

# Historic District Commission 2007 Annual Report

## Membership

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

## Commission and Staff

The Historic District Commission (HDC) continued meeting on the first and third Tuesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the City Hall meeting room until September 18. On October 9, the Commission began meeting on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 p.m. in City Council Chambers.

In 2007, the Commission was staffed by the Planner I, which was Richard Murphy. Additional staff support was provided by the HDC Intern. The HDC Intern from January to September was Cristin Moody, who was a graduate student from Eastern Michigan University in the Historic Preservation program. From September through December, Courtney Miller, also a graduate student in EMU's Historic Preservation program filled this position. 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.

The Planner I 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.

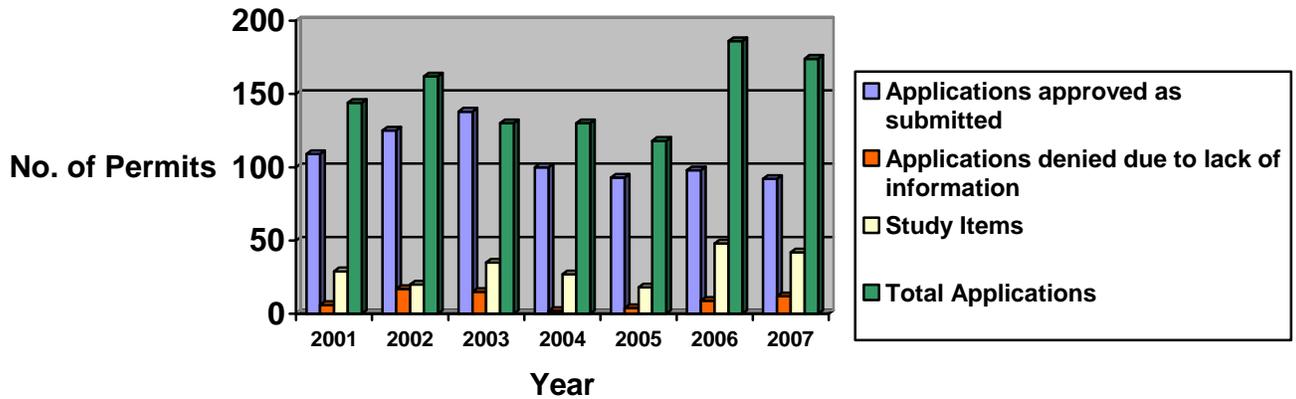
<b>Statistics and Trends</b>
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Despite concerns about the economy, residents and businesses continued to invest in Historic District properties. The Commission received fewer permits than last year, but more than 2004-2005. The number of applications and actions taken is shown in the table, below.

**Historic District Commission Actions, 2004-2007**

	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Applications approved as submitted	80	71	88	84
Applications approved with modifications	20	22	10	8
Administrative approvals			24	19
Applications denied due to lack of information	2	4	6	3
Applications denied due to inappropriateness	0	0	3	9
Applications pending at end of year	1	3	2	2
Study Items	27	18	48	42
Amendments to previous approvals			5	7
<b>Total Applications</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>118</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>174</b>

## HDC Work Permit Activity



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 2007.

### Starkweather House

At the end of 2007, the Starkweather House was under new ownership. The new owner intended at the end of 2007 to utilize the structure, once rehabilitated, as a space for public events. The new owner would also like to use the rehabilitation of this structure as a learning experience, using Eastern Michigan University students in the Historic Preservation program to assist in various ways. In December of 2007, he was pursuing utility connections, and had received HDC approval and building permits for structural repairs to the front porch and corner posts.

### Demolitions

1266 Huron River Drive, Garage – The Commission found that the garage was a deterrent to a major improvement program that will be of substantial benefit to the community. It was also decided that the structure had no architectural or historical significance. Demolition was approved.

### Appeals

107 E. Cross – The owner of 107 E. Cross filed an appeal to a staff decision to reject an application for the removal of a side porch at that address both as an incomplete application and in conflict with active proceedings in Washtenaw County Circuit Court. The appeal was withdrawn after a hearing by the State Historic Preservation Review Board at which the owner agreed to resubmit a complete application and

City staff agreed to place the application before the Commission for review; the application was approved.

## Significant Projects

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

- 133 W. Michigan Avenue: Michigan Heritage Building  
Exterior rehabilitation work has been completed on this property.
- 220 N. Huron: Ypsilanti Historical Museum  
Ownership of the museum was transferred from the City to the Ypsilanti Historical Society. The Society undertook a number of projects, including an addition to the building that will house an ADA-compliant lift allowing use of the basement which has been renovated to house the city archives.
- 324 Oak:  
Significant rehabilitation occurred on this residential property in 2007.
- 400 N. River: The Thompson Block  
The owner of this property applied for and received Obsolete Property Rehabilitation Certificates, and work is expected to commence in 2008.
- 402 S. Huron:  
The property is under new ownership. Significant rehabilitation work has been done on this structure including roof, siding, and foundation repairs; painting; structural repairs; and replacement of exterior doors.
- 416 N. Huron:  
The reconstruction of the carriage barn on this property has been completed.
- 1266 Huron River Drive : The Starkweather House  
Rehabilitation will occur under new ownership.

## 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.

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Jane Schmiedeke, Chair  
Historic District Commission

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Date

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Richard Murphy, Planner I  
Planning and Development Department

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Date