



City of Wooster
Planning and Zoning Division
2014 Annual Report

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Summary

The City of Wooster Planning and Zoning Division continued to guide and assist development in 2014. The Division has 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 2014 include:

- Applications and fees for Zoning and Sign permits were a substantial increase from last year and are at their highest levels since 2010 and 2007, respectively.
- The Division continued to assist the Planning Commission, Board of Building and Zoning Appeals and Design and Review Board in their review of applications. Applications for the Boards and Commission have been trending up over the past few years.
- With a recent hire in late 2013, the Division was able to create a process for conducting and tracking Planning and Zoning Code violations.
- A number of significant projects were reviewed and approved, including a 59,000 sq. ft. commercial development on Burbank Road, a 38 bed memory care facility off of Beall Avenue, a 12,000 sq. ft. retail/warehouse building on Akron Road, and numerous projects in downtown Wooster.
- The Division also worked on a number of major planning projects including an update to the City's Comprehensive Plan (Approved in October), the City's designation as a Certified Local Government (Approved in June), a Bike Path Plan and a Gateway Plan.

Zoning Permits and Sign Permits

A total of 208 Zoning Permits were issued in 2014, up from 187 in 2013. Of the issued permits, 128 were residential related which included the approval of 25 new residences. In addition, 80 Zoning Permits were issued for commercial or industrial projects. A total of \$7,247 in Zoning Permit fees was collected in 2014, up from \$3,683 in 2013.

In 2014, 104 Sign Permits were issued in the City of Wooster. A total of \$7,220 in Sign Permit fees was collected in 2014. There were 58 Sign Permits issued in 2013.

A further breakdown of Zoning Permits and Sign Permits is found in the appendix section at the end of this document (Tables 1 and 2 and Charts 1 and 2).

Planning Commission

The City of Wooster Planning Commission heard 41 requests in 2014, an increase of 15 from 2013. A total of 13 requests were Conditional Uses, 23 were Development Plans and 5 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 (Tables 1 and 2 and Chart 3).

Board of Building and Zoning Appeals

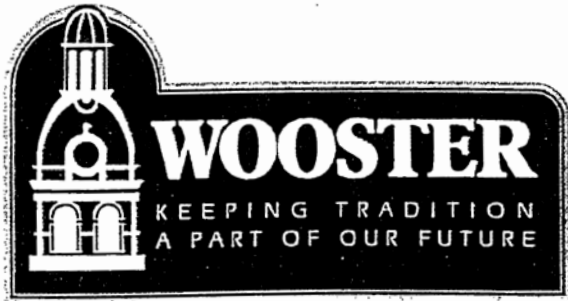
The Board of Building and Zoning Appeals (BZA) heard 29 requests in 2014 encompassing a variety of topics. In 2013, the BZA heard 33 requests. Of the 29 applications, the BZA approved 25 applications and denied 2 application (2 applications were withdrawn). There were 20 area

variance requests, 8 use variance requests, 1 substitution of a nonconforming use, and 1 appeal of a determination of the Planning and Zoning Administrator heard by the BZA in 2014 (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 (Tables 1 and 2 and Chart 3).

Design and Review Committee

The City of Wooster Design and Review Committee heard 49 requests in 2014. The Committee approved 48 of the requested applications and denied 1 application.



Of the 49 request heard by the Committee in 2014, 32 were for signs. The remainder of the applications included such exterior changes as lighting, windows, doors, awnings, accessory buildings and outdoor dining. The most significant approvals of the Board include a comprehensive restoration of the Wayne County Courthouse and a complete renovation of two buildings at 120-124 East Liberty Street.

A further breakdown of Design and Review applications is found in the appendix section at the end of this document (Tables 1 and 2 and Chart 3).

Zoning Enforcement

As a Property Maintenance/Zoning Inspector position was added to the Development Department in late 2013, 2014 was the initial year of recorded data for zoning violations. A total of 72 violations were cited in 2014, with the majority stemming from RV and trailer parking, parking on lawns and signs.

A further breakdown of Zoning Enforcement is found in the appendix section at the end of this document (Table 3 and Chart 4).

