



City of Ypsilanti

Planning and Development Department

Date: February 16, 2011

2010 Annual Report Planning Commission Ypsilanti, Michigan

INTRODUCTION

The Planning Commission of the City of Ypsilanti is governed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, State of Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008, and by the City of Ypsilanti's Zoning Ordinance.

In 2010, the Planning Commission's membership was as follows:

Roderick Johnson (chair)	Cheryl Zuellig
Gary Clark (vice-chair)	Joseph Schultz (resigned 2-10)
Daniel Lautenbach	Kevin Smith (resigned 3-10)
Brett Lenart	Richard Murphy (appointed 10-25-
Mark Bullard	2010)
Brian McClemens	

The Commission was staffed by Richard Murphy through the February 2010 meeting. Beginning in March 2010, Teresa Gillotti assumed the Planner II position and staffed the commission along with Executive Secretary Nan Schuette. In the spring and summer, the Planning & Development Department began restructuring to try to provide more capacity for ongoing community and economic development projects and planning. John Jackson, of McKenna Associates, Incorporated provided support with site plan reviews and rezoning during the transition periods. In October of 2010, Bonnie Wessler assumed a part-time Planner I position and continues to also staff the Commission with Ms. Gillotti and Ms. Schuette.

Under the Planning Enabling Act, the Commission must provide an annual report to City Council, as the legislative body of the City. This report discusses,

1. The operations of the Commission during the past year
2. The status of any on-going planning activities

3. Recommendations to the legislative body related to planning and development

PLANNING COMMISSION OPERATIONS

The Planning Commission met monthly during 2010, except for the months of June and December. From the perspective of formal applications, the Commission's agenda maintained an average load compared to previous years. The Commission considered 20 applications, including 7 site plans and 6 text amendments. Some of these applications were internally initiated, including zoning text amendments for medical marijuana, outdoor cafes, and sign ordinance revisions. Map amendments in this category included Freighthouse and train platform rezoning, as well as adopting a modernized zoning map.

In addition to a fair number of applicants, the Commission addressed a number of significant issues that weren't tied to individual sites or applications.

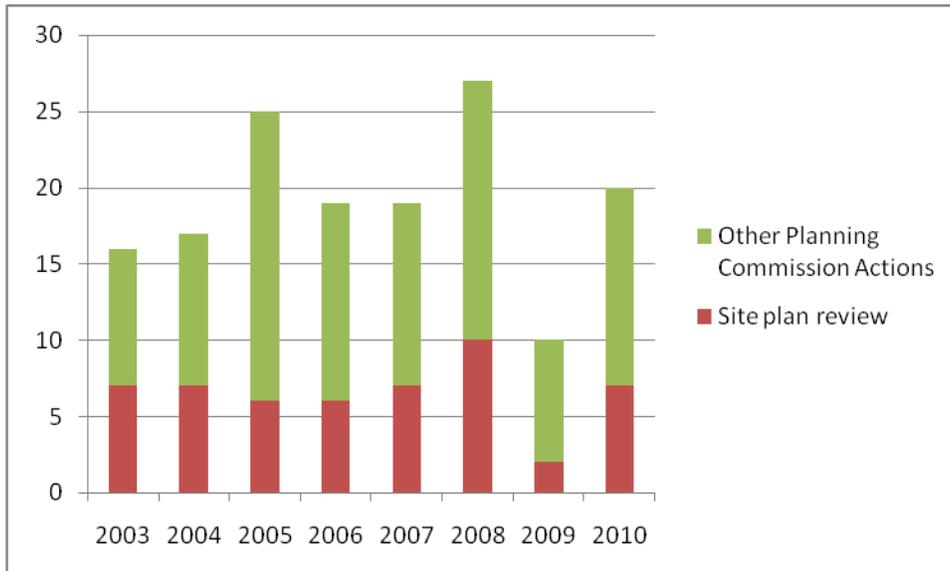
- In March, the Commission formerly adopted the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan for the City of Ypsilanti as part of the City's Master Plan.
- The Commission also continued a fairly new process of reviewing and making recommendations on capital improvement projects in the City of Ypsilanti, as called for in the Planning Enabling Act.
 - In February the Commission received a presentation from Kent Early of OHM, and city engineer on the upcoming street rebuilding project on East Cross between River and Prospect Streets including three options for the non-motorized facilities related to the project.
 - In May the Commission participated in a conference call from Alex Bourgeau from SEMCOG, who presented a conceptual plan for the commuter rail platform north of the Freighthouse in Depot Town.
 - EMU first presented preliminary information on the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) application as part of a traffic study presentation in May. In October and November, the Planning Commission received presentation from Chris Wall of FTC&H on behalf of Eastern Michigan University (EMU). The Commission provided extensive feedback on this project in particular trying to balance the intensive institutional uses with adjacent residential uses. Comments and suggestions focused on either the intersection project itself, or the need for system-wide transportation planning at EMU to not increase any adverse affects on the adjacent neighborhoods.
- In July the Commission formed four committees and assigned commissioners to each one.
 - The Master Plan Committee met monthly to review the existing master plan and work out a plan for coordinating the update process.
 - The Non-Motorized Committee met monthly beginning in December, with members of the DDA and Recreation Commission in addition to Planning Commission, to begin considering implementation of the non-motorized transportation plan.

