



# Building Safety in Wooster

2018 Annual Report  
City of Wooster Building Standards Division

“Building safety is vital to all who work in buildings, send their kids to school or shop at the local grocery store – we often just take building safety for granted.”

Tim Monea, Chief Building Official

# Letter from the Chief Building Official

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I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for reading our 2018 annual report. I sincerely hope that you will find it informative and that it allows you to gain an understanding of our purpose and responsibilities to our community.

Ensuring building safety defines our purpose and we are committed to it. We are staffed by 6 extremely qualified personnel dedicated to building safety, whether it's Residential, Commercial, or Industrial buildings. In this report, I will present the activity of the division while identifying trends and opportunities. Although we value our past work, we also see present opportunities for growth, and embrace the challenges of the future.

I hope you will take the time to appreciate the work behind the statistics. Our inspectors spent hundreds of hours reviewing plans, meeting with contractors and owners, making site inspections, and working with our customers to achieve compliance with building codes. I encourage you to ask questions to learn more about our activity. I welcome your comments and suggestions so together we can continue to improve our important work.

Sincerely,



Tim Monea, CBO  
Building Standards Manager

# \$1,185,804,148

Value of construction in Wooster the last 21 years is nearly \$1.2 billion

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## 25,000

Permits Issued in the last 21 years

## 65,000

Inspections made since 1997

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## 1,429

Permits issued in 2018

## 2,600

Inspections made in 2018

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# \$87,748,179

Value of construction in Wooster in 2018

# 2018 Plan Review, Permitting, and Inspection

## Activity Summary

The Division maintains certification as a State Certified Building Department with Certified personnel. As such, the Division deals directly with private architects, developers, contractors, property owners and others in carrying out the mission to protect the public. In 2018, this work included performing 220 plan reviews, issuing over 1,400 permits and conducting 2,600 construction inspections and another 1,500 existing property inspections.

- **1,406 permits** were issued, down 17% from last year's all-time high of 1,700 but still in the top 5 on record. This trend has been moving upward since 2011, with 2012 topping 1,000 permits for the first time.
- **2600 construction inspections** were performed, down 13% from last year. The inspections mirror the number of permits issued.
- The total value of permitted **construction was nearly \$88 million**. A slightly higher total from last year but almost exactly the same value.
- In 2018, we collected **\$327,574 in fees**, up 4% from 2017 which were up 12% from 2016. This reflects that although there were fewer permits issued, they were for larger projects.
- **16 new single-family houses** were approved, and this is up 30% from last year. This is analyzed further in the report.
- In addition to using cloud based software for all of the applications, approvals, inspections, payments, and documents, the Division used cloud-based online software to track the **testing of approximately 1,800 backflow prevention devices** that protect the City's water supply.

## City of Wooster Building Standards Division Significant 2018 Accomplishments

- **Online Permitting Improvements.** We went “live” with this process on January 1, 2017 functioning as a “paperless” office when we began using a cloud-based permitting system. In 2018, we implemented several improvements to the process. Most notably, we enhanced the way inspections are requested and scheduled online. This has had a big impact on customer service as it was made easier and more precise. Applications, inspection requests, permits, receipts, reports, and other documents continue to be accessed online. Again, over 25,000 sheets of paper were saved, along with countless full-size plan sheets.
- **Parking Permit Improvements.** Also, in 2018, the Building Standards and Planning and Zoning Divisions instituted the City’s new parking permit program transitioning to an online process. We also changed the way the City’s public parking lots are utilized and designated resulting in more parking being made available.
- **Major Construction Projects Permitted in 2018:** LUK facility expansion, College of Wooster rebuilding of dormitories, Retail projects such as Beall Store remodel, new Aldi Grocery Store, and new CSB bank branch, Baker Industries new warehousing, 180’s new woman’s residential facility, and Westview Healthy Living’s expansion of a new wellness center and a new skilled nursing addition.
- **Other Accomplishments in 2018:** Instituted new process for water meter installation, expanded the City’s downtown dumpster program, represented the City as a member of the Housing Coalition and worked on the homelessness ad hoc subcommittee, managed city hall remodeling projects including the replacement of the boilers, led lighting upgrades, and new carpet, paint and bathroom upgrades.

