

Natural Features Protection Overlay District & Ordinance

Overview

Protection of Natural Features was a community priority identified in the Imagine Kalamazoo 2025 Master Plan. The Natural Features Protection (NFP) Overlay District and Ordinance aligns with the Environmental Responsibility goal of the City's Strategic Vision.

The NFP Overlay District was adopted in 2019 and has been successfully implemented for the past two years, protecting important Natural Features like water resources, woodlands, rare species, and slopes. The ordinance adds additional development standards that require thoughtful design around Natural Features when properties are developed or redeveloped.

Creating The NFP Overlay

Natural Features Criteria

The proposed map amendments to the NFP Overlay District were identified by four criteria:

- 1 Properties that have or are near streams, rivers, lakes, and wetlands
- 2 Properties that have steep slopes with tree cover
- 3 Properties in woodland areas identified by the community
- 4 Areas immediately adjacent to public preserves

What's a Zoning Overlay?

A Zoning Overlay is a set of zoning standards applied to a property in addition to the zoning standards from the base or underlying zoning district. For properties within the NFP Overlay, the standards of today's zoning district apply in addition to those of the NFP Overlay. In cases of conflict, the NFP Overlay standards apply.

Upcoming Meetings

Virtual Information Session

June 16th, 12 pm
<https://zoom.us/j/91513416311>

NFP Review Board Meeting

June 22nd, 4 pm, live streamed
Recommendation to Planning Commission

Virtual Information Session

June 23rd, 7 pm
<https://zoom.us/j/93200035843>

Planning Commission Meeting

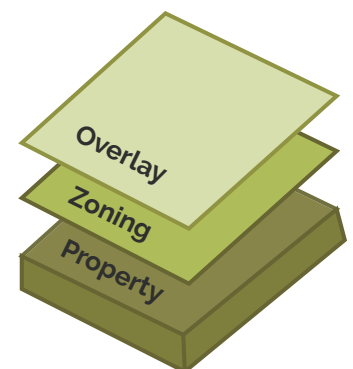
July 1st, 7 pm, live streamed
Recommendation to City Commission

Find meeting access information:
www.kalamazoo-city.org/notices

Phases

There are three phases to Natural Features Protection in the City. Current proposed changes to the map and ordinance are part of Phase 2.

- 1 **NFP Overlay District & Ordinance**
Adopted June 2019
Implementation 2019 - present
- 2 **Mapping Analysis & Amendments**
Map Analysis 2020 - 2021
Text Amendments 2021
- 3 **Public Education & Stewardship**
Long-term voluntary projects
Beginning in 2022



Development Standards



Water Resources & Wetlands

New buildings and parking lots must be setback from wetlands, rivers, streams, and lakes (up to 25'). In some cases a planted buffer is required near the water's edge to stop pollutants from getting into our waterways.



Woodlands

This standard requires developers to preserve a portion of Woodlands on the property, while allowing minimum land clearing for the new development. This helps to maintain habitat corridors and reduce pollution.



Trees

For projects required to apply for site plan review (e.g., commercial or multi-family) large trees and special species of trees must be replaced if they must be removed. A list of native, climate resilient, and site-appropriate trees guides developers to plant trees that will thrive.



Slopes

Steep slopes tied to Water Resources, Wetlands, and Woodlands are protected Natural Features and cannot be disturbed. Setbacks at the top and bottom of the slope help protect the stability of the slope and other Natural Features.



Natural Heritage Areas

Remnants of natural communities and rare species are protected by requiring a database search for known locations of these Natural Features. For projects required to apply for site plan review, an on-site survey may be required when species are found in the vicinity.



Zoning & Stormwater

For projects required to apply for site plan review, additional zoning standards apply. For example, certain intensive uses or hazardous substances are not allowed, "required" landscaping must be native plants, and more stormwater must be captured and treated.

Project Review Paths

There are three different review pathways for projects in the NFP Overlay based upon what development or changes are planned for the property:

- 1 Administrative Review**
For projects with minimal changes to the exterior, no ground disturbance, or **any single-family or duplex** project/permit
- 2 NFP Review Board & Site Plan Review**
For more extensive development or redevelopment projects
- 3 NFP Review Board & Planning Commission**
Extensive projects with multiple Natural Features and require zoning approvals from Planning Commission or Zoning Board of Appeals

Interactive NFP Overlay District Map

The data used in the mapping analysis to select certain parcels for the NFP Overlay District is available in an online, interactive map. Visit www.imaginekalamazoo.com/projects/NFP2 to view the map. The webmap platform allows you to zoom to street level, search for a specific address, change the base layer, and click on a parcel to see what selecting Natural Features were used to recommend adding it to the NFP Overlay District.

A print map is also available for in-person viewing in the atrium of City Hall, 241 W. South Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.

Go to [imaginekalamazoo.com](http://www.imaginekalamazoo.com) to read the NFP Overlay draft and see the map.