



2021 Annual Report Ypsilanti Planning Commission

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 2021, the Planning Commission’s membership was as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Matt Dunwoodie (chair) | Jessica Donnelly |
| Michael Simmons (vice-chair) | Phil Hollifield |
| Marc Arthur | Carl Schier |
| Eric Bettis | Jared Talaga (resigned October 2021) |
| Mike Davis Jr. | |

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 held twelve total meetings during 2021 which moved to a virtual platform in 2020 once the state and city were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, Planning Commission acted on 25 items in 2021.

Applications

The Commission reviewed nine site plan review-related applications- one as a full site plan review, five as limited site plan reviews, and three as recently approved site plan amendments. The Commission also reviewed eight special use permit applications. All but one site plan review and special use permit applications were eventually approved; one was tabled first for more information or clarity, then approved.

There were three zoning ordinance text amendments. Two were City staff-led “bug-fixes,” and one was a City staff-led amendment for residential zoning modifications, based on the recent Master Plan update. All three text amendments were ultimately adopted by City Council.

One alley vacation was proposed. City Council ultimately denied the alley vacation.

Master Plan and Special Planning Topics

The Master Plan was updated, by a process that began in December 2020 with Planning Commission’s recommendation to distribute the plan for public comment, and ultimately ended with City Council adoption in May 2021. The Master Plan update largely consisted of the addition of the Sustainability Plan chapter. Small general updates were added to the Master Plan throughout the Plan.

The special planning topics involved the Non-Motorized Transportation Plan update. The Plan update was distributed for public comment in May, and then adopted by City Council in July.

Planning Commission’s Non-motorized Transportation Advisory subcommittee continued to meet throughout 2021.

Bylaws

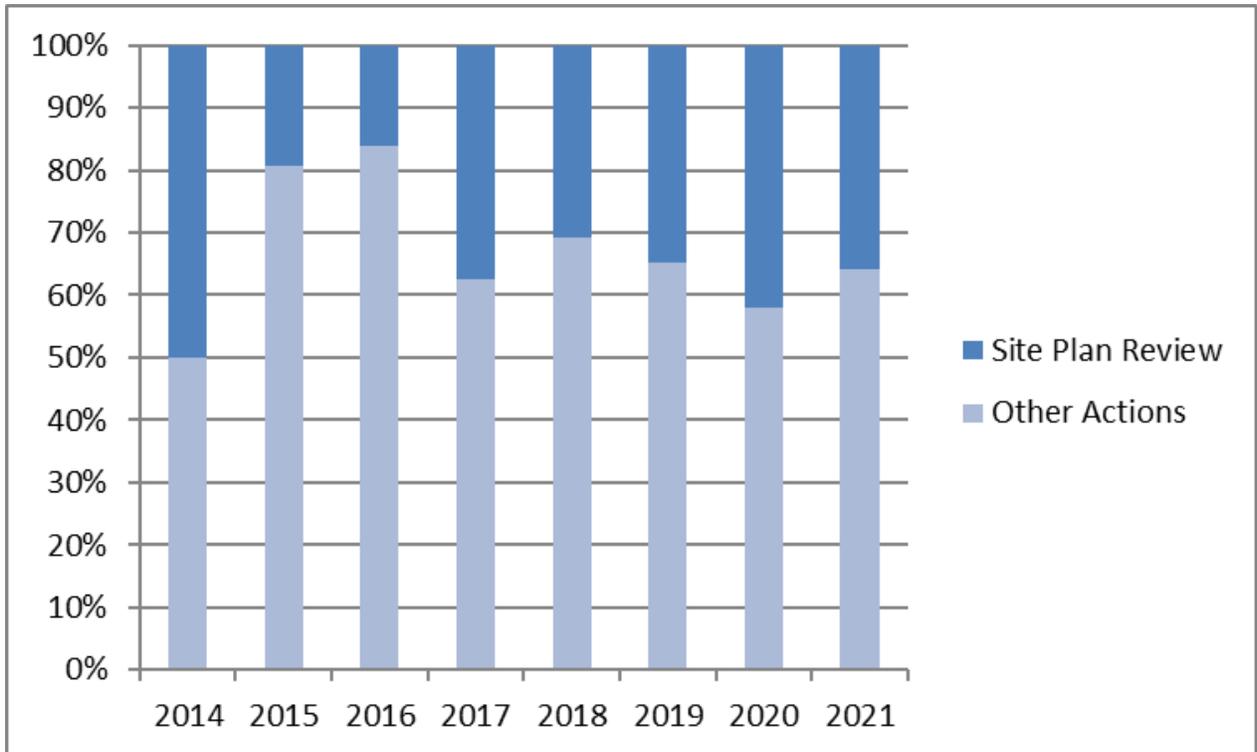
The bylaws were amended twice in 2020 but were not amended in 2021.

