



City of Wooster
Planning and Zoning Division
2015 Annual Report

February 5, 2016

Summary

The City of Wooster Planning and Zoning Division continued to guide and assist development in 2015. 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 2015 include:

- Significant planning projects including a Downtown Plan, which was completed with the assistance of a consultant, and a Bike Path Plan, which was drafted by city staff.
- Completion of a CLG Grant to conduct an update of the City's Historic Design Guidelines. The grant was awarded to the City by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office in early 2015. The Design Guidelines update process was conducted in 2015 and is projected to be finalized in early 2016.
- 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 50 unit assisted living facility at 939 Portage Road
 - The demolition and reconstruction of a classroom building (Mateer Hall) and residence hall (Holden Hall Annex) at the College of Wooster
 - Preliminary approval for a City of Wooster Safety Center at the corner of Friendsville Road and Burbank Road
 - A large addition to Wooster Community Hospital on the north side of the existing building
 - A Dunkin Donuts/Baskin Robins at 1812 Cleveland Road which will utilize the existing former First Merit Bank building
- The allocation of additional staff time to the enforcement of the Planning and Zoning Code.
- 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 consistent with application totals in recent years.
- The attainment of all of the Division's Goals for 2015, though aspects of some goals will be completed in early 2016.

Planning Projects

The Planning and Zoning Division has worked on the following Planning related projects in 2015:

1. **Downtown Master Plan** – The Planning and Zoning Division worked to complete a Downtown Plan in 2015. The update was a significant undertaking with a total timeline of approximately eight months. The process of creating the Downtown Plan included the employment of a consultant, OHM Advisors, which worked closely with city staff on the project. Input for the plan came from a variety of sources including a steering committee, meetings with downtown business owners, property owners and residents, multiple public meetings, an interactive website, and a market study.



The plan detailed the existing conditions in downtown Wooster, outlined the completed market study, provided numerous strategies for development and redevelopment, and included multiple public and private area plans for portions of downtown.

2. **Bike Path Plan** – The lack of non-motorized transportation options was a focal point of the Comprehensive Plan update completed in 2014. As such, a Bike Path Committee was created including staff and members of the community to produce a Bike Path Plan for the City and the greater Wooster area. The Bike Path Plan for areas within the city was drafted by the Planning and Zoning Division and adopted in late 2015 by the Bike Path Committee. The plan identifies bike routes in the City of Wooster, outlines a phased process for completing the construction of the paths and provides guidelines for design and best practices.



3. **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. 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 an employment of a consultant with expertise in architecture and historic preservation.

The updated Design Guidelines provide 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 Design Guidelines are a valuable asset to the Design and Review Board, applicants to the Board, residents, property owners, and business owners. The Design Guidelines are expected to be adopted in early 2016.

4. **Code Amendment** – In 2015, there was one amendment to the Planning and Zoning Code which included changes to temporary sign regulations, clerical changes to Board of Building and Zoning Appeals and miscellaneous additional changes.

Development Projects

There were a number of significant residential, commercial and industrial developments initiated in the City of Wooster in 2015. The following projects were assisted by the Planning and Zoning Division and were approved by one or more of the aforementioned boards:

1. **Danbury Woods Phase II** – A 50 unit assisted living facility and 10 independent living units were approved at 939 Portage Road to the rear of the existing facility. The project will likely begin in early 2016.
2. **College of Wooster Mateer Hall** – Plans were approve to demolish the existing Mateer Hall and replace it with a new 70,000 sq. ft. classroom facility at 931 College Avenue. The project will likely begin in early 2016.
3. **College of Wooster Residence Hall** – Plans were approve to demolish the existing Holden Hall annex and replace it with a new 22 unit residence hall at 534 East University Street. The demolition of the Holden Hall annex was completed in 2015 and the construction portion of the project is currently progressing.
4. **City of Wooster Safety Center** – Property was rezoned and preliminary plans were approved for a 37,340 sq. ft. public safety center at 3319-3365 Burbank Road. The project will likely begin in early 2016.
5. **Industrial Additions** – Additions were approved to the existing LUK and Tekfor facilities of 34,272 sq. ft. and 25,250 sq. ft., respectively. The projects will likely begin in early 2016.
6. **Dunkin Donuts** – Plans were approved to site and building alterations to locate a Dunkin Donuts/Baskin Robins at 1812 Cleveland Road. The project will likely begin in early 2016.

