



WATERFRONT OVERLAY DISTRICT

Model Language

April 2026

1 TABLE OF CONTENTS

2	Purpose	1
3	Definitions	1
4	Waterfront Areas Regulated.....	2
5	Development Standards.....	3
5.1	Waterfront Lot Width	3
5.2	Waterfront Setback.....	3
5.3	Shoreline Vegetative Buffer	3
5.4	Docks, Moorings, and Watercraft	4
5.5	Shared Waterfront Access	4
5.6	Impervious Surfaces	5
5.7	Stormwater Management	5
5.8	Marinas.....	5
5.9	Shoreline Armoring.....	5
5.10	Lighting	5
6	Approvals.....	6

2 PURPOSE

This Article is adopted to protect and enhance water quality within [Township Name]; to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation into surface waters; and to preserve the scenic character and property values of waterfront properties.

The Waterfront Overlay District applies to all parcels, or portions thereof, located within one hundred (100) feet of the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM) of Lake Leelanau and all natural or constructed watercourses, including channels, drains, rivers, creeks, and streams within [Township Name].

3 DEFINITIONS

For purposes of this Article, the following definitions shall apply:

1. **Hardened Seawall:** A fixed shoreline stabilization structure constructed of non-permeable materials, including but not limited to concrete, steel, or treated timber.

2. **Impervious Surface:** Any surface that prevents or significantly impedes the infiltration of water into the soil, including but not limited to rooftops, pavement, and compacted gravel. Frozen ground shall not be considered an impervious surface.
 3. **Lot Coverage:** The percentage of a lot covered by impervious surfaces.
 4. **Low Impact Development (LID):** Site design strategies and practices that manage stormwater runoff close to its source by promoting infiltration, evapotranspiration, and reuse. Examples include rain gardens, infiltration trenches, porous pavement, bioswales, dry wells, and cisterns.
 5. **Natural Vegetative Cover:** Native or naturally occurring vegetation, including trees, shrubs, and groundcover. Turf grass or maintained lawn areas shall not be considered natural vegetative cover.
 6. **Ordinary High-Water Mark (OHWM):** The line between upland and bottomland established by the presence and action of water, as defined by applicable State of Michigan law.
 7. **Shoreline:** The OHWM of a water body or the bank of a watercourse.
 8. **Shoreline Vegetative Buffer:** A strip of land extending inland from the shoreline that is maintained in native or restored vegetation.
 9. **Structure:** Anything constructed or erected requiring a permanent location on or attachment to the ground.
-

4 WATERFRONT AREAS REGULATED

A. These regulations are supplemental to underlying zoning requirements. Where conflicts occur, the more restrictive provision shall apply.

B. The Waterfront Overlay District includes all land between:

1. The OHWM; and
2. A line parallel to and one hundred (100) feet landward of the OHWM (“waterfront overlay line”).

C. Floodplains

All development within mapped floodplains shall comply with the Michigan Building Code and all applicable State of Michigan and EGLE regulations. Evidence of required permits or approvals shall be submitted prior to issuance of Township permits.

5 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS

5.1 WATERFRONT LOT WIDTH

Waterfront lots shall have a minimum width of one hundred (100) feet measured along the OHWM.

5.2 WATERFRONT SETBACK

- a. The waterfront yard shall be considered the front yard.
 - b. No principal structure, accessory structure, or parking area shall be located within seventy-five (75) feet of the OHWM, except on lawful nonconforming lots.
 - c. For lots of record existing prior to the effective date of this Article, the setback may be reduced by averaging the setbacks of the nearest developed adjacent lots, but shall not be less than fifty (50) feet.
 - d. The following are prohibited within the waterfront setback:
 1. Storage or placement of solid waste, refuse, or discarded materials
 2. Storage or application of fertilizers, manure, or similar nutrient sources
 3. Storage of inoperable vehicles or equipment
 - e. Driveways and roadways are prohibited within the waterfront setback, except where a perpendicular crossing is necessary to provide access and is designed to minimize disturbance.
-

5.3 SHORELINE VEGETATIVE BUFFER

- a. A shoreline vegetative buffer of not less than thirty-five (35) feet in width shall be maintained landward from the OHWM.
- b. Existing native vegetation shall be preserved to the maximum extent practicable. Areas of disturbance shall be restored with native vegetation.
- c. Within the buffer, no more than thirty (30%) percent of trees and shrubs may be selectively pruned or removed to create a filtered or corridor view, provided that root systems remain intact to stabilize soils.
- d. Clear cutting and tree topping are prohibited.
- e. One (1) access pathway per lot is permitted within the buffer. The pathway shall not exceed the lesser of:
 1. Six (6) feet in width; or
 2. Twenty-five (25%) percent of the lot's shoreline frontage

Pathways shall be constructed of pervious materials and designed to minimize erosion.

