



Historic District Commission

CITY OF FARMINGTON HILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION 2025 ANNUAL REPORT

The City of Farmington Hills Historic District Commission (HDC) is charged with preserving historic districts within the City that reflect elements of the architectural, cultural, economic, political, or social history of the community. This seven (7) member commission is comprised of City residents working diligently over the past year to further this goal. This report summarizes the Commission's activities in 2025.

2025 Commission Membership

Ken Klemmer, Chair
Marleen Tulas, Vice Chair
Alec Thomson, Recording Secretary
Emily Howard
Steve Olson
James Paulson
John Trafelet

City Council Liaison: Valerie Knol, Councilperson
City Staff Liaison(s): Kris Canty, Staff Planner (January to February, resigned)
Erik Perdonik, City Planner (February to April, acting)
Diane Mulville-Friel, AICP, City Planner (April to December)

2025 Historic District Commission Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives

- ☐ Assist with the development of the Sarah Fisher Site.
- ☐ Host Educational and Social Gatherings open to the public.
- ☐ Identify properties within city for possible inclusion in Historic District.
- ☐ Continue collaboration between the Historic District Commission and City's Department of Public Works in implementing the cemetery preservation plan, including additional monument cleaning, and resetting.
- ☐ Continued assistance with ongoing restoration and repair of the Spicer House exterior.

2026 Historic District Commission Goals, Objectives, and Initiatives

- ☐ Host a public engagement event to educate the public about the HDC.
- ☐ Present a workshop for historic property owners dedicated to property maintenance.
- ☐ Promote locally available historic preservation workshops.
- ☐ Focus on recruiting new homes for inclusion in the district as representative of mid-century modern design.
- ☐ Continue assistance with ongoing restoration and repair of the Spicer House exterior.
- ☐ Continue collaboration between the Historic District Commission and City's Department of Public Works in implementing the cemetery preservation plan, including additional monument cleaning, and resetting.
- ☐ Continue editing and updating the "Blue Book", the City's official guide to its Historic Districts.
- ☐ Provide updates to the HDC Website.

Historic District Commission Meetings

In 2025, the Historic District Commission held eight (8) regular meetings; meetings in February, June, September, and December were cancelled due to lack of business.



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REVIEW OF WORK WITHIN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

Certificates of Appropriateness are granted for a project which meets the United States Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, as set forth in Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 67, as amended.

The Historic District Commission per Ordinance Sec. 15-37, may delegate the issuance of certificates of appropriateness for specified minor classes of work (roof, deck, air conditioners/generators) to its staff and that the HDC shall review the certificates of appropriateness issued by the delegate on at least a quarterly basis to determine whether or not the delegated responsibilities should be continued. (These are noted with an "A" at the end of the Certificate of Appropriateness case number).

Certificates of Appropriateness

In 2025, a total of 10 Certificates of Appropriateness were issued (seven approved by the HDC and three approved by its delegate) within the following districts:

Historic District Site No. 3 – Lemuel Botsford House – 24414 Farmington Road

Site Overview

Lemuel Botsford was a Connecticut farmer who came to Michigan in 1836. He moved to Farmington soon after; attracted by the Quaker community. The current house replaced a smaller structure that was on this property in 1837.

Lucy and Lemuel had ten children, a number of whom were prominent in the Farmington community. Rhonda Botsford married P.D. Warner. Milton Botsford became proprietor of the Botsford Inn. Orville was known for the fine horses he raised.



The Greek Revival house was located on a hill called Botsford Hill overlooking the Village of Farmington. Subsequent owners included John Pettibone of the pioneer Pettibone family.

The 1837 house has had numerous additions including a bedroom wing added in the 1930's by Ralph Finneron, a Ford Motor Company executive.

This fine Greek Revival house is listed on the Michigan State Registry of Historical Places.

Certificate of Appropriateness 25-1

The Historic District Commission issued a Certification of Appropriateness for removal of (1) kitchen window and replacement with (1) Renewal by Andersen picture window of the same size. Work is consistent with Secretary of Interior's Standards #2 and #5.

