

City of Wadsworth Building & Planning Department Annual Activity Report 2009



PLANNING COMMISSION ACTIVITY

**TABLE I
MEETING SUMMARY
2005 - 2009**

	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Number of Meetings	20	21	20	23	21
Total Time (Hours)	20	28	30	24	35
Average Meeting Length (Hours)	1.0	1.3	1.5	1.0	1.67
Staff Reports Prepared	63	90	121	92	135
Preliminary Plat Applications	1*	3*	4*	1*	3
Final Plat Applications	3	1	5	0	4
Minor Subdivisions (Lot Splits & Consolidation Plats)	4	6	5	7	13
Conditional Zoning Certificates	8	10	9	7	17
Zoning Text Amendments	1	6	7	4	6
Zoning Map Amendments	1	3	3	5	4
Site Plan Reviews	3	7	10	12	16
Condominium Declarations	1	1	5	5	10

* Includes re-approval of subdivisions whose original approval was set to expire since Planning Commission approval of a preliminary plat is valid for one year unless construction has commenced.

**TABLE II
2009 RESIDENTIAL SUBDIVISIONS**

SUBDIVISION NAME/DEVELOPER	LOCATION	PUBLIC WATER	PUBLIC SANITARY	PRELIM. PLAT APPROVED	FINAL PLAT APPROVED	BLDG LOTS PER FINAL PLAT
NONE FOR 2009						

No major residential subdivisions were platted in 2009. The subdivision activity reported in Table I was for minor subdivisions (those creating 5 or less new lots, a.k.a., "replats"); dedication & consolidation plats; condominium declaration plats and renewal/extension of previously approved preliminary plats.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

**TABLE III
MEETING SUMMARY
2005 - 2009**

Year	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
No. of Meetings	9	11	13	17	15
Total Variance & Appeals Applications Received	12	15	18	32	43
No. of Cases Withdrawn	0	0	2	2	1
No. of Cases Approved	11	12	14	27	39
Pct. of All Cases Approved	92%	80%	78%	84%	91%

**TABLE IV
VARIANCES BY LAND USE TYPE - 2009**

	RESIDENTIAL	COMMERCIAL	INDUSTRIAL	PUBLIC – QUASI/PUBLIC	TOTAL
No. of Variance Cases	7	3	1	1	12
No. of Cases Approved	6	3	1	1	11
Approval Percentage	86%	100%	100%	100%	92%

BZA activity has decreased significantly in recent years, reflecting the general economic downturn and its impact on development.

CONSTRUCTION AND PERMIT ACTIVITY

The following tables show that *single-family* residential growth, the traditional mainstay of the community's development activity, continued to grow in 2009 after "bottoming out" in 2007. Note that as single-family home development drops, multi-family development increases. Likewise, permit fees collected have increased in all categories, reflecting the upward trend in development activity.

**TABLE V
RESIDENTIAL GROWTH COMPARISON 2005 – 2009**

	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Ave. One Family Structure Cost	\$159,305	\$157,583	\$186,478	\$177,245	\$172,092
Avg. One Family Floor Area	1,991	1,948	2,312	1,990	1,999
Total Single Family Dwelling Units (including condominiums)	75	68	50	94	145
Total New Dwelling Units (A)	176	68	194	202	145
Approved Final Plats (Major Residential Subdivision) – No. of Lots Platted	0	42 s.f. lots	206 s.f. lots 3 duplex lots	0	136 s.f. lots 3 duplex lots

(A) Total New Dwelling Units include all 1, 2 & 3-family dwelling and all multifamily dwellings (4 or more units in one building)

**TABLE VI
FEES COLLECTED
2005 - 2009**

FEES COLLECTED:	2009	2008	2007	2006	2005
Building Permits	\$59,737	\$50,052	\$46,094	\$70,647	\$109,101
Zoning Certificates	\$9,193	\$6,881	\$ 8,574	\$12,039	\$8,345
Development Permits (A)	\$7,407	\$4,474	\$ 9,324	\$15,511	\$3,912
Sanitary Sewer Capacity	\$320,174	\$141,426	\$264,499	\$330,320	\$384,995
HVAC Permits	\$21,000	\$17,556	\$19,252	\$26,044	\$24,700
Electrical Permits	\$24,295	\$23,000	\$22,949	\$35,731	\$41,977
BZA & Planning Commission Applications	\$2,150	\$2,350	\$ 5,810	\$4,416	\$4,100
Subdivision Review (B)	\$1,610	\$1,170	\$ 4,860	\$ 2,100	\$3,650

Notes:

(A) Fees for the construction of commercial, industrial and multifamily development projects.

(B) Subdivision Review Fees include major subdivisions (residential and commercial); minor subdivisions (those creating less than 5 new lots), replats, dedication plats, consolidation plats and condominium declaration plats.

**TABLE VII
CONSTRUCTION & PERMIT ACTIVITY - 2009**

	NUMBER OF PERMITS			\$ VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION		
	2009	2008	2007	2009	2008	2007
RESIDENTIAL						
Single Family	75	66	50	\$11,947,853	\$10,448,116	\$9,323,918
Two Family*	1	2	0	\$160,000	\$220,000	\$0
Three Family**	1	0	0	\$240,000	\$0	\$0
Multi-Family***	8	0	12	\$4,200,000	\$0	\$6,300,000
Remodel/Alteration	64	67	62	\$478,815	\$518,685	\$695,527
Additions/Garages	88	70	85	\$715,249	\$834,582	\$719,833
Demolition	10	5	2	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Residential	247	210	211	\$17,741,917	\$12,021,383	\$17,039,278
Total Less Demo Permits	237	205	209			

*2009 - 1 Two Family (2 separate permits) **2009 - 1 Three Family (3 separate permits) ***2009 8 Bldgs x 12 units(96 Units)

	2009	2008	2007	2009	2008	2007
COMMERCIAL						
New Construction	2	5	3	\$1,450,000	\$9,328,416	\$1,525,000
Additions/Alterations	5	2	0	\$535,000	\$53,700	\$0
Demolition	0	1	1	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Commercial	7	8	4	\$1,985,000	\$9,382,116	\$1,525,000
Total Less Demolition Permits	7	7	3			

	2009	2008	2007	2009	2008	2007
INDUSTRIAL						
New Construction	0	0	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Additions/Alterations	1	0	1	\$775,000	\$0	\$1,200,000
Demolition	0	1	0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total Industrial	1	1	1	\$775,000	\$0	\$1,200,000
Total Less Demolition Permits	1	0	1			

	2009	2008	2007	2009	2008	2007
PUBLIC/QUASI PUBLIC						
New Construction	0	0	0	0	\$0	\$0
Additions/Alterations	0	0	1	0	\$0	\$1,200,000
Demolition	0	0	0	0	\$0	\$0
Total Public/Quasi Public	0	0	1	0	\$0	\$1,200,000
Total Less Demolition Permits	0	0	1	0	0	\$1,200,000

TOTAL -ALL BLDG PERMITS	255	219	217
Total - Less Demo Permits	245	212	214

	TOTAL VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION		
	2009	2008	2007
Building&Zoning Permits	365	324	362
HVAC Permits	151	124	141
Electric Permits	149	155	177
TOTAL PERMITS	665	603	680
Electric Inspections	488	510	479
Building Inspections	968	925	875

CODE ENFORCEMENT

Table VIII is a categorized comparison of the type and number of code violation issues addressed in the year 2009 relative to previous years. Based on recent years' averages, 46% more code violations were issued in 2009 than in the previous five years, but less notices than in 2008. Overall, approximately 82% of code violations were satisfactorily resolved.

**TABLE VIII
CODE ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY – 2009**

	2009	5 Year Avg.	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004
Building	62	<i>65</i>	61	39	119	84	20
Zoning	6	<i>18</i>	18	13	17	43	12
Property Maintenance	29	<i>34</i>	50	29	29	25	38
Public Nuisance	0	<i>3</i>	6	2	0	2	5
Weeds	189	<i>71</i>	167	45	52	59	33
Total Notices	286	<i>194</i>	302	128	217	213	108
Total Resolved	234	<i>151</i>	257	95	151	164	87
% Resolved	(82%)	<i>(78%)</i>	(85%)	(74%)	(69%)	77(%)	(81%)

- Building Code violations issued for dated projects lacking final inspection approval were about average.
- Generally, the increase in Weed notices accounted for the overall high level of code enforcement activity.
- Complaint driven Zoning violation notices were low in 2009 and included changes of use, lack of zoning permits, and illegal parking.
- Property maintenance code activity was lower for the year due to fewer complaints. The majority of residential violations related to junk and unsanitary conditions in yards.
- There were no Public Nuisance violations issued.
- Weed notice totals were again a record high. Increased public awareness of the ordinance combined with an abundance of abandoned residences, and a high number of un-mowed vacant lots in newer subdivisions, created the high number of complaints.

Table IX breaks down violation notices by code chapters and defines their current status.

**TABLE IX
CODE ENFORCEMENT COMPLIANCE - 2009**

Type of Violation	Total Violations	Referred to Law Dept.	Resolved by Law Dept.	Abated by City	In Non-Compliance	Total Cases Resolved*	Percent Resolved
Building	62	1	0	0	37	26	42%
Zoning	6	0	0	0	3	3	50%
Property Maintenance	27	1	0	0	9	20	69%
Public Nuisance	0	0	0	0	0	--	--
Weeds	189	0	0	27	4	185	98%
Totals:	284	2	0	27	53	234	82%

* “Total Cases Resolved” includes cases abated by the City and resolved by legal action.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

NOTES TO TABLE IX

- Building occupancy related notices resulted in 42% of non-compliant properties receiving final building approval. Numerous projects were not completed, other properties have changed ownership, and owners are reluctant to make compliance related improvements.
- Zoning violation notices achieved a 50% compliance rate.
- 69% of Property Maintenance code violation notices resulted in compliance. The majority of the remaining issues will probably require legal action to correct the violations.
- As in previous years, enforcement of weed notices was time consuming, and required the services of private contractors to abate some (27) of the nuisances. Weed notices dominate summer month code activity. All but four properties were eventually mowed by the owners, or abated by the City. The great majority were vacant properties/lots.

Every effort is made to achieve compliance with all code violation notices without utilizing additional legal avenues.

GRANT ACTIVITY

The Building & Planning Department administers two types of grants funded by the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, which itself is administered by the Ohio Department of Development:

- 1) **Small Cities Formula Grant:** – This grant is awarded annually based on a “formula” established by the Ohio Department of Development based on census data and other factors. This is a non-competitive grant, meaning that the City will receive a predetermined allocation provided that a grant application is submitted by the established deadline and the proposed projects meet a national objective of the CDBG program. CDBG formula funds have been used for water, sanitary & stormwater upgrades, street and sidewalk improvement, and improvements to various parks.
- 2) **CHIP Grant:** CHIP stands for Community Housing Improvement Program. It is a competitive housing rehabilitation grant that provides various forms of housing assistance to qualified low and moderate-income residents. CHIP grant awards have ranged from \$450,000 to \$600,000. The City has been awarded CHIP grants in 1993, 1999, 2001, 2003, 2005 and 2007. Since 1999, the city has received more than \$2 million from the CHIP, which have been used to provide downpayment assistance, emergency repairs and housing rehabilitation for both owner-occupied and rental properties. More than 60 household have been assisted through this program. While the City’s 2009 CHIP application was not funded, we will apply for 2010 CHIP funds. This application is due on April 1, 2010.

CDBG funded programs such as the Formula and CHIP, can only be used to assist low to moderate income residents or those census tracts where 50% or more of the household are identified as being below the area’s median income.

Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)

As part of the Federal Housing & Economic Recovery Act of 2008 (HERA), the Medina and Wayne Counties and the cities of Brunswick, Medina, Wadsworth and Wooster collectively received \$1.8 million in funding through the Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP). An NSP application for the collective entities was filed on February 27, 2009.

The purpose of the NSP is to help communities deal with the increasing number of foreclosed and abandoned homes caused by the recent downturn in the housing market. Funds can be used in a variety of ways, mainly to demolish abandoned or foreclosed properties, or to provide downpayment assistance and rehabilitation to potential homebuyers interested in purchasing a foreclosed home. Unlike CDBG Formula or CHIP, the NSP can be used by any person or household whose median income is equal to or less 120% of the region’s median income, even though the CDBG program is the source of the NSP funds.

The City of Wadsworth’s share of the NSP funds is approximately \$222,000 and the City has chosen to use the bulk of it funds to provide downpayment assistance/rehabilitation (DPA) to individuals or families interested in purchasing a foreclosed or abandoned home. While it was initially thought that funds would be available for demolition activities, the response to the DPA activity has been greater than originally anticipated, so it appears that all of the City’s NSP funds will be used for the DPA activity.

Table X summarizes grant activity undertaken in 2009:

**TABLE X
GRANT ACTIVITY - 2009**

Grant Name	Funding Source	Activities Undertaken	Grant Funds Awarded/Spent*
FY2007 CHIP	CDBG/HOME	Rehabilitation of owner occupied and rental housing; down-payment assistance for first-time homebuyers; and emergency repairs for income-qualified home owners. The bulk of the funds were expended in 2008. Program was completed and “closed out” in 2009.	\$605,400/\$233,212
FY2008 Formula	CDBG	Street improvements to South Lyman Street between Broad & Pine Streets.	\$58,000/\$58,000
FY2009 Formula	CDBG	Approved application includes funding for slum & blight clearance of vacant commercial properties on Main Street. Project to commence in summer 2010.	\$60,000/\$0
FY2008 NSP	CDBG	Approved application includes funding for downpayment assistance/rehabilitation and demolition (clearance) of abandoned structures. Most funds will be expended in 2010 & 2011.	\$222,860/\$8,000

*Most grants are multi-year projects. Not all funds are awarded are expended in the same calendar year.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Other major activities undertaken by the Department in 2009 but not reported elsewhere in this report include:

NSP Training & Application Filing: The City was notified of the NSP in mid-December 2008. In January & February 2009, staff traveled to Columbus on several occasions for NSP application training and met with representatives from Medina and Wayne counties and the cities of Brunswick, Medina and Wooster to complete the collective NSP application. The regional application was filed by the deadline of February 27, 2009 and subsequently approved by the state so that project funding could commence.

Comprehensive Plan Update: The first full-scale comprehensive plan update since 1996 began this year. The planning consultant firm of McBride-Dale-Clarion was selected to oversee the planning process and since May 2009, one public meeting/open house has been held to gather public input as to what issues and challenges the city may face in the coming years. Additionally, four steering committee meetings have been held to help direct and guide the planning process. Additional steering committee meetings as well as public open houses will be scheduled in early 2010 so that a draft plan can be submitted to the Planning Commission for a recommendation and ultimately to City Council for adoption. The goal is to have a plan before Council by June 2010.

TLCI Funded Transportation Study: The City received a \$40,000 grant from the Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Committee's (NOACA) *Transportation for Livable Communities Initiative* (TLCI) program to study several transportation related activities. The grant is being used to:

- Study the feasibility of transit services for the City
- Develop concept plans for improving the public parking lot at Watrusa & Mills Street as a potential multi-modal hub
- Develop plans for a multi-purpose trail from the Watrusa/Mills parking lot/multi-modal hub to the southeast corporation limit following the abandoned trolley line.
- Develop a list of funding sources to implement the improvements.

The firm of URS was hired to oversee the planning process and a steering committee was established to assist in drafting the plan. The steering committee has met several times and a final meeting will be held in early 2010 to finalize a draft plan that will be submitted to the Planning Commission and City Council for review and ultimately adoption.

For more information about NOACA and the TLCI program, see www.noaca.org.

Revisions to Property Maintenance Code & Abatement of Public Nuisances: The Department also drafted revisions to the Property Maintenance Code and a public nuisance abatement process the main purpose of which was to allow the City the ability to address unmaintained and/or abandoned commercial properties based on their "blighting influence" without having to rely on commercial building code provisions for structural deficiencies, which would require the involvement of the County Building Department. The city's current property maintenance regulations only apply to one, two and three-family residential structures. These revisions are currently being review by the Law Director and are on Council's Committee for Planning & Economic Development agenda for future discussion.