

Historic District Commission 2008 Annual Report

Membership

Jane Schmiedeke, Chair
Hank Prebys, Vice-Chair
Joseph Schultz
Edward Penet
Christian Overland
Brenda Rigdon
Ronald Rupert
Michael Condon

Commission and Staff

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. Commissioner Joseph Schultz served from January through May when he left the Commission. The vacant position was filled in October by Commissioner Michael Condon.

In 2008, the Commission was staffed by the Planner II, Richard Murphy and the Preservation Planning Intern, Courtney Miller. Additional staff support was provided by the HDC Intern. The HDC Intern from January to August was Courtney Miller, who was a graduate student from Eastern Michigan University in the Historic Preservation program and remained on staff as the Preservation Planning Intern in August. From August through December, Aimee D'Agostini, also a graduate student in EMU's Historic Preservation program filled the position of HDC Intern. The HDC Intern served 15-20 hours per week, performing various administrative duties, enabling the Commission to fulfill the requirements of the 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 reviewed 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 both completeness and zoning compliance. 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. Staff assembles completed applications into meeting packets and delivers them to Commissioners on the Friday before the meeting. An additional application was created this year for Demolition in the Historic District, which requires specific documentation. The application seeks to create a greater understanding and guide applicants through the process of demolishing structures in the Historic District.

The Preservation Planner (Intern) and HDC Intern attend each Commission meeting. After the meeting, the HDC Intern writes all decision letters and a draft of the official minutes. The draft is then forwarded to the HDC Chair for approval. The turnaround time for this process from application submittal to mailing of decision letters generally takes about ten days. When building, sign, fence, or other permit applications are made at the same time as the Historic District Work Permit Application, staff performs zoning reviews in parallel to the HDC process both to minimize conflicts between Commission approvals and zoning requirements and also to minimize response time.

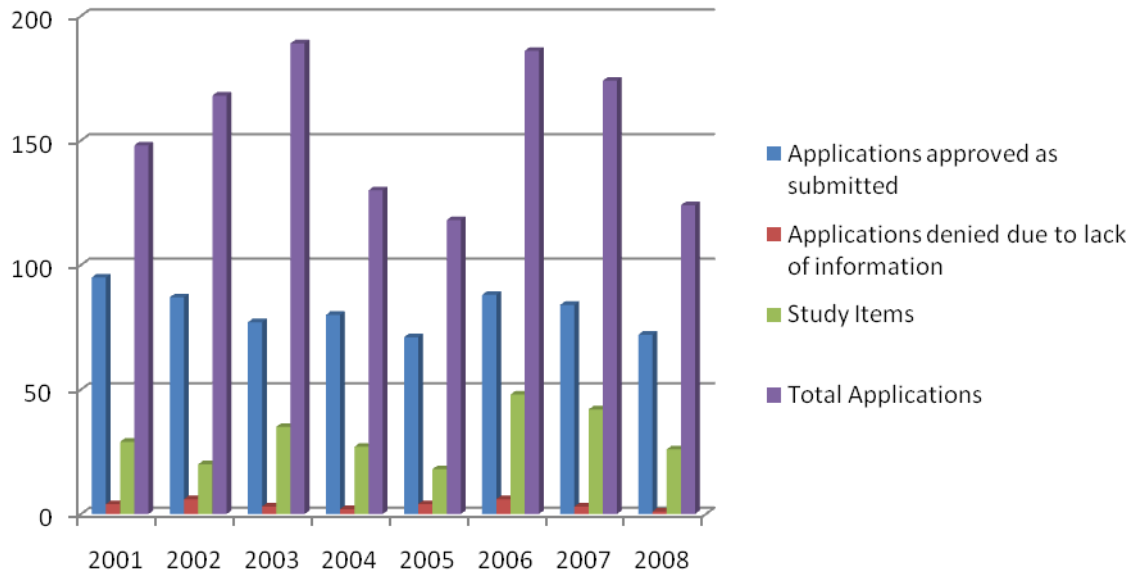
Potential applicants are encouraged to bring projects to the Commission as Study Items before formal submission. This allows the Commission to provide feedback to property owners at a conceptual stage, clarifying expectations and allowing for a more predictable final review.

