

# GRAND RAPIDS HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION 2013 Annual Report

## The Allure of Historic Districts



## the Boom Continues

Over the years we have found that preservation is an effective tool in stabilizing and creating desirable neighborhoods; a fact well known in Grand Rapids as it has made our City a national show case of how to do it right. Our City has many wonderfully diverse urban neighborhoods that have risen from the ashes over the past 40 years thanks in large part to the hard work of our Citizens and the use of historic preservation. We have watched urban neighborhoods stabilize and transform into vibrant and desirable places to live and work. What now? If the neighborhood is stable or on its way what does preservation do for us now? The answer is simple, it maintains that vibrancy and desirability through equally applied standards that assure homeowners, buyers and developers that their investment is sound, that the neighborhood will continue to be stable. The effectiveness of preservation is still very evident in the amount of new construction occurring within the districts as well as the rehabilitations and moving real estate market.

In 2013 to 2014, we have an unprecedented three, new single family owner occupied homes being constructed on vacant lots in Heritage Hill alone. Additionally, there have also been several total rehabilitations in both the residential and commercial areas of our districts. This, combined with the pace at which marketed homes are selling illustrates the popularity and drawing power the historic districts possess. It is historic preservation that encompasses and protects the elements of these districts that draws people to the area; the beautiful historic structures and the sense of place and environment. This combined with the urban location, and citizen involvement amount to a formula that has been and continues to be very successful for Grand Rapids. Preservation does and will continue to play a key role in the success and longevity of these very special neighborhoods and our urban core.





# Soon!

This year the HPC approved several large new construction and rehabilitation projects. Of these projects three are owner occupied homes being constructed in Heritage Hill, two of which have already begun work. The Hill is a well-established dense neighborhood. To have a home constructed, let alone three, is an unprecedented event. It speaks volumes to the desirability and stability of the area.



48 Williams SW

However, the Hill is not the only location where things are hopping. Cranes are abundant in Heartside where you can see several new multi-story buildings gracing the skyline along Ionia, Commerce, Cherry and Division. These new structures combine with the historic buildings to make a unique and vital neighborhood.



578 Madison Ave. SE



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### Renovations on the Rise!

Not to be overshadowed by new construction, the renovation of historic structures is also thriving. This can be seen at 665 Wealthy and 700 Wealthy with the renovation and adaptive reuse of the old gas station into a restaurant and the non-contributing block building into Elks Brewing. Additionally, there have been several house restorations including 336 Robey and 556 Wealthy.



665 Wealthy SE, before



665 Wealthy SE, after



700 Wealthy SE, before



700 Wealthy SE, after



336 Robey SE, before



336 Robey SE, after



556 Wealthy SE, before



556 Wealthy SE, after



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### SAVED!

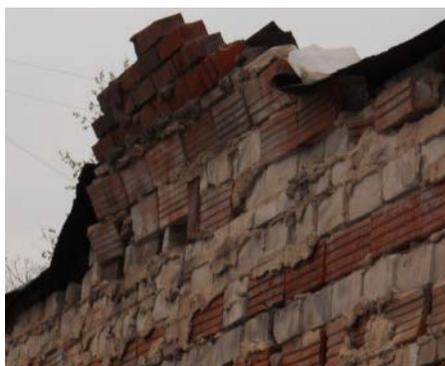
Many have watched for years as the quaint commercial structure at 619 Wealthy Street SE slowly deteriorated culminating in the east exterior wall collapsing onto the sidewalk. Through efforts of City Employees, City Commissioners and local Citizens, Staff is very happy to say that the structure has been saved!! This unique combined effort illustrates what a community can do when it works together. Through these efforts the structure was sold to great new owners. The owners immediately began work on reconstructing the entire roof and the brick facades. The building is now completely secure, structurally sound and protected from the weather. It eagerly awaits its next phase of life and will hopefully soon turn a beautiful and contributing face to the street again.