Historic District Site No. 508 – Spicer House – 24711 Farmington Road

Site Overview

The long low English Country House was designed to blend in with the landscape by talented architect Marcus Burrowes. The house was built in 1926 for attorney David Gray and his wife, Martha. It originally stood on twelve acres of land. The house was designed with two wings; the outdoors was visible from all rooms. This design was not only beautiful, but practical, because of the cross ventilation.



David Gray died before the house was occupied and Martha Gray moved to California before the house was ever lived in. When Eleanor Goodenough married John Spicer in 1935, Mrs. Gray gave the home and property to the newlyweds. Eleanor was the daughter of Luman Goodenough, a dear friend of the Grays. Additional acres were purchased for the farm which Eleanor Spicer ran until her death in 1982. At that time the property included 200 acres and Mrs. Spicer liked to refer to it as the only unspoiled place in Farmington Hills.

The land is now Heritage Park with this jewel of a house as its heart. The Spicer House serves as the Park's Visitor Center, with the wings modernized to serve as classrooms and meeting areas. The four historic rooms: the hall, living room with cathedral ceiling, library and dining room, serve for gatherings and displays.

Certificate of Appropriateness 25-2

The Historic District Commission issued a Certification of Appropriateness for exterior maintenance and miscellaneous repairs based on Secretary of Interior's Standards #2, #5, and #6. The scope of work was based on the report from National Restoration, Inc., which included: repairing the front door and screen door; new shutter made to match originals; replace and repair glazing of individual windowpanes, where needed; replace broken glass; scrape, prep, and paint steel window frames; replace tiles in front entry with custom made tiles; fill in voids around window frames; install new plaster under eaves where missing; and apply limewash to two chimneys in a color to match house plaster.

Historic District Site No. 602 – Arthur Beckwith House – 31765 Franklin Fairway Street

Site Overview

The Arthur Beckwith House was built in 1960 by the firm of Meathe and Kessler. It reflects a style of "saw tooth" design that has been a signature of William Kessler, the designing member of the firm. After Philip Meathe and William Kessler separated, Kessler established his own firm. Mr. Kessler has received 131 awards for his designs.

Modern is a historic architectural style of which this house is a prime example. The house is divided into fifteen-foot bays with zones for bedrooms, entertaining, and family activity. The house has numerous sky lights and glass window walls that bring the outside in. The garden is mostly original and the original oriental pond in the back garden is self-sustaining.



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The house has been presented in W. Hawkins Ferry's *The Buildings of Detroit* 1968, *Detroit Free Press Photos* September 1960 and *House and Gardens*, Winter 1991. It received the American Institute of Architects Twenty-Five Years Award in 1995. The Arthur Beckwith House is continually toured by architects and architectural students studying the "Modern Style."

Certificate of Appropriateness 25-3

The Historic District Commission issued a Certification of Appropriateness for demolition of existing detached accessory building (pool house) and construction of a new 192 sq. ft. accessory building based on Secretary of Interior's Standards #9 and #10.



Historic District Site No. 304 – John Pettibone House – 36400 W. 12 Mile Road

Site Overview

Judson Pettibone carved a lot out of his parents' farm and built a house in 1861. In 1867, he sold his property to his brother John B. Pettibone. John added a front section to the house in 1875 in the Gothic style.

The gingerbread-style Victorian house was sold out of the family in 1889 when John and his wife, Kate, moved to another farm.

Both John and Judson were children of Levi and Huldah Pettibone who migrated from Vermont in 1841 to Milford, where they had owned land since 1829. They came to Farmington in 1854.



From the rearview, the first house is evident. Evidence of the two houses can also be seen in the basement where the Michigan and cut stone basement are evident. There are two enclosed stairways in the house; the back one in the older section is steeper.

Certificate of Appropriateness 25-4

The Historic District Commission issued a Certification of Appropriateness for new freestanding monument sign based on Secretary of Interior's Standards #9 and #10.

Historic District Site No. 17 – Orville Botsford House – 24105 Locust Street

Site Overview

Built in 1860 by Orville Botsford of the pioneer Farmington Botsford family, this house has Greek Revival features.

