



***City of Wooster***  
***Planning and Zoning Division***  
***2016 Annual Report***

January 27, 2017

## Summary

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The City of Wooster Planning and Zoning Division continued to facilitate development in 2016. The Division worked to efficiently review and process permits, assist various boards and commissions, enforce the regulations of the Planning and Zoning Code, and effectively conduct significant planning projects. Highlights for the Planning and Zoning Division in 2016 include:

- The creation of an online permitting system for all Planning applications. The permitting system was a joint effort between the Planning Division and Building Standards Division.
- The adoption of the Downtown Design Guidelines by the Design and Review Board.
- The completion of a Downtown Parking Study by the Planning Division.
- The coordination of a number of significant projects reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission, Board of Building and Zoning Appeals and Design and Review Board, including:
  - A 122 unit, 100,000 sq. ft. nursing home facility at 1700 East Smithville Western Road
  - A combined City Police and Fire safety center facility at 3333 Burbank Road
  - A 90,000 sq. ft. addition to LUK at 2782 Akron Road
  - An 84 room Comfort Suites hotel at 965 Dover Road
- Continued assistance to the Planning Commission, Board of Building and Zoning Appeals and Design and Review Board in their review of applications. The number of applications for the Boards and Commission was the highest in the past ten years.
- The allocation of additional staff time to the enforcement of the Planning and Zoning Code.
- The attainment of the majority of the Division's Goals for 2016.

## Planning Projects

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The Planning and Zoning Division worked on the following Planning related projects in 2016:

1. **Online Permitting** – After an evaluation of permitting software 2015, the Planning and Zoning Division and Building Standards Divisions made the decision to budget for new software in 2016. After a lengthy evaluation of possible software choices, the Divisions decided on a cloud-based system from ViewPoint Cloud.

The cloud-based system allowed all Planning and Building applications to be submitted and paid for online from any

device. The versatile system allowed for the elimination of numerous paper documents and permitted inspectors to access permits and plans on site. In addition, other City Divisions have also utilized ViewPoint Cloud to process permits and applications.



The Planning and Zoning and Building Standards Divisions dedicated significant effort in setting up the system, testing its capabilities, and obtaining hardware solutions. To aid users without internet access, a public Kiosk was set up in the Planning and Zoning and Building Standards Division office.

The system went live on 1/1/17 and will continue to be adjusted and evaluated in 2017.

2. **Design Guidelines** – The Planning and Zoning Division applied for, and received, funding via a Certified Local Government (CLG) grant to assist an update of the Design Guidelines in 2015. As noted in the City’s grant application, the current guidelines were clearly outdated and in great need of revision. The update of the Design Guidelines also included employment of a consultant with expertise in architecture and historic preservation.

The updated Design Guidelines provided a detailed overview of the Design and Review Board Process, an outline of history and architecture in Wooster, and guidance for exterior changes and maintenance to historic sites and structures. The Guidelines are a valuable asset to the Design and Review Board, applicants to the Board, residents, property owners, and business owners. The Design Guidelines were adopted in February of 2016 by the Design and Review Board.

3. **Downtown Parking Study** – The Planning and Zoning Division conducted a study of public parking space in the Downtown area in 2016. The study surveyed each of the 1,011 spaces in the parking study area on 21 separate occurrences for a total of 21,231 parking spaces surveyed. In general, the Downtown Parking Study showed an overall abundance of parking in the Downtown area with high parking occupancy rates in core areas on Weekdays in the morning and mid-day.

The study provided a detailed picture of parking in the Downtown area and will be utilized as a resource to evaluate possible changes to parking Downtown.

4. **Code Amendments** – In 2016, there were two amendments initiated by the Planning and Zoning Division. The first amendment addressed regulations for electronic message center signs and was approved by Council in January of 2017. The second amendment sought to extend the downtown off-street parking exemption area and is currently under review by City Council.

