



CITY OF

Ypsilanti

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Historic District

Porches, steps, and doors

This Fact Sheet is not a substitute for the ordinance, but addresses common questions about City ordinances. For further information, please contact the Historic District Assistant.

All permit applications are available from the Building Department and at cityofypsilanti.com/permits.

Completed applications may be dropped off at the Building Department.

City Hall

One South Huron
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Building

3rd Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 482-1025
cityofypsilanti.com/157

Planning

4th Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 483-9646
cityofypsilanti.com/planning

Historic District

4th Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 483-9646
cityofypsilanti.com/hdc

All permits, fees, and factsheets can be found at cityofypsilanti.com/permits.

The following Historic District Commission (HDC) requirements apply to all porch projects, new or replacement. The Commission encourages the retention of original porch elements which still exist and, in some instances, requires duplication of parts. Porches should not be enclosed, as doing so changes both the appearance and the function of the porch. Please Note: Treated lumber should be used only for portions of the porch that come in contact with the ground. All parts of the porch that are above ground shall be painted or stained an opaque stain.

CEILING: the porch ceiling shall, in most cases, consist of bead board.

LIGHTING: Any changes in lighting for the porch area must be approved by the HDC.

HEADER: the header, if any, and its decorative elements shall be appropriate to the style of the building and in the proper proportion.

POSTS: the style of the posts shall be appropriate to the style of the house and existing porch details. If 4 x 4s are boxed, resulting posts must be at least 5 x 5. Replacement posts must match original posts, if any still exist, or be of the same diameter as the originals. Split posts may be required for attachment to an exterior wall.

NEWEL: newel posts shall match or be related in style and size with porch posts. They shall be mounted on the bottom step and shall be capped.

DECK: the deck (floor) of the porch shall consist of 1 x 4 tongue and groove vertical grain fir porch flooring, and shall be installed with the narrow ends of the boards against the wall of the house. The deck shall overhang the skirt and the skirt trim by at least 1". The last deck boards (one at each end of the porch) shall have the exposed tongue and groove trimmed off. The deck of the porch should be sloped in order to shed water.

SKIRTING: porch skirting is required. The skirt shall be framed with a minimum of a 1 x 4. Prefabricated lattice is acceptable, although the HDC strongly recommends replacing the original style or a decorative skirting.

GUARD RAIL (on the porch):

1 & 2 family homes: a guard rail is required if the porch floor surface is more than 30" above grade. Must be 36" high. (May be as low as 30" if evidence exists to indicate the height of original guard rail.) The guard rail shall consist of three parts: a **top rail** shall be a minimum 2 x 4 placed flat & shall have beveled top edges; **balusters** shall be a minimum 2 x 2 and be spaced so that a 4" sphere cannot pass through; a **bottom rail** shall be a maximum of 2 x 4 placed flat with beveled top edges, shall be at least 3" off of porch decking and shall have support blocks if the guard rail exceeds 8' between posts. All members shall be centered on the porch posts with butt joints.

3-unit & most multi-family and commercial structures: a guard rail is required if the porch deck is more than 30" above grade. The guard rail must be 42" high.

HAND RAIL (down the stairs):

