

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

This is the Annual Report of the

Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department

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Cover images (clockwise from top):

Conservative Business Concepts development, Columbia City

Kyler Ridge building elevation, Churubusco

Excerpt from plat of Harvey Addition, South Whitley

A.J. Machine, East Business 30

All photos by Department staff

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

2017 was an interesting year—though perhaps hectic is a better word—for both the planning and building sides of the Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department.

The year began with a continuation of the relatively high level of permit activity from the fall of 2016. So much so, that it felt like there was no “winter” during which to accomplish some of the more mundane activities of the office. This was intensified with the changeover of positions in April due to Cathy leaving and Jen coming on, and continued through the rest of the year because of necessary leaves of absence that made the office short-handed. Only when going into the winter did it seem that those tasks were catching up; just in time for Jenny to announce her transfer to another department at the year-end.

The pace of building permits was matched by the number and intensity of zoning petitions handled during the year. A total of 94 public hearing petitions were handled by the four jurisdictions’ Plan Commissions and Boards of Zoning Appeals, compared to 78 petitions in 2016 and 58 in 2015. In addition, a dozen Development Plan reviews helped keep the office bustling.

All of this activity was reflected in the fee revenues for the department, which exceeded \$180,000. This was the most that the Department has ever collected, and it resulted in an operating ratio of 68.6%.

Particularly memorable was the County BZA’s January meeting, as it was surprisingly standing room only for a case on confined feeding operations rules. After that meeting, the decision was made to move Plan Commission and BZA meetings to a remodeled Meeting Room A/B on the lower level, which offers a much larger space. Even so, the Plan Commission and BZA still conducted meetings later in the year that had to be held at the 4-H Center due to large crowds. While it is always good to have active public participation, it is intimidating to be sitting before an audience of 300 or more, and both boards handled it well.



The January 2017 County BZA meeting

Looking to 2018, it seems that permit levels may follow a more “normal” pattern, with the first weeks of the year being quieter than they were in 2017. Planning and zoning should continue to be active, with code revisions and possibly a Comprehensive Plan update for the County, along with other changes as necessary. Of course, hopefully, there will be new residential developments to meet what seems to be a continuously undersupplied demand.

No matter what the year may bring though, I am confident that the Department will continue to strive to make our communities great.

-Nathan Bilger, AICP, Executive Director

DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

STAFF

Executive Director

Nathan Bilger, AICP

Chief Building Inspector

Craig W. Wagner, CBI

Assistant Planner

Cathy Gardner *through April 21*

Office Administrator/Planner I *through April 21*

Assistant Planner/Office Administrator *starting April 22*

Amanda Thompson

Planner I

Jennifer Shinabery *starting April 17*

Planning & Permit Technician

Jenny Stephenson

Building Inspectors (part-time)

Daniel Bishop

William Klein *starting February 7*

The Joint Planning and Building Department's seven-member staff fills the six positions shown above. While each position is defined generally as planning, building, or administrative, the department enjoys a high level of cooperation among all of the employees.

Collectively, the staff has several decades of experience in land use, development, and construction practice. Continuing education, training, and certifications are essential for maintaining the currency of the Department with new and upcoming trends and changes. Notably, Craig Wagner is a Certified Building Inspector, has statewide notoriety through teaching building code classes, and is actively involved in the development of the state building code. Nathan Bilger is a certified planner and serves on the state planning legislative committee. The other staff members also participate in training courses throughout each year.



Receiving an award for permitting excellence from Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership

HISTORY AND PURPOSE

In 1987, the Joint Planning and Building Department was created, combining the offices of the Columbia City and Whitley County Plan Commissions.

Current responsibilities of the office, which has planning/zoning/building jurisdiction over the City of Columbia City, unincorporated County, and the Towns of Churubusco, Larwill, and South Whitley, are:

- review all rezoning, special exception, variance, and subdivision applications that are filed - prepare staff reports, attend board and commission meetings to provide advice and recommendations

DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

- prepare amendments to codes and ordinances to maintain compliance with state law, to expedite review of development proposals, and to improve the quality of life in the county
- review and issue building permits, schedule and complete inspections, prepare violation notices, complete re-inspections
- conduct unsafe building inspections, file orders, and enforce through the courts
- review development plan applications for all new commercial and industrial projects
- provide administrative support to the Whitley County Redevelopment Commission
- assist Whitley County Economic Development on economic development activities
- administer the floodplain management program for County and municipalities
- maintain files of all building permits, petitions, meeting minutes, and other Department records
- assist citizens, developers, attorneys, realtors on planning/zoning/building/development matters

JOINT ADVISORY BOARD

In creating the Joint Planning and Building Department in 1987, a Joint Budgetary Board was established to oversee the Department's budget and its activities. Since that time, the Board was renamed the Joint Advisory Board, but it continues as the managing body for the Department.

The Board is made of seven members representing Columbia City and Whitley County. In 2017, the members were:

George Schrupf, Chairman	County Commissioner
Ryan Daniel, Vice-chairman	Mayor
Jim Bayman	County Council
Don Langeloh	City Plan Commission
Nicole Penrod	City Council
Kim Wheeler	County Council
John Woodmansee	County Plan Commission

By code, the Board must meet at least twice per year, at the beginning of the year to review the annual report, and in the middle to prepare the budget. In 2017, the Board met twice: on February 9, and June 6.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2017

In addition to the accomplishments of the Commissions and Boards listed elsewhere herein, some of the notable achievements of the Department in 2017 included:

- Issued ten unsafe building notices, resulting in two unsafe building orders
- Craig Wagner served as First Vice President, North-at-large Director, and Bylaws Committee Chairman for the Indiana Association of Building Officials
- Hosted eight Northeastern Indiana Association of Building Officials meetings, which feature code training sessions, code enforcement discussions, and presentations by construction industry suppliers and manufacturers. 2017 topics included: General Administrative Rules, unsafe buildings, state building variance applications and procedures, pools, LP gas storage, and other topics.

DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

- The value of the part-time inspection staff was proved as they performed diligently while Craig Wagner was on medical leave for several weeks in the spring and summer
- Conducted an ongoing customer service survey for the Permitting Excellence Coalition
- Served as a certification testing center for the International Code Council
- Transitioned Columbia City and Whitley County meetings from the Commissioners' room to the much larger Lower Level meeting rooms, including installation of new furniture and sound system
- Implemented staffing for the Whitley County Redevelopment Commission
- Held a training workshop in conjunction with the EDC on the principles of Tax Increment Financing and Redevelopment Commissions for elected and appointed officials in the county
- Reviewed the status of each Comprehensive Plan with the Plan Commissions of the County, Churubusco, and South Whitley
- Implemented a temporary overlay zoning district to regulate confined feeding operations and residential development in certain parts of the county
- Established a County Code Development Committee to aid in identifying and researching zoning code updates; began working with them on standards regarding confined feeding operations
- Assisted Churubusco in their bid for a Stellar Communities designation
- Provided a training workshop for South Whitley on setting up their initial Redevelopment Commission
- Drafted and publicized a plan document for upgrading U.S. 30 with the local U.S. 30 committee

ON-GOING PROJECTS

Additionally, some projects, either by their scale or longevity, are on-going efforts that span the course of multiple years. Currently, these include:

