between Master Plan goals and the Zoning Ordinance. Many of the land use recommendations, goals and objectives found in the Master Plan can be aided by amendments to the City's Zoning Ordinance.

For example, the first goal of the Master Plan is to "Provide a range of housing choices for all ages, abilities, and incomes." To actualize this, there must be changes to the Ordinance, such as updating permitted housing types, establishing appropriate residential standards, and clarifying regulatory procedures.

The City's current Zoning Ordinance is cumbersome and difficult to administer. This has caused confusion for applicants and unnecessary business before the Planning Commission and City Council. For example, architectural requirements for new developments are not currently explicit, making it difficult to provide proper guidance to applicants. Development procedures for new small businesses are currently arduous, inconsistent and lacking in clarity. As part of this Zoning Ordinance update, unclear, unnecessary and burdensome requirements have been removed and replaced with requirements that are more clear and more reasonable.



PROJECT GOALS

One of the primary goals of this project is to create a clear, modern, and user-friendly Zoning Ordinance, which is an essential foundation for effective community development and livability. Streamlining the City's Zoning Ordinance will reduce confusion, increase transparency, and make it easier for residents, developers, and City officials to understand and navigate Grosse Pointe Woods' land use regulations.

The updated Zoning Ordinance will also support and implement the community's vision, as identified in the recently adopted Master Plan.

OUR PROCESS AND PROGRESS TO DATE

Each month, two of the 12 draft articles are to be reviewed. Enclosed is a timeline that details the upcoming meetings and schedule of articles for review.

Most recently, at the August Planning Commission meeting, the Commission reviewed and forwarded the following two articles to City Council for review:

Article I: Title, Purpose, Scope

Article XII: Violations and Penalties

Should Council have any comments or requested changes on the above two articles, those are to be flagged and sent back to the Planning Commission for further discussion.

No public hearing is required at this time, the meeting on September 14th is for discussion only. All 12 articles will be reviewed first, then combined, prior to a full draft review.

We appreciate your efforts on this very important project and recognize the time you are proactively investing in, thank you.

ZONING ORDINANCE REWRITE:

2026-2027 REVISED ADOPTION TIMELINE

City of Grosse Pointe Woods, MI | August 4, 2026

DATE	KEY TASKS / MEETINGS
August 2026	Planning Commission Meeting <i>Present draft Articles I (Title, Purpose, Scope), and XII (Violations and Penalties). Changes incorporated and packaged to City Council for their next meeting.</i>
September 2026	City Council Meeting <i>Present draft Articles I (Title, Purpose, Scope), and XII (Violations and Penalties).</i>
September 2026	Planning Commission Meeting <i>Present draft Articles X (Administrative Organization) and XI (Administrative Procedures). Changes incorporated and packaged to City Council for their next meeting.</i>
October 2026	City Council Meeting <i>Present draft Articles X (Administrative Organization) and XI (Administrative Procedures).</i>
October 2026	Planning Commission Meeting <i>Present draft Articles III (including Use Chart) and IV (Schedule of Regulations). Changes incorporated and packaged to City Council for their next meeting.</i>
November 2026	City Council Meeting <i>Present draft Articles III (including Use Chart) and IV (Schedule of Regulations).</i>
November 2026	Planning Commission Meeting <i>Present draft Articles V (Requirements for Specific Land Uses) and VIII (Landscaping and Screening). Changes incorporated and packaged to City Council for their next meeting.</i>
December 2026	City Council Meeting <i>Present draft Articles V (Requirements for Specific Land Uses) and VIII (Landscaping and Screening).</i>
December 2026	Planning Commission Meeting <i>Present draft Articles VI (General Requirements) and VII (Parking and Loading). Changes incorporated and packaged to City Council for their next meeting.</i>
January 2026	City Council Meeting <i>Present draft Articles VI (General Requirements) and VII (Parking and Loading).</i>
February 2027	Planning Commission Meeting <i>Present draft Articles II (Definitions) and IX (Nonconformities). Changes incorporated and packaged to City Council for their next meeting.</i>
March 2027	City Council Meeting <i>Present draft Articles II (Definitions) and IX (Nonconformities).</i>