619 Wealthy SE, after



619 Wealthy SE, before



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### 19th Annual Historic Preservation Awards

The winners for 2013 were:

#### Residential Project



Jenn Gavin & Sylvain Stym-Popper  
428 Pleasant SE



Elizabeth Hoffman-Ransford & Charlie Ransford  
215 Warren SE

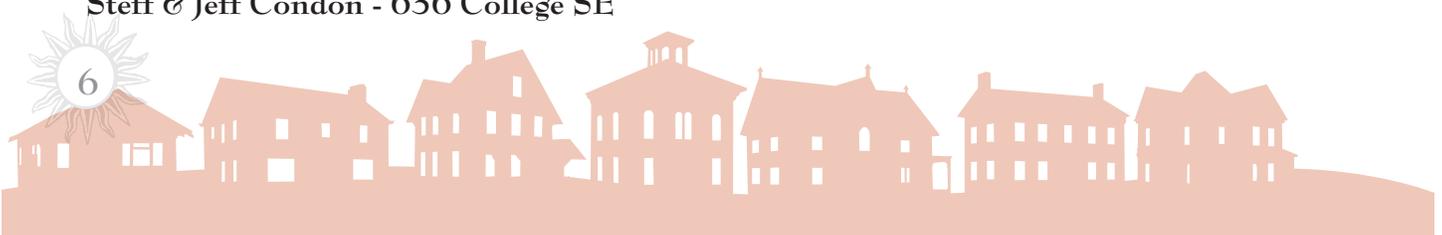


Steff & Jeff Condon - 636 College SE

#### Commercial Project



Joseph Niewiek - 135-139 S. Division



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### Group Project



Bazzani Assoc. & Offsite Lake Drive LLC  
1415 Lake Drive SE

### Special Recognition



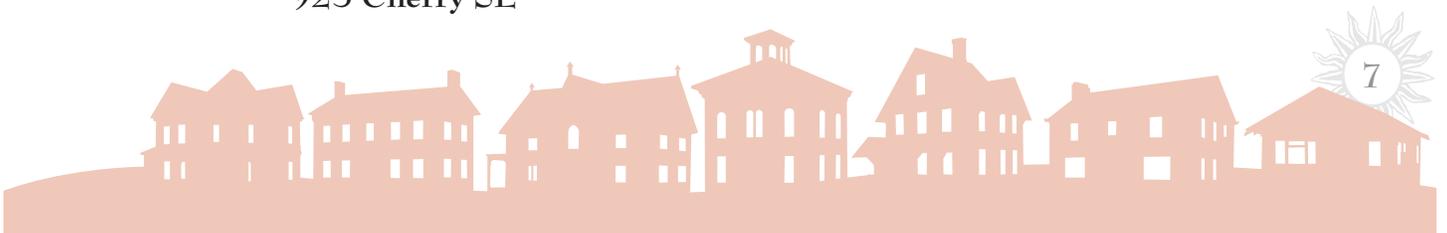
Rachel Lee



Locus Development & Brewery Vivant  
925 Cherry SE



North College Block Club



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### Grand Rapids welcomed back the Old House Expo!

MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

THE ALL NEW  
**OLD HOUSE  
EXPO**

JANUARY 5, 2013 – 9am-7pm  
**DEVOS PLACE**

*featuring*

- 2 tracks of educational programs w/ new topics!
  - Enlarged Vendors Hall
- GR Antiques Market with hundreds of booths
  - Cost is \$10.00 per person



OLD HOUSE EXPO



Grand Rapids  
ANTIQUES  
MARKET

For more info go to; [oldhousenetwork.org](http://oldhousenetwork.org)  
or contact Rhonda Baker at 456-3451