- Participation in the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership and Permitting Excellence Coalition
- Assistance in implementation and tracking of Comprehensive Plan recommendations and goals for each jurisdiction
- Assisting South Whitley in downtown improvement and revitalization efforts, including aid to their Redevelopment Commission, investigating historic preservation, and implementing related codes
- Continuing training of staff in current codes, best practices, and new trends and technologies
- Close coordination with county and municipal departments and utilities on proposed projects and plans
- Collaboration with other departments in the Parcel Committee to collectively review proposed property splits and combines throughout the County for code compliance and acceptability
- Writing documentation of standard operating procedures for department processes
- Annual review of procedures, fees, and business operations
- Cooperation with the Whitley County Economic Development Corporation in business attraction and retention

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENT STATISTICS

Building permits issued	719	New single-family homes constructed	99
Inspections completed	3,233	New commercial buildings	9
Building department vehicle mileage	47,745	Demolition permits issued	25
Unsafe building violation notices	5	Unsafe building orders issued	2
Improvement location permits issued	561	Mobile home renewals	6
Pond permits issued	5	Code violation notices	5
Plan Commission applications	26	BZA applications	68
Public meetings held	55	Development plan reviews	12
Total fees collected	\$ 181,885.22	Total operating expenses	\$ 265,181.24

POPULATION

The population for Whitley County was estimated by the U.S. Census as 33,449 as of July 2016, the most recent estimate available. This represents a growth of 0.5% above the 2010 Census count, but negligible growth over the previous year. Over the 2010-16 time period, Allen County had an estimated 4.1% growth, Kosciusko County had 2.3%, and the state as a whole was 2.2%. However, Whitley County has fared as well as, or better than, the other nearby counties: Noble (0.3%), Huntington (-1.9%), and Wabash (-3.3%). However, due to the methodology used by the U.S. Census Bureau to extrapolate the population, estimates in the latter part of each decade can become less precise, particularly for places that have sudden shifts in population, where the variation from actual can be nearly 2 percentage points.

POPULATION GROWTH ESTIMATES

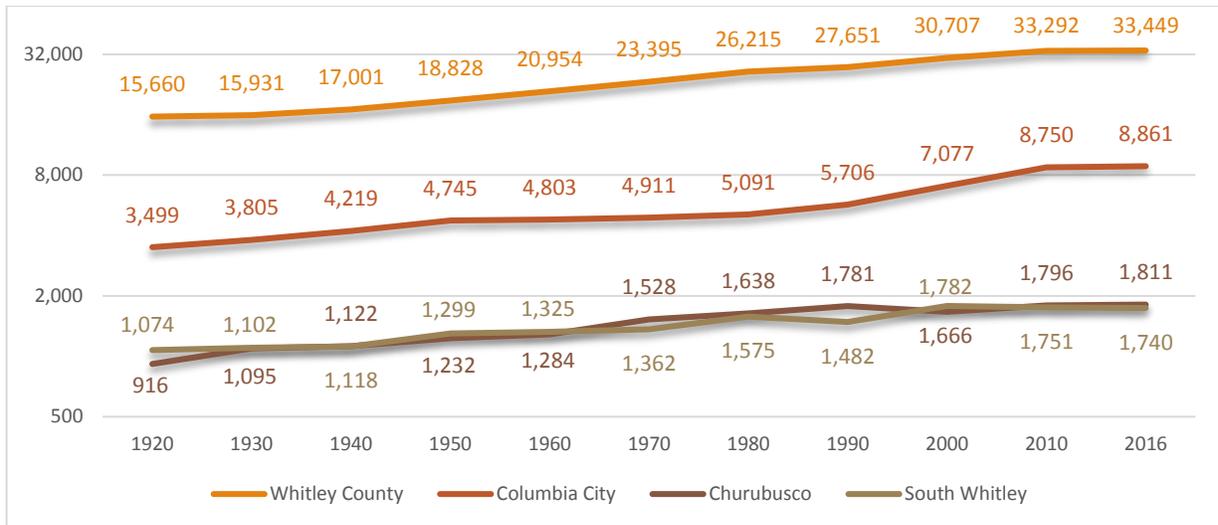
	CENSUS		POPULATION ESTIMATES					CHANGE
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2010-16
Whitley County	33,292	33,288	33,270	33,238	33,403	33,406	33,449	0.5%
Columbia City	8,750	8,812	8,809	8,791	8,829	8,857	8,861	1.3%
Churubusco	1,796	1,801	1,797	1,789	1,790	1,795	1,811	0.8%
South Whitley	1,751	1,770	1,763	1,757	1,752	1,743	1,740	0.6%
Larwill*	283	282	281	280	283	282	281	-0.7%

Note: Larwill is an incorporated town and so is included here for reference. Because the Town lacks its own Plan Commission, it is included in County figures elsewhere in this report.

As a frame of reference, from 1930 to 2010, the County had fairly steady population growth of around 10% per decade. Columbia City had a period of substantial growth from the late 1980s up to 2010, growing by some 50%. The towns of South Whitley and Churubusco have not had any periods of major increases, and are statistically much the same as 25 years ago.

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

POPULATION GROWTH SINCE 1920



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

As stated in last year's report, if the trend indicated by the 2010-16 estimates continues to 2020, Whitley County would see its lowest growth rate since 1930. This could severely impact the sustainability of our businesses, industries, and schools, as well as potentially reducing provision of public services.

Columbia City did have new single-family subdivision sections and a large multi-family development open in 2017; the resultant population growth would not appear in estimates for at least another year. Churubusco and the County also had plans presented for additional sections of existing subdivisions that may break ground in 2018. South Whitley, while not having new development proposals, did have several new single-family permits in an existing subdivision that may indicate increasing interest in the community.

Hopefully, these and more residential developments in 2018 reverse the population stagnation in the future.

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT

School enrollment is an important factor to consider in planning as it can be another indicator of the long-term vitality of our communities.



Rendering of the proposed main entrance for the new Columbia City High School (WCCS)

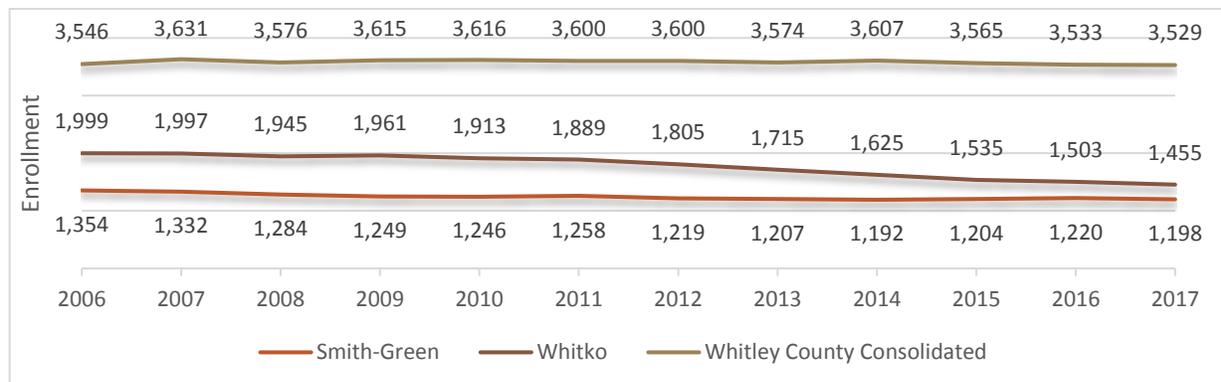
Increasing enrollment typically accompanies new residents, especially those of the younger generation that have or will soon have children. A stagnant, aging population as we are seeing currently in the county will stall school enrollment. This is important to consider as rising school operating costs will eventually exceed

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

the growth of funding per student received from the state. As such, stagnated enrollments could have an impact on the school system as much as decreasing enrollment, potentially resulting in staffing cuts, program reductions, or even school closures. A decreasing enrollment for a county such as ours has added impact on the community at large, as it signifies the population is aging with fewer and fewer children to replace retiring workers, to fill homes, and to provide the vitality necessary for a functioning community.