Also included in this year’s annual report is the implementation matrix from the Master Plan update.

Figure 1: Planning Commission Applications by Type (past five years)

	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Site Plan Review	5	6	12	8	13	6
Site Plan Amendment	--	2	1	1	--	3
Special Use Permit	5	1	11	5	12	8
Zoning Map Amendment	2	1	4	--	--	--
Zoning Text Amendment	5	1	8	4	3	3
Master plan Update/ Amendment	--	--	--	--	1	1
Planned Unit Development	1	1	1	--	--	--
Amend Approved PUD	--	--	--	--	--	--
Alley/Street closure/Vacation	2	--	--	--	--	1
Change in non-conforming use	1	--	--	--	--	--
Capital Improvements Reviews	3	1	1	4	--	1
Special topic planning (begins 2010)	--	3	1	--	2	2
Study Item (begins 2010)	1	--	--	--	--	--
Conditional Rezoning	--	--	--	1	--	--
Modification of Sign Standards (begins 2012, ends 2016)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Special Use Revocation (begins 2015)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Designation of Special Nonconforming Status (begins 2015)	6	1	--	--	--	--
Total Applications / Deliberations	31	17	39	23	31	25

Figure 2: Planning Commission Actions by Year (percent)



Master Plan Implementation Matrix

These goals and their matrices are taken directly from the Master Plan, adopted May 2021.

Items implemented in 2021 in yellow

Capital Improvements Plan = CIP; Zoning Ordinance = ZO

	Action	Timeframe	Location	Safety	Diversity	Equity	Environmental Sustainability	Economy	Primary Mechanism	Completion or Benchmark Date	Next Steps
Center	Continue and expand the number, type, and location of festivals and events	Ongoing	All centers		x			x	Convention & Visitors Bureau (event attraction, destination marketing); Special Events policy		Ongoing
	Continue efforts to fill upper stories	Ongoing	All centers		x	x	x	x	Zoning Ordinance (enable private investment) DDA (business & investment attraction)	Ordinance passed 2014 MEDC façade grant 2018	Ongoing
	Maintain and expand transportation options	Ongoing	Downtown	x		x	x	x	Capital Improvements Plan; Zoning Ordinance (require last-mile infrastructure); Non-Motorized Transportation Plan	Capital Improvements Plan adopted 2020 Zoning Ordinance passed 2014 Non-Motorized Plan adopted 2021	Ongoing
	Draft a business attraction plan for Downtown, Depot Town and Cross Street	1-5 years	All centers		x			x	DDA	RRC Certification obtained 2015	Ongoing
	Encourage business and event activity during the day and evening	1-5 years	All centers	x	x	x		x	Zoning Ordinance (encourage mix of uses)	Ordinance passed 2014	Ongoing

