

Historic District Commission 2006 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 to meet on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the City Hall meeting room.

In 2006, the Commission was staffed by the Planner I, which was Karen Wieber at the beginning of the year, and Richard Murphy from June through the end of the year. Additional staff support was provided by the HDC Assistants. The HDC Assistant from January to July was Jonathan Ringel, a graduate student in the Urban & Regional Planning program at Eastern Michigan University (EMU). Another student from EMU, Cristin Moody, who was a graduate student in the Historic Preservation program, filled this position from September through December. The HDC Assistants 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, Commissioner packets, and minutes; property monitoring; and preparing reports as needed. Additionally, staff has the ability to administratively review and approve routine roof work, under conditions that the Commission has defined.

The Building Official, Charles Boulard, attended several meetings throughout the calendar year, providing valuable communication between the HDC and the Building Department, as well as assistance in ensuring compliance with the Historic District Ordinance.

The Commission continued to function in a manner that provides prompt review of applications. To summarize the current procedure, once an application is filed by the deadline (the Wednesday prior to an HDC meeting), staff assembles the applications from the Building Department and reviews the applications for both completeness and zoning compliance. Any incomplete applications are addressed through written or phone correspondence to the applicant, requesting additional information. Staff assembles

completed applications into meeting packets and delivers them to Commissioners on Friday before the meeting. Staff also photographs the properties under consideration.

The Planner I and HDC Assistant attend 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 approval. The turnaround time for this process from application submittal to mailing of decision letters generally takes about one week. 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 to ensure that Commission approvals do not conflict with zoning requirements.

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

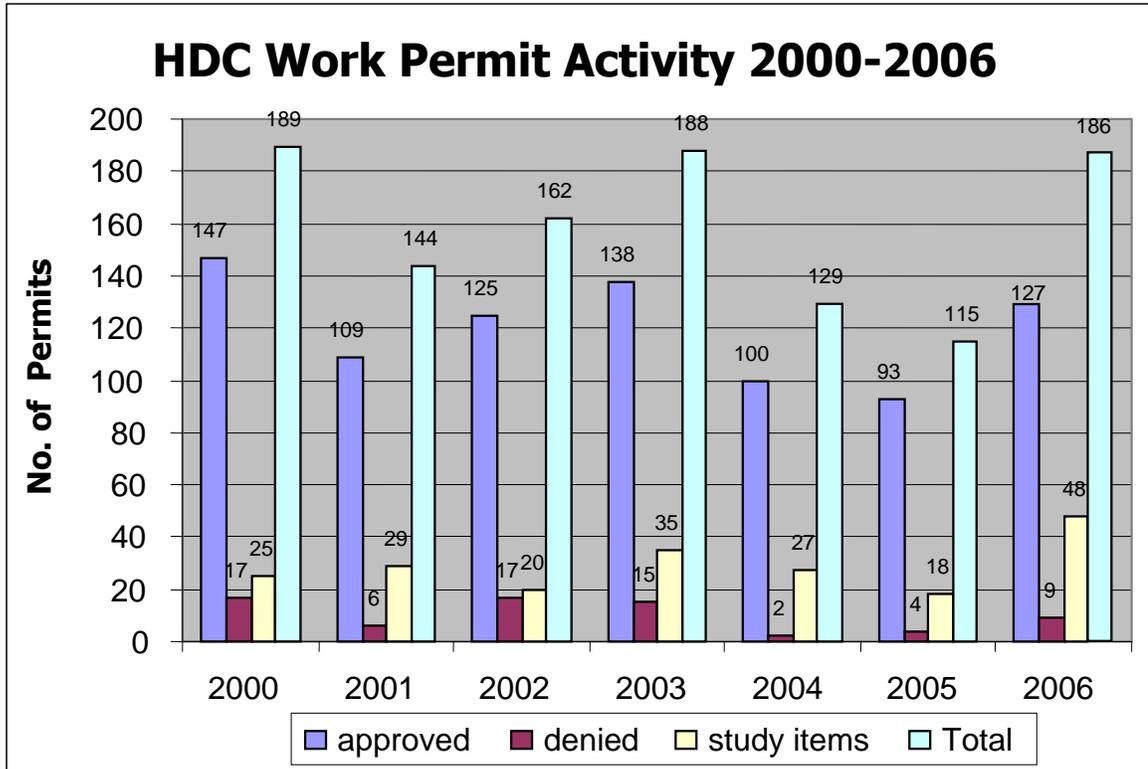
Despite concerns about the economy, residents and businesses continued to invest in Historic District properties. The Commission received significantly more applications for work in District in 2006 than in either 2004 or 2005. The number of applications and actions taken is shown in the table, below.

Historic District Commission Actions, 2003 - 2006

	2003	2004	2005	2006
Applications approved as submitted	77	80	71	88
Applications approved with modifications	61	20	22	10
Administrative approvals				24
Applications denied due to lack of information	3	2	4	6
Applications denied due to inappropriateness	12	0	0	3
Applications pending at end of year	1	1	3	2
Study Items	35	27	18	48
Amendments to previous approvals				5
Total Applications	189	130	118	186

Source: Planning & Development Department Records

To further illustrate activity levels in the historic district, the chart below shows HDC Work Permit activity from 2000 through 2006.



Starkweather Historic District

In 2006, the City of Ypsilanti completed the process of creating Ypsilanti’s second historic district, the Starkweather Historic District. This district includes the Starkweather House at 1266 Huron River Drive, an important historic landmark. The Commission continues to be concerned about the poor condition of the Starkweather House, however, and the stabilization and repair of that structure will be an important project in 2007.

Ongoing Projects

The following projects commenced in 2006, and should be completed and/or implemented in 2007:

- 400 N. River: The Thompson Building
- 76 N. Huron: Riverside Arts Center
- 402 S. Huron
- 416 N. Huron
- Freighthouse

Demolitions

The Commission did not approve any demolitions during the year.

Appeals

There were no appeals of decisions made by the Historic District Commission during the 2006 calendar year.

Significant Projects

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

- 133 W. Michigan Avenue: Michigan Heritage Building
- 720 Norris Street: Corner Brewery
- Library Park adjacent to the Downtown Library

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

Richard Murphy, Planner I
Planning and Development Department

Date