For the three school corporations of Whitley County, enrollment has been stagnant or decreasing for the past decade. Whitley County Consolidated Schools began construction of the new high school in 2017, which could help to spark interest in the school district and start to push student numbers upward within the next few years. Meanwhile, the other two school districts began to examine strategies to adjust to the lower enrollment numbers in the near future. It could be a proactive effort for the three towns (Churubusco, Larwill, and South Whitley) to investigate opportunities to partner with the school corporations to offset the decrease in students. Discussions to that effect did begin in 2017, and optimistically they will continue.

PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT SINCE 2006



Source: Indiana Department of Education

As a matter of planning, it is important that these impacts are anticipated and adequately addressed by each jurisdiction while pursuing the goals of their comprehensive plans.

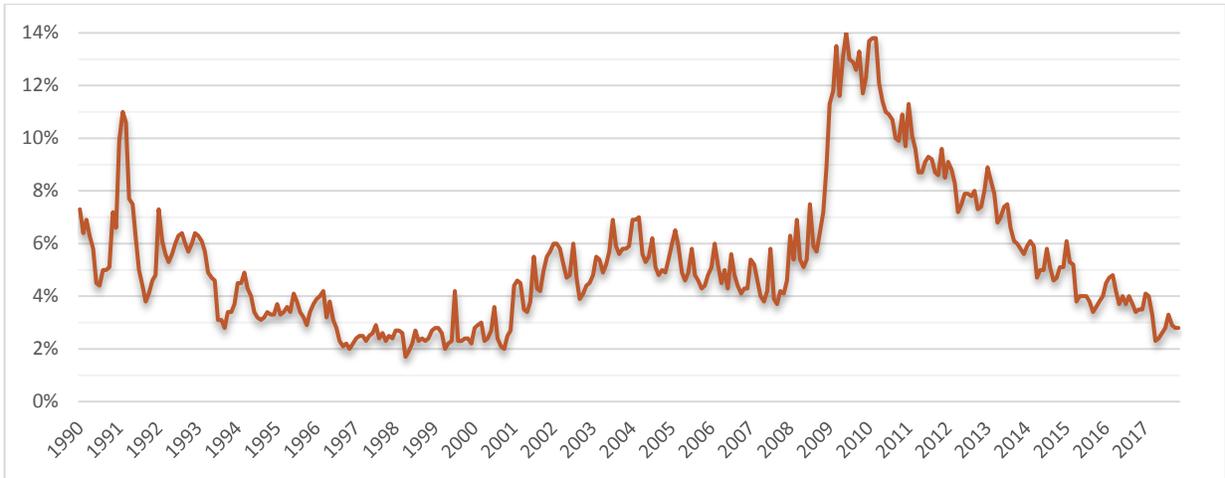
UNEMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate is an important statistic for the Department and communities to utilize in planning efforts. At the end of 2017, the County unemployment rate stood at a seasonally-unadjusted 2.8%, having fallen from 3.5% in December 2016 and 3.9% in 2015. The peak unemployment of nearly 14% occurred in 2010, during the height of the Great Recession.

A decreasing unemployment rate is a good thing for our residents, but it should be monitored to anticipate and promote balanced growth. Unemployment that falls below about 4-5% (a theoretical “full employment” rate) can indicate that current businesses are being starved for employees and may begin to look elsewhere for expansion possibilities, while new businesses may pass the County by for lack of an immediately available workforce. This difference can be made up for by commuters into the County, but only up to certain point, and a large proportion of commuting has drawbacks as well.

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

WHITLEY COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT RATE SINCE 1990



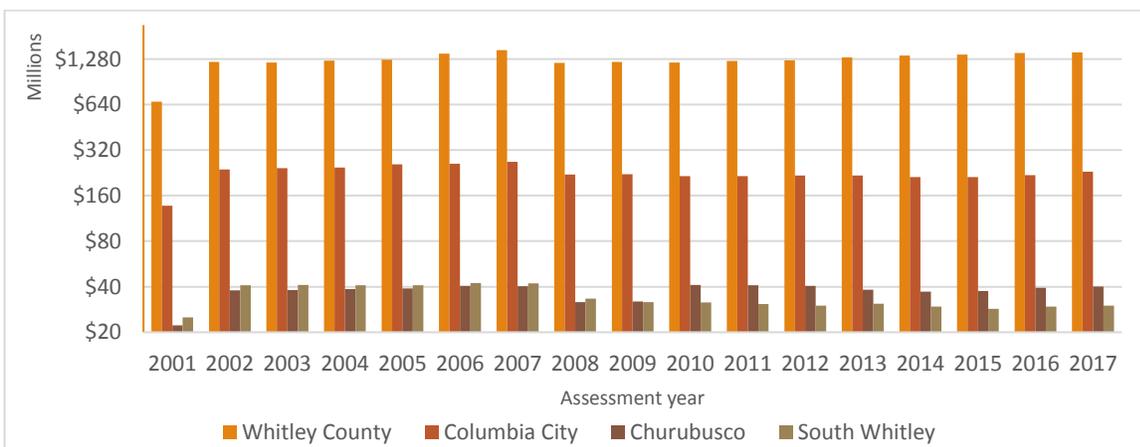
Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, through November 2017

Viewing this in combination with the flat population and school statistics, it will be important that appropriate residential growth and educational opportunities be considered throughout the county in order to continue and promote business location and expansion.

ASSESSED VALUES

The assessed value (AV) of real property can be an important indicator of the strength of a community and its ability to provide services, and the trend of AV is a factor used by businesses in selecting new locations.

ASSESSED VALUES (CERTIFIED NET) SINCE 2001



Source: Whitley Co. Auditor (note that Larwill is not shown here due to its relatively low AV)

As seen in the above chart, all the jurisdictions in the county have had varying trends of growth and decline, though few major rises or falls. When looking at each jurisdiction in 2017, only the County and Churubusco

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

total assessed values exceeded the 2002 values. However, Columbia City did see a 5.72% increase in 2017 over the 2016 value, or about a \$12M increase in value. This is likely due to the construction of the apartment buildings in Quail Ridge and new single-family homes in the newly developed subdivision sections. The County overall, Churubusco, and South Whitley also had increases in AV from 2016 but not as significant as Columbia City's, ranging from 1.1 to 2.1%.