### **Development Projects**

There were a number of significant residential, commercial and industrial developments initiated in the City of Wooster in 2016. The following projects were assisted by the Planning and Zoning Division and approved by one or more of the aforementioned Boards and Commissions:

1. **The Avenue at Wooster** – The Final Development Plan was approved for a 122 unit, 100,000 sq. ft. nursing home facility located at 1700 East Smithville Western Road. The project is underway and will likely be completed in 2017.
2. **City of Wooster Safety Center** – The Final Development plan was approved for a public safety center at 3333 Burbank Road. The project is under construction and will be completed in 2017.
3. **LUK Addition** – The Final Development Plan was approved for a 90,000 sq. ft. addition to LUK at classroom facility at 2782 Akron Road. The project is currently under construction.
4. **Summit Motorcars** – The Final Development Plan was approved for an expansion of Summit Motorcars at 4821 Cleveland Road. The project will likely begin in 2017.
5. **Comfort Suites** – The Final Development Plan was approved for the construction of an 84 room hotel at 965 Dover Road. The project will likely begin in 2017.
6. **High School Locker Room** – The Final Development Plan was approved for the construction of high school locker room facilities at 515 Oldman Road. The project is currently under construction.

7. **Taco Bell** – The Final Development Plan was approved for a 2,422 sq. ft. Taco Bell at 4094 Burbank Road. The project, which involves the removal of an existing building, will likely begin in 2017.
8. **Downtown Projects** – Significant changes in downtown include the following:
  - Major renovations of the former Gallery in the Vault building for Westfield Bank
  - Renovations to an existing building on East Liberty Street to locate Consumer Savings Bank
  - An expansion of the St. Paul Hotel on South Market Street
  - The expansion of Broken Rocks for On the Rox bar
  - Renovations to the Chamber of Commerce/Main Street Wooster building on West Liberty Street

### **New Staff**

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The Building Standards and Planning and Zoning Divisions hired Carla Jessie to fill a vacant Administrative Assistant position in 2016. The position, which is integral to multiple functions of both divisions, was vacated due to the retirement of a long-term employee.

### **Zoning Certificates and Sign Permits**

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A total of 216 Zoning Certificates were issued in 2016, which is similar to the 207 issued in 2015. Of the issued Certificates, the majority were residential related including the approval of 74 new residential units (including assisted living). A total of \$7,580 in Zoning Certificate fees were collected in 2016, slightly up from \$7,480 in 2015.

In 2016, 102 Sign Permits were issued in the City of Wooster, and a total of \$6,950 in Sign Permit fees was collected. There were 73 Sign Permits issued in 2015.

A further breakdown of Zoning Certificates and Sign Permits can be found in the appendix section at the end of this document.

### **Board of Building and Zoning Appeals**

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The Board of Building and Zoning Appeals (BZA) heard 43 requests in 2016 encompassing a variety of topics. In 2015, the BZA heard 37 requests. Of the 42 applications in which a decision was made, the BZA approved 32 applications and denied 7 applications. There were 31 area variance requests and 13 use variance requests heard by the BZA in 2016 (1 application included both an area and a use variance).

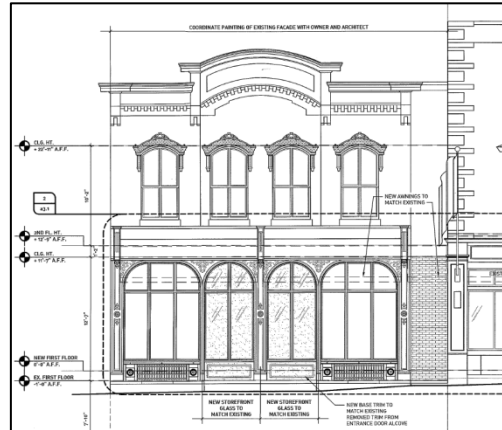
A further breakdown of BZA applications can be found in the appendix section at the end of this document.

## *Design and Review Board*

The City of Wooster Design and Review Board heard 60 requests in 2016. In 2015, the Board heard 38 requests. The Design and Review Board approved all requests, at times with modifications.

Of the 60 request heard by the Board in 2016, 36 were for signs. The remainder of the applications included considerations such as building demolitions, new building construction, exterior changes to building facades, and miscellaneous changes to features such as lighting, windows, doors, and awnings. In 2016, the most significant approvals of the Board included

- The relocation of a historic structure on Milltown Road
- The expansion of the St. Paul Hotel on South Market Street
- Exterior changes to the current Consumer Savings Bank on East Liberty Street
- Exterior changes to the Chamber of Commerce/Main Street building on West Liberty Street



A further breakdown of Design and Review applications can be found in the appendix section at the end of this document.

