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# **Building Standards Division**

## **2004 Annual Report**

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**Tim Monea, CBO  
Building Standards Manager**

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## **CONSTRUCTION VALUES & PERMIT ACTIVITY**

Permit issuance continued very strong in 2004 and marked the third best year ever as far as the dollar value of projects constructed during the year and number of permits issued. The year **2004 ended up with over \$65 million in construction value** exceeding last year's numbers by 5 ½ million dollars<sup>1</sup>.

All other facets of permit issuance had high levels in number of permits: new homes, signs, electrical, heating, plumbing, change of use, day care homes, moving/demolition, sidewalk/driveway, etc. There were well over 1,400 permits issued.

### **2004 Year End Report – Permits, Fees, and Valuations**

<b>Permit Type</b>	<b># 2000</b>	<b># 2001</b>	<b># 2002</b>	<b># 2003</b>	<b># 2004</b>
1 family	65	59	82	100	106
2 family	2	3	10	5	2
3 family	0	0	9	0	0
Other Res	84	107	96	123	111
<b>Total Res</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>219</b>
<b>Total Com</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>103</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>Total Bldg</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>272</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>324</b>
Electric	364	347	458	489	427
HVAC	281	289	340	294	295
Plumbing	198	199	248	241	233
Signs	94	73	97	134	145
Demo/Move	28	12	19	13	12
Sidewalk	11	13	11	11	12
<b>Total All</b>	<b>1,234</b>	<b>1,205</b>	<b>1,464</b>	<b>1,523</b>	<b>1,448</b>

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<sup>1</sup> 2001 was a record year as it topped \$75 million and 2002 was second with nearly \$70 million. 2003 dropped to nearly \$60 million. All four of these years were substantially more than any other year as no other year ever topped \$40 million in value

Permit Type	2003			2004		
	# for 2003	Fees for 2003	Values for 2003	# for 2004	Fees for 2004	Values for 2004
1 Family	100			106		
2 Family	5			2		
3 Family	0			0		
Other Res.	123			111		
<b>TOTAL Residential</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>\$41,184</b>	<b>\$18,585,594</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>\$42,464</b>	<b>\$19,840,109</b>
<b>TOTAL Commercial</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>\$68,285</b>	<b>\$30,789,393</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>\$43,462</b>	<b>\$36,195,400</b>
<b>TOTAL BUILDING</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>\$109,469</b>	<b>\$49,374,987</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>\$85,926</b>	<b>\$56,035,509</b>
Electrical	489	\$60,399	\$3,728,337	427	\$56,759	\$3,392,351
Heating	294	\$63,966	\$3,652,727	295	\$48,417	\$2,473,407
Plumbing	241	\$59,325	\$2,969,707	233	\$59,594	\$3,338,523
Signs	134	\$6,162		145	\$6,249	
Moving/Demolition	13	\$962		12	\$0	
Sidewalk/Driveway	11	\$451		12	\$0	
<b>TOTAL All Permits</b>	<b>1,523</b>	<b>\$300,734</b>	<b>\$59,725,758</b>	<b>1,448</b>	<b>\$256,945</b>	<b>\$65,239,790</b>

## **OPERATIONS**

All submitted construction plans must be reviewed for code compliance and compliance with the City of Wooster ordinances. Plan reviews continued at a strong pace during 2004 with 509 commercial plan reviews taking place, 219 residential housing plan reviews, and 145 signage reviews. Commercial plans are mandated by the State of Ohio to be reviewed within 30 calendar days of receipt and the average time for review was 21 days. Residential plans were reviewed within 48 hours. This outstanding customer service is the result of a team approach to plan review. Our plan review process has continued to evolve with more participation by the City of Wooster Engineering Division, Fire Division, Utilities Division, and others participating with the goal of the building department being a conduit for the communication between divisions as projects are submitted.

Inspections took place at a high volume again this year. This is directly tied to the number of permits issued and the nearly 1,500 permits issued necessitated these inspections. 772 commercial construction inspections were conducted and 1,775 residential construction inspections were conducted. Additionally, over 500 housing and misc. inspections were also made for a total of well over 3,000 inspections made during 2004. Other types of inspections conducted include: zoning, signs, change of use, certificate of occupancy, occupant load limits, day care homes, moving/demolition, sidewalk/driveway, etc. All inspectors were required to enroll in State of Ohio continuing education training for their respective State licenses. All inspectors completed this training during 2004. Additionally, all inspectors participated in their annual State of Ohio conferences for their respective inspector trade associations. The conferences had inspector training and seminars conducted by experts from around the country specializing in plumbing code, electrical code, mechanical code, and building code. Other specialty training was also completed: alarm, sprinkler, fuel gas, etc.

