



2016 Annual Report Historic District Commission Ypsilanti, Michigan

INTRODUCTION

The Historic District Commission of the City of Ypsilanti is governed by the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act, State of Michigan Public Act 169 of 1970, and by Chapter 54 of the City of Ypsilanti Code of Ordinances.

MEMBERSHIP

Anne Stevenson, Chair
Hank Prebys, Vice-Chair
Mike Davis
Erika Lindsay

Alex Pettit
Ronald Rupert
Jane Schmiedeke

COMMISSION AND STAFF

Throughout 2016, the Historic District Commission (HDC) continued meeting on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

The HDC was staffed by interns Haley McApline, through August, and Yasmin Ruiz, beginning in September, and by Associate Planner Cynthia Kochanek. In the HDC Assistant role, they worked 15-20 hours per week performing various administrative tasks to enable the Historic District Commission to fulfill its responsibilities under the Historic District Ordinance. Staff responsibilities included reviewing Historic District Work Permit Applications prior to meetings; corresponding with applicants; preparing meeting agendas, commission packets, and minutes; property monitoring; and preparing reports, as needed.

The Commission continued to provide prompt review of applications. Applications are collected from the Building Department and reviewed by staff for completeness. Incomplete applications are addressed through email or phone correspondence with the applicant, requesting additional information be provided prior to the meeting. If that information is not provided, the application is returned to the applicant. Staff reviews are written for each application and are designed to address issues and to fill in gaps with the applications. These staff reviews are included in the meeting packets. Meeting packets are then posted on the City of Ypsilanti's website and emailed to the Commission by the Friday prior to each meeting.

The HDC Assistant attends each HDC meeting in order to take minutes. After the meeting, the HDC Assistant writes decision letters and drafts the official minutes. The draft is then forwarded to the HDC Chair for review. The turnaround time for this process, from application submittal to mailing of decision letters, generally takes about

two weeks; however, the approvals are provided to the building department the day after the meeting to expedite the work.

Potential applicants are encouraged to bring projects to the Commission as study items before the formal submission of a Work Permit Application. This allows the Commission to provide feedback to property owners at a conceptual stage, clarifying expectations and allowing for a more predictable final review.

INITIATIVES

HDC Application Revisions

A new application format and application checklist to help applicants understand what is expected of them when applying was implemented in early 2016 to streamline the application process.

New Owner Outreach

“New Owner” mailings occurred quarterly in March, June, September, and December.

This Place Matters / Michigan Places Matters

Photos were taken at the Towner House in Ypsilanti featuring members of the HDC, City staff and members of the local historic foundations as part of the National Trust for Historic Preservation’s “This Place Matters” campaign. The photos were placed in circulation on social media and sent to MHPN to be included in their “Michigan Places Matter” campaign.

Vinyl Resolution

The HDC updated the vinyl resolution making it clearer to homeowners that vinyl windows will only be allowed in the Historic District in very rare instances.

Photo Survey

An update to the district-wide photo survey began at the end of 2016 and is expected to be completed in 2017. All properties in the Historic District will be included.

Realtor Outreach

A new realtor outreach program was initiated in which postcards were sent to the realtor of any property that was listed for sale in the historic district advising that the listed property is in the district and what that involves for potential owners.