# 2018 Property Maintenance Code Enforcement

## Activity Summary

Code enforcement is some of the most challenging work we do. It is undeniably difficult with imperfect results. But it is important work and can be satisfying because it not only protects public health and safety but also safeguards relationships between neighbors, beautifies our neighborhoods, and preserves property values.

- We performed nearly **1,000 maintenance code inspections**, and this is down about 50% from last year reflecting the loss of the property maintenance inspector for several months during the year.
- We identified **225 Property Maintenance and 91 Zoning Code violations**.
- Nine houses were **demolished** either by the City or by order.

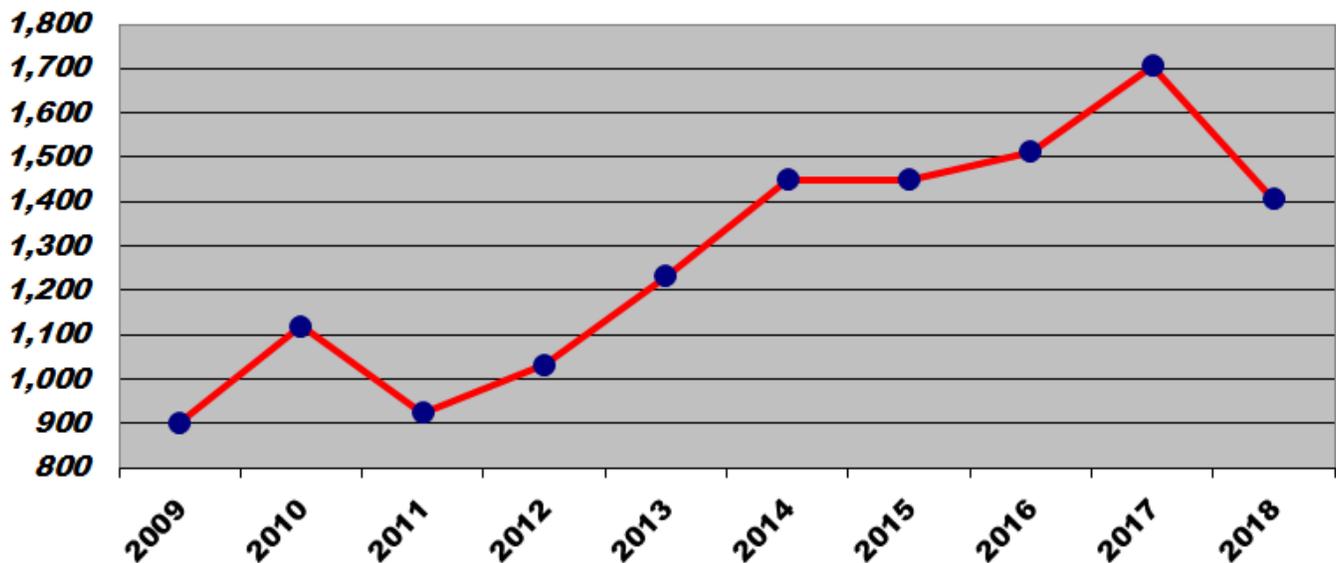
## 2018 PERMIT ACTIVITY

### Although down from last year, activity still strong

In 2018, over 1,406 permits were issued, down 17% from last year's all-time high ending a strong four-year upward trend. This trend has been moving upward since 2011, with 2012 topping 1,000 permits for the first time.

Inspections were also down 13% with 3,600 inspections conducted. This parallels the number of permits issued.

