



# Memorandum

**TO:** Village of Lake Orion Planning Commission  
**FROM:** Jake VanBoxel, MSA, Principal Planner  
Sommer Nafal, Assistant Planner  
**SUBJECT:** **Accessory Mechanical Units**  
**DATE:** April 29, 2026

## BACKGROUND

Recently, the Village has received complaints regarding the placement of Accessory Mechanical Units (standby generators). Village staff and members of the Planning Commission have asked to be provided with information regarding the current regulations, along with how other similar communities are regulating these items.

## INTRODUCTION

The Village's current zoning ordinance language pertaining to standby generators is located in Article 13 General Provisions, Section 13.11 Accessory Buildings and Structures.

Standby generators are identified as "Accessory Mechanical Units" under section 13.11(E) and the section specifies regulations for both *single family residential* and *non-single family residential* uses.

The Village's current Zoning Ordinance language is provided below in [blue](#):

### E. Accessory Mechanical Units

1. **Single Family Residential.** Freestanding heating, ventilation, standby generators, and air conditioning equipment may be located in any yard other than the required front yard of the principal structure, subject to the following requirements (window-mounted room air-conditioners are exempt from these requirements):
  - a) Placement of accessory mechanical equipment shall not be permitted within 10 feet of a window on an adjacent dwelling.
  - b) Accessory mechanical equipment shall be screened in a manner which will reduce the noise output of the unit and to shield the equipment from view of any road, adjacent residence, or the Lake. The maximum noise output from any such unit shall not exceed 55 decibels, measured at a distance of ten (10) feet from the unit.
2. **Non-Single Family Residential.** Freestanding, roof or building mounted equipment (including air conditioning units, transformers, generators and similar) for all non-single family residential buildings and uses, and those on sites zoned non-single family residential districts shall be located in accordance with the following:
  - a) **Front Yards.** Equipment shall not be located in a front yard except the Planning Commission may permit equipment to be located in the front yard upon finding that such location will meet the spirit and



intent of the zoning district in which the building is located provided such equipment is not located closer than ten (10) feet from an adjacent residential dwelling or district.

- b) Side and Rear Yards. Equipment shall be permitted in a side or rear yard provided such equipment is not located closer than ten (10) feet from an adjacent residential dwelling or district.
- c) Screening. Equipment shall be screened from public rights-of-way and adjacent uses by evergreen trees or shrubs, walls, or berming. Alternative methods of screening may be approved by the Planning Commission.
- d) The Planning Commission shall have the authority to waive or modify the above requirements upon the determination that such waiver or modification meets the spirit and intent of the district in which the equipment is located.

## **SUMMARY OF REGULATIONS**

Section 13.11(E) provides regulation requirements for the following:

- Permitted locations
  - Prohibits front yard placement for residential use
- Minimum separation from adjacent dwellings
  - 10 feet from neighboring windows
- Required screening
  - To reduce noise and;
  - Prevent view from neighboring residence, street, and the lake.
- Maximum noise output
  - 55 dB at 10 feet
- Grants the Planning Commission authority to modify requirements in non-single-family districts

Supporting Provisions:

- Article 20 Violations and Penalties (enforcement)
- Building/Electrical Codes incorporated by reference

## **SUMMARY OF CHANGES**

During review, McKenna staff reviewed a number of other nearby communities' Zoning Ordinances for comparison and to provide insight for the discussion at the May 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. These communities include The City of Orchard Lake Village, the City of Birmingham, the City of Northville, and Bloomfield Charter Township.

Sections of their ordinances have been attached with this memo, which include all matters related to "Power Generators", "Standby Generators", "Emergency Electrical Generators", and "Ground-Mounted Mechanical Equipment". Additionally, a table that can be used for comparing how each community is regulating these items has been provided below:



Municipality	How Generators Are Classified	Location Limits	Setback Standards	Noise Controls	Screening Requirements	Operational Limits
Village of Lake Orion	"Accessory mechanical unit". Accessory Buildings and Structures.	Prohibited in required front yard (SF); limited front-yard allowance for non-SF	>10 ft from adjacent dwelling or residential district	55 dB at 10 ft (residential)	Required to reduce noise and shield from roads, residences, and lake	No expressed time limits
City of Orchard Lake Village	"HVAC Equipment/Power Generators". Accessory Buildings, Structures, and Uses.	Rear or side yard	Must comply with minimum setbacks for primary buildings.	May require insulated cabinet to conform to nuisance standards	Required screening (non-deciduous plantings) from neighbors, street, and lake.	Not identified
City of Birmingham	"Standby Generators". Accessory Structure.	Rear yard required.	5 feet from principal or habitable building.	Not identified	Not identified.	Maintenance testing limited to 15 minutes, once a week, M-F 7am-5pm
City of Northville	"Emergency Electrical Generators". Stand-alone section in General Provisions	Rear yard preferred. Side yard with conditions.	Within 12 feet of principal structure and cannot encroach setbacks	No more than 75 dB(a) measured 6 feet above ground level at property lines	Landscaping, fencing, or masonry. Screening to be 12 inches higher than equipment.	Testing required to be conducted M-F 10am-4pm. No testing on weekends.
Charter Township of Bloomfield	"Ground-mounted mechanical equipment". Stand-alone section within Site Standards. <b>Not an accessory use or structure.</b>	Must be immediately adjacent to building served	No closer than 10 feet from lot line	Not exceeding 70 dB(a). Cross-referenced to another section	Evergreens or screen wall. Optional enclosure within compliant accessory structure	No expressed time limits

## NEXT STEPS

We are requesting the Planning Commission review the materials provided and discuss this topic during the May 4<sup>th</sup> meeting. Following the discussion, if consensus from the Planning Commission is reached to move forward with proposed revisions, we will present the item at the next Planning Commission meeting.

Please feel free to contact us with any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

**McKENNA**

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