Welcome back, Old House Expo! The January 2013 event marked the 8th annual Expo and the third year in Grand Rapids. The Expo was created eight years ago by the non-profit Old House Network with the goal of providing educational opportunities to owners of older buildings. The HPC and City Staff worked alongside Expo founders in bringing this one day event to Grand Rapids for the first time in 2011. In 2013 the Grand Rapids Expo underwent a large transformation through a partnership with the Grand Rapids Antiques Market. This partnership increased visibility of the Expo and afforded it an opportunity to reach a broader audience. The combined event was held on January 5, 2013 at De-Vos Place. The Expo offered 12 educational sessions on a wide range of topics from our Stump the Chump panel of experts to, Lead Paint, Masonry Issues, and FHA 203K Loans. Speakers came from all over the State to volunteer their time and knowledge to make the event a success. In addition we managed to fill the Vendors hall with over 20 local and west Michigan based crafts people and non-profits.

This event not only helps the local economy by enabling local crafts people to meet future clients and obtain possible jobs; it assists homeowners by teaching them about their structures. The Old House Expo has brought many talented and knowledgeable people together to help educate and assist our local owners and community. It has been a pleasure working with the Old House Network and we look forward to future opportunities to partner on other projects.



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The event saw  
an unprecedented  
1,200+ attendees  
come through the hall!



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### HPC News

- 1) Staff is partnering with Kalamazoo to bring the Old House Expo to Grand Rapids for a 3rd year.
- 2) Staff worked with the Old House Network to combine Old House Expo with the annual Antiques Market.
- 3) HPC welcomed two new Commission members, Michael Clark and Lisa Miller. They have been a great asset to the Commission and have had very active first year. Warm welcome to both!

### The Purpose of the Historic Preservation Commission

1. Stabilize and improve property values in Historic Districts.
2. Strengthen the local economy.
3. Safeguard the Heritage of the City of Grand Rapids by preserving Historic Districts and Historic Landmarks that reflect elements of the City's cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history.
4. Foster civic beauty.

These purposes were successfully served during 2013 through 272 decisions made by staff and the Commission. These decisions preserved the integrity of the structures and district while at the same time enabling practical changes which allow for economic use of historic buildings. The significant amount of investment in improvement and renovation of many buildings in the historic districts speaks to the impact of historic preservation on economic development.

### Customer Service

The 2013 Annual Report Statistical Information enclosed shows continued success in customer service by the Historic Preservation Commission and HP Staff. A substantial number of applicants continue to have projects approved on first consideration.

### Statistical Information

#### Approved Applications

- The ratio of approved applications remained steady at an outstanding 96%. In 2013 the HPC and HP staff approved 265 of the 272 applications submitted.

#### Applications Processed

- In the year 2013 the HPC and staff reviewed a total of 272 applications a substantial number given today's economic climate, further testament to the stability and investment security investors and owners experience in a historic district.

#### HPC Reviewed Applications Per Historic District

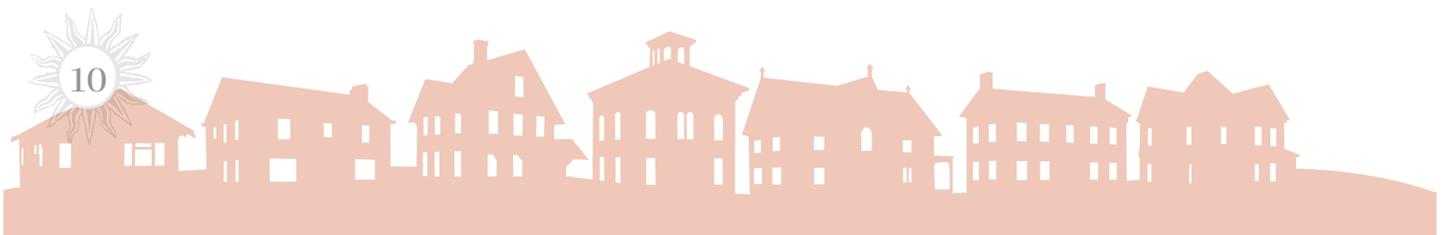
- Applications to the HPC from historic districts other than Heritage Hill have held around a 39% share of the activity over the past five years.

