



City of Ypsilanti

Planning and Development Department

Date: February 17, 2010

2009 Annual Report Planning Commission Ypsilanti, Michigan

INTRODUCTION

The Planning Commission of the City of Ypsilanti is governed by the Michigan Planning Enabling Act, State of Michigan Public Act 33 of 2008, and by the City of Ypsilanti's Zoning Ordinance.

In 2009, the Planning Commission's membership was as follows:

Roderick Johnson (chair)
Daniel Lautenbach
Brett Lenart
Brian McClemens
Kevin Smith

Gary Clark (vice-chair)
Roberta Wojcik-Andrews (resigned 10/09)
Mark Bullard (appointed 11/09)
Joseph Schultz (appointed 11/09)
Cheryl Zuellig

The Commission was staffed by the City's Planner II, Richard Murphy, and Executive Secretary Nan Schuette.

Under the Planning Enabling Act, the Commission must provide an annual report to City Council, as the legislative body of the City. This report discusses,

1. The operations of the Commission during the past year
2. The status of any on-going planning activities
3. Recommendations to the legislative body related to planning and development

PLANNING COMMISSION OPERATIONS

The Planning Commission met monthly during 2009, except for December. From the perspective of formal applications, the Commission's agenda was lighter than in previous years - the Commission only considered 10 applications, including 2 site plan reviews. Some of these applications were internally initiated, including zoning

text and map amendment recommendations for the City's Water Street property and text amendments for arts-related uses.

However, the number of applications does not well reflect the Commission's activity level for the year – a number of significant issues were discussed by the Commission that weren't tied to individual sites or applications, including:

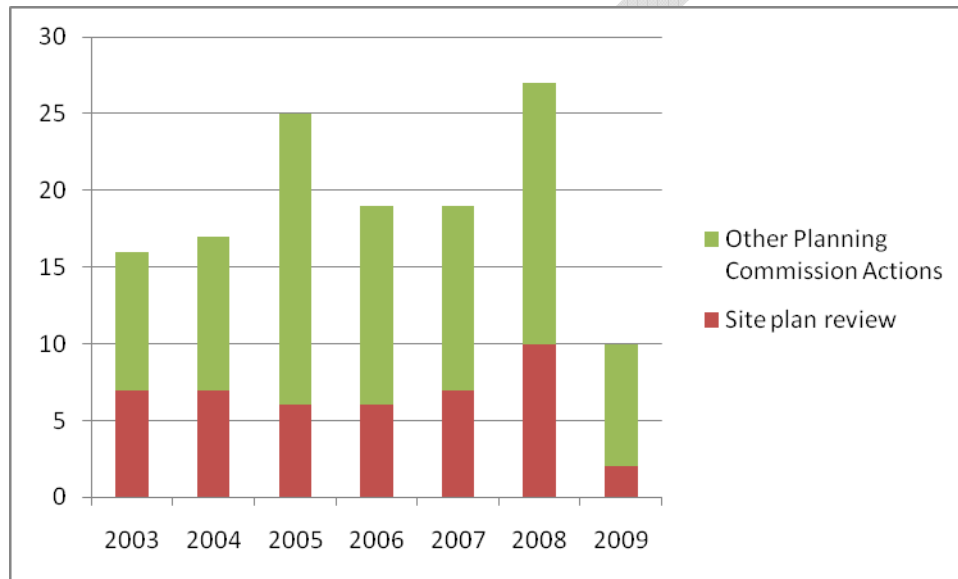
- A Non-Motorized Transportation Plan was prepared and reviewed over the course of 2009. This process was led by Planning Assistant Bonnie Wessler, with Commissioners Johnson and Smith participating in the stakeholder advisory meetings. The draft is currently being circulated for review before final hearing for adoption.
- The 20/20 Task Force presented its final report to the Planning Commission in February. Commission Clark had chaired the Task Force during its 2-year process.
- The Ann Arbor – Detroit Commuter Rail project status was presented to the Planning Commission in March. Several items for future work were noted, including the management of traffic and parking around the proposed stop in Depot Town, questions around the zoning of the Freighthouse and Maple Street Parking lot relative to proposed rail-oriented use, and the need to identify and direct future transit-oriented development opportunities.
- The zoning text amendments around arts-related uses were discussed as the first small step in a longer process of reviewing the Zoning Ordinance, and revising and updating where appropriate.
- In November, the Planning Commission reviewed streetscaping concept plans for East and West Cross. These plans, the result of a 10-year-long process, beginning with the 1998 Depot Town Circulation Study and 2002 Cross Street Neighborhood Improvement Plan, are currently slated for MDOT funding in 2010-11.
- The "Reimagine Washtenaw Avenue" project was also presented to the Commission in November. Representatives from the City, as well as Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti and Pittsfield Townships, developed a proposal for joint planning activities along this major regional corridor. The Commission expressed its support for formally continuing this project, and appointing Commissioner Zuellig to a Joint Technical Committee.

Table 1: Planning Commission applications by type

Planning Commission Applications	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Site plan review	7	7	6	6	7	10	2
Amend approved site plan	0	0	0	0	4	1	1
Special use permit	3	3	6	3	3	6	1
Zoning map amendment	2	1	4	5	2	5	2
Zoning text amendment	2	1	3	1	2	2	3
Master plan amendment	0	2	3	2	0	2	0
Planned unit development	2	0	1	0	0	0	0

Amend approved PUD	0	1	0	0	0	1	0
Alley vacation	0	1	2	2	0	0	1
Change in non-conforming use	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
Allow add'l floor area in B1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Total Applications	16	17	25	19	19	27	10

Figure 1: Planning Commission applications by year



ONGOING PLANNING ACTIVITIES

As of the end of 2009, a few specific planning activities remain in-progress.

The draft Non-Motorized Plan, as noted, is currently in distribution for comment, and is scheduled to return to the Planning Commission in March for a final public hearing and adoption.

The zoning amendments that the Planning Commission had developed for the Water Street area remain tabled by the City Council. The Commission had by resolution requested that the Council take final action on these amendments.

The 2008 Annual Report had also identified a need to undertake a review of the Master Plan and identify any areas that needed attention or revision. Commissioners Smith, Lenart, and Andrews began discussion of this task, but substantial work remains.

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the course of the year, the Planning Commission recognized that at times that staff resources were not sufficient for the needs at hand. In particular, monitoring compliance with approved site plans, zoning ordinance enforcement, and taking on identified needs for zoning ordinance updates arose as not receiving ample staff time.

The Commission also stated concerns with staff capacity for major projects. For example, the impending commuter rail service and Cross Street streetscaping both deserved more attention during the year. (In these cases, the DDA Director's departure in May, a position which is still vacant, exacerbated the Planning Department's staff limits.) Adequate staffing will continue to be a concern, for the success of these projects, as well as continued collaboration with neighboring communities along Washtenaw Avenue or revisions to the Master Plan and Zoning Ordinance to adapt to current needs. The Commission urges that the importance of these and similar projects to Ypsilanti's future not be overlooked.

Over the course of the year, the Commission discussed areas of work that could be undertaken or led by Commissioners rather than staff. While the Commission will continue to look for ways to provide needed resources to major issues and projects, staffing will remain crucial. The commission does expect help from the City Attorney's office on guidelines on Open Meetings Act compliance.

ACTION

The Planning Commission reviewed this report at its January 20 and February 17, 2010, meetings, and approved it unanimously for transmittal to the City Council.