Development Projects

There were a number of significant residential, commercial and industrial developments initiated in the City of Wooster in 2014. The following projects were assisted by the Planning and Zoning Division and were approved by one or more of the aforementioned boards:

1. **Apartment Buildings** – A 44 unit multifamily apartment complex was approved at 2024 Akron Road (north of the Winchester Woods Apartments), construction is subject to grant funding for the project
2. **Fastenal Building** – A 12,000 sq. ft. retail and warehouse building was approved at 1747 Akron Road (across from Vinton Woods Drive), construction was completed in the fall of 2014

3. **Pediatric Dental Building** – A 4,750 sq. ft. pediatric dental building was approved at 3582 Cleveland Road, construction recently completed
4. **Community Action** – The previously vacant Lincoln Elementary was approved for offices, classroom space and site changes at 905 Pittsburgh Avenue, the project is currently under construction
5. **Brookdale Place** – A 38 bed nursing home (memory care facility) was approved at 1560 Beall Avenue, the project is currently under construction
6. **Chase Properties Commercial Development** – A 59,000 sq. ft. commercial development was approved at 4369 Burbank Road (north of the Hampton Inn), the project has not been begun a this time
7. **Montessori School** – An 8,000 new school building was approved at 1170 Akron road, the project has not been begun a this time
8. **Downtown** – New businesses approved to locate in downtown Wooster include Gionino’s Pizzeria, Birdeye, Weaver Custom Homes, Oak Grove Eatery, Gulf, Mr. Rooter, and the Wayne County Republican Party Office. In addition, a new public parking lot was created on East North Street by the City of Wooster.

Planning Projects

The Planning and Zoning Division has worked on the following Planning related projects in 2014:

1. **Comprehensive Plan Update** – The Planning and Zoning Division completed an update of the City’s Comprehensive Plan in 2014. The update was a significant undertaking with a total timeline of over a year. The process of updating the Comprehensive Plan included close work with a consultant to create the plan. Input for the plan came from a variety of sources including a steering committee, multiple public meetings, an interactive website, and a statistically significant survey of residents. The updated Comprehensive Plan, approved by the Planning Commission in October, addresses such topics as land use, transportation, parks and recreation, and public services. The plan also detailed four “Priority Development Areas” to provide guidance in areas that are primed for development or redevelopment. A key component of the updated Comprehensive Plan is a focus on implementation of the various plan principles and objectives.
2. **CLG Application** – The division also assembled an application to the Ohio Historic Preservation Office (OHPO) to become a Certified Local Government (CLG). In June, the National Parks Service officially designated the City of Wooster as a CLG community. The designation identifies Wooster 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 included 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 2014, there were two amendments to the Planning and Zoning Code encompassing a variety of code sections. One amendment was partially approved by City Council and a second amendment has received an approval recommendation from the Planning Commission, but is yet to go to City Council.
4. **Gateway Plan** – The City has worked with a consultant to formulate a gateway plan for entrances to the City. The plan, which was identified as an item to address in the updated Comprehensive Plan, is currently being finalized.
5. **Bike Path Plan** – The lack of non-motorized transportation options was a focal point of the Comprehensive Plan update. As such, staff, and members of the community have been working on creating a Bike Path Plan for the City. The plan is in its early stages, but has ambitious goals for the future of bike paths in Wooster and the surrounding area.
6. **Downtown Plan** – The Division has also begun the creation of a Downtown Plan along with a consultant for the project, Main Street Wooster and the Chamber of Commerce. Focus on the downtown area was also a significant aspect of the Comprehensive Plan update.

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 2014, 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. Having documents scanned and available on the shared drive greatly assists in researching past projects.
2. **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 in 2014 to formulate a standard process for inspections, violation notices and tracking.

Status of 2014 Goals and Objectives

The following indicates the status of the Planning and Zoning Division’s goals and objectives established for 2014:

Goal 1 – Attend available training and certification opportunities

- Objective 1A – Obtain American Institute of Certified Planners (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

Status: An application was submitted to initiate the AICP certification process. In addition, multiple training events were attended including the APA National Conference.

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

Status: The process of creating and adopting and updated plan for the City of Wooster was completed in October.