DATE	KEY TASKS / MEETINGS
March 2027	Planning Commission Meeting <i>Review full draft of the Zoning Ordinance.</i> <i>Changes incorporated and packaged to City Council for their next meeting.</i>
April 2027	City Council Meeting <i>Present the full draft of the Zoning Ordinance.</i>
April 2027	Planning Commission Meeting <i>Reviews final changes to the full draft of the Zoning Ordinance.</i> <i>Set public hearing for the next meeting.</i>
May 2027	Planning Commission Meeting <i>Planning Commission holds public hearing.</i> <i>Recommends adoption to the City Council.</i>
June 2027	City Council Meeting <i>City Council first reading.</i>
July 2027	City Council Meeting <i>City Council second reading and adoption by resolution.</i>
July 2027	<i>Adopted Zoning Ordinance available online and City Hall offices.</i>

DRAFT Zoning Ordinance through the MSDHA Grant

City of Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

Change Log: V.1: July 22, 2026 – PC and Attorney Reviewed
V.2: August 5, 2026 – Attorney Changes Incorporated, Subcommittee Reviewed
V.3: August 11, 2026 – For PC Review on August 25

Article I: Title, Purpose, and Scope

Background and Introduction to this Article:

Article I modernizes the legal framework of the Zoning Ordinance by clarifying its purpose, statutory authority, applicability, and interpretation, while reorganizing existing provisions and adding administrative sections to improve usability and legal clarity.

Summary Table of Proposed Article Changes:

Section	Nature of Revision	Summary
1.1	Clarified	<i>Updates terminology and wording for clarity and consistency with modern ordinance drafting practices without changing the intent of the section.</i>
1.2	New	<i>Establishes the purpose and legal authority of the Zoning Ordinance under the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act and identifies the planning objectives the Ordinance is intended to achieve.</i>
1.3	Expanded	<i>Clarifies the applicability of the Ordinance, establishes minimum standards, addresses conflicts with other regulations and private agreements, and confirms that all land, buildings, and structures are subject to the Ordinance.</i>
1.4	Consolidated	<i>Combines multiple existing provisions into a single section and clarifies how vested rights are addressed while recognizing the City's authority to amend the Ordinance, subject to applicable legal protections.</i>
1.5	Expanded	<i>Provides clear direction for resolving conflicts between regulations, establishes that more restrictive standards generally apply, and clarifies that written text takes precedence over illustrations.</i>
1.6	Relocated	<i>No substantive revisions. The section has been relocated for improved organization and readability.</i>
1.7	New	<i>Establishes the Ordinance's effective date and repeals the previous zoning ordinance while preserving existing legal rights, actions, and liabilities.</i>
-	REMOVED	<i>Section 50-1.5 was removed from the text; This eliminates a standalone cross-reference section because references are now incorporated throughout the Ordinance, improving usability and reducing redundancy.</i>

Article I: Title, Purpose and Scope

Former title: *Article I - Purpose and Intent*

Legend:

Red Text = Summary of Changes

Underlined = New Text

~~Strikethrough~~ = Removed Text

Yellow Highlight = Subcommittee Changes

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-1.1 Short Title Chapter 50 shall be known as, referred to, and cited as the “Zoning Ordinance” of the City of Grosse Pointe Woods.	Sec. 50-1.1 Title This Chapter 50 of the City of Grosse Pointe Woods, Michigan Code of Ordinances shall be known and may be cited as the “Zoning Ordinance” or “Zoning Code” of the City of Grosse Pointe Woods.	<i>Minor updates.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-1.2 Purpose <u>Pursuant to the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act (Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended), this Zoning Ordinance is designed to implement the goals, objectives, policies, and strategies of the Grosse Pointe Woods Master Plan, through complete, effective and concise regulations to:</u> A. <u>Protect the public health, safety, and general welfare of residents, property owners, business owners, and visitors of the City.</u> B. <u>Regulate the use of land and buildings by dividing the City into districts.</u> C. <u>Provide for the orderly development of the City by regulating the location, height, bulk, erection, and construction of structures and buildings to be used for business, residence, energy production, and other specified purposes.</u> D. <u>Provide for adequate light, air, and convenience of access to secure safety from fire and other hazards.</u> E. <u>Provide for an appropriate density of population by establishing minimum setbacks, yards, and open spaces.</u> F. <u>Provide for traffic safety and adequate parking and loading space for vehicles.</u> G. <u>Facilitate the development of adequate systems of fire protection, education, recreation, and public utilities and services.</u> H. <u>Protect the quality of environmentally sensitive areas.</u> I. <u>Conserve natural resources.</u>	- -	<i>New section; needed to describe the enabling authority of the City to zone.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-1.3 Application and Scope of the Zoning Ordinance A. <u>The provisions of this Ordinance (in their interpretation and application) shall be held to be minimum requirements adopted for the promotion of the public health, safety and general welfare. Wherever the requirements of this Ordinance are at variance with the requirements of any other lawfully adopted rules, regulations or ordinances, the most restrictive or that imposing the higher standards shall govern.</u> B. <u>This Ordinance shall not abrogate or annul any easement, covenant or other private agreement. Where any provision of this Ordinance is more restrictive or imposes a higher standard or requirement than such easement, covenant, or other private agreement, the provision of this Ordinance shall govern.</u> C. Zoning applies to every building, structure or use. No building, structure or land shall be used or occupied, and no building or structure or part thereof shall be erected, moved; placed; reconstructed, extended, enlarged or altered, except in conformity with this Ordinance. D. <u>Subdivision restrictions documented and filed with the Register of Deeds that are more restrictive than the provisions in this Ordinance are subject to enforcement by the proprietor of the subdivision or the subdivision association.</u>	Sec. 50-1.2 Scope No building or structure, or part thereof, shall be erected, constructed or altered and maintained, and no new use or change shall be made or maintained of any building, structure or land, or part thereof, except in conformity with the provisions of this chapter.	<i>Expanded the existing section.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-1.4 Vested Rights A. Nothing in this <u>Ordinance shall be interpreted or construed to give rise to any permanent vested rights in the continuation of any particular use, district, zoning classification, or permissible activities therein. Such rights as may exist through enforcement of this Ordinance are subject to subsequent amendment, change or modification as may be necessary for the preservation or protection of public health, safety, and welfare, to the extent that such rights are not protected by the provisions in Article IX: Nonconformities.</u> B. Existing Building Permits. Nothing in this Ordinance shall require any change in the plans, construction or intended use of a building for which a building permit has been issued prior to the time of passage of this ordinance from which this chapter is derived and the construction of which shall have been diligently prosecuted within 6-months of the date of such permit, and the ground story framework of which, including the second tier of beams, shall have been completed within such 6-months and which entire building shall be completed according to such plans as filed within 2-years from the date of the adoption of this Ordinance. C. Prior Height Permits. Nothing shall prevent the ultimate erection to its full height as originally planned of a building constructed to a less height prior to the adoption of this Ordinance, but with its foundations and structural members designed to carry the higher building.	Sec. 50-5.8 and 50-5.9 - 50-5.8 Existing Building Permits Nothing in this chapter shall require any change in the plans, construction or intended use of a building for which a building permit has been issued prior to the time of passage of the ordinance from which this chapter is derived and the construction of which shall have been diligently prosecuted within 6-months of the date of such permit, and the ground story framework of which, including the second tier of beams, shall have been completed within such 6-months and which entire building shall be completed according to such plans as filed within 2-years from the date of the adoption of the ordinance from which this chapter is derived. 50-5.9 Prior Height Permits Nothing contained in this chapter shall prevent the ultimate erection to its full height as originally planned of a building constructed to a less height prior to the adoption of the ordinance from which this chapter is derived, but with its foundations and structural members designed to carry the higher building.	<i>Existing sections were moved and expanded.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-1.5 Relationship to Other Ordinances, Conflicting Regulations A. <u>Whenever regulations imposed by this Ordinance are either more or less restrictive than regulations imposed by any governmental authority through legislation, rule, or regulation, the regulations that are more restrictive or that impose higher standards shall govern. Where two or more regulations in this Ordinance conflict, the more restrictive regulation shall prevail.</u> B. <u>Whenever a general and specific regulation pertains to a particular aspect of site design, the specific regulation shall be followed.</u> C. <u>Whenever there is a discrepancy between a written regulation and an illustration, the written regulation shall be followed.</u>	Sec. 50-1.4 Conflicting Regulations A. Sometimes there may be general and specific regulations that pertain to one particular aspect of site design. In such instances, the specific regulations must be followed. B. Discrepancies between text and an illustration (including its caption) may occur. In the case of such discrepancies, the text is considered the accurate source of information. Graphics in this ordinance are not to scale and are intended for illustrative purposes.	<i>Expanded the existing section and streamlined text.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-1.6 Severability This Ordinance and the various parts, divisions, articles, sections, subsections and clauses thereof are hereby declared to be severable. If any part, sentence, paragraph, subsection, section or clause is determined by a court of law to be unconstitutional or invalid, it is hereby provided that the remainder of the chapter shall not be affected and shall remain in force.	Sec. 50-1.3 Severability "-----"	<i>No change; this text was moved.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-1.7 Effective Date and Repeal A. <u>This Zoning Ordinance was adopted by the Grosse Pointe Woods City Council at a regular meeting called and held on _____. The Ordinance shall take effect on _____, said date being ten days after publication of notice of adoption in a newspaper of general circulation in the City.</u> B. <u>The Zoning Ordinance that was adopted by the City Council on April 25, 2022, and all amendments thereto are hereby repealed as of the effective date of this Ordinance. This repeal does not affect or impair any act done, offense committed, or right occurring, accrued or acquired, or liability, penalty, forfeiture, or punishment incurred prior to the time enforced, prosecuted, or inflicted.</u>	- -	<i>New section.</i>

