

DIVISION 7. - HISTORIC DISTRICT ORDINANCE

Sec. 2-476. Short title.

This division shall be known as the "Historic District Ordinance of the City of Dearborn".

(Ord. No. 98-747, 11-17-98; Ord. No. 99-791, 9-21-99; Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-477. Purpose.

(a) Historic preservation is hereby declared to be a public purpose and the city council may hereby regulate the construction, addition, alteration, repair, moving, excavation, and demolition of resources in historic districts within the city limits.

(b) The purpose of this division is to:

(1) Safeguard the heritage of the city by preserving districts which reflect elements of its history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and/or culture.

(2) Stabilize and improve property values in each district and surrounding areas.

(3) Foster civic beauty.

(4) Strengthen the local economy.

(5) Promote the use of historic districts for the education, pleasure and welfare of the citizens of the city and of the State of Michigan, and to visitors.

(c) The city may by ordinance establish one or more historic districts. The historic district(s) shall be administered by the historic district commission pursuant to this division.

(Ord. No. 98-747, 11-17-98; Ord. No. 99-791, 9-21-99; Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-478. Definitions.

For the purpose of this division, the following definitions shall apply unless the context clearly indicates or requires a different meaning:

Act means the Michigan Local Historic Districts Act, being Public Act 169 of 1970, MCL 399.201 et seq., as amended.

Alteration means work that changes the detail of a resource but does not change its basic size or shape.

Certificate of appropriateness means the written approval of a permit application for work that is appropriate and that does not adversely affect a resource.

Commission means the historic district commission of the City of Dearborn created by city council pursuant to this division and the Local Historic Districts Act, Public Act 169 of 1970, MCL 399.201 to 399.215, as amended.

Demolition means the razing or destruction, whether entirely or in part, of a resource and includes, but is not limited to, demolition by neglect.

Demolition by neglect means neglect in maintaining, repairing or securing a resource that results in deterioration of an exterior feature of the resource or the loss of structural integrity of the resource.

Denial means the written rejection of a permit application for work that is inappropriate and that adversely affects a resource.

Fire alarm system means a system designed to detect and announce the presence of fire or by-products of fire. Fire alarm system includes smoke alarms.

Historic district means an area, or group of areas not necessarily having contiguous boundaries, that contains one resource or a group of resources that are related by history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture.

Historic preservation means the identification, evaluation, establishment, and protection of resources significant in history, architecture, archaeology, engineering or culture.

Historic resource means a publicly or privately owned building, structure, site, object, feature, or open space that is significant in the history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, or culture of the City of Dearborn, State of Michigan, or of the United States.

Notice to proceed means the written permission to issue a permit for work that is inappropriate and that adversely affects a resource pursuant to a finding under MCL 399.205(6) of Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended.

Open space means undeveloped land, a naturally landscaped area, or a formal or man-made landscaped area that provides a connective link or a buffer between other resources.

Ordinary maintenance means keeping a resource unimpaired and in good condition through ongoing minor intervention, undertaken from time to time, in its exterior condition. Ordinary maintenance does not change the external appearance of

the resource except through the elimination of the usual and expected effects of weathering. Ordinary maintenance does not constitute work for purposes of this division.

Proposed historic district means an area or group of areas not necessarily having contiguous boundaries, that has delineated boundaries and that is under review by a committee or a standing committee for the purpose of making a recommendation as to whether it should be established as a historic district or added to an established historic district.

Repair means to restore a decayed or damaged resource to a good or sound condition by any process. A repair that changes the external appearance of a resource constitutes work for purpose of this division.

Resource means one or more publicly or privately owned historic or nonhistoric buildings, structures, sites, objects, features, or open spaces located within a historic district.

Smoke alarm means a single-station or multiple-station alarm responsive to smoke and not connected to a system. As used in this division, *single-station alarm* means an assembly incorporating a detector, the control equipment, and the alarm sounding device into a single unit, operated from a power supply either in the unit or obtained at the point of installation. *Multiple-station alarm* means two or more single-station alarms that are capable of interconnection such that actuation of one alarm causes all integrated separate audible alarms to operate.

Standing committee means a permanent body established by the city council to conduct the activities of the historic district study committee on a continuing basis.

Work means construction, addition, alteration, repair, moving, excavation or demolition.

(Ord. No. 98-747, 11-17-98; Ord. No. 99-791, 9-21-99; Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.201

Sec. 2-479. Historic district study committee and study committee report.

(a) Before establishing, modifying, or eliminating a historic district(s), the city council shall appoint a historic district study committee.