- f. Dead, diseased, or hazardous vegetation may be removed and shall not count toward the thirty (30%) limitation.
 - g. No structures, including accessory buildings, shall be permitted within the shoreline vegetative buffer.
 - h. The buffer area shall be protected during construction through installation of silt fencing or similar barriers, which shall remain in place until site stabilization is complete.
-

5.4 DOCKS, MOORINGS, AND WATERCRAFT

- a. One (1) dock and one (1) boat hoist or shore station shall be permitted per legally created waterfront lot with at least one hundred (100) feet of frontage.
- b. Additional docks or hoists shall require an additional one hundred (100) feet of frontage per unit.
- c. On inland lakes, the number of watercraft shall not exceed:
 - Two (2) motorized watercraft per one hundred (100) feet of frontage; and
 - Four (4) non-motorized watercraft per one hundred (100) feet of frontage

Lots with less than one hundred (100) feet of frontage shall be permitted the above as a maximum.

- d. Commercial use of docks, including rental of slips or mooring rights, is prohibited.
 - e. Storage of petroleum products, fuels, or hazardous substances on docks is prohibited.
 - f. Shoreline alterations for boat launching facilities are prohibited except where expressly allowed in zoning districts permitting such use.
 - g. All docks and related structures shall comply with applicable State of Michigan permitting requirements.
-

5.5 SHARED WATERFRONT ACCESS

- a. Shared waterfront access arrangements shall require site plan approval.
- b. A minimum of one hundred (100) feet of shoreline frontage shall be required for up to two (2) users. Each additional user shall require an additional fifty (50) feet of frontage.
- c. The minimum lot area shall be thirty thousand (30,000) square feet, plus ten thousand (10,000) square feet per additional user.
- d. Commercial activities, including watercraft rental, are prohibited.
- e. One (1) off-street parking space shall be provided per user, unless waived or modified by the Planning Commission.
- f. Sanitary facilities shall be required for shared access serving more than six (6) users.

- g. All facilities shall comply with applicable setback and screening requirements.
 - h. Site plans shall include all proposed improvements, including docks, watercraft storage, recreation areas, parking, and sanitary facilities.
-

5.6 IMPERVIOUS SURFACES

Impervious surfaces shall not exceed twenty-five (25%) percent of the total lot area within the Waterfront Overlay District.

5.7 STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

- a. Stormwater shall be retained and treated on-site using Low Impact Development techniques.
 - b. Direct discharge of stormwater to surface waters or wetlands is prohibited.
 - c. Post-development stormwater runoff rates shall not exceed pre-development conditions.
 - d. Stormwater systems shall be designed to direct runoff away from the shoreline and promote infiltration.
-

5.8 MARINAS

New or expanded marinas are prohibited.

5.9 SHORELINE ARMORING

New hardened seawalls, jetties, and similar structural shoreline armoring are prohibited. Natural shoreline stabilization methods, including vegetative and bioengineered techniques, are permitted and encouraged.

5.10 LIGHTING

All lighting within the Waterfront Overlay District shall be low-intensity, fully shielded, and directed downward to prevent glare, light trespass, and illumination of adjacent properties or water bodies. Lighting within the waterfront setback is prohibited, except for safety lighting approved by the Township.

6 APPROVALS

- a. Site plan approval shall be required for all development within the Waterfront Overlay District.
- b. Site plans shall include, at a minimum:
 - 1. Existing natural features, including vegetation, wetlands, and drainage patterns, and a description of how such features will be preserved
 - 2. The OHWM and shoreline vegetative buffer delineation
 - 3. Location of all existing and proposed structures
 - 4. Grading limits and areas of vegetation removal
 - 5. Lot coverage calculations
 - 6. Stormwater management plan utilizing Low Impact Development techniques
- c. Applicants shall demonstrate compliance with all applicable local, county, state, and federal regulations, including but not limited to soil erosion and sedimentation control, inland lakes and streams permitting, building code requirements, and health department approvals.
- d. No Township permit shall be issued until all required external approvals have been obtained.