



**2018 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 (Jan – June)
Hank Prebys, Vice-Chair (Jan – Feb)
Mike Davis, Jr., Vice-Chair (March – June) & Chair (June – Dec)

Alex Pettit Vice-Chair (July – Dec)
Erika Lindsay
Ronald Rupert
Jane Schmiedeke

COMMISSION AND STAFF

Throughout 2018, the Historic District Commission (HDC) continued meeting on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 p.m. The HDC was staffed by Preservation Planner Cynthia Kochanek. Staff worked 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, minutes and various reports; property monitoring; webpage maintenance; Facebook updates; and other support, 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. Staff reviews are written for each application and are designed to address issues and to fill in gaps in the applications. Staff reviews are included in the meeting packets that are posted on the City's website and emailed to the Commission prior to each meeting.

The Preservation Planner attends each HDC meeting in order to provide staffing support. Last year the HDC was also supported by a recording secretary. This role was filled by Seth Torkelson-Regan (Jan – March) and Nancy Hare-Dickerson (May – Dec). The recording secretary is responsible for drafting full minutes for each meeting.

The turnaround time for applications averages about two weeks. Potential applicants are encouraged to bring projects to the Commission as study items before formal submission of an 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 Demolition by Neglect

The HDC reviewed and made the determination that three properties in the historic district were in danger of demolition by neglect; 302 E Cross, 206-210 N Washington and 401 E Forest. The HDC and staff are working with the owners of these properties in order to address concerns regarding neglect issues. Once the issues are resolved, the demolition by neglect status will be removed.

CLG Evaluation

Staff worked on a Baseline Certified Local Government (CLG) Evaluation for the Michigan State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to address how the City is meeting its obligations as a CLG. The initial review was submitted in July and the SHPO responded with items for the City to address. Staff responded to the items that needed to be addressed in November. The HDC and staff have already implemented a new plan to promote vacancies, developed a strategy for surveying properties and modified the way that minutes are recorded in order to address concerns that were brought up as a result of the survey. The HDC is currently working with staff to add a conflict of interest policy that aligns with what is required for CLG's to the HDC Rules and Regulations. This item will be forwarded to City Council for their review in the first quarter of 2019.

CLG Grant

The City obtained a grant at the end of 2018 in order to host a National Alliance of Preservation Commissions training in March 2019.

New Owner Outreach

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

Facebook updates

Staff continued utilizing the commission's Facebook page to do weekly "Throwback Thursday" posts utilizing old photos from City files and surveys as well as photos from the archives at the Ypsilanti Historical Society. Staff has also been utilizing the page more regularly for meeting updates, relevant preservation related topics as well as posts in May to celebrate Preservation Month.

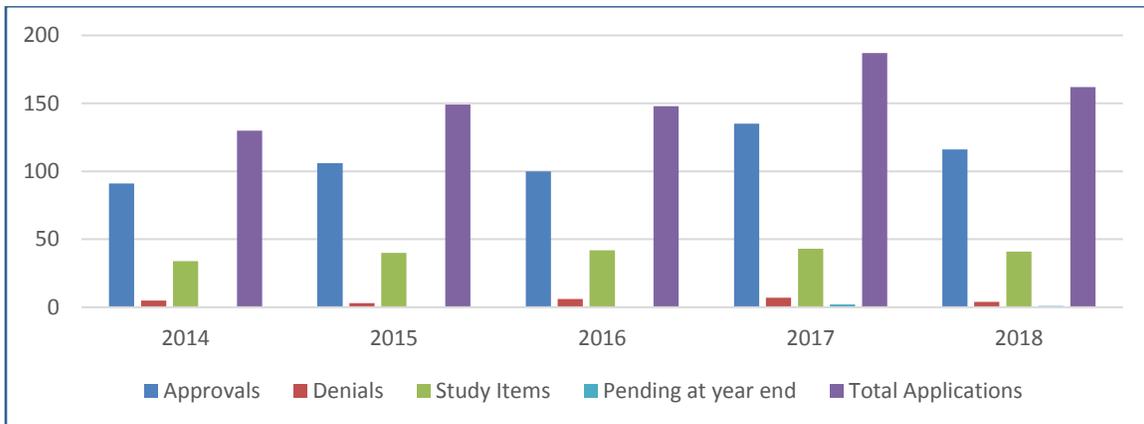
APPLICATIONS

The number of applications received in 2018 was slightly less than the amount seen in 2017, which was the highest amount received in the previous ten years. The number of study items is similar to the amount for the previous few years. Administrative approvals are now at a level that is higher than they've been in recent years, this can be attributed to not only the amount of applications taken for the year but also to the staff's knowledge and comfort level with administrative approvals. 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, 2014-2018

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Approved as submitted	54	79	69	73	68
Approved with modifications	25	15	14	22	11
Approved administratively	9	11	13	36	27
Amended approvals	3	1	4	4	5
Denied: lack of information	0	3	1	1	1
Denied: inappropriate	5	0	5	6	3
Pending at year end	0	0	0	2	1
Notice to Proceed	0	0	0	0	5
Total Action Items	96	109	106	144	124
Study Items	34	40	42	43	41

To illustrate the number of projects within the Historic District over the past five years, the chart below depicts HDC Work Permit application activity from 2014 through 2018.



MAJOR PROJECTS

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

- **New Construction**

32 Photo was issued a certificate of appropriateness for the construction of a new detached accessory structure on the property. 426 N Huron was issued a notice to proceed for an accessory structure at the back of the property.

- **13 N Washington**

13 N Washington was issued approvals for work on the building at HDC meetings in February and July and for sign installation at the December meeting. Work appears to be nearing the end and is expected to be completed in 2019.

- **116-118 W Michigan**

Building renovations were approved for 116-118 W Michigan that included new storefront entry units, replacement windows on the front and back, awnings and a rooftop deck installation in May. Work has commenced but is proceeding slowly due to additional structural alterations required once work was underway.

- **15 S Washington**

The old Smith Furniture Building was approved for work in July 2017 with an amendment seen by the HDC in March 2018. Work has been completed on the site and a Certificate of Occupancy issued in July 2018.

- **400 N River (Thompson Block)**

In April, the HDC approved an amendment to the previous approval for work on the building. Stabilization and restoration work on the building has commenced and visible changes to the structure were seen by the end of 2018.

Demolitions

In September of 2018, the HDC approved the demolition of the recycling center structures at 651 Rice St. The HDC agreed that the structures were of no historical significance and work had started on the demolition by the end of the year.

Appeals

No appeals were filed with the State Historic Preservation Review Board in 2018.

Looking Forward

2019 should be an exciting and eventful year for the historic district and the commission. Visible changes should continue to take place at 400 N River and work should be completed in the coming year. A new Michigan Historic Preservation tax credit bill is expected to be introduced and staff plans to keep tabs on the tax credit and introduce new resolutions in support of the credit to the HDC and City Council.

In the upcoming year, staff will continue to process updates and revisions to the commission forms, fact sheets along with administering the CLG grant. Staff will continue the Facebook updates for community outreach and will look to streamline and perfect the commissions' processes.

SUMMARY

Although of varied scope and scale, the projects completed throughout 2018 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 was adopted at the January 8, 2019 regular meeting of the Historic District Commission and respectfully submitted to Ypsilanti City Council.