Existing Text that is Removed Entirely

Notes

~~**Sec. 50-1.5**~~
~~**Selected References**~~

~~Each district has a list of selected additional references that are frequently related requirements in section 50-3.1 Districts enumerated. The entire ordinance should be read for all additional requirements.~~

*Removed –
covered elsewhere.*

DRAFT Zoning Ordinance through the MSDHA Grant

City of Grosse Pointe Woods, MI

Change Log: V.1: July 22, 2026 – PC and Attorney Reviewed
V.2: August 5, 2026 – Attorney Changes Incorporated, Subcommittee Reviewed
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Article XII: Violations and Penalties

Background and Introduction to this Article:

Article XII establishes the City's authority to enforce the Zoning Ordinance, defines zoning violations, establishes penalties, and outlines the legal remedies available to the City. The proposed article consolidates enforcement provisions into a single article, clarifies enforcement authority, and introduces additional procedures intended to improve ordinance administration while preserving the City's legal remedies.

Summary Table of Proposed Changes:

Section	Nature of the Revision	Summary
12.1	New	Creates a dedicated public nuisance provision.
12.2	Expanded	<i>Expands who may be held responsible for violations and addresses fraudulent applications.</i>
12.3	New	<i>Creates a dedicated penalties provision.</i>
12.4	New	<i>Creates a procedure for reporting zoning violations.</i>
12.5	New	<i>Clarifies the City's authority to pursue court action.</i>
12.6	New	<i>Clarifies the City's enforcement rights and remedies.</i>

Article XII: Violations and Penalties

Former title: *Did not exist; light provisions were located in 50-7.12 Violations

Legend:

