

COMMITTEE CHARTER: Citizen Committee on Housing Affordability & Accessibility

Adopted December 20, 2017
Revised February 21, 2018

Background

In October 2013, the Planning Commission of the City of Ypsilanti adopted a new Master Plan (also referred to as the "Shape Ypsi" Master Plan), a hybrid land use/policy plan intended to guide development, redevelopment and preservation in the City over a 20-year horizon. It provides the framework on which the City's Zoning Ordinance is based and also contains guidance for other areas of civic governance, such as capital improvements, non-motorized transportation and development of publicly-owned land.

Two of the guiding values set forth in the Master Plan are "*Diversity is our strength*" and "*Anyone, no matter what age or income, can find a place to call home in Ypsilanti.*"

In the four-plus years since the 2013 Master Plan was adopted, issues of housing affordability and accessibility have surfaced repeatedly during Planning Commission proceedings (which include reviews of site plans and special use applications). Rents are rising, in some cases so sharply that renters have been priced out of the City. Barriers to physical accessibility, common among Ypsilanti's older homes, continue to limit housing options for people with a disability. These realities conflict with the Master Plan guiding values cited above.

By statute, the Planning Commission is required to review the Master Plan at least once every five years and to make updates as deemed necessary.

I. Purpose

The Citizen Committee will review and update the City of Ypsilanti's 2013 Master Plan with a focus on preserving and enhancing housing affordability and accessibility in keeping with the guiding values of the Master Plan. The Committee will develop and issue recommendations for specific land use and policy changes for consideration by the Planning Commission and (upon invitation) City Council.

II. Committee Type

Per Planning Commission bylaws, "*the Commission, Chair or City Planner may establish and appoint citizen committees with the consent of the Commission. The purpose of the citizen committee is to be able to use individuals who are knowledgeable or expert in a particular issue before the Commission or to better represent various interest groups.*"

The Citizen committee is a "special" committee of the Planning Commission (as opposed to a standing committee). It is formed to serve for a limited time and will be dissolved once the tasks and responsibilities assigned to it are complete.

III. Membership

The committee will be comprised of:

- Up to four (4) members of the Planning Commission
- One member of the Human Relations Commission
- One member of the Sustainability Commission
- One representative of the Ypsilanti Housing Commission ~~board~~
- One representative of EMU
- One representative of Defend Affordable Ypsi
- One representative of Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living
- One representative of Avalon Housing
- One representative of Ozone House
- One representative of civic affairs organization at the county or state level
- One Ypsilanti owner-occupant
- One Ypsilanti business owner (and employer)
- One lessor of rental properties in Ypsilanti
- Up to two renters of the community at large
- One Ypsilanti community member experiencing homelessness

Members shall be residents of the City. In the event that a resident cannot be identified for a specific seat, no more than 25% of seats may be occupied by non-residents. Only residents shall have a vote on matters requiring one. A guiding principle in recruiting and selecting individuals to serve on the committee will be the degree to which the members, as a whole, represent the diversity of the Ypsilanti community, both demographically (in terms of income, race or ethnicity, age group and ward) and with respect to affordability and accessibility-related interests.

Organizations represented on the committee may elect to rotate their representative as appropriate to accommodate the thematic focus of work sessions. Participation is voluntary, and any organization may opt out of committee participation at any time.

All members shall have equal voice and standing with respect to the proceedings and recommendations of the Committee.

The Planning Department of the City of Ypsilanti will provide a staff advisor to the Committee.

IV. Chairperson

The Chair of the Planning Commission shall serve as the Chairperson of the Citizen Committee and will designate another committee member to chair work sessions in her absence.

V. Activities, Duties & Responsibilities

- Drawing on the most up-to-date quantitative and qualitative data and resources available, assess the current situation with respect to housing affordability and accessibility in Ypsilanti and Washtenaw County
- Analyze underlying barriers to affordability and accessibility at the municipal, county, state and national levels
- Study existing affordability and accessibility strategies and models (local and non-local)
- Identify additional strategies and models for increasing affordability and accessibility
- Rate strategies based on their probable impact, feasibility and acceptability in Ypsilanti
- Develop written land use and policy recommendations for adoption and implementation
- Present recommendations to Planning Commission and (upon invitation) City Council

VI. Committee Procedures

Frequency of meetings: The committee will hold its initial work session in January 2018 and will meet on a regular basis (not more than twice-monthly and not less than monthly) to fulfill its duties as described above.

Venue(s): Work sessions of the Citizen Committee will be publicly noticed and held at rotating, accessible venues to facilitate community engagement in the review and updating of the Master Plan.

Thematic focus groups: As appropriate, the Citizen Committee will invite additional input from community residents through focus groups, special presentations, and public comment sessions. In addition, the committee will form subgroups to perform in-depth study of special topics as required.

Completion of work and presentation of recommendations: The committee will report back to the Planning Commission on a monthly basis. The committee's work will be completed **no later than October 2018**, five years from the date of the adoption of the Master Plan. Upon finalizing its recommendations, the committee will make a formal presentation to the Planning Commission and, upon invitation from City Council, to Council members.

VII. Authorship Information

This charter was drafted by Heidi Jugenitz, Chairperson of the Planning Commission of the City of Ypsilanti, with input from members of the Planning, Sustainability and Human Relations Commissions, City Council, and the community at large.