#### Staff Approved Applications

- Staff-approved applications are those that receive instant consideration and approval. Applicants utilize the one-stop convenience of the Development Center for review.
- A total of 1,090 applications have been approved by staff over the past five years.

#### Customer Service Performance Measured by Tabled Applications and First Approvals

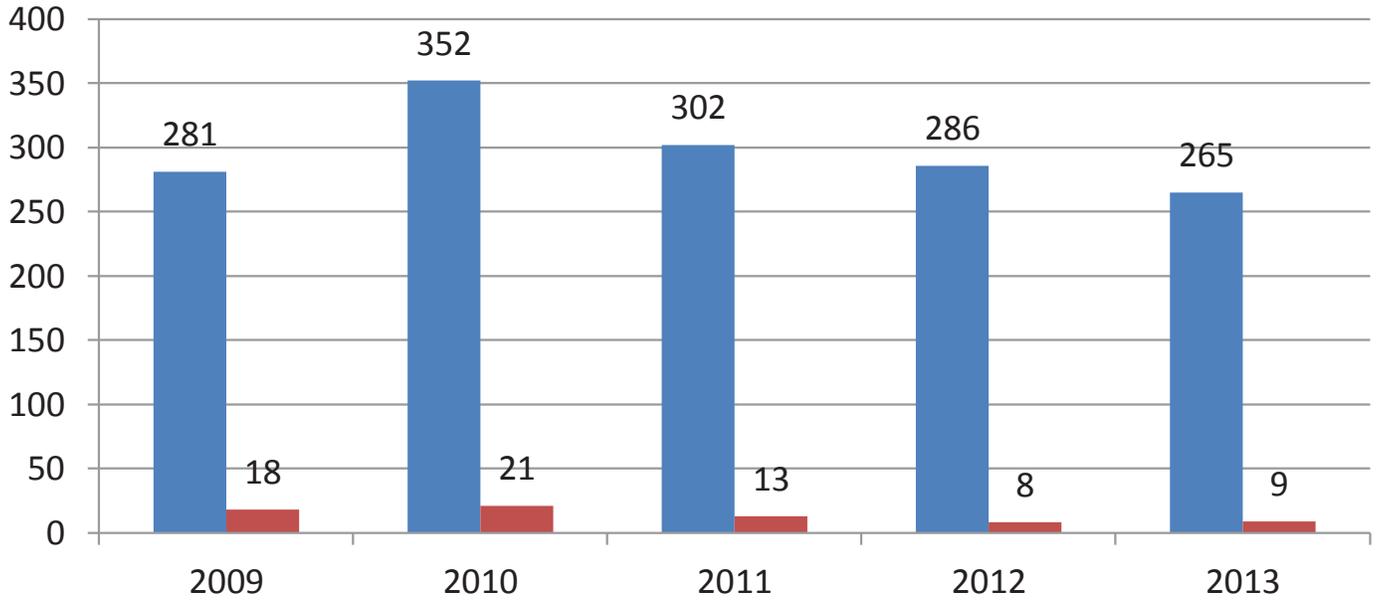
- In the year 2013 the HPC continued to exemplify good customer service with an outstanding 94%, first time approval rating.