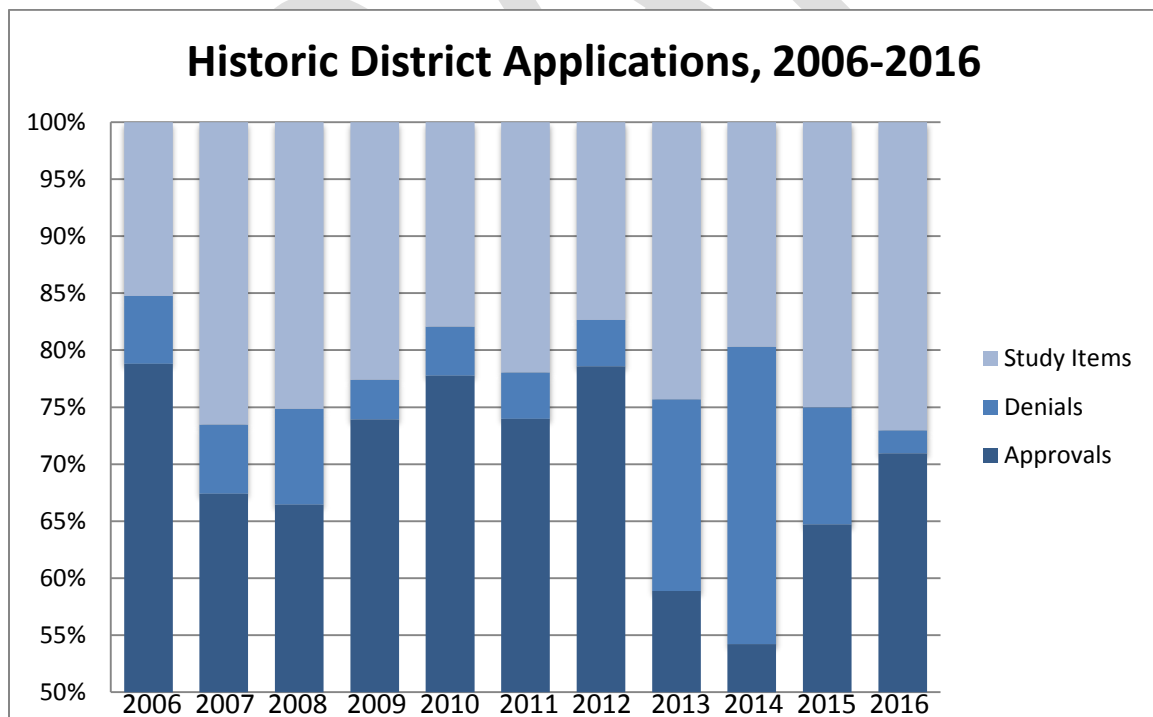
APPLICATIONS

The number of applications received this year closely matched the amount received in 2015, which was the highest amount received since 2007. The number of study items was also the highest it has been since. The lower amounts of applications in recent years reflect the impact of economic issues. The ambitious scope of many of the approved projects reflects the commitment of residents and businesses to the improvement of the local community. The number of applications and actions taken is depicted in the table below.

Historic District Commission Actions, 2011-2016

	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Approved as submitted	51	44	62	54	79	69
Approved with modifications	15	10	6	25	15	14
Approved administratively	11	9	9	9	11	13
Amended approvals	5	2	2	3	1	4
Denied: lack of information	1	2	0	0	3	1
Denied: inappropriate	3	3	5	5	0	5
Total Action Items	103	70	84	96	109	106
Study Items	17	26	28	34	40	42

To illustrate the number of projects within the Historic District this year as compared to the past ten years, the chart below depicts HDC Work Permit application activity from 2006 through 2016.



MAJOR PROJECTS

The Historic District continued to benefit from investment over the past year. Some of the significant projects are summarized here:

- Ypsilanti Freighthouse- Major interior work was completed in order for the building to move toward obtaining a temporary certificate of occupancy and opening to the public. Bathrooms were added to the interior, the floors were finished and heating and plumbing were installed. New signs and solar panels were also installed on the property.
- 106 Michigan Ave- The existing storefront was demolished and replaced with a new, aluminum storefront brought flush with the sidewalk.
- 539 Maple Court- The HDC approved a solar panel installation for the south side of the roof on the main structure.
- 600 N. River – The main entry stair to the building was repaired and replaced. Work was approved in such a way to save the owners an estimated \$12,000.

Demolitions

In August of 2016, the HDC approved the demolition of an accessory structure (a garage) at 111 Maple St. The HDC agreed that the garage was of no historical significance, and was deemed a safety hazard by the City of Ypsilanti. The garage was ultimately demolished in the fall of 2016.

Appeals

An appeal was filed with the State Historic Preservation Review Board in 2016 by Barnes and Barnes for a denial by the HDC. The appeal was settled with the City prior to the court date and the appeal was subsequently withdrawn.

Looking Forward

2017 should be an exciting and eventful year for the historic district and the commission. The temporary Certificate of Occupancy should be issued in mid-January for the Ypsilanti Freighthouse and the building should be open to the public by late January 2017. Construction will continue in the summer to finalize the outstanding construction needed prior to a permanent Certificate of Occupancy being issued. Once open, the Ypsilanti Freighthouse will offer a unique event venue in the heart of Ypsilanti.

Staff will also be making necessary updates and revisions to current HDC Fact Sheets, as well as producing new Fact Sheets to better inform the public of the HDC's design guidelines. Minor modifications will be made to the HDC Work Permit Application to streamline the application process.

SUMMARY

Although of varied scope and scale, the projects completed throughout 2016 are excellent examples of the continued preservation efforts of property owners within the Ypsilanti Historic District. Commendation by the City is due to these owners for their substantial contribution to the community as they continue to support the efforts of the Historic District to beautify the district and preserve the heritage of Ypsilanti's built environment.

This report adopted at the January 24, 2017 regular meeting of the Historic District Commission and respectfully submitted to the Ypsilanti City Council.

Anne Stevenson, Chair
Historic District Commission

Date

Yasmin Ruiz, Historic District Assistant
Community & Economic Development Department

Date