Red text = Summary of Changes

Underlined = New text

~~Strikethrough~~ = Removed text

Yellow Highlight = Subcommittee Changes

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-12.1 Public Nuisance <u>Buildings erected, altered, razed or converted, or uses carried on in violation of any provision of this Ordinance are hereby declared to be a nuisance per se, and shall be subject to abatement or other action by a court of appropriate jurisdiction.</u>	-	-
	-	<i>New section; grounds enforcement action at the City level.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-12.2 Violations Defined A. <u>Any person, firm, corporation, or agent, or any employee, contractor, or subcontractor of same, who fails to comply with any of the provisions of this Ordinance or any of the regulations adopted in pursuance thereof, or who impedes or interferes with the enforcement of this Ordinance by the Zoning Administrator or other enforcement official shall be deemed in violation of this Ordinance.</u> B. Any architect, builder, contractor, subcontractor, or other person who is responsible for erecting, repairing, altering, changing, or remodeling without having obtained proper permits, or who is responsible for performing such work in conflict with the terms of this Ordinance, shall be deemed guilty of a violation of this Ordinance in the same manner and to the same extent as the owner of the premises. C. <u>Statements in an application or supporting documentation that are based on deceit or falsity shall render any such application</u>	Sec. 50-7.12 Violations A. Violations by architects or contractors. It shall be the duty of all architects, contractors, subcontractors, builders and other persons having charge of the establishment of any use of land or the erecting, altering changing or remodeling of any building or structure, including tents and trailer coaches, before beginning or undertaking any such work, to see that a proper permit has been granted therefor and that such work does not conflict with and is not in violation of the terms of this chapter. Any such architect, builder, contractor, subcontractor or other person doing or performing any such work of erecting, repairing, altering, changing or remodeling without such a permit having been issued, or in violation of or in conflict with the terms of this chapter, shall be deemed guilty of violation of this chapter in the same manner and to the same extent as the owner of the premises or the person for whom such buildings are erected, repaired, altered, changed or remodeled or the use of land established in violation of this chapter and shall be subject to the penalties prescribed in this chapter for such violation. B. Penalty. Any person who violates any of this chapter shall be responsible for a municipal civil infraction. Each day that a violation is permitted to exist shall constitute a separate offense.	<i>Expands violation to include any individual/group (not just contractors/architects);</i> <i>Streamlines language around architect/contractor or violations;</i> <i>Adds violation language for false applications/supporting documentation;</i> <i>Relocates specific penalty type into its own separate section.</i>

void. Any permits issued on the basis of such false statements shall be revoked.

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-12.3 Penalties A. For any and every violation of the provisions of this Ordinance, the owner, agent, contractor, lessees, or tenant of the premises, building, or part thereof, where such violation has been committed, shall be guilty of a civil infraction. The owner, agent, architect, builder, or any person who commits, takes part, or assists in such violation of any of the provisions of this Ordinance, or any person who maintains any buildings or premises in which any such violation exists, shall be guilty of a civil infraction. B. Violations of the provisions of this Ordinance or failure to comply with any of its requirements shall constitute a civil infraction. Each day such violation continues shall be considered a separate offense. C. <u>Nothing herein contained shall prevent the City from taking such other lawful action as is necessary to prevent or remedy any violation.</u>	Sec. 50-7.12 Violations D. Penalty. Any person who violates any of this chapter shall be responsible for a municipal civil infraction. Each day that a violation is permitted to exist shall constitute a separate offense.	<i>Relocates specific penalty type into its own specific section;</i> <i>Offers more detail as to the City's power to take action to remedy violations.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-12.4 Procedures for Addressing Violations <u>Anyone may report apparent violations of this Ordinance to the Building Official.</u>	- -	<i>New section needed to clarify procedure.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-12.5 Authority to Pursue Court Action <u>The City Council or its duly authorized representative is hereby empowered to commence and pursue any and all necessary and appropriate actions or proceedings in the Circuit Court, or any other court having jurisdiction, to restrain, prosecute, or prevent any non-compliance with or violation of any of the provisions of this Ordinance, and to correct, remedy, prosecute, or abate such noncompliance or violation.</u>	- -	<i>New section to offer more detail as to the City's power to take action to remedy violations.</i>

Proposed Text	Existing Section / Text	Notes
Sec. 50-12.6 Rights and Remedies Preserved <u>Any failure or omission to enforce the provisions of this Ordinance, and failure or omission to prosecute any violations of this Ordinance, shall not constitute a waiver of any rights and remedies provided by this Ordinance or by law, and shall not constitute a waiver nor prevent any further prosecution of violations of this Ordinance.</u>	- -	<i>New section to offer more detail as to the City's power to take action to remedy violations.</i>