These figures are important to consider, as new construction will increase net assessed values in the jurisdictions, but tax abatements, homeowner credits, and property losses will reduce them. Monitoring of construction values and net losses, both fiscal and physical, is necessary to ensure the ongoing provision of services for quality of life, education, and safety.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

CHURUBUSCO

PETITIONS FILED IN 2017

Rezoning	0	Subdivision plat	0	Variance	4
Zoning text amendment	0	Subdivision replat	0	Appeal	0
Development plan	0	Special exception	1	Other	0

PLAN COMMISSION

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Jason Bartl	Town Council	1/1/2018
Paula Grawcock	County Commissioners	1/1/2021
Jeremy Hart, President	Town Council	1/1/2020
Ashley Johnson	County Commissioners	1/1/2020
Bruce Johnson	Town Council Member	Term
Wayne Krider	Town Council	1/1/2020
Mark Pepple	Town Council Member	1/1/2022
Brenda Saggars, Vice president	Town Council	1/1/2018
Pat Stanford	Town Council	1/1/2018

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Churubusco Plan Commission held 1 meeting in 2017, in which the Commission discussed the status of the Comprehensive Plan.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Jason Bartl, Chair	Town Council	1/1/2020
David Crabill	Town Council	1/1/2020
Paula Grawcock, Vice chair	Plan Commission	Biennial appointment
Alan Malcolm	Town Council	1/1/2019
Miles Wilson	Town Council	1/1/2019

Summary of BZA actions

The Churubusco Board of Zoning Appeals held 6 meetings in 2017 and considered cases for a special exception of a downtown apartment, a use variance for a meat processing use, and setback and parking variances.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

COLUMBIA CITY

PETITIONS FILED IN 2017

Rezoning	2	Subdivision plat	1	Variance	6
Zoning text amendment	1	Subdivision replat	1	Appeal	0
Development plan	5	Special exception	4	Other	2

PLAN COMMISSION

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Walt Crowder	City Council Member	Term of Office
Doug Graft, President	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Jon Kissinger	County Commissioners	1/1/2021
Don Langeloh	Mayor	1/1/2019
Jeff Walker, Vice president	City Council	1/1/2020
Dennis Warnick	Mayor	1/1/2020
Dan Weigold	City Council Member	Term of Office
Larry Weiss	Mayor	1/1/2021
Patrick Zickgraf	Mayor	1/1/2018

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Columbia City Plan Commission held 8 meetings in 2017. The Commission approved development plans for the new high school, Conservative Business Concepts building, and the aquatics center, and made recommendations on zoning amendments regarding single-family attached uses and a commercial rezoning. They also approved primary plats for two small subdivisions.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Marquis Jones	City Council	1/1/2019
Jon Kissinger, Vice chair	Plan Commission	Annual appointment
Dwayne Knott, Chair	Mayor	1/1/2021
Anthony Romano	Mayor	1/1/2018
Dennis Warnick	Mayor	1/1/2021

Summary of BZA actions

The Columbia City Board of Zoning Appeals held 7 meetings in 2017. The Board considered setback, signage, fence, and parking variances, as well as special exceptions for outdoor storage, medical clinic, downtown mixed use apartment building, and a seasonal entertainment use.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

SOUTH WHITLEY

PETITIONS FILED IN 2017

Rezoning	1	Subdivision plat	1	Variance	5
Zoning text amendment	0	Subdivision replat	1	Appeal	0
Development plan	0	Special exception	0	Other	1

PLAN COMMISSION

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Wendy Bills	Town Council	1/1/2021
Bill Boggs	Town Council Member	Term of Office
Randy Cokl	Town Council Member	Term of Office
Tom Dome, President	Town Council	1/1/2018
Les Hoffman	Town Council Member	Term of Office
Joe Kessie, Vice president	Town Council	1/1/2019 <i>resigned 4/26/17</i>
Anna Simmons	Town Council	1/1/2019
Wayne Swender	County Commissioners	1/1/2020
Vacant	County Commissioners	1/1/2020

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The South Whitley Plan Commission held 6 meetings in 2017. The Commission reviewed the status of the Comprehensive Plan, recommended an amendment to the Plan and an associated rezoning from industrial to residential for several properties, and considered two plats.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Frank Baldrige	Town Council	1/1/2019
Tom Dome, Chair	Town Council	1/1/2020
Rod Hardesty	Town Council	1/1/2021
Doug Morrissey, Vice chair	Town Council	1/1/2019
Wayne Swender	Plan Commission	Annual appointment

Summary of BZA actions

The South Whitley Board of Zoning Appeals held 5 meetings in 2017 and considered variances for electronic signs, lot area, and front setback.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

WHITLEY COUNTY

PETITIONS FILED IN 2017

Rezoning	3	Subdivision plat	11	Variance	27
Zoning text amendment	2	Subdivision replat	2	Appeal	2
Development plan	7	Special exception	19	Other	1

PLAN COMMISSION

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Chad Banks	County Council Member	Annual appointment
Elizabeth Deckard	County Commissioners	1/1/2018
John Johnson, Secretary	County Commissioners	1/1/2021
Kenneth Kerch	County Commissioners	1/1/2018
Mark Mynhier	County Surveyor	Duration of Office
Tom Western	County Commissioner Member	Annual appointment
Brad Wolfe, Vice president	County Commissioners	1/1/2018
John Woodmansee	County Extension Office	Duration of Office
Doug Wright, President	County Commissioners	1/1/2021

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Whitley County Plan Commission held 10 meetings in 2017. The Commission granted primary approval of several plats, made recommendations on 3 rezonings and 2 text amendments, and approved development plans for Steel Dynamics, Union 12, Cleveland Amish School, and Kissinger Electric.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Membership