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

Status: A completely updated fee schedule was adopted in March.

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

Status: The process of creating and applying for certification as a CLG was completed and the City of Wooster was designated a CLG in June.

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

Status: Research from a summer intern with supervision from Division staff resulted in an updated land use layer the entire City. Multiple GIS layers and maps have been created to graphically display the status property maintenance and zoning enforcement activities.

Goals and Objectives for 2015

The Planning and Zoning Division will continue in 2015 to guide development and sensibly regulate land use. The following goals and objectives for 2015 and in the next five years through 2019 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 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

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

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

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

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

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 and state conferences

Goal 2 – Create a Bike Path/Non-Motorized transportation plan by the end of 2016

- Objective 2A – Develop a scope and strategy for the project
- Objective 2B – Evaluate the need to involve a consultant in the process
- Objective 2C – Conduct the planning process and adopt the plan

Goal 3 – Revise rules and procedures for Board and Commission by the end of 2016

- 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 – Update the Planning and Zoning Code by the end of 2017

- Objective 4A – Evaluate the scope of changes that need to be made including the consideration of a wholesale code replacement (last completed in 2007)
- Objective 4B – Evaluate the need to involve a consultant in the process
- Objective 4C – Conduct the process and adopt the update

Goal 5 – Address the current Planning and Zoning Code requirement for all nonconforming signs to conform to current regulations by the end of 2019

- Objective 5A – Compose a database of all nonconforming signs
- Objective 5B – 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 5B – Create a plan to contact property owners and tenants or adjust current requirements

Appendix – Tables and Charts

Table 1: Permits & Requests 2014

Month	Zoning Permits	Sign Permits	Building & Zoning Appeals	Design & Review	Planning Commission	Total
January	5	6	1	3	2	17
February	9	5	1	2	4	21
March	17	4	2	4	5	32
April	31	10	7	4	4	56
May	27	11	2	10	2	52
June	19	10	1	3	3	36
July	28	7	3	1	1	40
August	18	8	1	9	4	40
September	23	10	1	3	4	41
October	15	17	3	8	2	45
November	9	8	0	2	5	24
December	7	8	7	0	4	26
Total	208	104	29	49	40	430
Total Fees	\$7,247	\$7,220	\$2,800	\$0	\$3,207	\$20,474
2013 Total	187	58	33	25	26	329
2013 Fees	\$3,683	\$5,800	\$3,225	\$0	\$1,950	\$14,658