Statistics and Trends

Residents and businesses continued to invest in Historic District properties; however the Commission received fewer permits than in the last two years. The number of applications and actions taken is shown in the table, below.

Historic District Commission Actions, 2005-2008

	2005	2006	2007	2008
Applications approved as submitted	71	88	84	72
Applications approved with modifications	22	10	8	2
Administrative approvals		24	19	11
Applications denied due to lack of information	4	6	3	1
Applications denied due to inappropriateness	0	3	9	2
Applications pending at end of year	3	2	2	1
Study Items	18	48	42	26
Amendments to previous approvals		5	7	9
Total Applications	118	186	174	124



Source: Planning & Development Department Records

To further illustrate activity levels in the historic district, the chart above shows HDC Work Permit activity from 2001 through 2008.

Edison Power Plant Historic District

A Historic District Study Committee was formed on July 15, 2008 to study and report on the feasibility of providing legal protection to the Edison Power Plant, Dam, and Peninsular Paper Company Sign by creating a three-resource historic district to be subject to the provisions of the existing Chapter 54 of the City of Ypsilanti Codes, entitled Historical Preservation. The Preliminary Report was submitted in September 2008 to the State Historic Preservation Office. The Study Committee will hold a public hearing before the end of 2009.

Historic District Fact Sheets

In 2008, the Historic District Commission approved two new fact sheets to provide rehabilitation guidelines for property owners and contractors in the district: the Alternative Energy Systems Fact Sheet and the Graffiti Abatement Fact Sheet. The Alternative Energy Systems Fact Sheet summarizes the general standards against which any proposal for an alternative energy system must be reviewed. The Graffiti Abatement Fact Sheet summarizes the appropriate methods for graffiti removal and offers suggestions for property owners as to graffiti removal products that can be used on different types of surfaces.

Demolitions

322 E. Cross, garage – The Commission found the structure to be a hazard to the public safety. It was also noted that the homeowner’s insurance was cancelled due to the condition of the structure. Demolition was approved.

117 S. Huron, house – The Commission found the house had no architectural or historic significance in its present fire damaged condition. Demolition was approved.

12 N. River, house – The Commission previously approved an application based on no remaining architectural details due to a fire that destroyed more than 50% of the house. The application was expired at the time of demolition and the new demolition application was a formality. Demolition was approved citing the previous approval of the same structure.

631 N. River, house – The Commission found the house had no architectural or historic significance in its present condition. It was also found that the structure constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or occupants. Demolition was approved.

Appeals

There were no appeals to Commission decisions in 2008.

Significant Projects

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

- 1 S. Huron: Ypsilanti City Hall
The installation of solar panels on the south façade was approved and work is expected to commence in 2009.
- 57 N. Huron: Corner Health Center
Rehabilitation work and a new addition to the building. Mounted mural on the south side of the building
- 300 W. Forest: School Pictures, Inc., former Ave Maria buildings
The owner is rehabilitating the buildings for LEED certification. The project is expected to be completed in 2009.
- 400 N. River: Thompson Block
Rehabilitation work expected to continue in 2009.
- 1266 N. Huron Drive: Starkweather House
South façade painted and electricity hooked up to the building. Rehabilitation work expected to continue in 2009.
- 211-215 W. Michigan: Mack and Mack Building
Building was purchased by Maurer Management. Rehabilitation is completed.
- Ypsilanti Freight House:
The goal of the project is to manage storm water on the site. Building renovations are being funded by a CLG grant from the State Historic Preservation Office. Project is expected to be complete in June 2009.
- 6 S. Washington: The Elbow Room

- The formerly dangerous façade of this building was rehabilitated.
- 200 W. Michigan: The Kresge Building
Construction continues on the first floor rehab of this formerly vacant building into a restaurant.

Conclusion

The above projects are all excellent examples of restoration and reflect Ypsilanti's sense of pride and commitment to historic preservation. Commendation by the City is due to these owners for their substantial contribution to the community as they help support our efforts to beautify the district and preserve our historic heritage.

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

Jane Schmiedeke, Chair
Historic District Commission

Date

Courtney Miller, Preservation Planner
Planning and Development Department

Date