(b) A committee shall consist of no less than three and no more than seven. A majority of the persons appointed to the committee shall have a clearly demonstrated interest in or knowledge of historic preservation. The committee shall contain representation of at least one member appointed from one or more duly organized local historic preservation organizations.

(c) The committee shall do all of the following:

(1) Conduct a photographic inventory of resources within each proposed historic district following procedures established or approved by the state historic preservation office.

(2) Conduct basic research of each proposed historic district and historic resources located within that district.

(3) Determine the total number of historic and non-historic resources within a proposed historic district and the percentage of historic resources of that total. In evaluating the significance of historic resources, the committee shall be guided by the selection criteria for evaluation issued by the United State Secretary of the Interior for inclusion of resources in the National Register of Historic Places, as set forth in 36 C.F.R. part 60, and criteria established or approved by the state historic preservation office, if any.

(4) Prepare a preliminary historic district study committee report that addresses at a minimum all of the following:

a. The charge of the committee.

b. The composition of committee membership.

c. The historic district(s) studied.

d. The boundaries of each proposed historic district in writing and on maps.

e. The history of each proposed historic district.

f. The significance of each district as a whole, as well as a sufficient number of its individual resources to fully represent the variety of resources found within the district, relative to the evaluation criteria.

g. Transmit copies of the preliminary report for review and recommendations to the planning commission, the state historic preservation office, the Michigan historical commission, and the state historic preservation review board.

h. Make copies of the preliminary report available to the public pursuant to Section 399.204(4) of Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended.

(5) Not less than 60 calendar days after the transmittal of the preliminary report, the historic district study committee shall hold a public hearing in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Public Act 267 of 1976, as amended. Public notice of the time, date, and place of the hearing shall be given in the manner required by Public Act 267. Written notice shall be mailed by first class mail not less than 14 calendar days prior to the hearing to the owners of properties within the proposed historic district, as listed on the most current tax rolls of the city assessor. An audio recording of the public hearing shall be maintained by the committee. The report shall be made available to the public in compliance with Public Act 442 of 1976, as

amended.

(6) After the date of the public hearing, the committee and the city council have not more than one year, unless otherwise authorized by the city council, to take the following actions:

a. The committee shall prepare and submit a final report, including an audio recording of the public hearing, with its recommendations and the recommendations, if any, of the planning commission to the city council as to the establishment of a historic district(s). If the recommendation is to establish a historic district(s), the final report shall include a draft of the proposed ordinance(s).

b. After receiving a final report that recommends the establishment of a historic district(s), the city council, at its discretion, may introduce and pass or reject an ordinance(s). If the city council passes an ordinance(s) establishing one or more historic districts, the city clerk shall file a copy of the ordinance(s), including a legal description of the property or properties located within the historic district(s) with the Wayne County Register of Deeds.

c. The city council shall not pass an ordinance establishing a contiguous historic district less than 60 days after a majority of the property owners within the proposed historic district, as listed on the tax rolls of the local unit, have approved the establishment of the historic district pursuant to a written petition. For purposes of determining a majority, there shall be one vote per parcel.

(7) A writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a committee in the performance of an official function shall be made available to the public in compliance with the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, Public Act 442 of 1976, as amended.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.203

Sec. 2-480. Establishing additional, modifying, or eliminating historic districts.

(a) City council may at any time establish by ordinance additional historic districts, including proposed districts previously considered and rejected, may modify boundaries of an existing historic district, or may eliminate an existing historic district.

(b) Before establishing, modifying, or eliminating a historic district, a historic district study committee appointed by the city council shall follow the procedures as stated in section 2-479 of this division and Section 399.203 (1-3) of Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended. To conduct these activities, the city council may retain the initial committee, establish a standing committee, or establish a new committee to consider only specified proposed districts and then be dissolved. The committee shall consider any previously written committee reports pertinent to the proposed action.

(c) In considering elimination of a historic district, a committee shall follow the procedures set forth in section 2-479 of this division and Section 399.203 of Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended, for the issuance of a preliminary report, holding a public hearing, and issuing a final report but with the intent of showing one or more of the following:

- (1) The historic district has lost those physical characteristics that enabled establishment of the district.
- (2) The historic district was not significant in the way previously defined.
- (3) The historic district was established pursuant to defective procedures.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.214

Sec. 2-481. Historic district commission.

(a) The city council may establish by ordinance a commission to be called the historic district commission. The commission may be established at any time, but not later than the time the first historic district is established.