Chart 1: Permits & Requests 2014

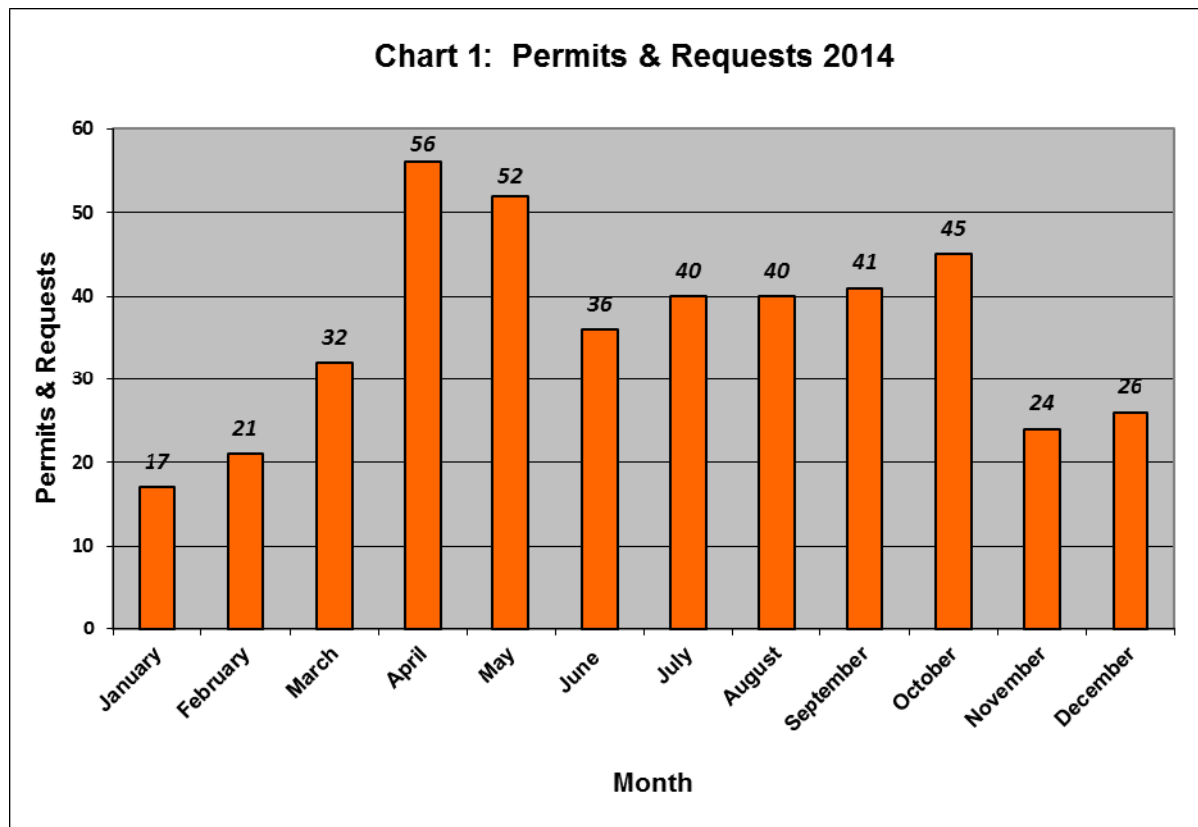


Table 2: Permits & Requests 2005-2014

Year	Zoning Permits	Sign Permits	Building & Zoning Appeals	Design & Review	Planning Commission	Total
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
2014	208	104	29	49	40	430
Total	2142	843	184	222	196	4017
Average	214	84	18	22	20	402