7. **Hospital** – Plans were approved for a large hospital expansion to the north side of the existing building. The project will likely begin in early to mid-2016.
8. **Downtown Projects** – Changes in downtown include major renovations of the Wayne County Courthouse, relocation of Muddy’s to East Liberty Street, the relocation of Ride-On to South Street, and approval for the location of Basil Asian Bistro on West Liberty Street.

Administrative Projects

1. **Digitalization of Documents** – Documents of the Planning and Zoning Division are kept on site for approximately two years. All other documents, some dating back more than 60 years, are stored in an off-site warehouse. These files take time to access and hamper efficiency. In 2015, the division continued the process of digitizing all archived documents, which was initiated in 2013. At this time, all documents from boards and commissions have been digitized along with all Sign Permits. In addition, the majority of Zoning Certificates, which includes the largest portion of the Division’s documents, have been scanned. The availability of digital documents on the shared drive greatly assists in researching past projects.
2. **Administrative Assistant** – In late 2015, the Planning and Zoning Division and Building Standards Division sought to find a capable applicant for the Department’s Administrative Assistant position. Interviews were conducted and a qualified individual was selected and will begin employment in the City in January of 2016. The position, which is integral to multiple functions of the Department, was vacated due to the retirement of a long term employee.

Zoning Certificates and Sign Permits

A total of 207 Zoning Certificates were issued in 2015, which is similar to the 208 issued in 2014. Of the issued Certificates, 147 were residential related which included the approval of 54 new residential units. In addition, 60 Zoning Certificates were issued for commercial or industrial projects. A total of \$7,480 in Zoning Certificate fees were collected in 2015, slightly up from \$7,247 in 2014.

In 2015, 73 Sign Permits were issued in the City of Wooster and a total of \$5,220 in Sign Permit fees was collected. There were 104 Sign Permits issued in 2014.

A further breakdown of Zoning Certificates and Sign Permits 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 37 requests in 2015 encompassing a variety of topics. In 2014, the BZA heard 29 requests. Of the 37 applications, the BZA approved 32 applications and denied 4 application (1 application was withdrawn). There were 29 area variance requests, 9 use variance requests and 1 request to substitute a nonconforming use heard by the BZA in 2015 (2 applications 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 Board

The City of Wooster Design and Review Board heard 38 requests in 2015. In 2014, the Board heard 49 requests. The Design and Review Board approved 48 of the requested applications and denied 1 application.

Of the 38 request heard by the Board in 2015, 24 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 2015, the most significant approvals of the Board included the demolition of two historic structures and the construction of replacement structures at the College of Wooster, the relocation of a Landmark structure, exterior renovations to Muddy's on East Liberty Street, and exterior renovations to the new Spoon Market location on West Liberty Street.

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



Planning Commission

The City of Wooster Planning Commission heard 24 requests in 2015, down from 40 in 2014. A total of 8 requests were Conditional Uses, 13 were Development Plans and 3 were Planning and Zoning Code Amendments. All requests received approval, or a recommendation of approval, often with conditions from the Commission.

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

Zoning Enforcement

As a Property Maintenance/Zoning Inspector position was added to the Development Department in late 2013. Throughout 2015, the inspector largely focused on property maintenance, however, the inspector also was responsible for enforcement of the Planning and Zoning Code. A total of 72 Planning and Zoning Code violations were addressed in 2015, with the majority of the issues stemming from RV and trailer parking, parking on lawns 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 is found in the appendix section at the end of this document.

Status of 2015 Goals and Objectives

The following indicates the status of the Planning and Zoning Division's goals and objectives established for 2015:

Goal 1 – Attend available training and certification opportunities

- Objective 1A – Obtain American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) certification from the American Planning Association (APA)
- Objective 1B – Attend training throughout the year including State or Regional conferences

Status: Andrew Dutton Planning and Zoning Manager, obtained AICP certification from the American Planning Association in November. In addition, multiple training events were attended including the APA State Conference.