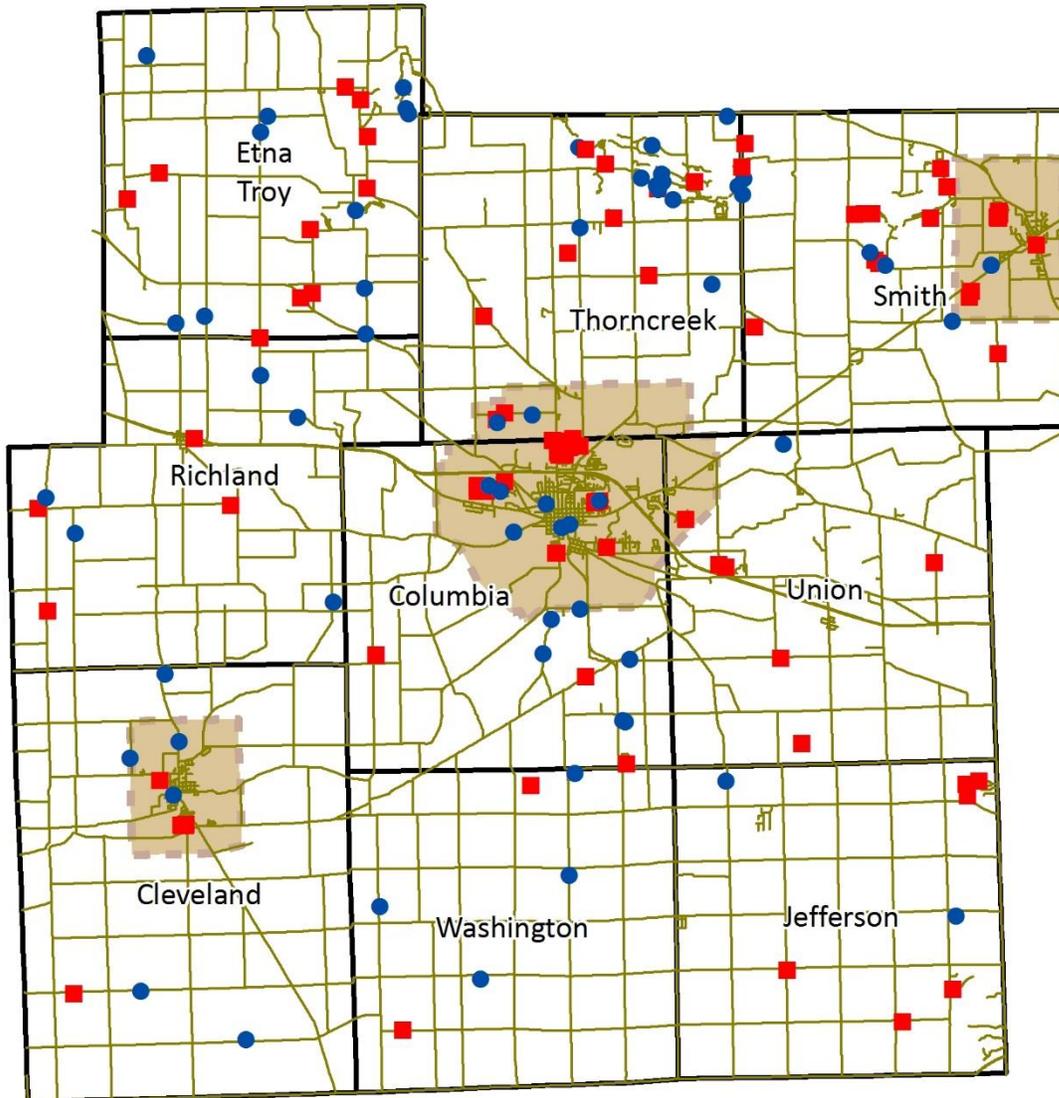
	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Elizabeth Deckard	County Commissioners	1/1/2018
Tim Denihan, Vice chair	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Will Klein	County Council	1/1/2020
Danny Wilkinson, Chair	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Doug Wright, Secretary	Plan Commission Member	Annual appointment

Summary of BZA actions

The County Board of Zoning Appeals held 12 meetings in 2017. The Board considered 22 setback variances, and special exceptions for secondary dwelling units, two-family villas, a confined feeding operation, a retail showroom/outdoor track, and a church in an AG District, among others.

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

MAP OF RESIDENTIAL PERMITS



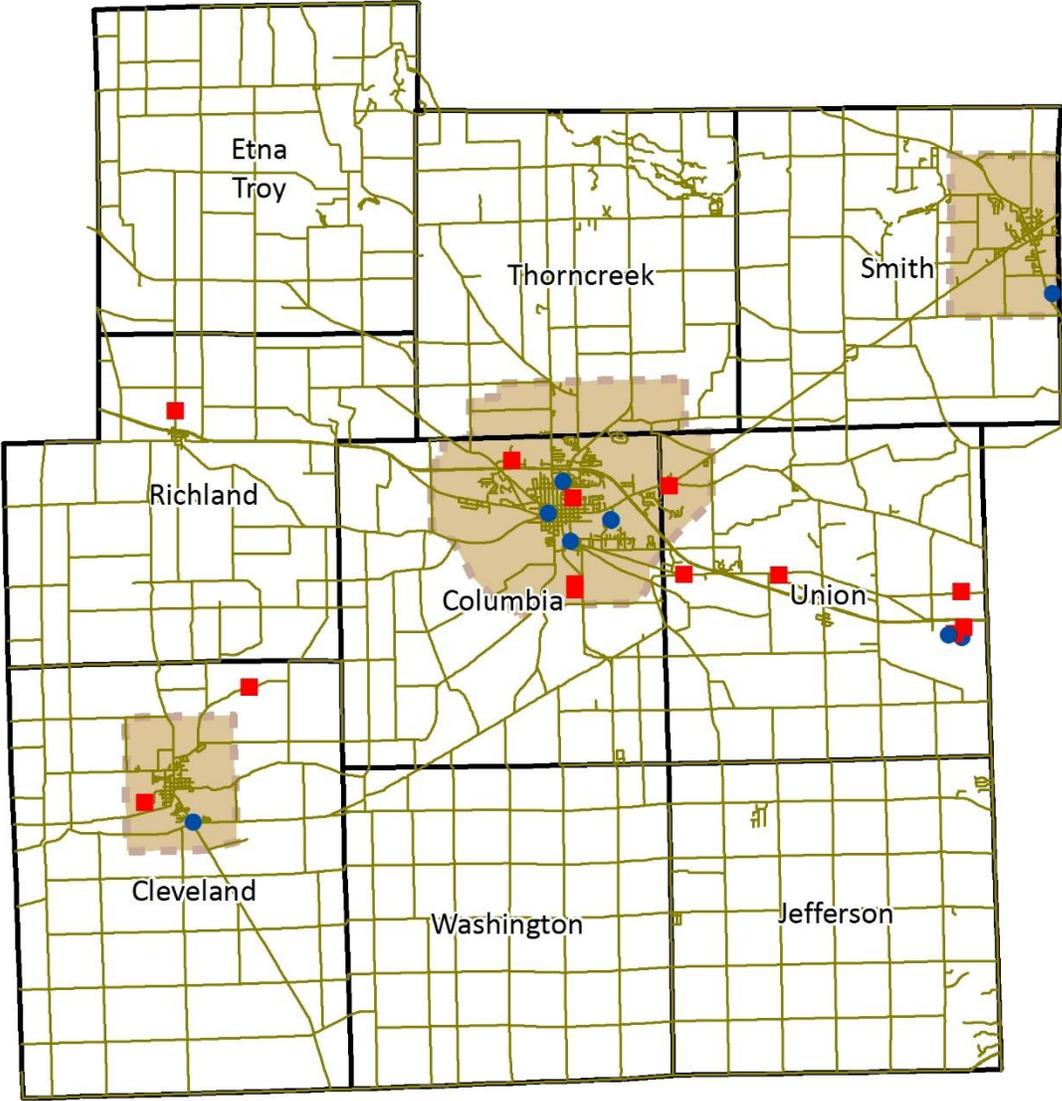
■ *New construction*
Includes single-family, two-family, modular, etc.
Does not include multi-family.

● *Additions*
Room or garage additions, adding stories, etc.
Does not include decks, porches, or remodels.



CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

MAP OF COMMERCIAL PERMITS



■ *New construction*
Includes commercial, industrial, multi-family, and institutional uses.

● *Additions*
Additions to existing commercial, industrial, multi-family or institutional uses. Does not include remodels.



CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

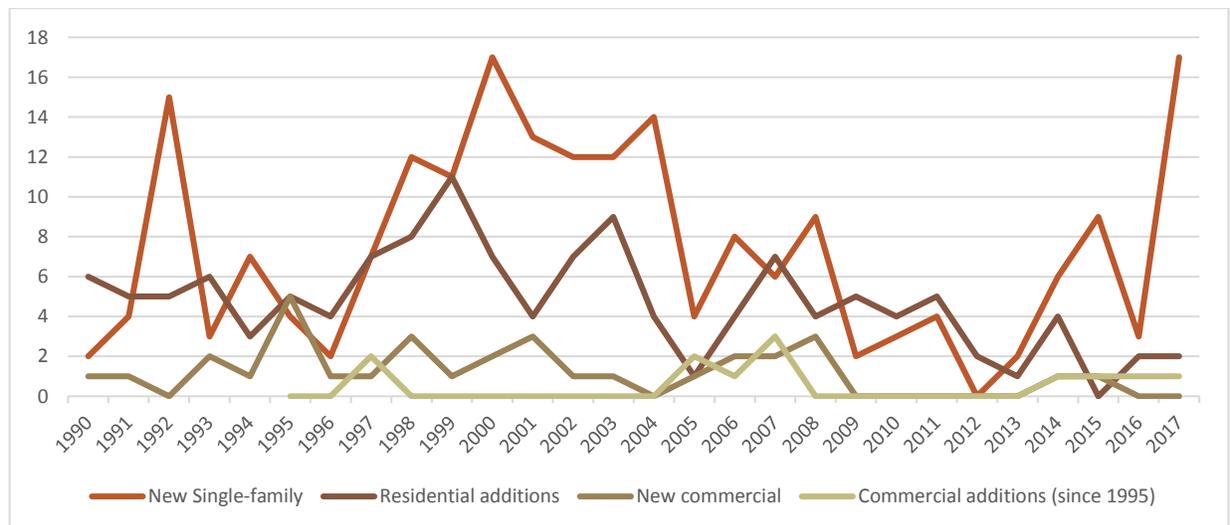
CHURUBUSCO

2017 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	17	\$3,026,118
Multi-family dwellings	0	\$0
Manufactured/mobile homes	1	\$1,500
Residential additions/remodels	9	\$146,600
Residential accessory buildings	6	\$16,690
Agricultural buildings	0	\$0
Commercial/industrial	6	\$114,400
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	2	\$380,000
Institutional	1	\$15,000
Institutional additions/remodels	2	\$164,300
Miscellaneous	24	\$101,530
TOTAL	68	\$3,966,138

Major projects in 2017: remodeling of Turtle Town Dental, \$70,000; and a \$35,000 addition to Brady's Auto Service. New single-family permits jumped due to the opening of a new section of Thresher Ridge.

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

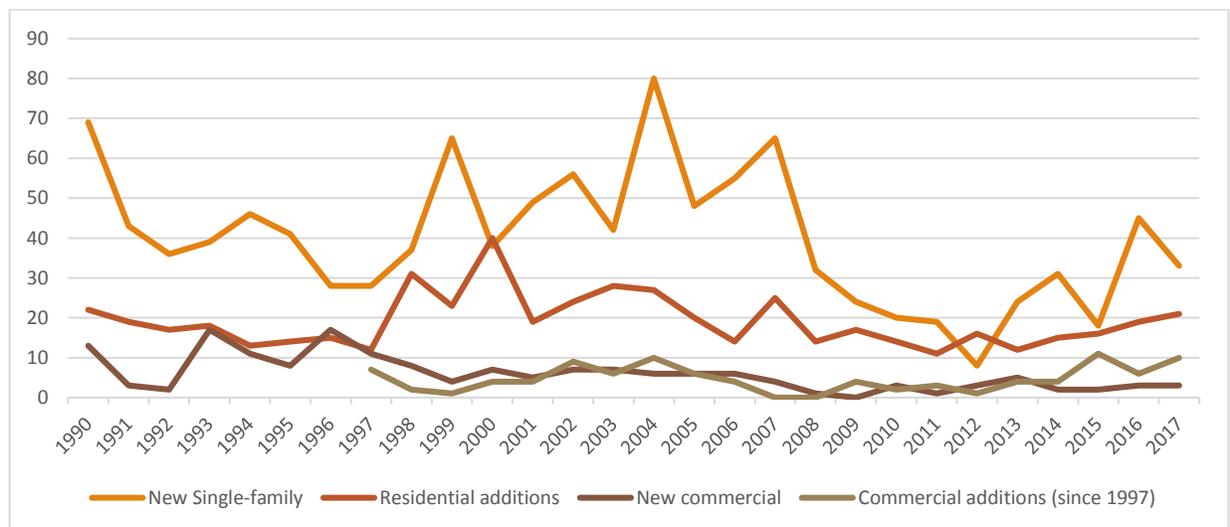
COLUMBIA CITY

2017 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	33	\$6,984,939
Multi-family dwellings	1	\$450,000
Manufactured/mobile homes	4	\$208,000
Residential additions/remodels	21	\$585,300
Residential accessory buildings	12	\$139,200
Agricultural buildings	1	\$75,000
Commercial/industrial	11	\$3,257,500
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	10	\$2,603,500
Institutional	3	\$69,500,000
Institutional additions/remodels	1	\$33,500
Miscellaneous	143	\$1,093,529
TOTAL	240	\$84,930,468

Major projects in 2017 included: a \$425,000 remodel of the YMCA; \$498,000 in remodeling Burger King; a \$1.6M remodel of Kroger; Conservative Business Concepts' new commercial building (\$2M); the new Columbia City Aquatic Facility (\$4M); and the \$65M new high school.

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

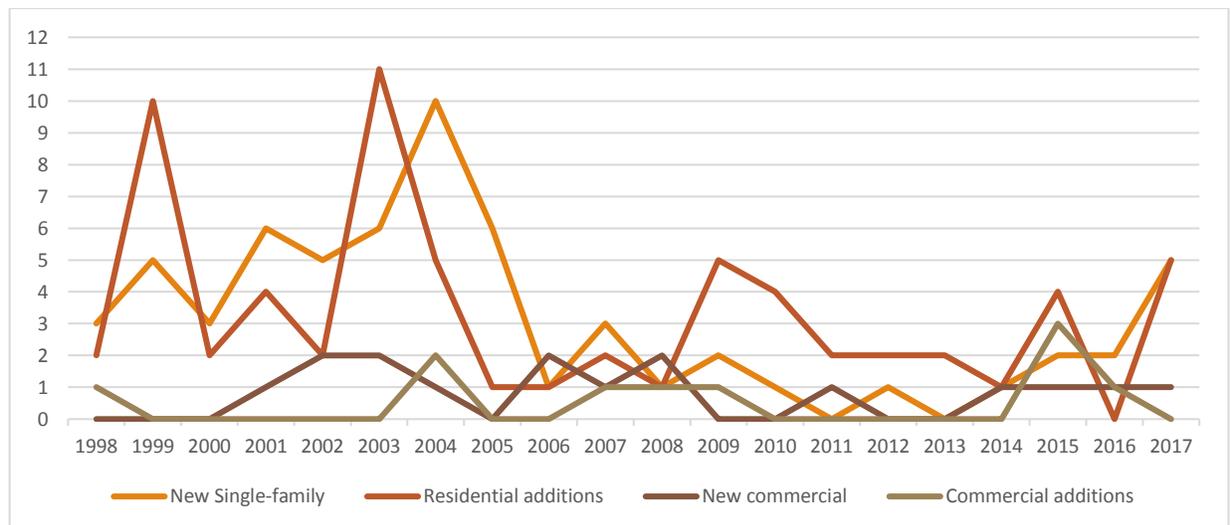
SOUTH WHITLEY

2017 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	5	\$1,094,250
Multi-family dwellings	0	\$0
Manufactured/mobile homes	6	\$142,500
Residential additions/remodels	5	\$189,000
Residential accessory buildings	11	30,200
Agricultural buildings	0	\$0
Commercial/industrial	1	\$130,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	1	\$250,000
Institutional	0	\$0
Institutional additions/remodels	1	\$40,000
Miscellaneous	30	\$144,340
TOTAL	60	\$ 2,020,290

Major projects in 2017: remodeling for a new gas station location at SR 5/14 (\$250,000); a new facility in the township cemetery (\$130,000); and \$40,000 remodeling of the library.