								DDA (business development)		
Create a marketing campaign for the City of Ypsilanti	1-5 years	All centers					x	Convention & Visitors Bureau	Community Tourism Action Plan adopted 2014	Ongoing- Update CTAP 2019. Also, City is working on Marketing Plan.
Curbless "festival" street on Washington	1-5 years	Downtown	x		x		x	Capital Improvements Plan		Ongoing
Use vacant storefronts for temporary retail uses	1-5 years	Downtown	x		x		x	DDA (landlord outreach)	Ordinance passed 2014	Ongoing
Permanent year-round home for Downtown Farmer's Market	1-5 years	Downtown	x	x	x	x	x	Zoning Ordinance (enabling) DDA (attraction)	Downtown Farmers' Market established 2016	Completed
Permanent year-round home for Depot Town Farmer's Market	1-5 years	Depot Town	x	x	x	x	x	Zoning Ordinance (enabling) DDA (attraction)		Ongoing
Increase walkability (2-way streets & raised intersections)	1-10 years	Downtown	x		x		x	MDOT coordination (20-year horizon) Capital Improvements Plan		Capacity reduction planning 2019-2022
Curbless "festival" street on River and Cross Streets	1-10 years	Depot Town	x		x		x	Capital Improvements Plan		Funding
Create a public space at new train station	1-10 years	Depot Town	x		x		x	Capital Improvements Plan	Proposed Amtrak Stop Feasibility Study completed 2018	Ongoing- Applied for CRISI (Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements) grant but was not awarded grant.

	Separate Cross and Washtenaw	1-10 years	Cross Street	x			x	x	Capital Improvements Plan		Capacity reduction, 2-way conversion
	Create a "front door" for EMU with reconfiguration of Cross and Washtenaw	1-10 years	Cross Street	x	x			x	MDOT coordination Capital Improvements Plan		Capacity reduction, 2-way conversion

Neighborhoods	Action	Timeframe	Location	Safety	Diversity	Equity	Environmental Sustainability	Economy	Primary Mechanism	Completion or Benchmark Date	Next Steps
	Continue and increase rental inspections and enforcement	Ongoing	All neighborhoods	x		x	x	x	Building Department		Ongoing
	Assist continuation and expansion of EMU Live Ypsi program	Ongoing	All neighborhoods		x			x		Program continuing	Ongoing
	Regulate the form of buildings to preserve the character of neighborhoods	Ongoing	All neighborhoods		x	x		x	Zoning Ordinance	Building Types in zoning ordinance complete	Ongoing
	Create "Eco-Districts" in neighborhood parks	1-10 years	All neighborhoods		x		x		Zoning Ordinance (enable); Parks Plan and Capital Improvements Plan		Ongoing
	Re-survey of the Historic District	1-10 years	All neighborhoods			x	x		Historic District Ordinance (Chapter 54)		Ongoing
	Consider new opportunities for accessory dwelling units	1-5 years	All neighborhoods	—	x	x	x	x	Zoning Ordinance	Regulations permitting ADUs in all residential zones adopted in 2021	Complete
	Relax dwelling size, lot area, and lot dimensions requirements	1-10 years	All neighborhoods	—	—	x	x	x	Zoning Ordinance	Regulations relaxing such dimensional	Complete

										requirements adopted in 2021	
Allow for density increases in residential zoning districts for the purpose of housing affordability	1-10 years	All neighborhoods	-	-	x	x	x	Zoning Ordinance	Regulations for corner-lot duplexes adopted in 2021; further work to be done for density.	Ongoing	
Revisit home occupation requirements and consider live-works	1-10 years	All neighborhoods		x	x	x	x	Zoning Ordinance		Ongoing	
Revise family/occupancy caps	1-5 years	All neighborhoods	x	x	x			Zoning Ordinance		Ongoing	
Create visitability requirements	1-5 years	All neighborhoods	x	x	x			Zoning Ordinance		Ongoing	
Preserve Bell-Kramer residential land uses	Ongoing	Central neighborhoods	x		x	x		Zoning Ordinance	Bell-Kramer rezoned to residential in 2018	Ongoing	