Goal 2 – Complete a Downtown Plan

- Objective 2A – Hold task force meetings in February through July
- Objective 2B – Hold stakeholder meetings in March
- Objective 2C – Use online tools to inform and gain input from the public
- Objective 2D – Work with the City's consultant, OHM, to present a final plan by July

Status: The process of creating and adopting a Downtown Plan was completed in November. The process was extended due to the significant amount of public input received.

Goal 3 – Revise the historic Design Guidelines

- Objective 3A – Apply for a CLG grant to financially assist the update of the guidelines
- Objective 3B – Create a Steering Committee to drive the process
- Objective 3C – Involve the public through open meetings to provide input
- Objective 3D – Adopt the Design Guidelines by the end of the year

Status: The City was awarded a CLG grant to conduct an update of the Design Guidelines. The process of creating the historic Design Guidelines was initiated in 2015 and is currently underway. Completion of the update is projected for early 2016.

Goal 4 – Refine responsibilities of division staff

- Objective 4A – 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 4B – Coordinate and assist a likely new employee to the division and provide a seamless transition

Status: The responsibilities of the Planning & Zoning Enforcement inspector were refined to include a focus on signs, particularly in the right of way. In addition, a methodology for conducting the zoning violation process was established. The indicated "new employee" was selected and is projected to start in January of 2016.

Goal 5 – Continue to refine and update GIS layers

- Objective 5A – Update and evaluate the land use layer and other planning layers
- Objective 5B – Utilize GIS to identify areas where zoning district lines should be modified or relocated to correspond with changing conditions

Status: Research from a summer intern, with supervision from Division staff, resulted in an updated land use layer for the entire City. A layer was also created to identify necessary changes to zoning district boundaries.

Goals and Objectives

In 2016, the Planning and Zoning Division will continue to guide development and sensibly regulate land use. The following goals and objectives for 2016 and in the next five years through 2020 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 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

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

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

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

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

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 – Revise rules and procedures for Board and Commission by the end of 2017

- Objective 2A – Identify any existing rules and procedures documents for the Planning Commission, Board of Building and Zoning Appeals and the Design and Review Board
- Objective 2B – Review current documents with the respective boards, research similar rules documents and consult with the City Law Director
- Objective 2C – Adopt new or revised rules and procedures documents

Goal 3 – Update the Planning and Zoning Code by mid-2018

- Objective 3A – Evaluate the scope of changes that need to be made including the consideration of a wholesale code replacement (last completed in 2007)
- Objective 3B – Evaluate the need to involve a consultant in the process
- Objective 3C – Conduct the process and adopt the update

Goal 4 – Address the current Planning and Zoning Code requirement for all nonconforming signs to conform to current regulations by the end of 2019

- 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 4B – 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 2016-2019 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

Appendix – Tables and Charts

Table 1: Permits & Requests 2015

Month	Zoning Certificates	Sign Permits	Building & Zoning Appeals	Design & Review	Planning Commission	Total
January	7	4	2	0	2	15
February	2	6	4	1	1	14
March	13	7	0	3	3	26
April	19	6	4	2	0	31
May	27	4	5	3	4	43
June	22	5	4	4	0	35
July	18	1	2	2	2	25
August	22	7	6	1	3	39
September	25	9	5	8	3	50
October	22	11	0	7	2	42
November	17	6	3	3	2	31
December	13	7	2	4	2	28
Total	207	73	37	38	24	379
Total Fees	\$7,480	\$5,200	\$3,500	\$0	\$2,250	\$18,430
2015 Total	208	104	29	49	40	430
2015 Fees	\$7,247	\$7,220	\$2,800	\$0	\$3,207	\$20,474

