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Ypsilanti

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Historic District Fact Sheet

Alternative Energy

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
3rd Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 483-9646
cityofypsilanti.com/planning

Historic District
3rd Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 483-9646
cityofypsilanti.com/hd

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

Ypsilanti's Historical Preservation ordinance and the Standards for Rehabilitation of Historic Structures set by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior govern the review of any work proposed in the district.

Under the ordinance, the HDC cannot approve any installation that would destroy or wholly obscure a character-defining feature, either by virtue of its installation or its removal. Examples of "character-defining features" include, but are not limited to, doors, windows, porches, rooflines, significant landscape features, and transoms. Both the materials and the arrangement of these features define a property's historic character and must not be obscured, radically changed, damaged, or destroyed.

General Considerations for Alternative Energy Installations

The term "alternative energy" covers a variety of technologies including geothermal, wind, and solar power. The general principles below apply equally to all types of alternative energy installations.

Effect on the Historic Material. The solar panels should not damage or obscure any historic material or character-defining feature on the structure.

Installations can be denied if there is any uncertainty as to how the installation will affect the structure or materials in the future.

Visibility. Any alternative energy installation, including solar panels, should not be visible on the primary façade (or facades if located on a corner lot) of the historic structure. The best location for solar panels is usually on the south facing roof. However, if this location can be seen from the street then solar panels would not be approved in that location.

Inverters and disconnects. Any inverter and/or power disconnect boxes installed as part of an alternative energy system should not be visible from the front of the structure. Any conduits for the alternative energy system to these boxes should not differ in color from the surface on which they are mounted.

Age of Structure. The age of the structure on which any installation would be installed is also a consideration. *Example:* South-facing solar panels that would be visible from the street on a 10 year old garage that sits behind a historic structure may be an acceptable alternative to placing panels on the main historic structure.

Installation and attachment. The proposed method and materials for attachment and the method of eventual removal and repair of any resulting damage to the structure shall be clearly identified in any work permit application.

Solar Panels

Angle of Attachment. If placed on the roof of the structure, the angle of the solar panels should match that of the roof. Flat roofs will have different consideration.

For more information, please see National Park Service's [Preservation Brief 3: Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings](#).