- The Ordinance Committee met with the sign ordinance stakeholders group but has had no other action.
- The Capital improvements committee is yet to meet.

Table 1: Planning Commission applications by type

Planning Commission Applications	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Site plan review	7	7	6	6	7	10	2	7
Amend approved site plan	0	0	0	0	4	1	1	1
Special use permit	3	3	6	3	3	6	1	1
Zoning map amendment	2	1	4	5	2	5	2	3
Zoning text amendment	2	1	3	1	2	2	3	6
Master plan amendment	0	2	3	2	0	2	0	1
Planned unit development	2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Amend approved PUD	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0
Alley vacation	0	1	2	2	0	0	1	0
Change in non-conforming use	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Allow add'l floor area in B1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
Historic Overlay discretionary zoning	n/a	1						
Total Applications	16	17	25	19	19	27	10	20

Figure 1: Planning Commission applications by year



ONGOING PLANNING ACTIVITIES

As of the end of 2010, a few specific planning activities remain in-progress.

- The sign ordinance is undergoing additional revisions and is expected to return to the Planning Commission in March for a final public hearing and recommendation to City Council.
- The Master Plan Update Committee is intending to present their findings and proposed next steps to the Commission at a series of meetings in the spring of 2011 with the goal of beginning revisions and updates to the Master Plan in 2011.
- Additional planning projects such as the Gateway/South of Michigan Avenue Community Needs Assessment will require Commission attention and participation, as well as ongoing work with the Reimagining Washtenaw project, and the City's Climate Action Plan.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the staff transition in 2010, concerns for staff resources for both major projects and ongoing compliance and enforcement led to a departmental restructuring, as well as Planning Commissioners becoming more engaged through the committees. Some concerns remain, however, with staff and Commission capacity. The Commission urges that the importance of these and similar projects to Ypsilanti's future not be overlooked.

- As Capital Improvements reviews came before the Planning Commission, the Commission noted some unfamiliarity with their appropriate role and relationship to making recommendations to the City Council. The State Enabling Legislation notes that a comprehensive, multi-year (at least 5) Capital Improvements Plan is to initiate with the Planning Commission and be recommended to the City Council for review. Training on Capital Improvements Plan creation would be appropriate for the Commission, followed by a work plan by the Capital Improvements Committee to have a CIP in place and ready for discussion at the end of 2011.
- Additionally, it's recommended that the Ordinance Committee work with staff on identifying and prioritizing areas of the ordinance to be addressed in 2011, once the sign ordinance is revised. Possible areas to evaluate would be the parking section, the overlay districts and landscaping standards – these sections were updated or added since the 1998 Master Plan adoption, and should be reviewed for their effectiveness in advancing the City's economic development and quality of life goals.
- Broader planning efforts like the Gateway/South of Michigan Avenue Study, Washtenaw Avenue Corridor Planning, commuter rail service planning, and the Master Plan review/updates will continue to command the Commission's attention during 2011.

- Ongoing projects such as the implementation of Cross Street streetscaping and Water Street redevelopment remain priorities that require staff time, but do not currently have an active Planning Commission role.

ACTION

The Planning Commission will review this report at its February 15, 2011, meeting, and determine if any changes are required before transmittal to the City Council.