Number of Permits Issued Last 10 Years

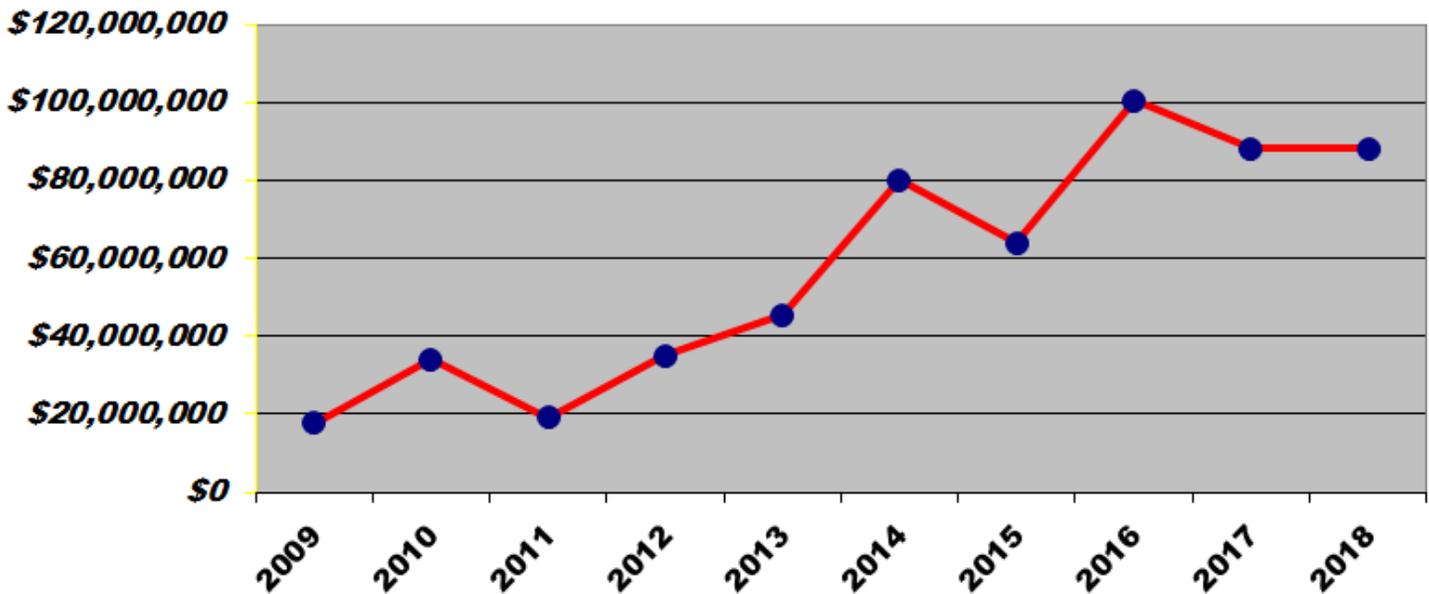


During 2018, the Division reviewed and issued over 1,400 permits. These permits include residential and commercial building, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and fire sprinkler and alarm permits. Also included in the figures are residential zoning permits (the division issues residential zoning permits). The last four years were record highs for permit issuance with 2017 the highest number on record.

## 2018 VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION REMAINS THE SAME AS LAST YEAR

In 2018, the total value of construction was nearly \$88 million. This was nearly the same as last year and not too far off of 2016's all-time high of \$100 million. \$88 million represents the third highest year ever.