## *Planning Commission*

The City of Wooster Planning Commission heard 31 requests in 2016, up from 24 in 2015. A total of 14 were Development Plan applications, 11 were Conditional Use applications, and 6 were Zoning Code or Map Amendment applications. The Commission approved or recommended approval of 27 applications, denied or recommended denial of 3 applications, and had 1 application withdrawn from their consideration.

A further breakdown of Planning Commission applications can be found in the appendix section at the end of this document.

## *Zoning Enforcement*

A Property Maintenance/Zoning Inspector position was added to the Development Department in late 2013. Throughout 2016, the inspector focused on enforcement of the Property Maintenance Code and the Planning and Zoning Code. A total of 82 Planning and Zoning Code violations were addressed in 2016, which were 10 more than in 2015. The majority of the issues stemming from parking on the lawn, parking of recreational vehicles or trailers, permit requirements, and signs.

In addition, the inspector also removed numerous signs located in the public right of way. As there was no formal notification or inspection in such instances, the removal of signs in the public right of way was not captured in the above figures.

A further breakdown of Zoning Enforcement can be found in the appendix section at the end of this document.

## Status of 2016 Goals and Objectives

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The following indicates the status of the Planning and Zoning Division's goals and objectives established for 2016:

### Goal 1 – Attend available training and meet AICP certification requirements

- Objective 1A – Complete training to meet American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) maintenance requirements
- Objective 1B – Attend training throughout the year including State or Regional conference and training provided by the Akron Section of the American Planning Association

*Status – Maintenance requirements for AICP certification must be met every two years. Approximately 50% of AICP maintenance requirements were completed in 2016. Multiple training opportunities were attended including the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana (OKI) Regional Planning Conference.*

### Goal 2 – Complete an Update to the Design Guidelines

- Objective 2A – Hold a required public meeting in January
- Objective 2B – Adopt the Design Guidelines by March
- Objective 2C – Comply with the CLG grant reporting requirements to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office in order to receive grant funds

*Status – The Historic Design Guidelines were adopted in February of 2016 and CLG grant reporting requirements were submitted.*

### Goal 3 – Conduct and update of Ohio Historic Inventory forms for ¼ of Landmarks within the City

- Objective 3A – Apply for and obtain a CLG grant to financially assist the creation of the forms
- Objective 3B – Employ a consultant to assist in the form update
- Objective 3C – Receive approval of the updated forms from the State Historic Preservation Office

*Status – The Planning Division was unable to obtain CLG grant funding in consecutive years to conduct the Ohio Historic Inventory form update project.*

### Goal 4 – Research permitting software for possible purchase in 2017

- Objective 4A – Solicit software providers to provide demonstrations and information regarding permitting software
- Objective 4B – Work with the Building Standards Manager to determine if new permitting software is necessary
- Objective 4C – If it is determined that new permitting software is necessary, work with the Building Standards Manager to create a list of required elements, an estimated cost and provisions to incorporate such software into the 2017 budget

*Status – The Planning and Building Standards Divisions researched possible permit software vendors and selected ViewPoint Cloud. In 2016, funding was secured and the permitting system was purchased. The Divisions coordinated with Viewpoint Cloud in an intricate setup process throughout 2016 and the system went live on 1/1/17.*

Goal 5 – Apply GIS to property maintenance and zoning enforcement

- Objective 5A – Grant GIS access to the property maintenance/zoning inspector
- Objective 5B – Provide the property maintenance/zoning inspector with GIS training
- Objective 5C – Create and maintain GIS layers for property maintenance and zoning enforcement

*Status – The Planning and Divisions maintained GIS layers for property maintenance and zoning enforcement. Due to the selection of the ViewPoint Cloud permitting software which integrates GIS, training for the Property Maintenance/Zoning Inspector was not necessary.*

**2017 Goals and Objectives**

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In 2017, the Planning and Zoning Division will continue to guide development and sensibly regulate land use. The following goals and objectives for 2017 and in the next five years through 2021 will allow the Division to better serve citizens and business owners, operate more efficiently, refine responsibilities, and update planning documents.