Chart 2: Permits 2005-2014

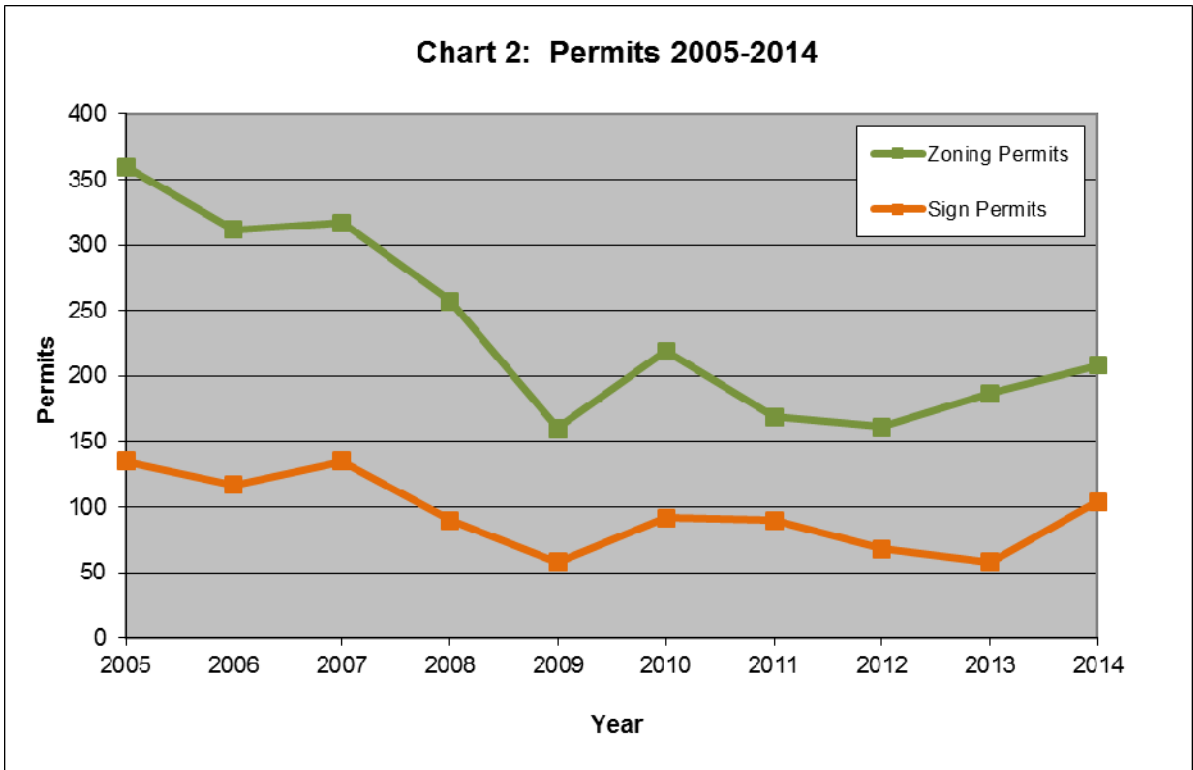


Chart 3: Requests 2005-2014

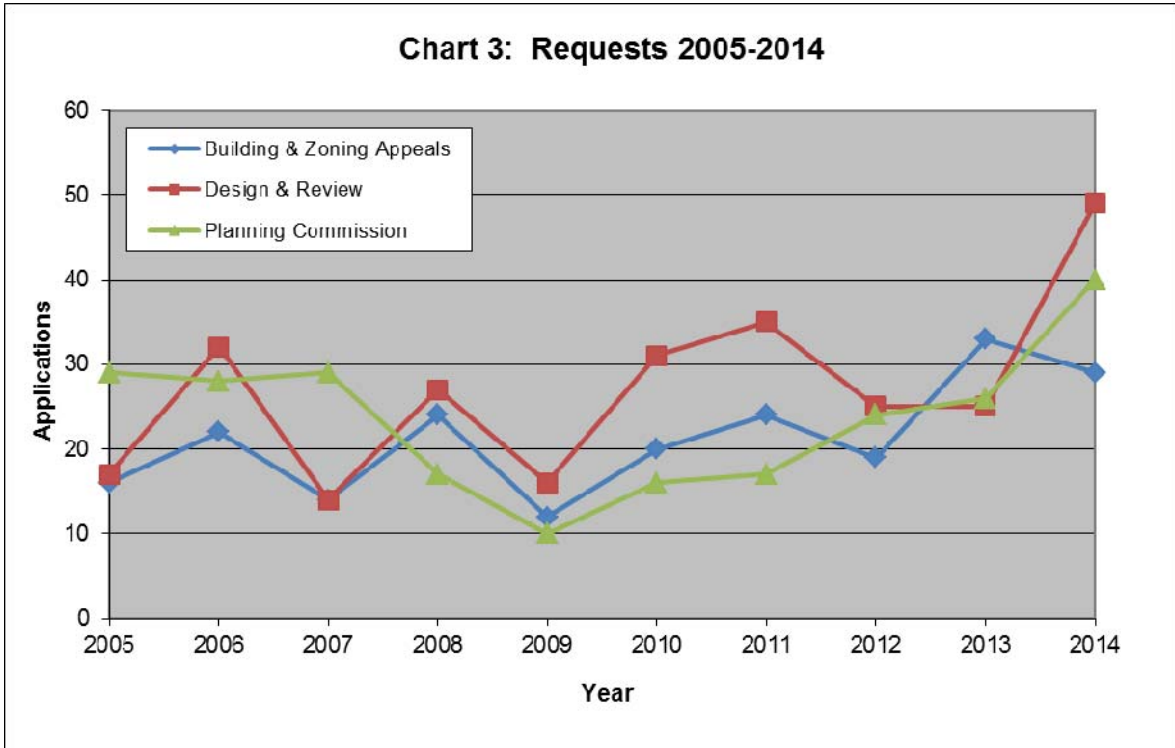


Table 3: Zoning Violations 2014

Violation	Number
Prohibited Use	2
Visibility at Intersection	2
Zoning Conditions of Approval	2
Other	2
Accessory Structure	3
Home Occupation	7
Permit Required	9
Signs	11
Parking on Lawn	13
Recreational Vehicle/Trailer	21
Total	72

Chart 4: Zoning Violations 2014