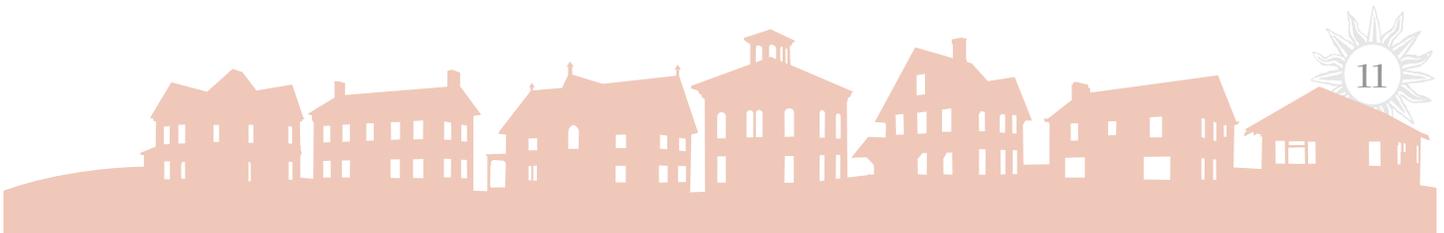
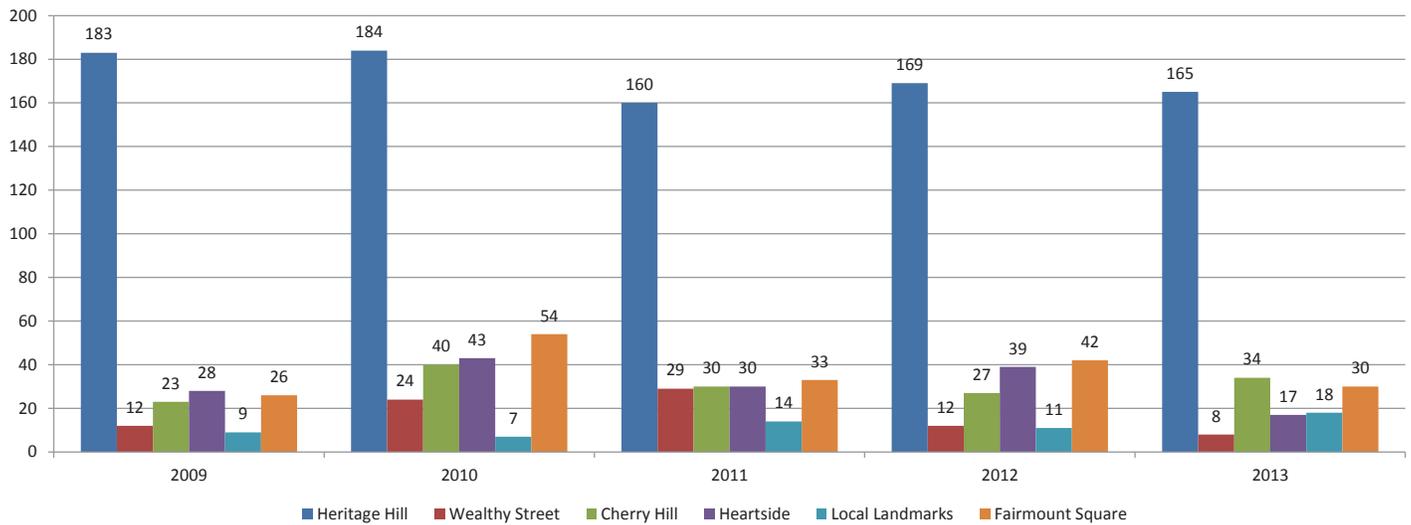
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### Approved Applications



