



City of Wooster
Planning and Zoning Division
2013 Annual Report

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Overview

The City of Wooster Planning and Zoning Division continued to guide and assist development in 2013. The Division worked with applicants and property owners to process permits, Planning Commission applications, Board of Zoning Appeals request, and Design and Review Board submittals. The Division also worked on significant planning projects including an update to the Comprehensive Plan, an application to become a Certified Local Government (CLG) and two Planning and Zoning Code Amendments. Additional staff has been added to the Development Department to enforce the Planning and Zoning Code and the adopted Property Maintenance Code.

Zoning Permits and Sign Permits

A total of 187 Zoning Permits were issued in 2013. Of the issued permits, 135 were residential related which included the new construction of 24 residences, 43 fences, 12 accessory structures and 16 decks. In addition, 52 of the Zoning Permits issued were commercial or industrial projects. A total of \$3,683 in Zoning Permit fees was collected in 2013. There were 161 Zoning Permits issued in 2012.

In 2013, 58 Sign Permits were issued in the City of Wooster. A total of \$5,800 in Sign Permit fees was collected in 2013. There were 68 Sign Permits issued in 2012.

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

Planning Commission

The City of Wooster Planning Commission heard 26 requests in 2013. A total of 8 requests were Conditional Uses, 13 were Development Plans and 5 were Planning and Zoning Code Amendments. All of the 23 applications were approved by the Planning Commission, a number of which included conditions.

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

Board of Building and Zoning Appeals

The Board of Building and Zoning Appeals (BZA) heard 33 requests in 2013 encompassing a variety of topics. Of the 33 applications, the BZA approved 30 applications and denied 1 application (2 applications were withdrawn). There were 23 area variance requests, 9 use variance requests, 1 substitution of a nonconforming use, and 1 appeal of a determination of the Chief Building Official heard by the BZA in 2013 (1 application included both an area and a use variance).

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

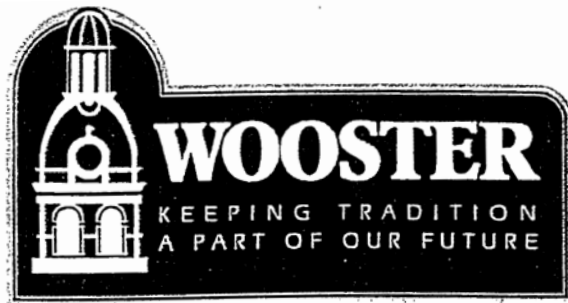
Design and Review Committee

The City of Wooster Design and Review Committee heard 25 requests in 2013. The Committee approved all of the 25 requested applications.

Of the 25 request heard by the Committee in 2013, 12 were for signs. The remainder of the applications included such exterior changes as lighting, windows, doors, awnings, accessory buildings and outdoor dining.

An amendment to Chapter 155, Design and Review Board, was reviewed by the Board and approved by City Council in 2013. The amendment added a section for Certificates of

Appropriateness, refined the powers and duties of the Board, added design criteria and modified the process for nominating Landmark properties and districts.



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

Development Projects

There were a number of significant residential, commercial and industrial developments initiated in the City of Wooster in 2013. The following projects were assisted by the Planning and Zoning Division and were approved by one or more of the aforementioned boards:

1. **Daisy Brand** – 173,000 sq. ft. manufacturing facility on Geyers-Chapel Road, the ground breaking is projected in spring of 2014
2. **Bauer Ladder** – 52,500 sq. ft. manufacturing facility at the north end of Enterprise Parkway, currently under construction
3. **Dollar General** – 9,100 sq. ft. Dollar General store at 5310 Cleveland Road, currently under construction
4. **Cottagewood Apartments** – 58 unit apartment development on Mindy Lane, currently under construction though a number of units are occupied
5. **Gomoplast** – 32,400 sq. ft. office and warehouse facility on Long Road, currently under construction
6. **Brasfond USA** – 14,100 sq. ft. building addition on Geyers-Chapel Road, construction completed
7. **Lemmonberry, The First Amendment, Allstate, Lucky Records, and Lee's Consignment** – Businesses located in available tenant space in the downtown area

Planning Projects

The Planning and Zoning Division has worked on the following Planning related projects in 2013:

1. **Comprehensive Plan Update** – The Planning and Zoning Division initiated an update of the city’s comprehensive plan. Such an update is a significant undertaking with a timeline of approximately one year. In September, the division selected a consultant, OHM Advisors, to facilitate the update to the comprehensive plan, a process given the title “Wooster Envisioned”. Since that time, draft sections of the plan have been created, a steering committee was selected and convened multiple times and a telephonic survey was conducted of Wooster residents. A strong base was created for the plan in 2013 which will continue to take shape in 2014.
2. **CLG Application** – The division has been assembling an application to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO) to become a Certified Local Government (CLG). The designation identifies a city as being committed to historic preservation, makes additional grant opportunities available and allows flexibility in the state building code as applied to historic properties. Steps completed in the application process include an amendment to Chapter 155 (Design and Review Board), receipt of resumes from Design and Review Board members and the compilation of background information for Landmark properties in Wooster.
3. **Code Amendments** – In 2013, there were two amendments to the Planning and Zoning Code encompassing a variety of sections of the code. In addition, an amendment to Chapter 155 (Design and Review Board) was approved as noted above.
4. **GIS** – The city’s GIS mapping system was supplemented with a number of planning related layers. New layers were created for existing land use (with the assistance of a summer intern), Landmark properties and city facilities.



Administrative Projects

1. **Digitalization of Documents** – All approved documents of the Planning and Zoning Division are kept on site for approximately two years. All other documents, some dating back more than 50 years, are stored in an off-site warehouse. These files take time to access and hamper efficiency. In 2013, the division initiated a process of digitizing all archived documents. At this time, about 5 years of the past documents have been scanned. Having documents scanned and available on the shared drive greatly assists in researching past projects.
2. **Application Forms** – Forms for the Planning and Zoning Division have been completely revised. Updated forms are easier to follow for the applicant and contain more information on what items are required to be submitted and how an application is evaluated.
3. **Zoning Enforcement** – In 2013, an employee was hired to focus on Property Maintenance (Building Standards Division) as well as Planning and Zoning Code Enforcement. The division has worked to formulate a standard process for inspections, violation notices and tracking.

Status of 2012 Goals

The following indicates the status of the Planning and Zoning Division's goals from 2012:

Goal 1 – Keep Accurate Data of Applications, Permits and Zoning Enforcement Activity

The BDS and HDS software have been adjusted to meet the division's needs, though further work needs to be done. A system is in place for the electronic and hard copy cataloging of zoning enforcement actions. The Building and Planning & Zoning Divisions have coordinated to distribute responsibilities for zoning enforcement and property maintenance.

Goal 2 – Update the Current Planning and Zoning Code

The Planning and Zoning Code was evaluated and two significant revisions were adopted by the end of 2013.

Goal 3 – Update the Division Fee Schedule

Research was conducted comparing other similar communities planning and zoning fees. A draft fee revision was completed in 2014.

Goal 4 – Revise inaccurate and incomplete GIS data

The GIS has been updated in a number of ways including the addition of new layers, the revision of existing layers and alterations to its presentation. A position in Engineering has been filled to take the lead on the GIS. The Planning Division has, and will continue to, coordinate with other divisions and departments to improve the GIS.

Goal 5 – Provide Courteous and Prompt Service to Issues and Questions Presented by Residents

Courtesy has been extended to all residents and applicants. The response time to inquiries is typically the same day or the next business day.

Goal 6 – Cooperate with and assist other Departments and Divisions

All major applications are forwarded to the above mentioned divisions and departments for their comment prior to approval. There are a number of items in which there has been successful collaboration with other departments and divisions such as updates to the GIS, the Melrose Water Tower application and fire access requirements.

Goals and Objectives for 2013

The Planning and Zoning Division will continue in 2014 to guide development and sensibly regulate land use. The following goals and objectives for 2014 and in the next five years through 2018 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 certification opportunities

- Objective 1A – Obtain AICP certification from the American Planning Association (APA), the next available AICP exam is likely in November
- Objective 1B – Attend training throughout the year including the APA National Conference in April

Goal 2 – Complete and adopt the Comprehensive Plan Update

- Objective 2A – Hold steering committee meetings in February, March and April
- Objective 2B – Hold the second public meeting in May

- Objective 2C – Work with the city’s consultant, OHM, to present a final plan to the Planning Commission by July
- Objective 2D – Adopt the plan by September

Goal 3 – Adopt a complete overhaul of the Planning and Zoning fees

- Objective 3A – Provide a comparison of other cities’ fees in January
- Objective 3B – Adopt the fee schedule by February

Goal 4 – Complete and submit the city’s Certified Local Government (CLG) application

- Objective 4A – Complete survey of historic structures by March
- Objective 4B – Complete summation of the city’s historic preservation plan by April
- Objective 4C – Complete and submit the full application by May

Goal 5 – Integrate aspects of the Building Standards and Planning and Zoning Divisions into GIS

- Objective 5A – Refine and amend the existing land use layer by the end of the year
- Objective 5B – Create layers for property maintenance and zoning enforcement activities by July

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 throughout the year including regional and state conferences