## HOUSING / PROPERTY MAINTENANCE

The past round of Housing Improvement grant money was for the 2001 – 2003 grant cycle. During this cycle, over \$700,000 has been invested in housing in the City. The City of Wooster had to reapply for CHIP (Community Housing Improvement Program) grant money and this meant a new CHIS (Community Housing Improvement Strategy) had to be developed during 2004. The City contracted with Lines and Associates to develop these documents and submit our grant request. The City of Wooster Housing Advisory Committee worked with the consultant to tailor the program to our needs. The Building Standards Manager (a member of the City of Wooster Housing Advisory Committee) was active in working with the Wayne Metropolitan Housing Authority in the administration of these programs. We believe this request will be viewed favorably again and result in grant money being awarded for the next cycle. Additionally, the Building Standards Manager participated in the Housing Coalition meetings for Wayne Co./Wooster making known the housing needs in the City and addressing these issues.

Since 2002, the property maintenance inspector has reached out to the various neighborhood groups (SPINK, Inc., etc.), real estate manager/owner groups (TRICREA, etc.), and government entities (WMHA, etc.). This increased synergy and public education has helped clean up neighborhoods, address problem properties, and produced better enforcement of our maintenance code. In this time period, well over 1,000 inspections have been conducted - with emphasis placed on removing unlicensed motor vehicles and garbage and debris from properties. The Division hired a towing company, a hauling company, and a mowing company to clean up the properties when the owners were unresponsive. The abatement costs (including administrative costs) were then assessed to the property owners. This has proved to be an extremely effective enforcement tool. During 2004, this effort continued with **over 400 inspections** conducted and additional emphasis placed on other violations. 410 cases were started and 390 were resolved. Some of the cases handled included: abandoned refrigerators, tent inspections, right-of-way violations, trash container violations (out too early), unprotected open ditch inspections, yard sale violations, fence inspections, animal nuisances, accessory building inspections, rental unit smoke alarm inspections, seasonal merchandise violations, illegal dumping, sidewalk snow removal violations, noise/odor violations, tree branches in the right-of-way, etc.

## **BACK FLOW VALVE PROGRAM**

The backflow valve program is in place to protect public health by guarding the water supply. The program takes on special importance at various special events during the year and during 2004, Independence Day, Woosterfest on the Square, and the Wayne County Fair this proved to be true. Approximately 210,000 visitors used our water during these times through over 400 water taps. By being proactive during these times, these events were safe and successful concerning the water supply.

Additionally, non-testable valves were added to our water system on residential water supplies and testable valves were added to commercial water supplies. Approximately 1,100 valves were tested and test data maintained in our database. Several hundred inspections, surveys, and site observations were made during 2004 by the backflow program coordinator.

## **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

The Building Standards Division has continued to keep up with the increased construction and permit activity during the last few years with very little overtime and no increased staffing. We are establishing the goal of initiating our periodic exterior property maintenance inspection program during 2005. With this program, targeted areas of the City will have entire streets, blocks, or areas undergoing an exterior inspection for compliance with our adopted property maintenance code in several key areas. This will be the first proactive approach to property maintenance the City of Wooster has initiated. All inspectors will assist the property maintenance inspector in the site inspections and violation notices.

The Building Standards Division generated significant revenue to offset budgeted expenses. The revenue policy of “covering” 80% of the expenses through permit sales, fees, and plan reviews was successfully met for three straight years but fell off this year. This reflects rising costs and other factors and during 2005 we will be seeking fee increases to keep pace. The Division will be assisting the Engineering Division and Fire Division in their permitting and inspection activity in 2005, helping to utilize the same software and database for all permitting and fee collection activity.

As a final note, the municipal building renovation was completed early in 2004. The Building Standards Division contributed a lot of time and effort to this project. We were excited by the opportunity to participate in a successful project that will meet the needs of the citizens and employees of the City of Wooster.