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1998*



*Tracking for building permits started in 1998. The town fully joined the Department in 2002.

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

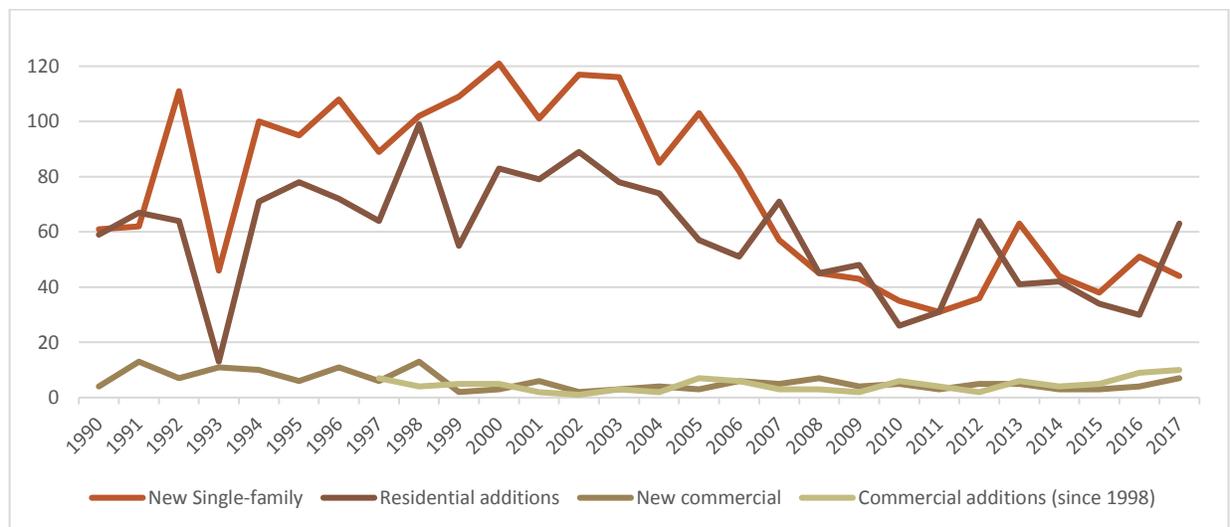
WHITLEY COUNTY

2017 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	44	\$12,727,146
Multi-family dwellings	0	\$0
Manufactured/mobile homes	11	\$1,052,200
Residential additions/remodels	73	\$3,573,758
Residential accessory buildings	80	\$2,254,545
Agricultural buildings	25	\$4,465,500
Commercial/industrial	7	\$78,709,502
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	10	\$3,451,700
Institutional	1	\$1,200
Institutional additions/remodels	0	\$0
Miscellaneous	196	\$2,572,167
TOTAL	447	\$108,807,718

Major projects in 2017: SDI, a new \$75M rebar mill; American Landmaster, \$2.1M new production and office facilities; \$760,000 new building for A.J. Machine; Kissinger Electric, a \$700,000 reception hall to be called Union 12; \$540,000 new building; and Red Star Manufacturing, \$400,000 industrial addition.

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

FEES COLLECTED

The Department primarily collects fees for building permits and for petitions to the Plan Commissions and BZAs. Building permits make up all or nearly all of the building fees collected. Planning fees include Improvement Location Permits (i.e. zoning permits), petition filing fees, and reimbursements for legal notices. Additionally, in 2017 the Department collected a \$25,000 planning fee for providing services to the Economic Development Corporation.

These are considered user fees, and they partially offset the time and expenses of performing the requested service (e.g. inspections, reviews, etc.). Owing to the joint nature of the Department, all fees are uniform throughout the County, which provides consistency for residents and businesses in any of the jurisdictions. A fee increase was instituted in July 2016, with the intent of offsetting approximately half of expenses, so 2017 was the first full year to see the results of the increase.

FEES COLLECTED, BY JURISDICTION

JURISDICTION	PLANNING FEES	BUILDING FEES	TOTAL	SHARE
Churubusco	\$ 5,022.40	\$ 8,798.25	\$ 13,820.65	7.60%
Columbia City	3,086.00	41,767.00	44,853.00	24.66%
South Whitley	1,128.00	5,302.00	6,430.00	3.54%
County	38,208.85	78,572.72	116,781.57	64.21%
TOTALS	\$ 47,445.25	\$ 134,439.97	\$ 181,885.22	

Court or attorney fees collected and permit fee refunds are not included on this table. Contract fees are included.

OPERATING EXPENSES

The tables below show the approved budget, final appropriations, and actual cash expenditures for 2017.

EXPENDITURES

SHARED EXPENSES	APPROPRIATIONS (BUDGET)	APPROPRIATIONS (FINAL)	EXPENDED	PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET
Salaries	\$ 229,569.00	\$ 235,069.00	\$ 230,808.58	100.5 %
Travel & auto	8,500.00	6,641.40	5,598.78	65.9 %
Equipment	6,750.00	6,477.96	6,097.34	90.3 %
Supplies	2,250.00	2,250.00	2,220.80	98.7 %
Printing	900.00	1,004.29	1,004.29	111.6 %
Memberships	702.00	816.00	816.00	116.2 %
Telephone	400.00	453.75	453.75	113.4 %
Dues & subscriptions	550.00	535.00	183.10	33.3 %
Misc. (permit refunds)	1,000.00	1,00.00	350.00	35.0 %
Total shared expenses	\$ 250,621.00	\$ 254,247.40	\$ 247,532.64	98.8 %

REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

COUNTY-ONLY EXPENSES *	APPROPRIATIONS		EXPENDED	PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET
	(BUDGET)	(FINAL)		
County PC/BZA attorney	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	100.0 %
County PC/BZA member stipends **	11,700.00	11,700.00	10,275.00	87.8 %
Professional services	2,500.00	4,373.60	4,373.60	174.9 %
Total county-only expenses	\$ 17,200.00	\$ 19,073.60	\$ 17,648.60	102.6 %
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 267,821.00	\$ 273,321.00	\$ 265,181.24	99.0 %

* These items are direct County costs that are included in the Department annual budget but are not operating expenses shared between the City and County.

** In prior years, the PC and BZA member stipends were separate line items.

Generally, the operating expenditures of the Department in 2017 were comparable to those of previous years, with two modifications. The budget for equipment was higher than previously to cover the expense of a new permitting software system, and printing was a new line item expense. Salaries, auto maintenance and fuel, and office materials continued to be major expenses. The professional services exceeded expectations due to legal counsel costs primarily due to pending litigation.