Goal 2 – Refine responsibilities of division staff

- Objective 2A – Work with the Planning & Zoning Enforcement Inspector and Residential Zoning Inspector to refine responsibilities based on work load and changing conditions, modify job descriptions as necessary
- Objective 2B – Coordinate and assist likely new employees to the division to provide a seamless transition

Goal 3 – Conduct a planning study based on the results and recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan update by the end of 2015

- Objective 3A – Evaluate focus area(s) which would most benefit from future planning study
- Objective 3B – Develop a scope and strategy for the project
- Objective 3C – Evaluate the need to involve a consultant in the process
- Objective 3D – Conduct the planning process and adopt the plan

Goal 4 – Revise the Wooster Downtown Design Guidelines by the end of 2016

- Objective 4A – Evaluate the scope of changes that need to be made including the consideration of a guideline replacement
- Objective 4B – Evaluate the need to involve a consultant in the process
- Objective 4C – Conduct the process and adopt the update

Goal 5 – Update the Planning and Zoning Code by the end of 2017

- Objective 5A – Evaluate the scope of changes that need to be made including the consideration of a wholesale code replacement (last completed in 2007)
- Objective 5B – Evaluate the need to involve a consultant in the process
- Objective 5C – Conduct the process and adopt the update

Appendix – Tables and Charts

Table 1: 2013 Permits & Requests

	Zoning Permits	Sign Permits	Variances	Design & Review	Planning Commission	Total
January	6	14	1	3	0	24
February	7	4	1	1	0	13
March	16	8	1	1	5	31
April	26	2	3	2	3	36
May	22	3	1	5	2	33
June	16	5	7	2	4	34
July	20	1	3	0	5	29
August	25	5	5	3	2	40
September	22	5	4	0	0	31
October	19	5	2	4	1	31
November	7	3	2	3	2	17
December	1	3	3	1	2	10
Total	187	58	33	25	26	329
Total Fees	\$3,683	\$5,800	\$3,225	\$0	\$1,950	\$14,658

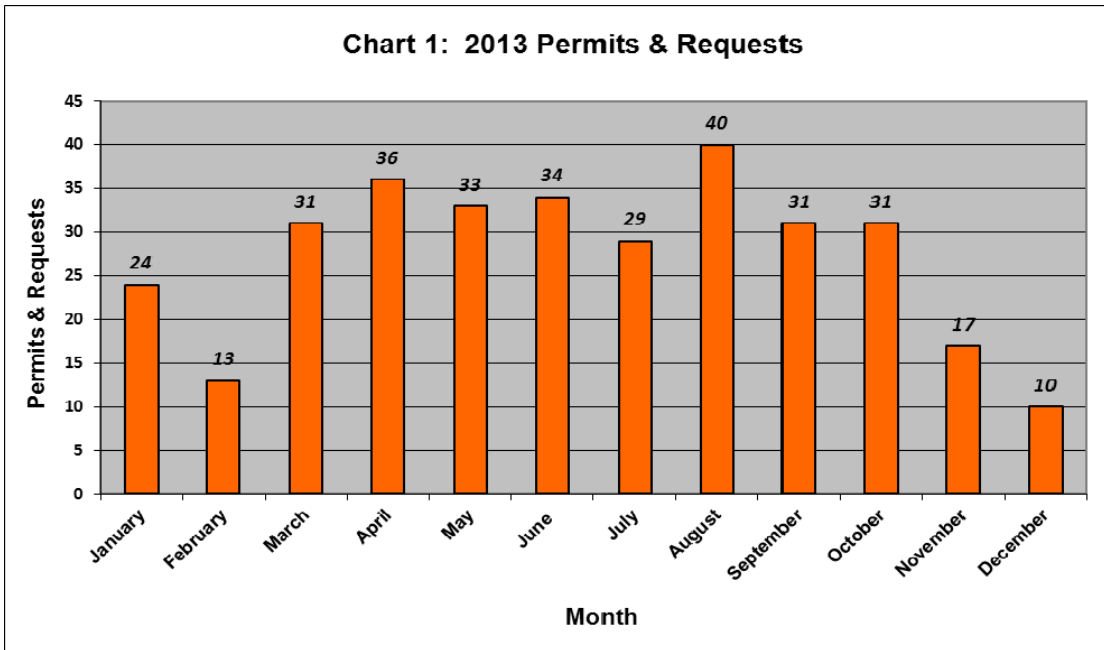


Table 2: Permits & Requests 2003-2013

Year	Zoning Permits	Sign Permits	Variances	Design & Review	Planning Commission	Total
2003	407	134	15	32	52	640
2004	372	145	23	30	35	605
2005	360	135	16	17	29	557
2006	312	117	22	32	28	511
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
Total	2921	1122	222	284	283	4832
Average	266	102	20	26	26	483