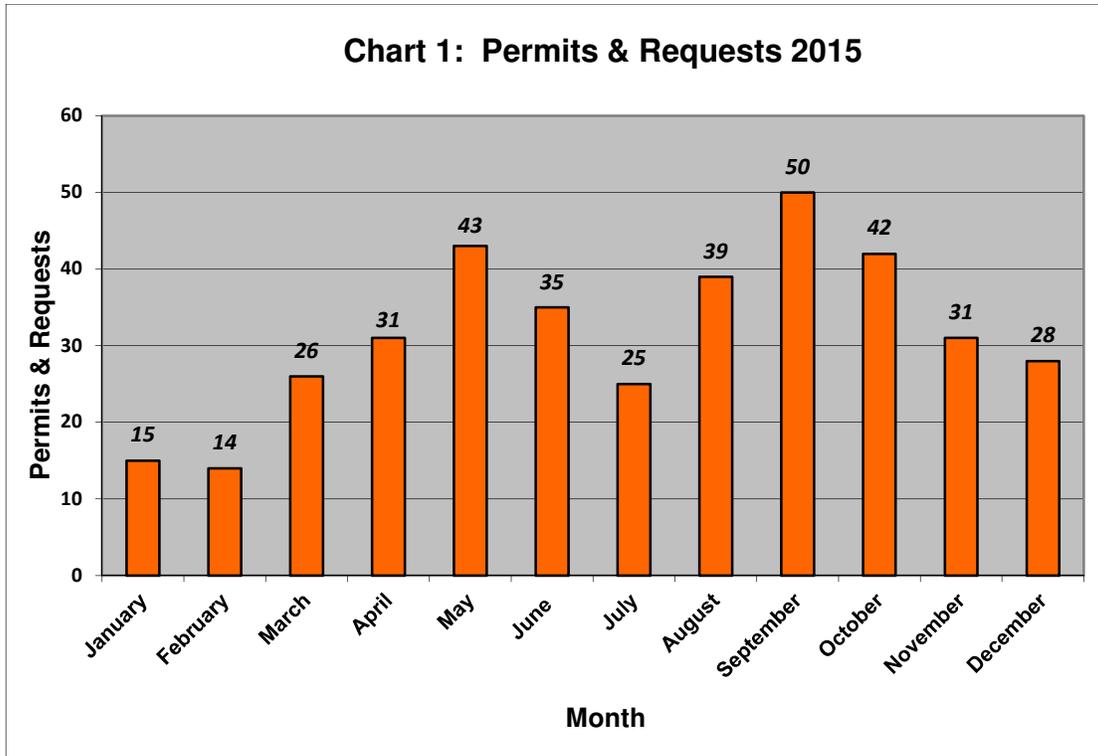


Table 2: Permits & Requests 2006-2015

Year	Zoning Certificates	Sign Permits	Building & Zoning Appeals	Design & Review	Planning Commission	Total
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
2014	208	104	29	49	40	430
2015	207	73	37	38	24	379
Total	2197	885	234	292	231	3839
Average	220	89	23	29	23	384