Total Construction Value of Permits for the Last 10 Years

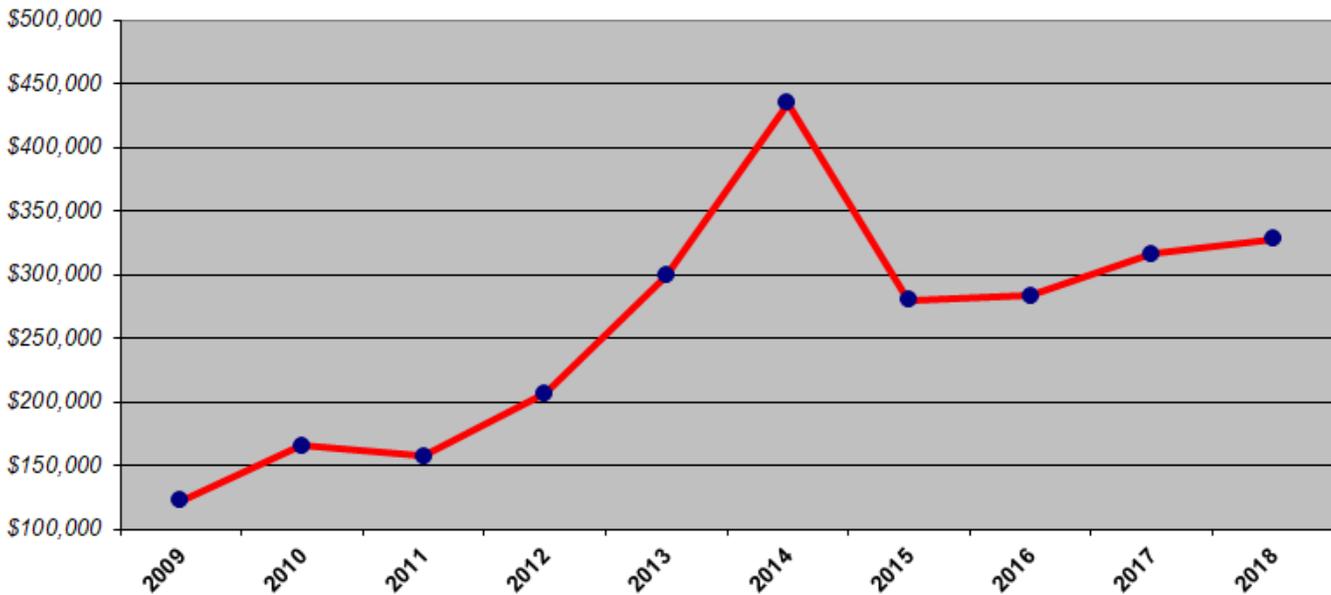


Over the years, construction in the City of Wooster has certainly had its ups and downs. Before 2001, construction values remained fairly constant in the \$30 - \$40 million range. The years between 2001 through 2007 saw construction activity levels peak in the City with 2005 seeing nearly double the norm with \$90 million in value. The housing crisis represented the low point. The last four years were very high and **2016 we issued building permits on construction valued at \$100 million – a new all-time high. 2018 was the third highest year on record.**

## 2018 FEE COLLECTION CONTINUES 3 YEAR UPWARD TREND

In 2018, we collected \$327,574 in fees, up 4% from 2017 which were up 12% from 2016. The increase is despite the fact that permit fees were lowered approximately 15% due to the efficiencies of the new cloud permitting process. Fees represent about 50% of budget expenses in line with our *revenue policy*.

Permit Fees Collected in the Last 10 Years



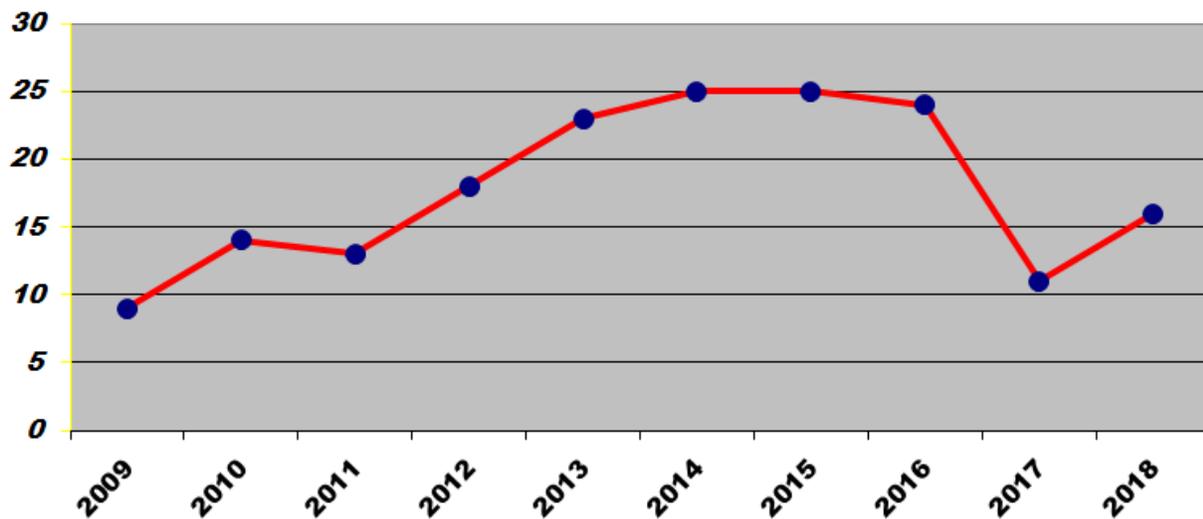
The general mix of fees is 50% user fees and 50% general fund. This mix is part of a revenue policy developed by the Division and Administration and is reviewed periodically. The policy reflects the view that fees from permits should not subsidize code enforcement and other non-development activity and the burden should be placed on the community as a whole.

In 2018 fees accounted for about half of the operating budget. Additional funds approved by Council to perform added demolitions and property maintenance abatement actions bring the percentage down, as fees are not collected for such actions.

## 2018 SINGLE FAMILY HOUSING STARTS REBOUND A BIT FROM 2017.

In 2018, 16 new houses were approved, up 30% from last year. The years 2011 – 2016 saw 20 – 25 houses built each year before it dipped to a low 11 houses in 2017. The reasons for this are complex and require further evaluation.

Single Family Housing Units



Housing has averaged **64 new units** for the each of the ten years from **1999 – 2007**. Housing unit growth has paralleled the growth of the North End of the City as new subdivisions were built out at the same time as the North End developed. For the years **2012 – 2016**, **Wooster averaged 23** new single-family houses. It appears that approximately 25 housing units/year has been a sustainable number in the City for the last several years. However, 2017 saw this dip to 11 houses only to rebound a bit in 2018 to 16 new single family dwellings.

In recent years, very few new subdivisions have been brought to the City for development. Only two residential subdivisions have developed in the last several years: Tartan Ridge and Crooked Creek. These, along with the Reserve at Deer Creek and the Meadows, have most of the available lots. This is an area that merits further study with questions such as: **Is there a pent-up demand or shortage of new single-family housing? Is the City providing adequate housing choices?**

**Top 10 projects in 2018**  
**\$32,425,414 in construction value**

1. LUK    21,680 sq.ft. South addition
  
2. Campbell Real Estate LTD    Remodel Bell Store
  
3. Baker Properties    New 120,000 sq.ft. warehouse
  
4. CSB    New 2 story 7,500 sq.ft. bank
  
5. 180    New woman's residential facility
  
6. Realty Income Corporation    New Aldi Grocery Store
  
7. Insite Wooster (GOJO)    Roof and deck replacement
  
8. The College of Wooster    Gut and rebuild Armington Hall
  
9. West View Healthy Living    New 22,480 sq.ft. wellness center
  
10. West View Healthy Living    New 43,599 sq.ft. skilled nursing

## **Floodplain Administration**

Flooding has been a notorious cause of damage and life loss in the United States, with an average annual damage cost of \$6 billion and loss of 140 people. Floods can occur due to heavy rain, snowmelt, or a body of water overflowing, among other causes. The people and places affected by flooding are located in what is referred to as the floodplain.

Since standard homeowners insurance doesn't cover flooding, the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) offers flood insurance to homeowners, renters, and business owners if their community participates in the program. Participating communities agree to enforce and adopt ordinances that meet FEMA requirements to reduce the risk of flooding. In the spring of 2007, the City began participating in the National Flood Insurance Program with the adoption of the Flood Damage Reduction Ordinances. As if on cue, the City experienced a 100-year flood event in 2009 and another in 2010.

The NFIP standard for floodplain management is based on the 100-Year Flood. This is a flood event that has a 1 percent chance of occurring in any given year. An even larger flood is called the 500-Year Flood, which has a 0.2 percent chance of occurring every year. The last 500-Year Flood occurred in Wayne County on July 4, 1969, causing \$17,000,000 in damages and claiming the lives of 21 people.

On average, the City will issue 3 permits per year in the floodplain. Projects in the floodplain are required to build to higher standards including dry-flood proofing, raising the elevation of the lowest floor or other flood resistant methods. By limiting activity in these areas, flood damage risks are properly managed.

During 2018, the division conducted over 20 floodplain reviews and issued 4 floodplain permits. We also assisted property owners determine the base flood elevation of their properties.

## Backflow Prevention Program

Backflow can be described as “a reversal of the normal direction of flow within a piping system.” Contaminated water or other substances may flow from a property/building **into the distribution pipes** of the City’s potable water supply, causing contamination.

What our **Backflow Prevention Program** means to our customers is that once the potable water passes through the water meter into a facility, premise or home, it will be uncontaminated from other users. The backflow device protects other users from possible contamination.

Backflow and cross connections are covered by the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) under sections 3745 – 3795 of the Ohio Administrative Code and the City’s Utility Ordinances. Under these ordinances, commercial and industrial facilities are in need of an approved backflow device. Also, residential sites may be required to have protection based on use (for example residential irrigations systems).

A survey/plan review is done for all new water connections and may be conducted at an existing site by the Program Coordinator (Scott Davis) at his discretion. Devices may be required based on this survey.

- During 2018, the **Division tracked the testing of approximately 1,800 devices** using the City’s online tracking system.
- The Division also conducted surveys and site visits to eliminate potential sources of cross-contamination.
- Additionally, the Division enforced the required testing of these devices. They are required by law to be tested annually.
- Also, the division required the installation of these devices on new and existing water service lines as stated in the law, particularly devices required to be installed on existing fire sprinkler supply lines.

## Property Maintenance Code Enforcement

**We performed 1,000 Property Maintenance and Zoning Code inspections in 2018 resulting in 316 violations. This is down about 60% from last year reflecting the loss of the property maintenance inspector for several months during the year.**

### Most Common Violations by number

Weeds over 12" high	312
Rubbish and Garbage	87
Flaking and Peeling Paint	86
Illegal Parking	32
Sign Violations	25
Unlicensed and Inoperable Vehicles	24
Roof and Gutter	2
Accessory Structures	1

**It is clear that an effective code administration program enhances the quality of life for the residents of Wooster in many ways. The program must include effective enforcement of the maintenance and zoning codes.**

The 1,000 property maintenance and zoning code enforcement inspections are down from 2017. The decrease is due to the part of the year we did not have an inspector. At the end of the year we filled the position and look forward in 2019 to resuming our inspection programs in full.

# City of Wooster Building Standards Division

## 2018 Goal Setting and Action Planning

**Goal One:** Work with City Managers regarding utilization of Viewpoint cloud-based application software for their divisions. Make presentation outlining current use and possible further Citywide utilization.

**Status:** Completed. In addition to the Building Standards and Planning and Zoning Divisions, the Engineering, Utilities, Recreation, and Economic Development Departments utilize online applications.

**Goal Two:** Work with Viewpoint to continue improving the function of the current online permitting processes.

**Status:** Some complete and ongoing. We have implemented many upgrades, notably an upgrade to the requesting and scheduling of inspections.

**Goal Three:** Complete update of Chapter 13 of the Codified Ordinances. This Building Code chapter needs a comprehensive update.

**Status:** Ongoing

## 2019 Goal Setting and Action Planning

**Goal One:** Complete update of Chapter 13 of the Codified Ordinances.

**Goal Two:** Review the fee policy and fee structure for permits.

**Goal Three:** Expand the downtown waste collection program and eliminate non-compliant dumpsters from the district.

## **City of Wooster Building Standards Division Significant Prior Accomplishments**

- In 2017 – 2018, developed a new online parking permit application and process including new rules for the public parking lots and enforcement.
- Worked with the Board of Realtors to organize an annual community clean up event.
- In 2018 worked to expand the downtown waste collection program including online applications and new sites for dumpsters.
- Assisted the Wayne County Commissioners with interviews and the selection of a new County Chief Building Official in 2016
- In 2017 – 2018, hosted the following cities searching for best practices regarding code enforcement, downtown rehabilitation of buildings and improved customer service: Ohio cities of Steubenville, Mansfield, Upper Arlington and Hudson and cities from North Carolina and Rhode Island.
- In 2008, developed an annual joint meeting with local code officials and the local Homebuilders Association to provide HBA members with code updates and education.
- Managed Larwill Trailer Park clean-up project and worked with the housing coalition and WMHA to assist with the relocation of all residents to improved housing.
- In 2015, managed the project to transfer the administration of the City's backflow valve testing program from a paper system to an online system. This included the online registration for tester certification and recording of mandatory annual tests. The City has over 1200 registered valves.

- Worked with Cleveland State University School for Professional Studies to streamline the plan review process. Used software updates and concurrent plan review to reduce the average review time to 21 days for complex projects.
- Began large format scanning and electronic archiving of all commercial plans since 2002.
- Developed “mutual consent” appeal process for commercial building code appeals for downtown businesses.
- Developed a system of updating and coordinating all lot information and address information with the Wayne County Auditor’s records. This allowed the accurate identification of current owners, lot/parcel information, and addresses.
- During 2002-2005, initiated the discontinuance of the citywide “radio alarm box” fire alarm systems. These were unreliable and non-code compliant. This resulted in 220 commercial buildings upgrading to code-compliant fire alarm systems and the City no longer monitoring fire alarm systems with outdated equipment.
- Co-managed the municipal building’s \$1.7 million remodel project in 2002, the exterior bicentennial project in 2007 and the 2008 Schellin Park bicentennial monument project.
- Created the full-time position of Property Maintenance inspector during 2002. Created new R-T District periodic inspection program during 2013/14.
- Served on the WC Housing Coalition representing the City of Wooster since 2003.
- Ordered and worked with property owners on 42 structure demolitions during a 30 month period ending in 2014 utilizing 16 Moving Ohio Forward funds provided by the State. Served on the county-wide MOF committee.

- Served on the Howey House committee working in the N. Buckeye St. neighborhood. Worked to save the “Black” century home and secured funding for complete renovation. Initiated the replacement of sidewalks in the area and street tree trimming and replacement.
- Began a partnership with the local Homebuilders Association to provide members with code updates and education.
- Elected during a statewide election to serve as a director for the Ohio Building Officials Association.
- Awarded Building Official of the Year in 2005 by the Five County Building Officials Association representing 15 counties in NE Ohio.
- Received certification from the State of Ohio for Residential Building Department and all personnel during 2010.

***“The City of Wooster Building Standards Division staff is well trained, experienced, and committed to our mission of protecting the public and we are ready for the challenges of 2019.”***

Tim Monea	Chief Building Official Floodplain Administrator
Carla Jessie	Administrative Assistant Building Standards Division Planning and Zoning Division
Kim Fahrni	Electrical Inspector Commercial Building Inspector
Scott Davis	Plumbing and HVAC Inspector Backflow Valve Program Coordinator
Mark Nussbaum	Building Inspector Zoning Inspector
Mark Wilson	Property Maintenance Inspector Zoning Inspector

Respectfully submitted by:

Tim Monea, CBO  
Building Standards Division Manager