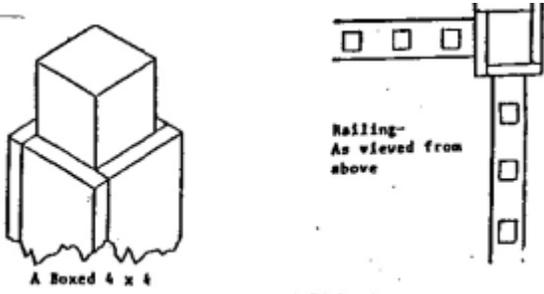
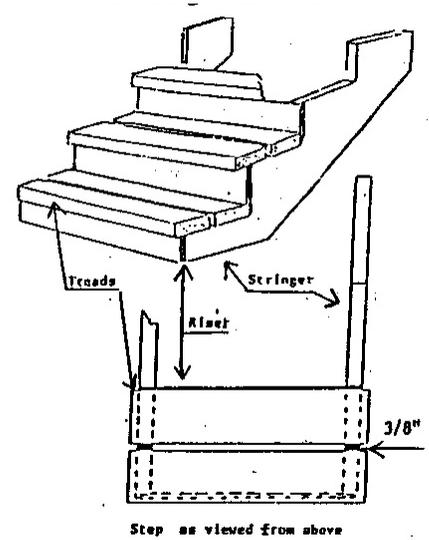
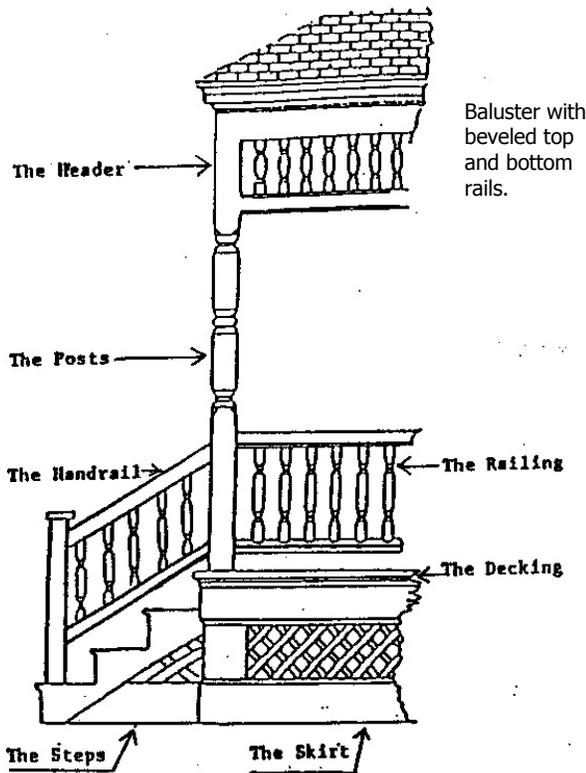
1 & 2 family homes: one hand rail is required for all stairs with 4 or more risers (this number includes the porch itself). The hand rail must be graspable. Wood hand rails shall match the guard rail in style. Hand rails are to be installed at 34-38" above the face of the stair nosing of the first tread and must extend from the face of the top riser to the face of the bottom riser. Ends shall return to the wall or terminate at post. No extension beyond the bottom riser is required. All diagonal members shall be centered on the porch posts and newel posts with butt joints. 1 1/2" painted pipe rails may be approved.

3-unit & most multi-family and commercial structures: hand rails are required on both sides of flights of 1 or more risers. Must be graspable. Must begin 12" horizontally beyond the face of top riser and extend at a slope to at least one tread beyond the face of the bottom riser. Ends shall return to the wall or terminate at a post.

STEPS:

1 & 2 family homes: pre-formed, multi-step concrete units are usually not appropriate. There are four different parts to the wooden step unit: stringers, treads, risers and skirt. Treads and risers shall be of 5/4" lumber. The maximum height of the rise shall be 8 1/4". The minimum depth of the tread shall be 9" measured from nosing to nosing. Treads shall rest on the stringers, not be rabbeted into the stringers. The tread shall consist of two boards separated by a 3/8" gap. Spacers shall fill the gap over the stringers. Treads shall have a minimum nosing of 3/4" and a 1/2" on the side of stringers, but nosing should not be more than 1 1/4". The rise must be enclosed with a solid panel and shall cover the stringer. The top step must be one rise below the deck. A skirt shall enclose the area beneath the stringers and shall be the same style as the skirting on the porch. Steps shall be uniform; the maximum difference from highest to lowest is 3/8".

3-unit & most multi-family and commercial structures: The maximum height of the rise shall be 7" and the minimum will be 4". Tread depths shall be 11" minimum and be measured horizontally between the vertical planes of the foremost projection of adjacent treads and at a right angle of the tread's nosing. The radius curvature at the leading edge of the tread shall not be greater than 9/16". Beveling of nosings shall not exceed 9/16". The nosing projection size shall not exceed 1 1/4" beyond the tread below. Steps shall be uniform; the maximum difference from highest to lowest is 3/8".



This is an example of an approved way to bring the porch railing up to code.