

2021

Report



Wooster Building Standards Division

Message from the Chief Building Official



These past 18 months have been a testing time for everyone, particularly those who have lost relatives and friends or have struggled with the health impacts of COVID-19. We have pulled together to help each other get through these challenging times.

While the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many challenges, it has also taught me some very important lessons such as the need to show appreciation for the hard work and perseverance of my colleagues. As an organization we have also learned lessons, and become stronger, more focused and better positioned than ever to deliver on our purpose. Ensuring building safety defines our purpose and we are committed to it. Staff works daily to ensure building safety, whether it's in our homes, places of work, or where we shop, eat or play.

In this year's review, we share our activity by the numbers. But we also explore what these numbers mean and how they support our values. We describe how we engage with our customers and stakeholders. We also describe our accomplishments, the goals we achieved and our new goals for the upcoming year. Thank you for reading our 2021 annual report and I sincerely hope it helps you better understand our purpose and commitment to the community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Monea".

Tim Monea, CBO
Building Standards Manager

1,569

Permits issued

Up 17% from last year

4,499

Total Inspections

Up 6% from last year

\$103,713,237

Value of construction in Wooster in 2021

Up 55% from last year's nearly \$67 million

8

New Single Family Homes built

Down 47% from last year

1,642

Property Maintenance and
Zoning Code Inspections

Up 30% from last year

Activity Summary

- **1,569 permits** This is up 17%. Four of the last five years had the highest permit numbers in the last 20 years. These numbers are impressive given the circumstances of the pandemic.
- **4,499 Total Inspections** Up 6% and amazingly, many of these were virtual inspections. Of these, 1,642 were property maintenance or zoning code inspections.
- **The total value of permitted construction was nearly \$104 million.** This was up 55% from last year. 4 of the last 5 years have been some of the highest values on record for the last 25 years.
- In 2021, we **collected \$363,438 in fees**, up 39% from 2020 and again fee collection in 4 of the last 5 years has been the highest on record and in line with our revenue policy discussed further in report.
- **8 new single-family houses** were approved, and this is down 53% from last year. This is analyzed further in the report.

The top 7 projects by value of construction

1. College of Wooster Lowry Center Remodel	\$30,000,000
2. New Warehouse on Daisy Way 200,000 SF	\$12,000,000
3. Daisy Dry Warehouse & Blast Cooler	\$3,044,000
4. Life Care Hospice Addition/Remodel	\$2,200,000
5. Western Reserve Group Remodel	\$2,000,000
6. Reed Warehouse new Warehouse 55,000 SF	\$1,500,000
7. Unitarian Universalist Church Addition	\$1,500,000
8. Walmart Remodel	\$1,321,000
9. New Subway Restaurant Cleveland Rd.	\$1,300,000
10. New Bellstore Car Wash Akron Rd.	\$1,211,000

This total represents 54% of all construction	\$56,076,000

City of Wooster Building Standards Division Significant 2021 Accomplishments

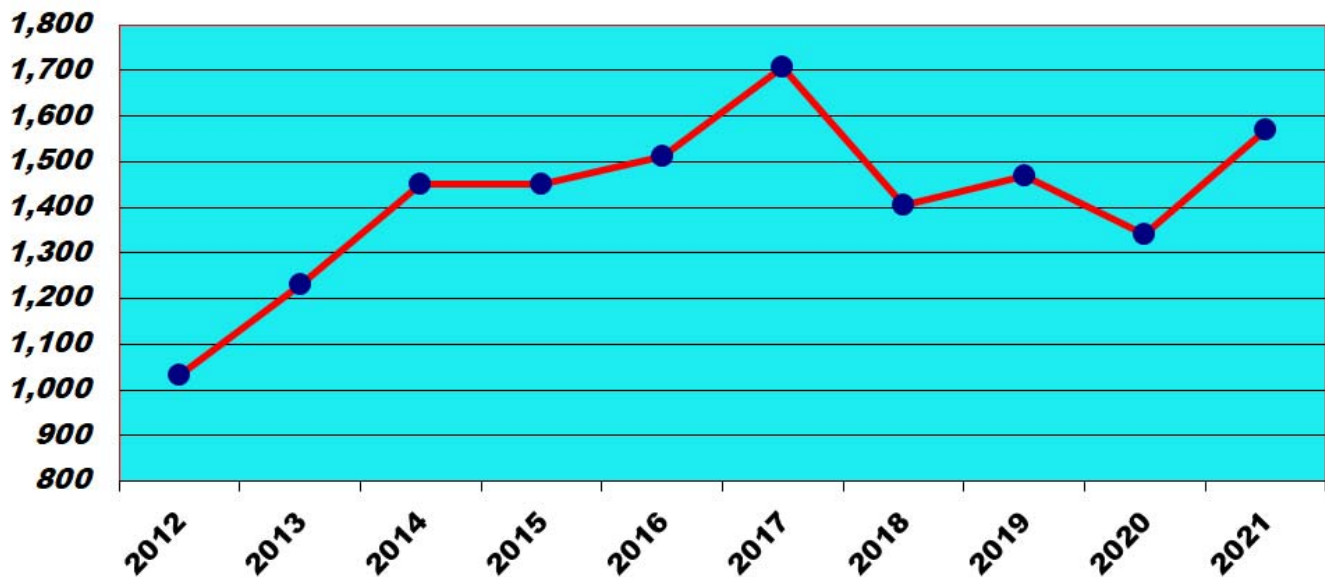
- **Accomplishments in 2021:** Our new Property Maintenance Inspector became certified for property maintenance code enforcement. The Division managed city hall facilities and upgraded the parking lot lighting, HVAC controls, and the main fire alarm panel. The Chief Building Official represented the City as a member of the Housing Coalition, worked on the homelessness ad hoc subcommittee, sat on the City's housing advisory committee, and represented the mayor as a board member of Community Action Wayne/Medina (CAW/M) and was a member of the CAW/M executive search committee that selected a new CEO. The division also managed the new Residential Waste Contract with Kimble, managed all of the City's off-street parking lots, and expanded the City's downtown dumpster program with a new location. The division also worked with the County on a grant project to demolish properties in the floodplain on Bauer Rd.
- **Virtual Building Code Inspections.** In 2020, we added the Virtual Inspection Program (VIP) to our online paperless building department software. Adhering to industry standards, we conducted many virtual inspections ensuring the safety of our customers, citizens, and employees. In 2021 we expanded and refined the program. We met with representatives from Scranton, PA; Cranberry, Pa; Portage County, Ohio, and many others to discuss our online system and VIP program.
- **Triannual Insurance Services Office (ISO) Review.** The City is awarded a score based on this in depth review of the operation of the building and fire departments. This score is used for homeowner insurance underwriting.

This activity has been trending up for nearly 10 years.

In 2021, 1,569 permits were issued, up 17% from last year. This trend had been moving upward since 2011, with 2012 topping 1,000 permits for the first time.

Total inspections were up 6% from last year as generally, this parallels the number of permits issued.

Number of Permits Issued Last 10 Years



During 2021, the Division reviewed and issued 1,569 construction permits, second highest number on record. These permits include residential and commercial building, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, and fire sprinkler and alarm permits. Not included in the figures are residential zoning permits (the division issues residential zoning permits).

2020 Value of Construction

In 2021, the total value of construction was nearly \$104 million. This represented the highest value ever.

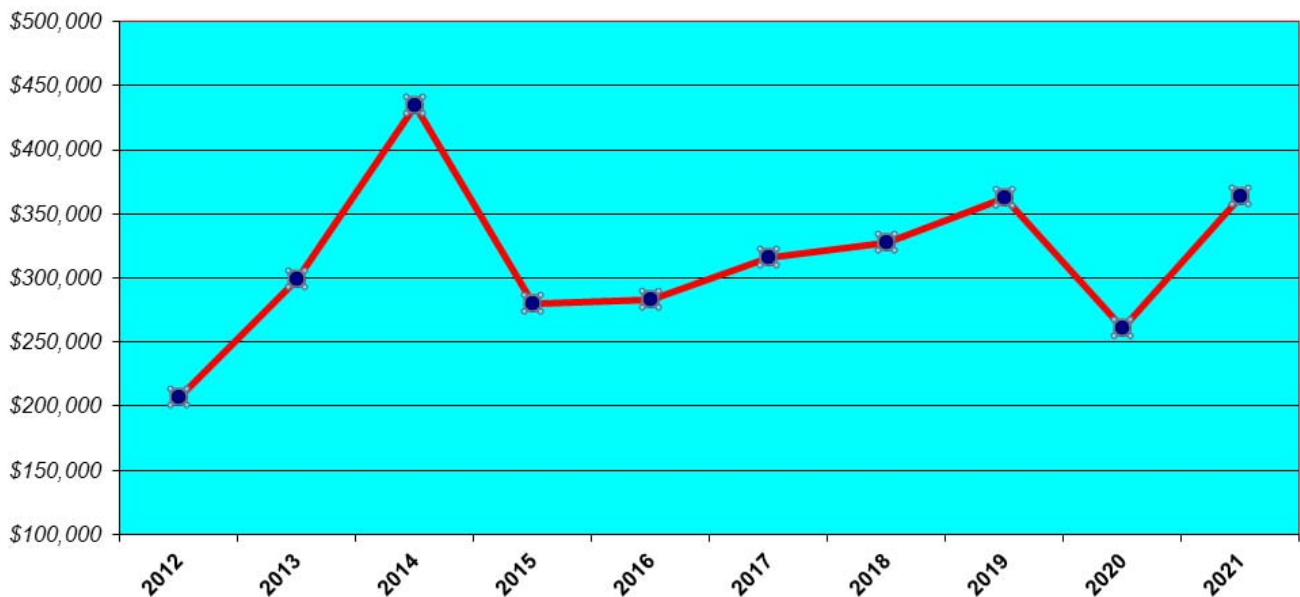


Over the last 20 years, construction in the City of Wooster has certainly had its ups and downs. Before 2001, construction values remained fairly constant in the \$30 - \$40 million range. The years between 2001 through 2007 saw construction activity levels peak in the City with 2005 seeing nearly double the norm with \$90 million in value. The housing crisis and the following years represented the low point. The last six years were very high (5 of the top 6 years ever) and in 2016 we issued building permits on construction valued at \$100 million – a new all-time high at that time. 2019 was then the second highest year on record at \$91 million. 2021's \$104 million is the highest on record.

2021 Fee Collection Up 39% Continuing a 6 year Upward Trend.

In 2021, we collected \$363,438 in fees, up 39% from 2020 as this mirrors construction activity. Previous years fee collection was up despite the fact that permit fees were lowered approximately 15% during 2017. Fees were lowered due to the efficiencies of the new cloud permitting process. We target fees to represent about 50% of budget expenses in line with our revenue policy and this will be closely monitored in 2022.

Permit Fees Collected in the Last 10 Years

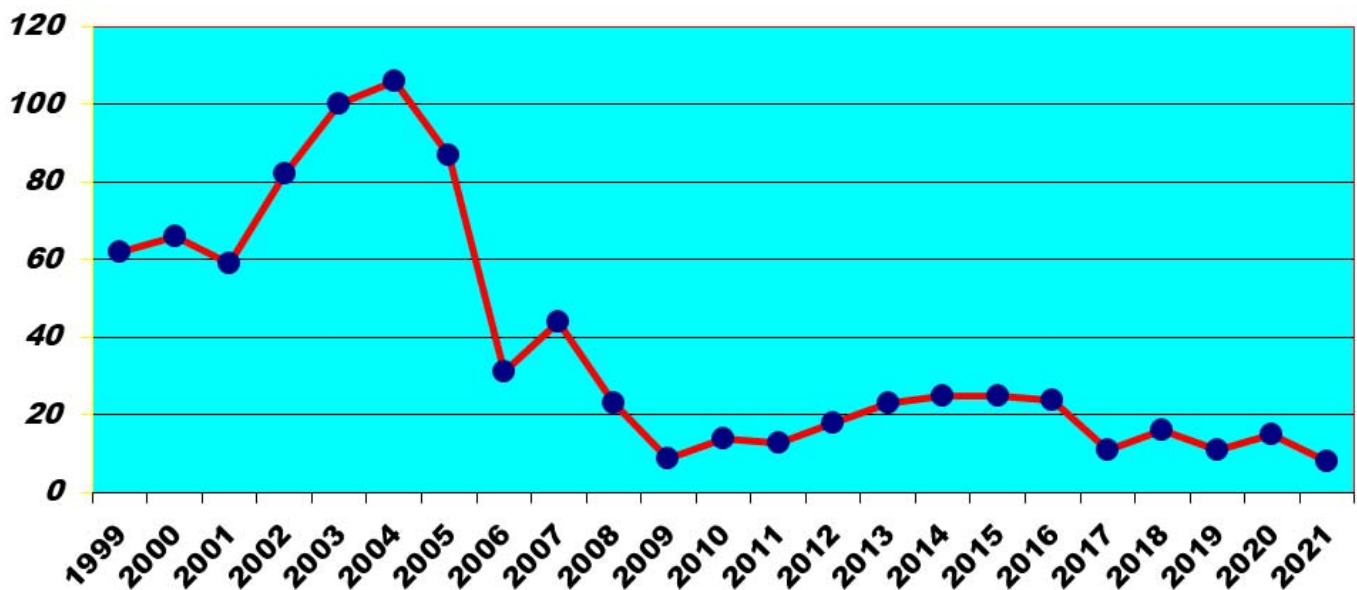


The general mix of fees is 50% user fees and 50% general fund. This mix is part of a revenue policy developed by the Division and Administration and is reviewed periodically. The policy reflects the view that fees from permits should not subsidize code enforcement and other non-development activity as this burden should be placed on the community as a whole. An increase in code enforcement activity and abatement funds such as demolition bring this percentage down, as fees are not collected for such actions. As these activities increase, adjustments to the target may be necessary.

2021 Single-Family Housing Starts Down from 2020

In 2021, 8 new houses were approved, down 53% from last year. The years 2011 – 2016 saw 20 – 25 houses built each year before it dipped to a low 11 houses in 2017 and not breaking 20 houses since.

Single Family Housing Units Last 23 Years



Housing averaged 64 new dwellings for the each of the ten years from 1999 – 2007 and even topped 100 units in two of those years. Housing unit growth 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. However, since then housing starts have not reached 20 units. In these years very few new subdivisions have been brought to the City for development. Only two residential subdivisions developed in the last several years: Tartan Ridge and Crooked Creek. In 2021 the housing industry faced unprecedented obstacles such as shortages of lumber and other supplies. The future looks bright for housing as several new developments are in various stages of approval.

2021 Property Maintenance Code Enforcement

Activity Summary

Code enforcement is some of the most challenging work we do. But it is important and satisfying because it protects public health and safety, safeguards relationships between neighbors, beautifies our neighborhoods, and preserves property values.

- We performed nearly **1,353 property maintenance and planning and zoning code inspections during 2020. This is up 7% from 2020.**
- We issued 615 **Code violations**. 87% were closed. They were closed because the owner complied, the City abated the violation, or we prosecuted the case in court. 22 cases were prosecuted in 2021.
- 77% of the violations were for high grass and weeds, excess rubbish and garbage, and unlicensed or inoperable vehicles.
- Five houses were **demolished** either by the City or by order. We have averaged 7 houses per year for the last 10 years.

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.

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 flood prone areas, flood damage risks are properly managed.

During 2021, the division conducted several floodplain reviews and assisted property owners determine the base flood elevation of their properties. Only a few floodplain permits were issued for projects. Additionally, properties on Bauer Rd. in the floodplain were acquired and demolished thus returning it to a natural area to receive floodwaters without causing property damage and loss.

2021 Goal Setting and Action Planning

Goal One: Complete update of Chapter 1351 of the Codified Ordinances. This Housing Code Enforcement chapter needs an update and a new code adopted.

Status: Completed

Goal Two: Evaluate fees for both building standards applications and the City's downtown waste collection program. Work out fee structures and formulas consistent with policy.

Status: Partially completed (building standards)/ongoing. For the downtown waste collection program, new facilities and customers were added but fee structure needs improved and another facility added.

Goal Three: Construct a new Downtown Waste Collection site for customers in the SW part of downtown.

Status: Completed in the SW corner of the Local Roots parking lot.

2022 Goal Setting and Action Planning

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

Goal Two: Assist the Land Bank in identifying properties to return to productive use in Wooster.

Goal Three: Remodel Council Chambers, IT, and Finance Division. Produce specifications for the replacement of the chillers at City Hall.

“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 2022.”

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 Residential Building Inspector
Mark Wilson	Building and Zoning Inspector Property Maintenance Inspector
Jeff Mills	Property Maintenance Inspector Zoning Inspector

Respectfully submitted by:

Tim Monea, CBO
Building Standards Division Manager