	Action	Timeframe	Location	Safety	Diversity	Equity	Environmental Sustainability	Economy	Primary Mechanism	Completion or Benchmark Date	Next Steps
Corridors	Designate the appropriate building form for each corridor based on existing patterns and vision for that corridor	Form-based code	All corridors	x	x	x		x	Zoning Ordinance	Complete	Completed
	Retain the mix of uses within each corridor but allow them throughout the area	Form-based code	All corridors		x	x		x	Zoning Ordinance	Complete	Completed
	Reinforce preservation of historic buildings	Form-based code	Historic corridors		x			x	Zoning Ordinance; Historic District Ordinance	Complete	Ongoing

	Maintain River Street as a historic boulevard	Form-based code	Historic corridors	x	x			x	Zoning Ordinance; Capital Improvements Plan	Ongoing	Ongoing
	Require a pedestrian friendly building form while allowing a mix of uses for both students and residents along Huron River Drive, Leforge & Railroad corridors	Form-based code	General corridors	x	x	x		x	Zoning Ordinance	Ongoing	Ongoing
	Coordinate regulations for Washtenaw Avenue with the Washtenaw County Re-Imagine Washtenaw Plan	1-10 years	General corridors	x	x	x		x	Zoning Ordinance	Ongoing	Ongoing
	Restore Harriet Street as the Main Street of adjacent neighborhoods	1-10 years	General corridors	x	x	x		x	Zoning Ordinance; Capital Improvements Plan	Ordinance passed 2014, ongoing	Ongoing
	Restore two-way function to Cross, Huron, and Hamilton Streets	1-10 years	Historic corridors	x		x	x	x	MDOT Coordination; Capital Improvements Plan	CIP adopted	Capacity/lane reduction project

Districts	Action	Timeframe	Location	Safety	Diversity	Equity	Environmental Sustainability	Economy	Primary Mechanism	Completion or Benchmark Date	Next Steps
	Update regulations to create walkable areas at the border of the City and Campus	Form-based code	EMU	x	x	x		x	Zoning Ordinance	Complete	Completed
	Create regulations that support the existing building form but assure access by all modes of transportation	Form-based code	Health & Human Services	x	x	x	x		Zoning Ordinance	Complete	Completed

Allow renewable energy facilities, such as solar panels, on industrial land	Form-based code	Job Districts				×	×	Zoning Ordinance	Complete	Completed
Reduce minimum lot size and width in the industrial park to create more opportunity	Form-based code	Job Districts		×			×	Zoning Ordinance	Complete	Completed
Align economic development incentives and programs to encourage emerging sectors that align with the Guiding Values and the employment potential of residents	1-5 years	All Districts				×	×	Economic Development Strategy	In progress	Ongoing
Create "Welcome to Ypsilanti" packages for new EMU students, including web version	1-5 years	EMU		×	×		×	Website & PDF authorship?		Package creation
Encourage use or redevelopment of unused parking lots	1-5 years	Health & Human Services & Job Districts		×		×	×	Zoning Ordinance (enable)	Complete	Completed
Create a "front door" for EMU in the area created by the reconfiguration of Cross Street and Washtenaw Ave.	1-10 years	EMU	×	×		×	×	MDOT coordination; Capital Improvements Plan		Capacity reduction & conversion to 2-way

LOOKING FORWARD

At the end of 2021, these planning projects remain in progress:

- Implementation of more Master Plan policy recommendations, including goals of housing affordability, density, and sustainability.
- Implementation of Non-Motorized Transportation Plan policy recommendations.
- Re-development of Water Street, 220 N Park, 206-210 N Washington
- Members of Planning Commission have expressed interest in reviewing and potentially revising certain parking standards in the Zoning Ordinance.
- The Planning Commission will continue to provide review of the annual Capital Improvements Plan prior to adoption by City Council, per state act.

ACTION

Planning Commission **approved** the 2021 annual report and its transmittal to City Council at its January 2022 regular meeting.