

# Historic District Commission 2011 Annual Report

## Membership

Jane Schmiedeke, Chair  
Hank Prebys, Vice-Chair  
Ronald Rupert  
Michael Condon  
Alex Pettit  
Jennifer Henriksen  
Anne Stevenson

## Commission and Staff

Throughout 2011, the Historic District Commission (HDC) continued meeting on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers.

The HDC was staffed by intern Connie Locker. As HDC Assistant, she worked 15-20 hours per week performing various administrative tasks to enable the 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, and minutes; property monitoring; and preparing reports as needed. Additionally, staff administratively approved routine roof work under conditions that the Commission has defined.

The Commission continued to provide prompt review of applications. The current application procedure begins with the filing of a Historic District Work Permit Application by noon on the Wednesday before the HDC meeting. The applications are then collected from the Building Department and reviewed by staff for completeness. Incomplete applications are addressed through written or phone correspondence to the applicant, requesting that additional information be provided prior to the meeting. Properties under consideration are photographed by staff for reference and included with all completed applications into assembled meeting packets. Packets are then posted on the City of Ypsilanti's website and emailed to the Commission on the Friday before each meeting.

The HDC Assistant attends each Commission meeting. After the meeting, the HDC Assistant writes all decision letters and a draft of the official minutes. The draft is then forwarded to the HDC Chair for review. The turnaround time for this process, from application submittal to mailing of decision letters, generally takes about ten days.

Potential applicants are encouraged to bring projects to the Commission as study items before formal submission of a Work Permit 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.

## Statistics and Trends

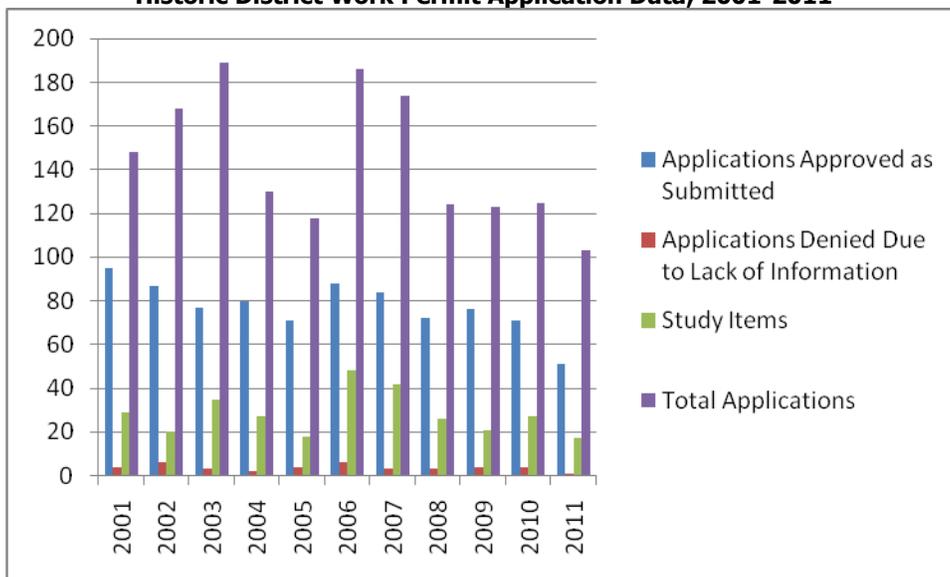
Although the number of applications received this year was significantly lower than in recent years due to the impact of economic issues, the ambitious scope of many of the approved projects reflects the commitment of residents and businesses to the improvement of the local community. The number of applications and actions taken is shown in the table below.

**Historic District Commission Actions, 2008-2011**

	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
Applications approved as submitted	72	76	71	51
Applications approved with modifications	2	3	7	15
Administrative approvals	11	12	13	11
Applications denied due to lack of information	1	3	2	1
Applications denied due to inappropriateness	2	1	2	3
Applications pending at end of year	1	1	1	0
Study Items	26	21	27	17
Amendments to previous approvals	9	6	2	5
<b>Total Applications</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>103</b>

To illustrate the number of projects within the Historic District this year as compared to the past ten years, the chart below depicts HDC Work Permit application activity from 2001 through 2011.

**Historic District Work Permit Application Data, 2001-2011**



Source: Planning & Development Department Records

## **Historic District Fact Sheets**

In 2011, no new fact sheets were created. At the end of the year, staff initiated a comprehensive review of the existing fact sheets aimed at updating information and assessing the need for future additions.

## **Demolitions**

310 N. Park – Following a public hearing on July 12, 2011, the Commission approved the demolition of 310 N. Park. Having been abandoned for years and damaged as a result of both fire and neglect, the Commission found that the structure was unsafe and, as a property on the Dangerous Buildings List, was a case of demolition by neglect. The City is pursuing demolition using Community Development Block Grant (CDBG). The use of the federal funds requires formal review by SHPO as well. This review is still pending.

## **Appeals**

119 N. Huron – An appeal based on the Commission’s decision regarding handrails at the property was dropped. The Commission is awaiting a formal application for a new handrail and porch repair at the property.

306 N. Hamilton – Significant work took place at 306 N. Hamilton this year, with a new addition, windows, siding, and porch installed. The Commission denied the property owners’ request for replacement vinyl siding and a fiberglass front door and that decision was appealed. The appeal has since been dropped. Outstanding compliance issues with the property are expected to be addressed by the end of March.

## **Significant Projects**

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

- 120, 122, and 124 W. Michigan – A third story was built at the rear of the buildings to accommodate new use as apartments. The addition was made in a manner that allowed for an additional floor that was completely concealed from the buildings’ facades on W. Michigan Ave. Exterior improvements, including new paint and replica window hoods on the facades, were also completed.
- Freighthouse – Work continues at the Freighthouse, with an indoor café expected to open this year.

- Starkweather – Work continues at 1266 Huron. Notable changes in 2011 included the removal of the existing front porch, to be replaced with a porch more representative of the original.

## Educational Workshops

The HDC continued hosting educational workshops on topics of interest to residents of the district. Six sessions were held over the course of the year:

- Introduction to Historic Preservation
- Historic Window Repair
- The Basics of the Ypsilanti HDC
- Historic Architecture of Ypsilanti
- Researching Your Historic Home (two presentations)

Due to the success of these workshops, a series of similar presentations by preservation professionals from the Michigan Historic Preservation Network, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the State Historic Preservation Office has been planned for 2012.

## Conclusion

Although of varied scope and scale, the projects completed throughout 2011 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 HDC to beautify the district and preserve the heritage of Ypsilanti's built environment.

This report respectfully submitted to the Ypsilanti City Council by the Historic District Commission.

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Jane Schmiedeke, Chair  
Historic District Commission

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Date

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Connie Locker, HDC Assistant  
Planning and Development Department

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Date