(b) Each member of the commission shall reside within the city limits. The commission shall consist of seven to nine members. Members shall be appointed by the mayor and subject to confirmation by the city council, and shall serve without compensation. A majority of the members shall have a clearly demonstrated interest in or knowledge of historic preservation. Members shall be appointed for a term of three years, except the initial appointments of three members for a term of two years and two members for a term of one year. Subsequent appointments shall be for three-year terms. Members shall be eligible for reappointment. In the event of a vacancy on the commission, interim appointments shall be made by the mayor and subject to confirmation by the city council within 60 calendar days to complete the unexpired term of such position. If available, one member shall be a graduate of an accredited school of architecture who has two years of architectural experience or who is an architect duly registered in the state. Two members shall be appointed from a list submitted by duly organized local historic preservation organizations.

(c) A person or representative of a person shall be entitled to appear at any public meeting of the commission and be heard on any matter before the commission before it reaches a decision.

(d) The city council may prescribe powers and duties of the commission, in addition to those prescribed by this division, that foster historic preservation activities, projects, and programs in the city.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.204; 399.213

Sec. 2-482. Historic district commission meetings, recordkeeping, and rules of procedure; other duties.

(a) The historic district commission shall meet at least quarterly, or more frequently at the call of the commission.

(b) The business that the commission may perform shall be conducted at a public meeting held in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Public Act 267 of 1976, as amended. Public notice of the date, time, and place of the meeting shall be given in the manner required by Public Act 267. A meeting agenda shall be part of the notice and shall include a listing of each permit application to be reviewed or considered by the commission.

(c) The commission shall keep a record of its resolutions, proceedings, and actions, including an audio record of all public hearings. A writing prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by the commission in performance of an official function shall be made available to the public in compliance with the Michigan Freedom of Information Act, Public Act 442 of 1976, as amended.

(d) The commission shall adopt its own rules of procedures and shall adopt design review standards and guidelines for recourse treatment to carry out its duties in accordance with this division.

(e) The commission shall establish such policies, rules and regulations as it deems necessary to administer its duties as herein provided. These include, but are not limited to:

(1) Assisting and collaborating in studies and programs designed to identify and evaluate structures, sites and areas worthy of preservation.

(2) Consulting with and consider the ideas and recommendations of civic groups, public agencies, and citizens interested in historic preservation.

(3) With proper court authority, inspecting and investigating structures, sites and areas which it has reason to believe worthy of preservation.

(4) Disseminating information to the public concerning those structures, sites and areas deemed worthy of preservation, and may encourage and advise property owners of the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of landmarks, historic sites, and other officially recognized property of historic interest, consider methods other than those provided for in this division for encouraging and achieving historic preservation, and make appropriate recommendations to the city council and other bodies and agencies, both public and private.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-483. Delegation of minor classes of work.

(a) The commission may delegate the issuance of certificates of appropriateness for specified minor classes of work to its staff or the department of economic development.

(b) The commission shall provide the department of economic development with specific written standards for issuing certificates of appropriateness under this subsection.

(c) On at least a quarterly basis, the commission shall review the certificates of appropriateness, if any, issued by the department of economic development to determine whether or not the delegated responsibilities should be continued.

(d) The department of economic development may charge a reasonable fee to process a permit application for delegated minor classes of work.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-484. Ordinary maintenance and construction of division.

Nothing in this division shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or repair of a resource within a historic district or to prevent work on any resource under a permit issued by city's building official or other duly delegated authority before this division was enacted.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.210

Sec. 2-485. Review by the commission.

(a) The commission shall review and act upon only exterior features of a resource and, except for noting compliance with the requirement to install a fire alarm system or a smoke alarm, shall not review and act upon interior arrangements unless specifically authorized to do so by city council or unless interior work will cause visible change to the exterior of the resource.

(b) The commission shall not disapprove an application due to considerations not prescribed in section 2-486 of this division and MCL 399.205(3) of Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-486. Design review standards and guidelines.

(a) In reviewing plans, the commission shall follow the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* ("*Standards and Guidelines*") as set forth in 36 C.F.R. part 67. Design review standards and guidelines that address special design characteristics of historic districts administered by the commission may be followed if they are equivalent in guidance to the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards and Guidelines* and are established or approved by the state historic preservation office.

(b) In reviewing plans, and in addition to the standards set forth in the preceding subsection (a), the commission shall also consider all of the following:

(1) The historic or architectural value and significance of the resource and its relationship to the historic value of the surrounding area.

(2) The relationship of any architectural features of the resource to the rest of the resource and to the surrounding area.

(3) The general compatibility of the design, arrangement, texture, and materials proposed to be used.

(4) Other factors, such as aesthetic value, that the commission finds relevant.

