



CITY OF

Ypsilanti

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Historic District Fact Sheet

Porches

This Fact Sheet is not a substitute for the ordinance, but addresses common questions about City ordinances. For further information, please contact the Historic District Assistant.

All permit applications are available from the Building Department and at cityofypsilanti.com/permits.

Completed applications may be dropped off at the Building Department.

City Hall

One South Huron
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Building

3rd Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 482-1025
cityofypsilanti.com/157

Planning

3rd Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 483-9646
cityofypsilanti.com/planning

Historic District

3rd Floor, City Hall
Phone: (734) 483-9646
cityofypsilanti.com/hd

All permits, fees, and factsheets can be found at cityofypsilanti.com/permits.

The following Historic District Commission (HDC) requirements apply to all porch projects, new or replacement. The Commission encourages the retention of original porch elements which still exist and, in some instances, requires duplication of parts. Historically open porches should not be enclosed, as doing so changes both the appearance and the function of the porch. Please Note: Treated lumber should be used only for the substructure of the porch. All parts of the porch that are above ground shall be painted or stained an opaque stain.

CEILING: the porch ceiling shall, in most cases, consist of bead board.

LIGHTING: Any changes in lighting for the porch area must be approved by the HDC. See the HDC lighting fact sheet for more information on options.

HEADER: the header, if any, and its decorative elements shall be appropriate to the style of the building and in the proper proportion.

POSTS: the style of the posts shall be appropriate to the style of the house and existing porch details. If 4 x 4s are boxed, resulting posts must be at least 5 x 5. Replacement posts must match original posts, if any still exist, or be of the same diameter as the originals. Split posts may be required for attachment to an exterior wall.

NEWEL: newel posts shall match or be related in style and size with porch posts. They shall be mounted on the bottom step and shall be capped.

DECK: the deck (floor) of the porch shall consist of 1 x 4 tongue and groove vertical grain fir porch flooring; a smooth side tongue and groove composite material, in matching thickness and width may be considered on a case-by-case basis. Boards shall be installed with the narrow ends of the boards against the wall of the house. The deck shall overhang the skirt and the skirt trim by at least 1". The last deck boards (one at each end of the porch) shall have the exposed tongue and groove trimmed off. The deck of the porch should be sloped in order to shed water.

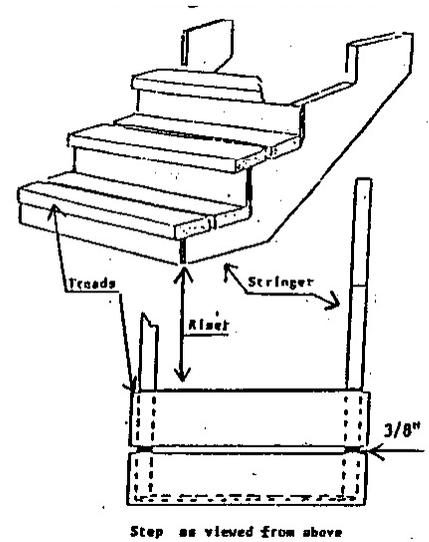
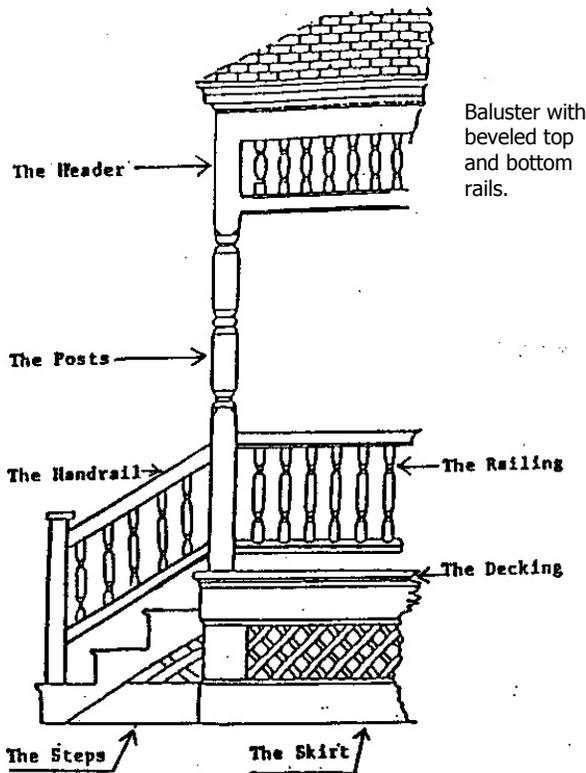
SKIRTING: porch skirting is required. The skirt shall be framed in with a minimum of a 1 x 4. Prefabricated lattice is acceptable, although the HDC strongly recommends replicating the original style or using a decorative skirting.

GUARD RAIL (on the porch): a guard rail may be required if the porch floor surface is of a certain height above grade. The guard rail must meet building code requirements in regards to height. If the original rail exists and the height needs to be increased, then an additional railing may be added to the existing in such a way that indicates that the additional railing is not original. The guard rail shall consist of three parts: a **top rail** shall be placed flat & shall have beveled top edges; **balusters** shall be spaced so that a 4" sphere cannot pass through and be set into the top and bottom rail, not attached to the exterior of the rails; a **bottom rail** shall be placed flat with beveled top edges, shall be at least 3" off of porch decking and shall have support blocks if the guard rail exceeds 8' between posts. Balusters are to be encased in between the top and bottom rails; not attached to exterior of the rails. All members shall be centered on the porch posts with butt joints.

HAND RAIL (down the stairs): if a hand rail is required the hand rail must be graspable. Wood hand rails shall match the guard rail in style. Ends shall return to the wall or terminate at the post. All diagonal members shall be centered on the porch posts and newel posts with butt joints. 1 1/2" painted pipe rails may be approved.

STEPS: there are four different parts to the wooden step unit: stringers, treads, risers and skirt. Treads and risers shall be of 5/4" lumber. Treads shall rest on the stringers, not be rabbeted into the stringers. The tread shall consist of two boards separated by a 3/8" gap. Spacers shall fill the gap over the stringers. Treads shall have a nosing on the side of stringers. The rise must be enclosed with a solid panel and shall cover the stringer. The top step must be one rise below the deck. A skirt shall enclose the area beneath the stringers and shall be the same style as the skirting on the porch. Steps shall be uniform; the maximum difference from highest to lowest is 3/8". Pre-formed, multi-step concrete units are usually not appropriate.

**Porch elements are subject to the requirements as listed in the current building code adopted by the City of Ypsilanti.*



This is an example of an approved way to bring the porch railing up to code.