The building is over a three-part basement: a Michigan cellar with cut stone walls on the east-end of the house, a log crawl space foundation is in the center and a cement block basement c. 1930 is on the west-end of the building.



Orville Botsford was 39 when he built this home on one of his properties. There he was a dairy farmer and raised horses. He had been in the business as the Botsfords were involved in community activities and businesses.

Orville had two wives; Mary Ann Eddy, his eighteen year old bride, who died shortly after the birth of their son in 1845 and Sophia Gage, with whom he had three children after they were married in 1849.

Earl Graser, the original radio Lone Ranger, lived in the house in the 1930's and did extensive remodeling. He was killed in an automobile accident in 1941 and Bruce Beemer replaced him on the radio, in the role of the Lone Ranger.

This house is near the border of the City of Farmington yet is very country-like on its one and one-quarter acres. The house is in Farmington Hills and the front yard is in Farmington. Ancient locust trees still exist on the property.

Certificate of Appropriateness 25-5

The Historic District Commission issued a Certification of Appropriateness for replacement of (2) banks of (3) windows and exterior window trim based on Secretary of Interior's Standards #5 and #9.

Certificate of Appropriateness 25-2A

The Historic District Commission issued a Certification of Appropriateness for minor like-for-like repairs to roof soffit and siding damaged from a recent fire through administrative delegation.

Historic District Site No. 504 – Kirby White House – 24200 Farmington Road

Site Overview

Kirby and Alice White and their five children moved into this Federalist Revival House in 1928. Kirby White was general manager, vice-president, and director of the Ferry-Morse Seed Company, which by the 1930's was the largest seed company in the United States.

The estate home was built for the Whites on five acres along Farmington Road and was designed by Marcus Burrowes who was a prominent architect in Detroit and Michigan. He designed public buildings for cities and houses for wealthy clients.



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The Kirby White House has some unique architectural features. "Windy Hill", as it was known, was built in the federalist style. The house is supported by steel beams, unusual for houses dating from the 1920's. The Federalist Revival style features many gables, arches and bays.

Kirby White died in June 1933 and the family moved from their country estate to Birmingham, Michigan. A series of owners for the lovely estate were executives of Ford Motor Company. The Presbyterian Church purchased the property and house in 1956. The needs of the church for religious purposes caused the house to be moved a mile south on Farmington Road in 1993.

It has been adapted to its new location and carefully maintained.



Certificate of Appropriateness 25-6

The Historic District Commission issued a Certification of Appropriateness to install a 100 ft. wrought iron fence along the east lot line. The proposed fence will be 6 ft. in height in the side and rear yard and 3 ft. in height in the front yard. Work is consistent with Secretary of Interior's Standards #2 and #10.

Certificate of Appropriateness 25-1A

The Historic District Commission issued a Certification of Appropriateness to install a generator in the side yard behind the fence, behind the house through admirative delegation.

Historic District Site No. 207 – Nehemiah Hoyt House – 36668 Howard Road

Site Overview

Built ca. 1851 as the residence of Nehemiah Hoyt, one of the early millers at the grist mill in Pernambuco or Sleepy Hollow.

This is a clapboard Michigan farmhouse over a stone foundation. It has a root cellar and narrow interior stairway. Some of the original windows are in the front of the house.



Certificate of Appropriateness 25-7

The Historic District Commission issued a Certification of Appropriateness to construct a 2nd floor (approximately 5 ft x 12 ft) addition on rear flush with back of house; to replace rotted exterior walls and roof materials to repair structural damage as needed; and to install new exterior trim and siding around entire house (existing siding to remain beneath). Approved LP Smartside cedar texture 38 series lap siding with overlap to match reveal or exposure of existing siding as much as possible. Work consistent with Secretary of Interior's Standards #2, #5, and #10.

Certificate of Appropriateness 25-3A



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The Historic District Commission issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation of new shingle roof (IKO Cambridge Architectural Shingles), color "Dual Grey" through administrative delegation.