(5) Whether the applicant has certified in the application that the property where work will be undertaken has, or will have before the proposed project completion date, a fire alarm system or a smoke alarm complying with the requirements of the Stille-DeRosset-Hale single state construction code act, 1972 PA 23, MCL 125.1501 to 125.1531.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-487. Permit applications.

(a) A permit shall be obtained before any work affecting the exterior appearance of a resource is performed within a historic district.

(b) The person, individual, partnership, firm, corporation, organization, institution, or agency of government proposing to do work shall file an a complete application for a permit with the building official or their designee. Upon receipt of a application, the building official shall immediately refer the application, along with all required supporting materials that make the application complete, to the commission. A permit shall not be issued and proposed work shall not proceed until the commission has acted on the application by issuing a certificate of appropriateness or a notice to proceed as prescribed in this division. A commission shall not issue a certificate of appropriateness unless the applicant certifies in the application that the property where work will be undertaken has, or will have before the proposed project completion date, a fire alarm system or a smoke alarm complying with the requirements of the Stille-DeRosset-Hale single state construction code act, 1972 PA 230, MCL 125.1501 to 125.1532.

(c) The commission shall file certificates of appropriateness, notices to proceed, and denials of applications for permits with the building official. A permit shall not be issued until the commission has acted as prescribed by this division.

(d) If an application is for work that will adversely affect the exterior of a resource the commission considers valuable to the City of Dearborn, the State of Michigan, or the nation, and the commission determines that the alteration or loss of that resource will adversely affect the public purpose of the city, state, or nation, the commission shall attempt to establish with the owner of the resource an economically feasible plan for the preservation of the resource.

(e) The failure of the commission to act on an application within 60 calendar days after the date a complete application is filed with the commission, unless an extension is agreed upon in writing by the applicant and the commission, shall be considered to constitute approval.

(f) The commission may charge a reasonable fee to process a permit application.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-488. Denials.

If a permit application is denied, the decision shall be binding on the building official and department of economic development. A denial shall be accompanied with a written explanation by the commission of the reasons for denial and, if appropriate, a notice that an application may be resubmitted for commission review when the suggested changes have been made. The denial shall also include the notification of the applicant's right of appeal to the state historic preservation review board and to the Circuit Court of Wayne County.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-489. Notice to proceed.

Work within a historic district shall be permitted through the issuance of a notice to proceed by the commission if any of the following conditions prevail and if the proposed work can be demonstrated by a finding of the commission to be necessary to substantially improve or correct any of the following conditions:

(1) The resource constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or to the structure's occupants.

(2) The resource is a deterrent to a major improvement program that will be of substantial benefit to the community and the applicant proposing the work has obtained all necessary planning and zoning approvals, financing, and environmental

clearances.

(3) Retaining the resource will cause undue financial hardship to the owner when a governmental action, an act of God, or other events beyond the owner's control created the hardship, and all feasible alternatives to eliminate the financial hardship, which may include offering the resource for sale at its fair market value or moving the resource to a vacant site within the historic district, have been attempted and exhausted by the owner.

(4) Retaining the resource is not in the interest of the majority of the community.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-490. Appeal of a commission decision.

(a) An applicant aggrieved by a decision of the commission concerning a permit application may file an appeal with the state historic preservation review board. The appeal shall be filed within 60 calendar days after the decision is furnished to the applicant. The appellant may submit all or part of the appellant's evidence and arguments in written form. The state historic preservation review board shall consider an appeal at its first regularly scheduled meeting after receiving the appeal. A permit applicant aggrieved by the decision of the state historic preservation review board may appeal the decision to the Circuit Court of Wayne County.

(b) Any citizen or duly organized historic preservation organization in the city, as well as resource property owners, jointly or severally aggrieved by a decision of the commission, may appeal the decision to the Circuit Court of Wayne County, except that a permit applicant aggrieved by a decision of the commission may not appeal to the court without first exhausting the right to appeal to the state historic preservation review board.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.211

Sec. 2-490.1. Work without a permit.

(a) When work has been done upon a resource without a permit and the commission finds that the work does not qualify for a certificate of appropriateness, the commission may require an owner to restore the resource to the condition the resource was in before the inappropriate work or to modify the work so that it qualifies for a certificate of appropriateness.

(b) If the owner does not comply with the restoration or modification requirements within a reasonable time, the commission may seek an order from the Circuit Court of Wayne County to require the owner to restore the resource to its former condition or to modify the work so that it qualifies for a certificate of appropriateness. If the owner does not comply or cannot comply with the order of the court, and upon notice to the property owner and/or tenant, the commission or its agents may enter the property and conduct work necessary to restore the resource to its former condition or modify the work so that it qualifies for a certificate of appropriateness in accordance with the court's order. The costs of the work shall be charged to the owner, and may be levied by the City of Dearborn as a special assessment against the property.