**One Year Goals and Objectives**

Goal 1 – Attend available training and complete American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) certification requirements

- Objective 1A – Complete training to meet AICP maintenance requirements for the current two-year session by the end of the year
- Objective 1B – Attend training throughout the year including the American Planning Association National Conference and training provided by the Ohio and Akron Chapters of the American Planning Association

Goal 2 – Complete an update to the Planning and Zoning Code

- Objective 2A – Send out an RFP for the project by February
- Objective 2B – Select a consultant and initiate the update the process by April
- Objective 2C – Adopt the updated Planning and Zoning Code by October

Goal 3 – Complete an update to the Planning and Zoning Map

- Objective 3A – Coordinate the update of the Map with the Planning and Zoning Code update
- Objective 3B – Identify areas of the Map to be changed by June
- Objective 3C – Adopt the updated Planning and Zoning Map by October

Goal 4 – Implement and adjust the Viewpoint Cloud permitting system

- Objective 4A – Implement the system on 1/1/17
- Objective 4B – Migrate historical data into the system by February
- Objective 4C – Complete all major adjustments and changes to the system by April

Goal 5 – Conduct a survey of permanent signs to determine nonconformance with current regulations

- Objective 5A – Conduct a survey of all signs for compliance by July
- Objective 5B – Complete a report of the survey by August

## Five Year Goals and Objectives

### Goal 1 – Continue attendance of training and certification opportunities

- Objective 1A – Maintain AICP certification which includes yearly training requirements in specific areas
- Objective 1B – Attend training including regional, state and national conferences

### Goal 2 – Shift all records to digital format by the end of 2018

- Objective 2A – Continue to accept only electronic applications and submissions
- Objective 2B – Digitize all remaining documents by the end of 2018
- Objective 2C – Place hard copy documents in storage or destroy them per the Planning and Zoning Division record retention schedule by the end of 2018

### Goal 3 – Revise rules and procedures for Boards and Commission by the end of 2019

- Objective 3A – Identify any existing rules and procedures documents for the Planning Commission, Board of Building and Zoning Appeals and the Design and Review Board
- Objective 3B – Review current documents with the respective boards, research similar rules documents and consult with the City Law Director
- Objective 3C – Adopt new or revised rules and procedures documents

### Goal 4 – Address the current Planning and Zoning Code requirement for all nonconforming signs to conform to current regulations by the end of 2020

- Objective 4A – Compose a database of all nonconforming signs
- Objective 4B – Evaluate the costs and benefits of requiring all nonconforming signs to conform to current regulations by 6/21/22 per Section 1171.10(d)(4)
- Objective 4C – Create a plan to contact property owners and tenants or adjust current requirements

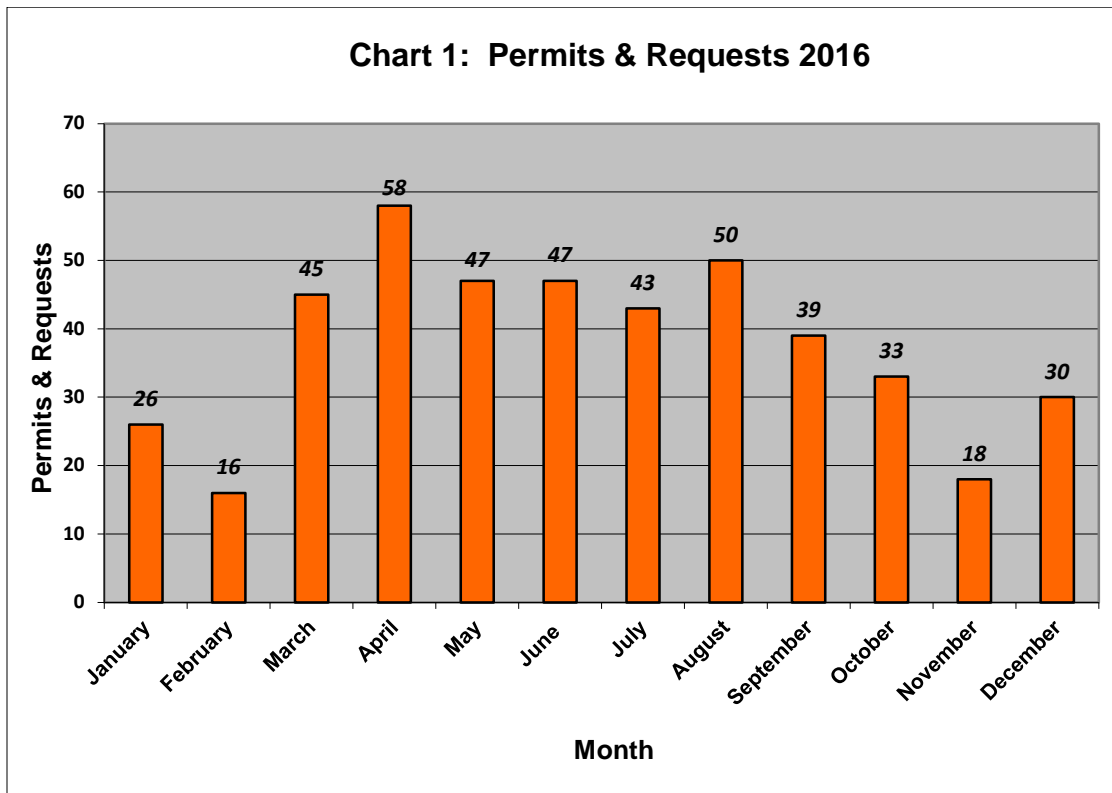
### Goal 5 – Create new Ohio Historic Inventory (OHI) forms for all Landmark Properties in the City of Wooster by the end of 2021