SELECTED HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION ACTIVITIES IN 2025

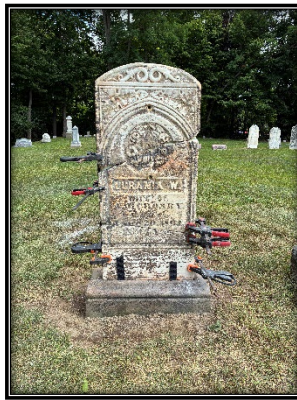
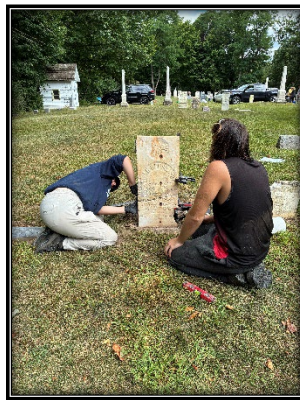
Cemetery Monument Restoration

In Year 5 of the campaign to restore and preserve the City-owned Utley and West Cemeteries made significant progress in 2025. Restoration efforts focused on cleaning, releveling, and carefully excavating fallen grave markers to stabilize and protect these historic resources.

The West Cemetery now presents with virtually all the restorable markers repaired and upright. The historic storage building sports a new, secure roof.

Focus in 2025 moved to the Utley Cemetery with broken marker restoration executed by Carter Cemetery Preservation professionals and a Spring Work Day.

Carter professionals repaired eleven broken markers in July and August 2025.



On May 10, 2025, Boy Scout Troops 45 and 179 along with HDC Commissioners Emily Howard, Steve Olson, James Paulson, John Trafelet and City Council HDC Liaison Valerie Knol participated in a Spring Work Day at Farmington East and Utley Cemeteries. Troop 45 lifted and relevelled five tombstones, cleaned the wood shake roof of the cemetery shed, and treated with DR biologic. Troop 179 lifted and relevelled thirteen tombstones. These volunteer efforts contributed meaningfully to the ongoing preservation of the City's historic cemeteries.

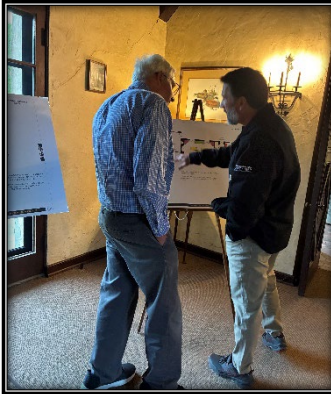


The transition to less frequent and more gentle hand-mowing of the turf has been an unqualified success, resulting in less damage to markers and turf. Under DPW management, a refined purchasing process – for the professional repair of broken & damaged markers – has been undertaken.

In 2026, we will host workdays in Spring and Fall with the Boy Scout Troops continuing to work on releveling tilted and fallen markers. Ongoing repair of broken markers (some 30+ have been identified for repair in Utley over the next couple of years) by professionals. We will also continue our focus on restoration of turf to correct earlier damage.

Spicer House – Community Open House and Tour

On May 20, 2025, the Historic District Commission hosted a public open house and tour of the Spicer House (Site No. 508), offering a “preservation-in-progress” experience at this English country-style residence built in 1926. The event highlighted ongoing and future preservation efforts, including the demonstration of an alternative wood shake roof



product and a preview of plans to relocate the Heritage and History Center to the Spicer House. Designed as an informal, presentation-free gathering, the open house provided attendees with the opportunity to engage directly with current volunteer HDC Commissioners and discuss the property’s plans and significance. The event was well received, with attendance exceeding 30 community members.

Oakewood Cottage – 100th Anniversary Open House and Tour

On August 2, 2025, Historic District Commission Commissioner Ken Klemmer hosted a public celebration marking the 100th anniversary of Oakewood Cottage / Edward Beals House (Site No. 511) and the Oaklands Subdivision. The event highlighted the architectural significance of the property and honored noted architect Emily Butterfield (1884–1958). More than 120 community members attended throughout the day, with several small-group tours offered to provide insight into the home’s history and design. The informal celebration included ice cream and fostered strong community engagement in the appreciation of local historic resources.