(c) When acting pursuant to an order of the Circuit Court of Wayne County, and upon notice to the property owner and/or tenant, the commission or its agents may enter a property for the purposes of this section.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.205; MCL 399.211

Sec. 2-490.2. Demolition by neglect.

Upon a finding by the commission that a historic resource within a historic district or a proposed historic district subject to its review and approval is threatened with demolition by neglect, the commission may do either of the following:

(1) Require the owner of the resource to repair all conditions contributing to the demolition by neglect.

(2) If the owner does not make repairs within a reasonable time, the commission or its agents may enter the property and make such repairs as are necessary to prevent demolition by neglect. The costs of the work shall be charged to the owner, and may be levied by the City of Dearborn as a special assessment against the property. The commission or its agents may enter the property for purposes of this section upon obtaining an order from the circuit court of Wayne County.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-490.3. Review of work in proposed districts.

Upon receipt of substantial evidence showing the presence of historic, architectural, archaeological, engineering, or cultural significance of a proposed historic district, the city council may, at its discretion, adopt a resolution requiring that all applications for permits within the proposed historic district be referred to the historic district commission as prescribed in section 2-487 of this division. The historic district commission shall review permit applications with the same powers that would apply if the proposed historic district was an established historic district. The review may continue in the proposed historic district for not more than one year, or until such time as the city council approves or rejects the establishment of the historic district by ordinance, whichever occurs first.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-490.4. Emergency moratorium.

(a) If the city council determines that pending work will cause irreparable harm to resources located within an established or proposed historic district, the city council may, by resolution, declare an emergency moratorium of all such work for a period not to exceed six months.

(b) The City Council may extend the emergency moratorium for an additional period not to exceed six months upon finding that the threat of irreparable harm to resources is still present. Any pending permit application concerning a resource subject to an emergency moratorium may be summarily denied.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-490.5. Penalties for violations and enforcement.

(a) Enforcement of this division shall be the responsibility of department of economic development, or other duly delegated authority.

(b) A person, individual, partnership, firm, corporation, organization, institution, or agency of government that violates this division is responsible for a civil infraction and may be fined not more than \$5,000.00 for each violation.

(c) A person, individual, partnership, firm, corporation, organization, institution, or agency of government that violates this division may be ordered by the court to pay costs to restore or replicate a resource unlawfully constructed, added to, altered, repaired, moved, excavated, or demolished, and attorney fees for the enforcement of this division.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.215

Sec. 2-490.6. Acceptance of gifts, grants, and programs.

The city council may accept state or federal grants for historic preservation purposes; may participate in state and federal programs that benefit historic preservation; and may accept public or private gifts for historic preservation purposes. The city council may appoint the historic district commission to accept and administer grants, gifts, and program responsibilities.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.206

Sec. 2-490.7. Advice and guidance to property owners.

The commission, upon request of any property owner, shall render advice and guidance with respect to any proposed work within an established historic district or on an established historic resource. In rendering such advice and guidance, the commission will be guided by the purposes and standards set forth in this division. Such advice and guidance shall be provided at a public hearing in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, Public Act 267 of 1976, MCL 15.261 et. seq.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

Sec. 2-490.8. Acquisition of historic resources.

If all efforts by the commission to preserve a resource fail, or if it is determined by the city council that public ownership is most suitable, the city council, if considered to be in the public interest, may acquire the resource using public funds, public or private gifts, grants, or proceeds from the issuance of revenue bonds. The acquisition shall be after receipt and consideration by city council of the recommendation of the commission. The commission is responsible for recommending standards for maintaining publicly owned resources to the mayor and city council. After receipt and consideration of the recommendation of the commission, the city council may sell resources acquired under this section with or without protective easements included in the property transfer documents, if appropriate.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.207

Sec. 2-490.9. County historic district commission; coordination with municipality.

The jurisdiction of a county shall be the same as that provided in Act No. 183 of the Public Acts of 1943, as amended, being MCL 125.201 to 125.232, or as otherwise provided by contract entered into between the county and the city. If a county historic district commission is in existence, coordination between the county historic district commission and city commission shall be maintained. The overall historic preservation plans of the city shall be submitted to the county historic district commission for review, and county plans submitted to the commission for the city. Day-to-day activities of the commission shall not be reviewed unless the activities affect resources of importance to another commission.

(Ord. No. 25-1861, 12-9-25)

State Law reference—MCL 399.208