- Objective 5A – Apply for CLG grant funding in each year from 2018-2021 to complete ¼ of the OHI forms for all Landmark Properties
- Objective 5B – Employ a consultant to update the OHI forms
- Objective 5C – Receive approval of the updated forms from the State Historic Preservation Office by the end of 2021



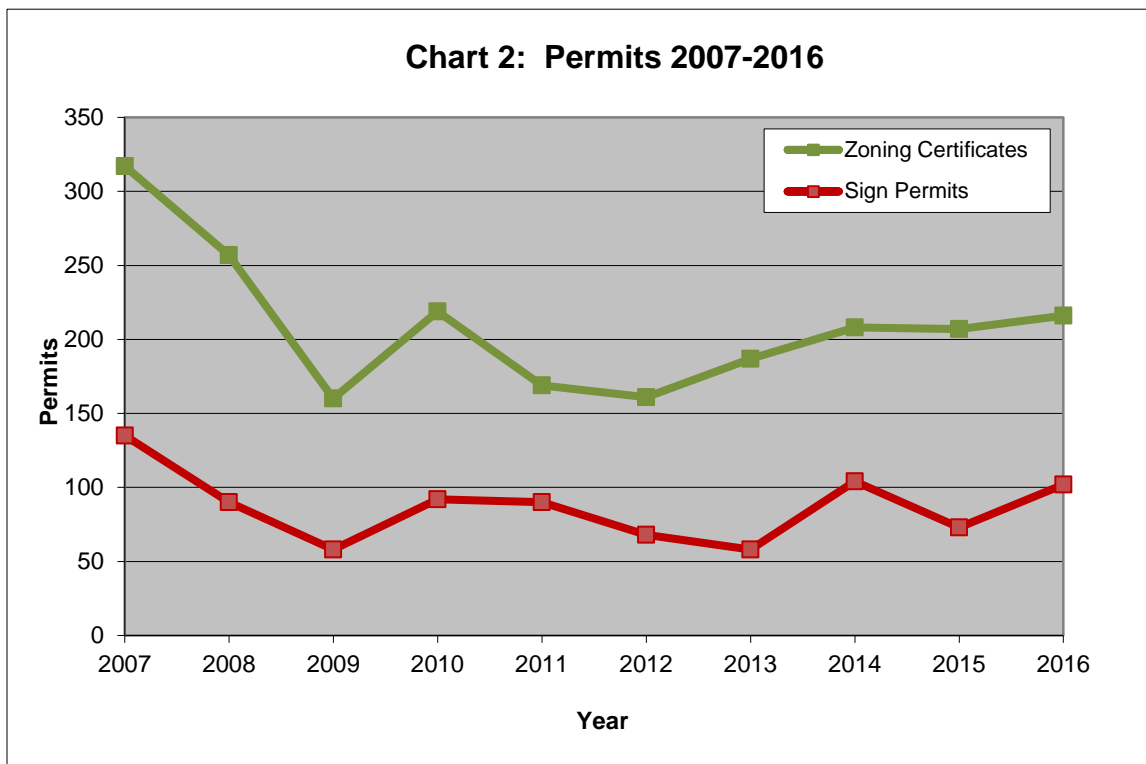
**Table 1: Permits & Requests 2016**

Month	Zoning Certificates	Sign Permits	Building & Zoning Appeals	Design & Review	Planning Commission	Total
January	9	9	2	4	2	26
February	7	4	0	3	2	16
March	16	13	6	6	4	45
April	22	19	5	11	1	58
May	27	10	2	6	2	47
June	26	8	4	7	2	47
July	30	7	4	2	0	43
August	23	7	5	5	10	50
September	16	7	7	7	2	39
October	22	3	2	4	2	33
November	10	3	4	0	1	18
December	8	12	2	5	3	30
<b>Total</b>	216	102	43	60	31	452
<b>Total Fees</b>	\$7,580	\$6,950	\$4,200	\$0	\$2,750	\$21,480
<b>2015 Total</b>	207	73	37	38	24	379
