



City of Ypsilanti Historic District Commission

City Hall
One South Huron
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

Planning & Development (4th Floor) 734.483.9646
Building Department (Basement) 734.482.1025

www.cityofypsilanti.com
hdc@cityofypsilanti.com

Frequently Asked Questions

1. When and where does the Historic District Commission meet?

The commission meets on the second and fourth Tuesday of every month (except the second Tuesday in January) at City Hall. The schedule for the current year is available online at www.cityofypsilanti.com, and from the Planning and Development Department.

2. Do I have to apply for both a historic district work permit and a building permit to do work on my house or building?

Yes, they are separate approvals. However, you need a historic district permit only for work involving the outside of your building or the grounds.

3. What's the process?

Step 1 A property owner or his representative submits a historic district work permit application to the Building Department. See below for deadlines and details on what a completed application must include.

Step 2 The application goes to the Planning and Development Department for review. If it is complete, it is added to the agenda for an HDC meeting; if it is incomplete it will be returned to the applicant with a request for additional information.

Step 3 The commission reviews the application at a public meeting. Ordinarily the applicant should be present, in order to provide additional details, answer questions, and so on. The commission may approve or deny the application as presented, approve it with amendments, or table the application if more information is needed or there is some other reason to delay a final decision.

Step 4 The applicant receives a letter formally notifying him or her that the application has been approved or denied, detailing the work to be done (if approved), and stating the basis for the commission's decision.

4. What's the application deadline?

To be put on the agenda for an HDC meeting, you must submit your application by noon on the preceding Wednesday. So, for example, if the next commission meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, July 18, your application must be in by Wednesday, July 12, at noon.

5. How do I apply?

Submit a completed application to the Building Department, One South Huron Street, Ypsilanti, MI 48197. Application forms are available online or from the Planning and Development Department or the Building Department.

6. What do I have to include in the application?

The application form requests some basic information—the property address, your contact information, a summary description of the work proposed. ***In addition, you must provide enough additional documentation to clearly, accurately, and fully describe the work proposed.*** That may mean including:

- Photographs of all locations where work will be done (required of all applications)
- Samples of paint colors, and of any unusual materials
- Details (dimensions, manufacturer's product numbers, and illustrations) of all manufactured or prefabricated items, such as windows, doors, light fixtures, etc.
- Dimensioned drawings of any proposed new construction or significant modifications to an existing structure. For small projects these do not need to be construction drawings, but they must still clearly show the details of the work proposed.
- A site plan, if any changes to the current layout of the site are proposed. A photocopy of the mortgage survey with changes drawn in will ordinarily be enough.

7. What's the difference between an action item and a study item? Do I have to apply as a study item first?

The HDC may make a *decision* on an action item only. All work requiring a permit must come before the commission as an action item eventually in order to be approved. A study item is for *discussion only*. A property owner or architect or contractor may bring a proposal at any stage of development before the HDC for comments and advice on how to proceed, but the commission may not approve or deny work proposed as a study item. *The permit application fee is only charged for action items; there is no fee to bring a study item before the commission.* It is not required to submit a proposal first as a study item, but if you are proposing anything complicated, or if you're uncertain about how the ordinance applies to your case, it's a good idea.

8. How does the HDC decide whether to approve an application?

The HDC applies two sets of guidelines:

- The U.S. Secretary of the Interior has established standards for rehabilitation of historic structures. These are codified in 36 *Code of Federal Regulations* 67 and are online at www.cr.nps.gov/hps/tps/tax/rhb/stand.htm and on the Ypsilanti HDC web page (www.cityofypsilanti.com); copies are also available from the Planning and Development Department.
- The Ypsilanti historic district ordinance (Chapter 54 of the city code) spells out additional criteria. A summary is available from the Planning and Development Department and on the HDC web page.

9. Does Ypsilanti have any specific information I can use to plan and design my project?

Yes. The HDC has put together fact sheets with design guidelines and other information for: porch construction or repair; window replacement or repair; masonry work, including cleaning and repointing; fences; roofing; use of pressure-treated lumber; signs and awnings; and demolition or removal of structures. These are available in the planning department or online at the HDC web page.

10. Are there any other permits I need?

No, but depending on the project you may also need zoning approval—both the zoning ordinance and the historic district ordinance regulate signs, for example, or the placement and design of fences, porches and decks, and outbuildings.

11. How can I talk to a live human being if I have other questions?

Call the Planning and Development Department at 734.483.9646, or e-mail the HDC, hdc@cityofypsilanti.com.