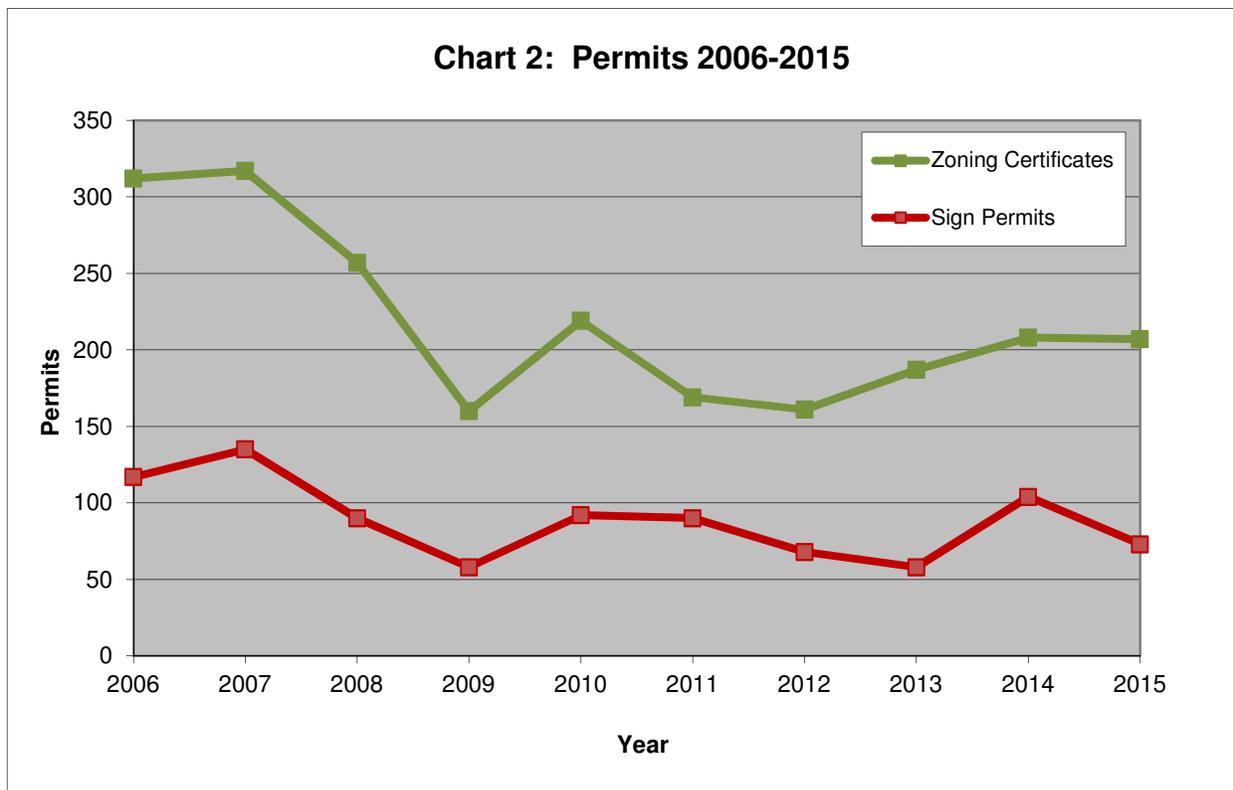


Chart 3: Requests 2006-2015

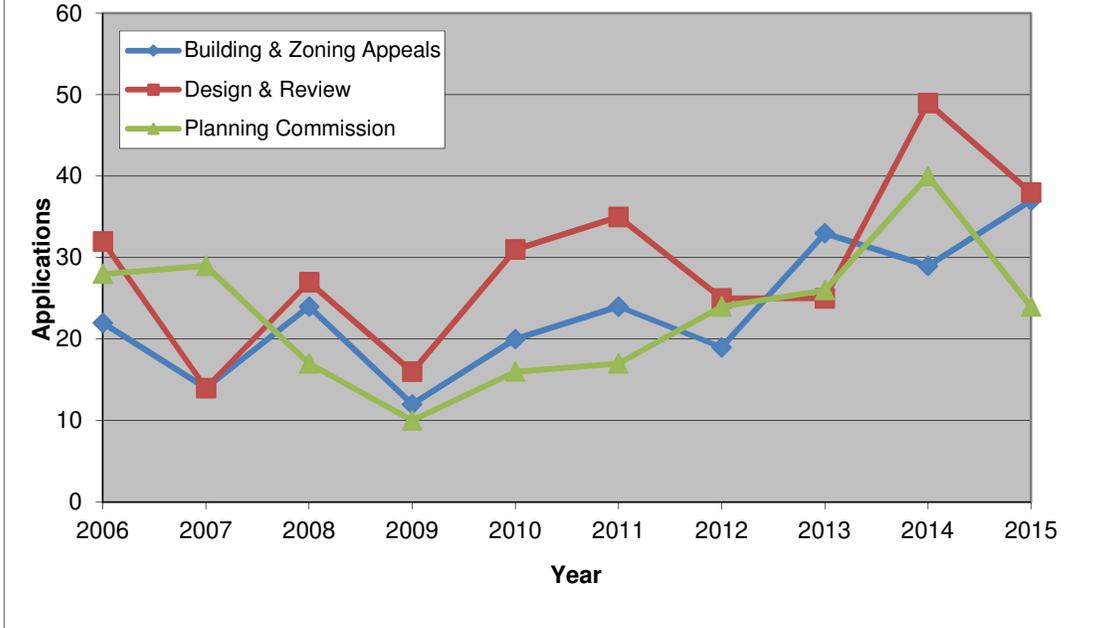


Table 3: Zoning Violations 2015

Violation	Number
Recreational Vehicle/Trailer	26
Parking on Lawn	18
Signs	9
Permit Required	4
Home Occupation	1
Accessory Structure	3
Prohibited Use	4
Visibility at Intersection	2
Garage or Yard Sale	1
Other	3
Total	72

Chart 4: Zoning Violations 2015