<b>2015 Fees</b>	\$7,480	\$5,200	\$3,500	\$0	\$2,250	\$18,430

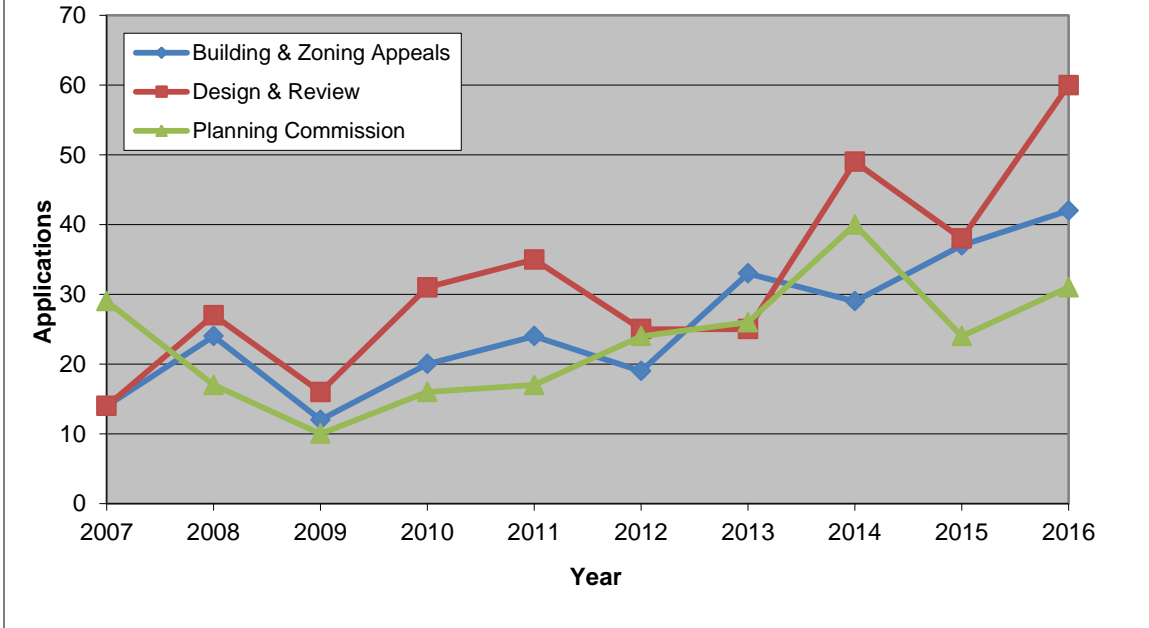


**Table 2: Permits & Requests 2007-2016**

Year	Zoning Certificates	Sign Permits	Building & Zoning Appeals	Design & Review	Planning Commission	Total
2007	317	135	14	14	29	509
2008	257	90	24	27	17	415
2009	160	58	12	16	10	256
2010	219	92	20	31	16	378
2011	169	90	24	35	17	335
2012	161	68	19	25	24	297
2013	187	58	33	25	26	329
2014	208	104	29	49	40	430
2015	207	73	37	38	24	379
2016	216	102	42	60	31	451
<b>Total</b>	2,101	870	254	320	234	<b>3,779</b>
<b>Average</b>	210	87	25	32	23	<b>378</b>



**Chart 3: Requests 2007-2016**



**Table 3: Zoning Violations 2016**

<b>Violation</b>	<b>Number</b>
Parking on Lawn	32
Recreational Vehicle/Trailer	16
Permit Required	10
Signs	8
Accessory Structure	7
Property Use	5
Other	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>

**Chart 4: Zoning Violations 2016**