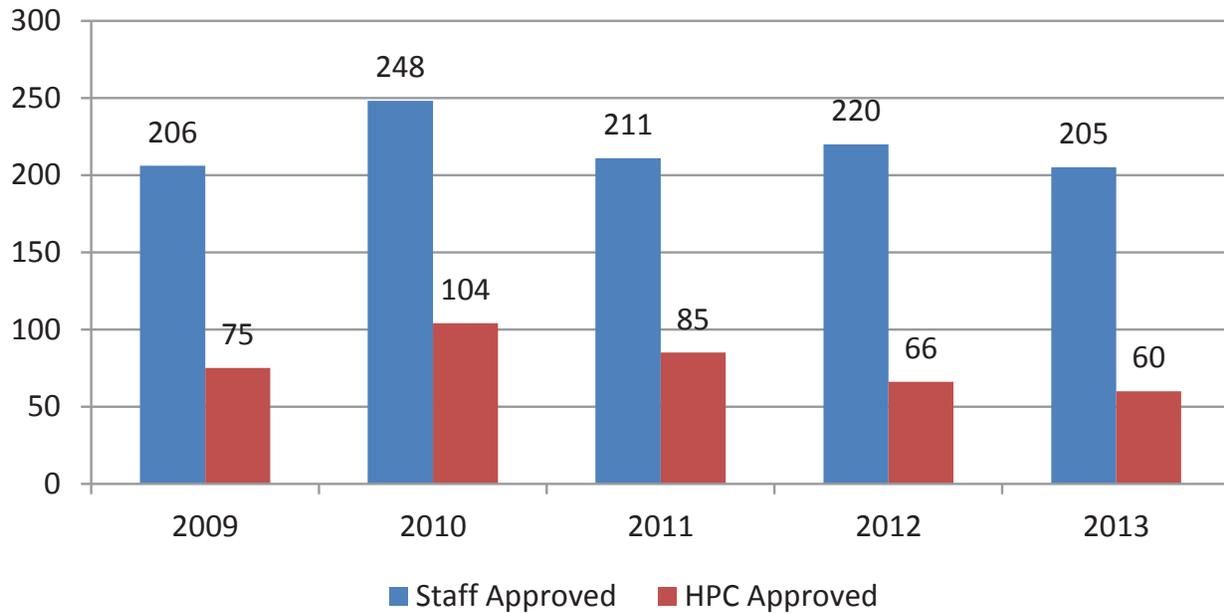
### Approved Applications Per Historic District



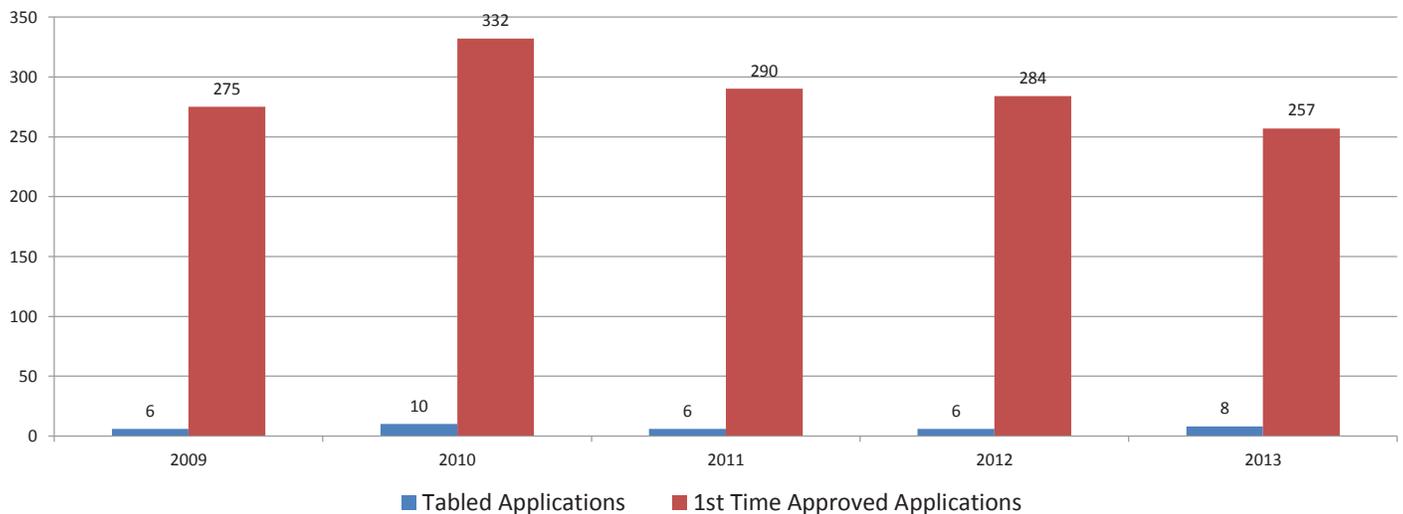
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### Approved Applications Processed



### Customer Service Performance







CITY OF  
GRAND  
RAPIDS

HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION