

2024

Annual Report



Building Standards Division

Message from the Chief Building Official retiring after 25 years with the City.



Reflecting on my 25 years as the City of Wooster's Chief Building Official, my mission was always building safety. I wanted to ensure that the buildings we spend most of our lives in are safe: our houses, schools, and the places where we shop, visit, work, play, or worship. At the same time, I realized that a reasonable and common-sense approach when working with owners, contractors, and others was vital to gaining trust and accomplishing my mission.

I wanted my office to be a resource to the community, approachable, and customer-friendly. I wanted an efficient department to ease the burden on developers and builders. This can help a community prosper economically as it is a good place to do business and develop. Every accomplishment resulted from working with colleagues and customers on these common goals.

This has not always been easy. In my tenure, the Wooster Community has experienced a lot, including the closing of Rubbermaid, financial challenges, a housing crisis, and a pandemic. With each challenge, this amazing community rebounded stronger economically with growth and improvements. I am proud of how the Building Standards Division responded to each challenge, improving along the way.

My 25 years have been marked by many improvements, such as becoming one of the first building departments in the country to do business entirely online and paperless in 2017, long before COVID made this a necessity. We've assisted other departments in Ohio and nationwide in doing the same. Besides building codes and safety, we've had a part in improving fire safety, water safety, and backflow protection and reducing losses from flooding. I've also taken care of City Hall as the facility manager and managed construction projects, the City parking lots, and contracts such as the residential waste contract.

I was privileged to represent the mayor on the Community Action Wayne/Medina board for many years and have been a longtime Wayne County Housing Coalition member. I've also served on the boards of directors for the Ohio Building Officials Association and the Five County Building Officials Association. That board of my peers selected me as the building official of the year.

I've been helped by coworkers, customers, the business community, friends, neighbors, and residents, making this work very satisfying and meaningful. I want to thank each and every one of you who has helped me along the way.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Monea". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tim Monea, CBO
Building Standards Division Manager / Floodplain Manager

1,881

Permits issued

Up 18% and continues the trend of record activity

4,176

Total Inspections

Up .5% from last year

\$160,983,454

The value of construction in Wooster is up 66% from last year. 2021 and 2022 were the highest values ever recorded, and 6 of the last 7 years' numbers were the highest on record. This 2024 number is the most ever recorded.

72

New Single Family Homes built is up 60% from last year.

645

Property Maintenance and Zoning Code Inspections

Down from the previous year.

2024 Activity Summary

- **1,881 permits** in 2024, up 18%. The last several years had the highest permit numbers in the last 20 years. These numbers are impressive, given the circumstances of the pandemic.
- **4,176 Total Inspections** in 2024. Up .5% from last year. Of these, 645 were property maintenance or zoning code inspections.
- **The total value of permitted construction was over \$160 million.** This was up 66% from last year. The last 4 years have been some of the highest values on record for the last 25 years, and the 2024 value was the highest ever recorded, followed by the 2022 value of over \$130 million.
- In 2024, we **collected \$392,154 in fees**, up 16% from 2023. Fee collection over the last several years has been the highest on record and in line with our revenue policy, which is discussed further in the report.
- **72 new single-family houses** were approved, up 60% from last year. This is analyzed further in the report.

The top 10 projects in 2024 by value of construction

1. WC Justice Center Addition & Remodel	\$50,000,000
2. WCH Patient Access Addition	\$25,500,000
3. 42 Unit Multi-Family Project	\$ 4,910,000
4. Akron Rd. Drug and Alcohol Rehab Center	\$ 4,300,000
5. Lyric Theater Remodel	\$ 2,146,000
6. Dairy Queen New Build	\$ 2,000,000
7. New Goodwill Building	\$ 1,400,000
8. Homeward Bound Shelter Facility	\$ 1,200,000
9. Apple Creek Bank Addition & Remodel	\$ 900,000
10. WCH MRI Buildout	\$ 850,000

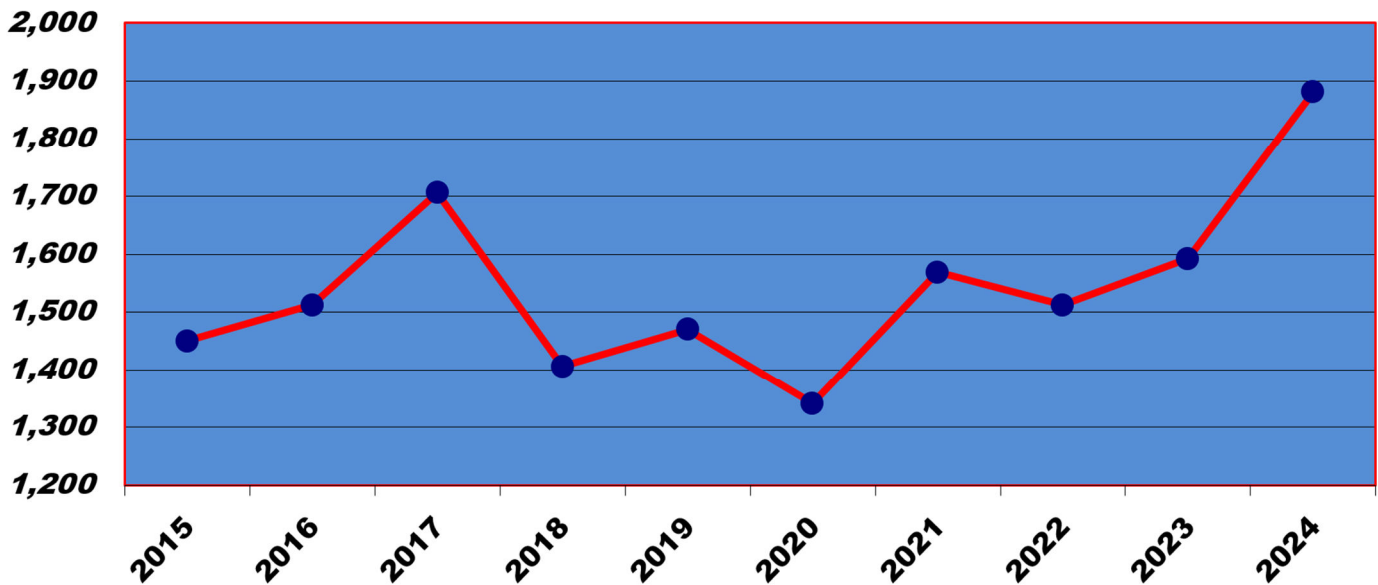
This is 58% of the total 2024 construction value	\$93,206,000

Permit activity has been trending up for 10 years.

In 2024, **1,881 permits were issued, up 18%** from last year. This activity level has been fairly consistent for the last 10 years, with 2024 being a new record for total permits issued.

The division performed **4,176 inspections in 2024, up from the previous year's numbers.** These numbers generally parallel the permit numbers and have remained consistent for the last ten years.

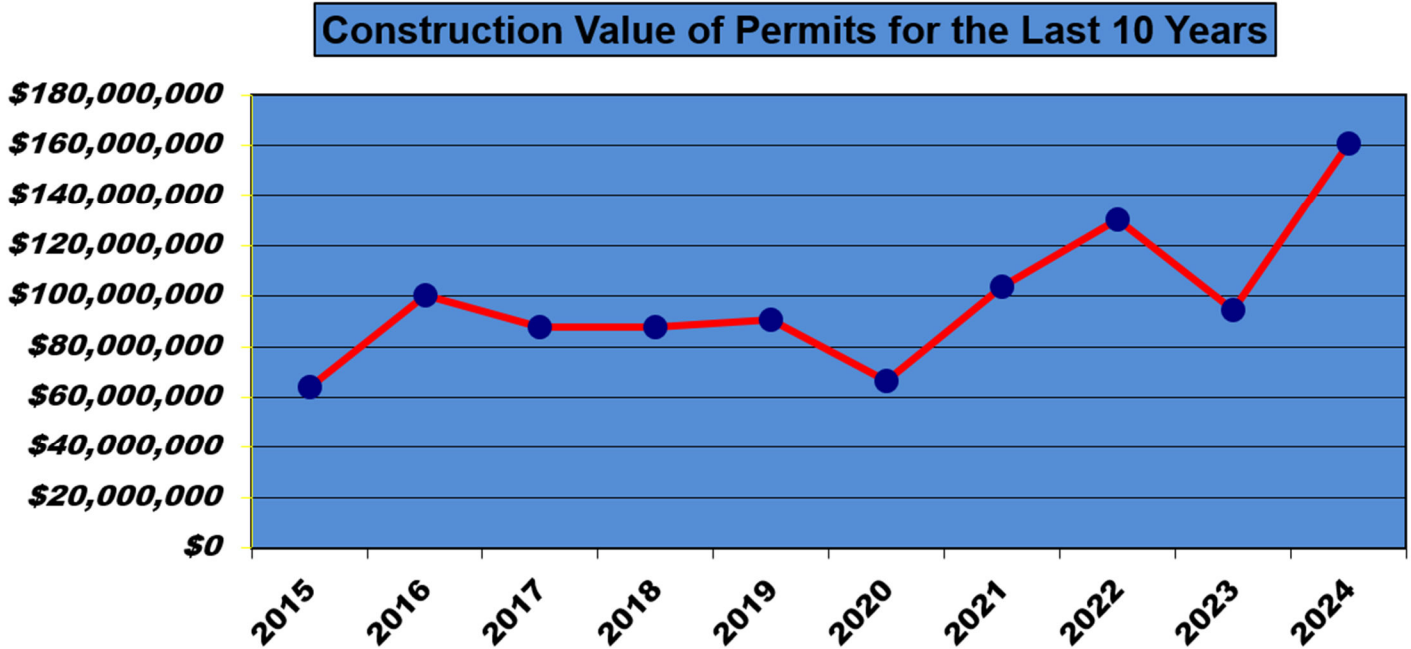
Number of Permits Issued Last 10 Years



In 2024, the Division reviewed and issued 1,881 construction permits. These permits include residential and commercial building, electrical, plumbing, HVAC, fire sprinkler, and alarm permits. Residential zoning permits (the division issues residential zoning permits, which the Planning and Zoning Division tracks) are not included in the figures.

2024 Value of Construction

The total value of construction in 2024 was **over \$160 million, the highest value ever** and up 66% from 2023.

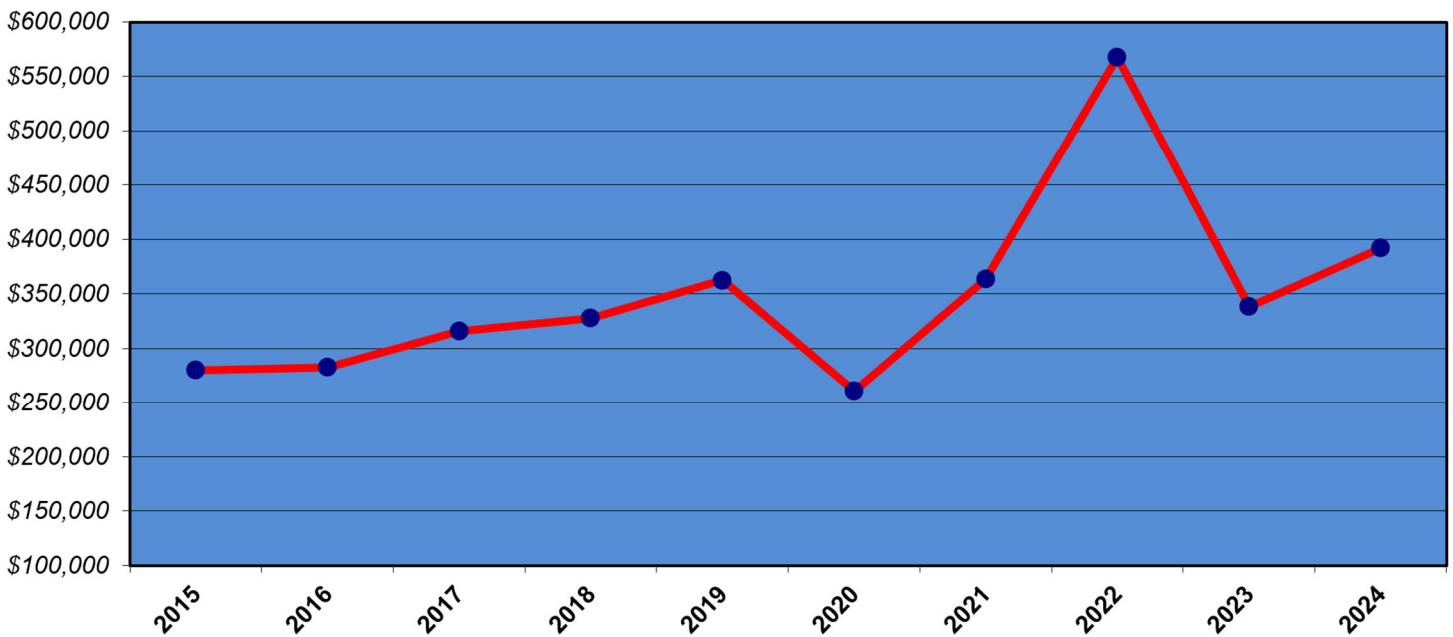


Over the last 25 years, construction in the City of Wooster has had its ups and downs. Before 2001, construction values remained fairly constant in the \$30 - \$40 million range. The years between 2001 and 2007 saw construction activity levels peak in the City, with 2005 seeing nearly double the norm, with \$90 million in value. The housing crisis and the few years following 2007 represented the low point. Starting in 2014, the last ten years had very high construction activity, culminating in a record year in 2022. In 2022, we issued building permits on construction valued at over \$130 million – a new all-time high topping 2021’s \$104 million, the previous record. 2023 continued this trend of robust activity with nearly \$96 million, although all of this was well below the new 2024 record year of over \$160 million. The 2024 numbers are bolstered by two large projects: the WC Justice Center project and the WCH patient access addition. In addition, the 72 new SFDs significantly increased the total.

2024 Fee Collection Up 16% Continuing a 4-year Upward Trend.

In 2024, we collected **\$392,154 in fees, up 16%** from 2023. The chart shows fees have been fairly consistent for 8 of the last 10 years and are in line with our revenue policy.

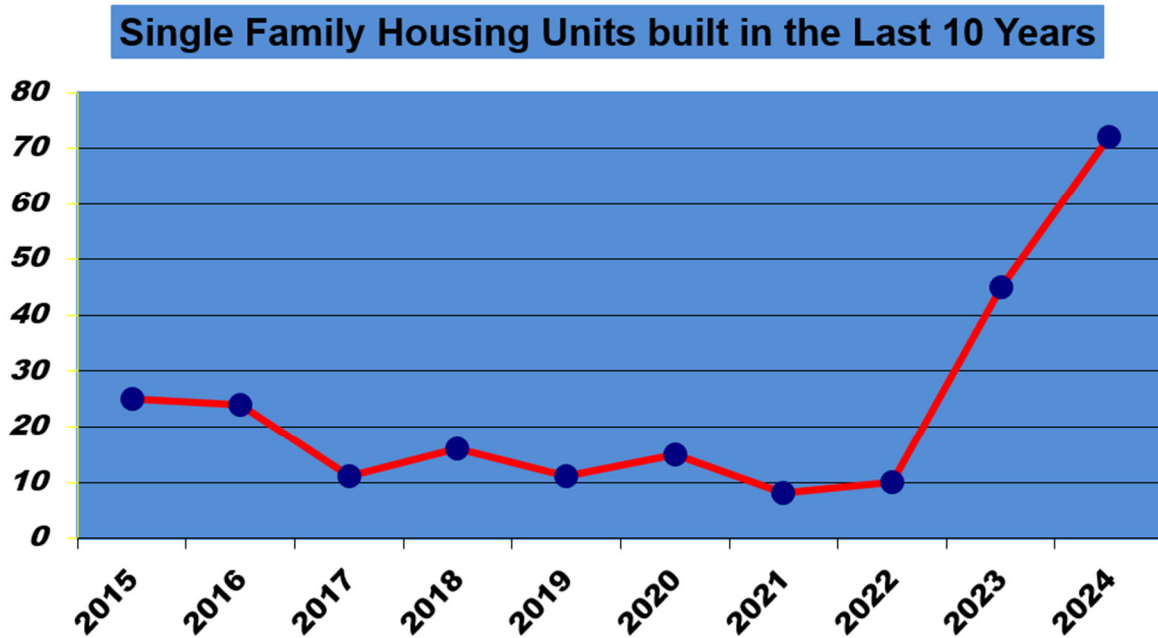
Permit Fees Collected in the Last 10 Years



The general mix of department funding is 40% user fees and 60% general fund. This mix is part of a revenue policy developed by the Division and Administration and is reviewed and analyzed periodically. The policy reflects the view that fees from permits should not subsidize code enforcement and other non-development activities, as this burden should be placed on the community as a whole. Increased code enforcement activity and abatement funds (such as demolition) bring this percentage down, as development fees should not fund this activity.

2024 Single-Family Housing Starts Up Again

In 2024, **72 new houses were approved, up 60%** from last year's total of 45, up dramatically over the past several years. 2015 – 2022 saw 10 – 25 houses built each year, not breaking 20 houses until 2023.



The 25-Year History

Housing averaged **64 new dwellings for each of the ten years from 1999 – 2007 and even topped 100 units for two 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, housing starts have not reached 20 units since 2023. In those years until 2023, very few new subdivisions were brought to the City for development. In 2021, the housing industry faced unprecedented obstacles, such as shortages of lumber and other supplies. The future looks bright for housing as we now have several hundred new single-family sites developed or approved and other multi-family developments started or planned. One development with nearly 100 sites sold about ½ of its sites in 2023 and nearly sold out in 2024.

2024 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 **645 property maintenance and zoning code inspections during 2024. This is down from 2023 and 2022, which were years of high enforcement activity.**
- We issued 370 **Code violations**. 80% of which were closed. They were closed because the owner complied, the City abated the violation, or we prosecuted the case in court. Several cases were prosecuted in 2024, and many more were resolved before court action.
- 70% of the violations were for high grass and weeds, excess rubbish and garbage, and unlicensed or inoperable vehicles.
- Eight houses were **demolished**. Six were either by the city or the owner because of demolition orders. Two commercial properties were demolished, and several residential garages in poor condition were demolished. We have averaged 10 houses per year demolished for the last 15 years.

Floodplain Administration

Flooding is a notorious cause of damage and life loss in the United States, with an average annual damage cost of \$6 billion and a 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 by adopting 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 must be built to higher standards, including dry-flood proofing, raising the elevation of the lowest floor, or other flood-resistant methods. Limiting activity in these flood-prone areas properly manages flood damage risks.

- In 2024, the division conducted several floodplain reviews and assisted property owners in determining their properties' base flood elevation. Only a few floodplain permits were issued for projects.

City of Wooster Building Standards Division Significant 2024 Accomplishments

- The Division serves as the main professional, technical, and administrative staff for plan review, permitting, inspections, code enforcement, floodplain administration, and enforcement of other local ordinances and requirements.
- The inspectors participated in mandatory training for their respective certifications and training for the updated building codes effective March 2024. The City participated in a training program for additional inspectors to be certified for commercial building and electrical inspections. This added capability will provide more flexibility and backup.
- The staff continued to provide support and back-up to the county inspectors.
- The Chief Building Official (CBO) represented the City as a member of the Housing Coalition and sat on the homelessness ad hoc subcommittee and the City's housing advisory committee. The CBO also represented the mayor on the Community Action Wayne/Medina (CAW/M) board and was a Lyric Theater construction committee member.
- The division also continued managing the Residential Waste Contract with Kimble, the City's off-street parking lots, and expanded the City's downtown dumpster program with a new location. The Division also manages city hall facilities. 2024 saw upgrades to the building's chiller system, new windows installed, and several offices added. The division prepared the bid specifications for replacing the rest of the building's windows and plans for adding several new restrooms.

2024 Goal Setting and Action Planning

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

Results: The program has expanded with new customers. A survey of all properties in the district was completed, and owners were contacted with program information. This work will continue in 2025.

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

Results: Several projects moved forward, and work will continue in 2025.

Goal Three: Complete City Hall projects.

Results: We replaced the chillers, added 6 new offices on the lower level, and produced plans for remodeling and adding 6 restrooms.

2025 Goal Setting and Action Planning

Goal One: Work with the new Chief Building Official, Mr. Joseph Bodnar, RA, CBO, and acclimate him to the City and Division.

Goal Two: Work with the Deputy Director of Administration to continue to expand the Downtown Waste Collection Program, including enforcing non-compliant containers scattered around the downtown area. Evaluate the fees and develop a fee policy.

Goal Three: Complete work on City Hall. This includes the window replacement phase 2 and new restrooms on the lower and second floors.

Goal Four: Evaluate the City's Property Maintenance Code Enforcement Program. With personnel changes in 2025, there will be a full-time dedicated property maintenance code inspector. During 2023 and 2024, this full-time inspector provided the needed backup for construction inspections and completed training for certifications required because of pending staff changes. More emphasis should be placed on this work.

“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 2025.”

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