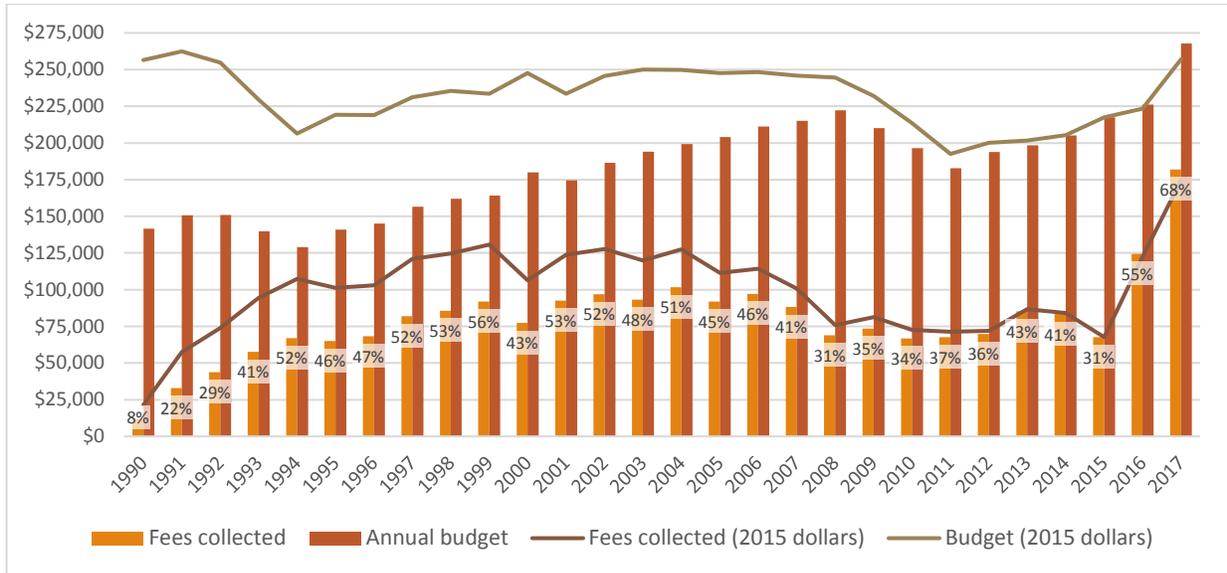
FEE REVENUES VS. EXPENSES

The Department is not a self-supporting agency. Its 2017 budget of \$267,821.00 was supported by the four member jurisdictions. However, as mentioned above, building permit application fees, petition filing fees, service contracts, and so on are user fees intended to offset the cost for the Department to provide those services and products. These funds are transferred on a monthly basis to the County General Fund to help defray the costs of the Department.

As mentioned above, a fee increase was implemented in July 2016, with a goal to increase fee revenues to approximately 50% of expenses. So, while the budget increased \$41,674 between 2016 and 2017 (an 18.4% increase), fee revenues increased \$57,350.68 (46.1%). This resulted in a significantly higher year-end operating ratio of 67.9% (68.6% of actual expenses). This was despite a slower autumn season than in 2016.

REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

FEES COLLECTED AS PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET



As seen in the chart above, the total fee revenue in 2017 surpassed all previous years of the Joint Department, both in absolute figures and when factored for inflation. Even when removing the service fee from the EDC, the amount exceeded all other years. More importantly, the 2017 operating ratio was the highest in the documented history of the County Planning Department (back to 1972), although the expenses in the earliest years include items such as building maintenance that are no longer explicitly included in the Department expenditures.

While it may be tempting, due to the volatility of the construction and development industries, the Department should not strive to be self-sufficient based entirely on fee revenues. Nor should its expenses be permitted to outpace revenues unnecessarily. Rather, the Department should continue its history of reasonable expenditures, while striving to balance the workload required by our communities with corresponding fee revenues.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2018

Based on the review of 2017 and future expectations, the following are recommendations for major goals for the Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department in 2018.

BALANCED GROWTH

As was first mentioned in the 2015 Annual Report, the continued stagnation of population growth among all the jurisdictions over the past several years can lead to broader adverse community impacts.

No new major subdivisions were proposed in any of the jurisdictions in 2017 (though new sections of existing were brought forward), so 2018 will likely not see any surges in population due to new development. However, ongoing community development and growth of living-wage jobs are important factors in making the county appealing for new residents.

So, as stated previously, to the extent that it is possible, the Department should continue to assist the jurisdictions in preparing for and encouraging a diversity of quality residential developments that would supply an increasing population.

CODE CHANGES

2017 brought some challenging zoning code questions in each of the jurisdictions. While most of these were resolved within the year, some will continue to be worked upon in 2018; most notably implementing revised standards for confined feeding operations in the County. Other zoning code revisions may include sign code updates, downtown- and traditional neighborhood-specific zoning districts, and amendments to industrial and commercial codes to reflect changing economies. As was recommended for 2017, but which took lower priority to zoning code changes, new subdivision control ordinances should be initiated to replace the dated and increasingly obsolete codes currently in place.

Any code updates or revisions of course will require the diligence of the Department, committees, Plan Commissions, legislative bodies, and citizens to develop, revise, and adopt.

STAFFING

Cathy Gardner's retirement in April left a gap in experience that was difficult to fill. We are fortunate that her replacement Jennifer Shinabery has excelled in learning the many aspects of the position throughout the year. She will be an asset to the Department going forward.

While the permit load in the first half of 2017 was unusually strong, the latter part of the year tapered into the winter as is expected in most years. For 2018, it is of course impossible to predict the actual numbers of permits and inspection loads. However, two major projects, the new high school and SDI expansion, will likely require significant inspection time during the peak months of the summer, so the work of the part-time inspectors to provide a high level of customer service will continue to be a critical part of the Department. Adjusting the budget for their service may be necessary as 2018 progresses.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: COUNTY-WIDE CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY COMPARISON

	2016		2017	
	PERMITS	EST. VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION	PERMITS	EST. VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	100	\$ 19,382,900	99	\$ 21,832,453
Two-family	0	0	0	0
Multi-family	9	11,600,000	1	450,000
Manufactured homes	10	890,000	14	1,292,000
Mobile homes	9	69,350	8	112,200
Residential additions	51	2,674,300	77	3,749,058
Residential accessory buildings	208	5,199,000	107	2,458,325
Agricultural buildings	5	139,800	26	4,540,500
Commercial/industrial	8	9,832,000	29	82,211,402
Commercial/industrial additions	17	7,458,000	5	1,888,700
Institutional	0	0	8	69,754,000
Institutional additions	2	850,000	0	0
Miscellaneous	345	4,045,768	441	11,435,976
TOTAL	764	\$ 62,141,118	815	\$ 199,724,614

Note that the number of permits includes both building permits and improvement location permits; many projects have both.

APPENDIX B: YEARLY COMPARISONS

BUILDING PERMITS	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Churubusco	35	25	50	45	34	57
Columbia City	177	182	247	173	87	185
South Whitley	40	25	34	40	40	45
County	419	435	410	382	509	432
Total	671	667	741	640	670	719

APPENDICES

IMPROVEMENT LOCATION PERMITS	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Churubusco	19	12	28	31	22	41
Columbia City	96	111	157	112	168	154
South Whitley	20	10	19	22	24	38
County	294	331	290	301	300	328
Total	429	464	494	466	514	561

INSPECTIONS COMPLETED*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Churubusco				190	123	229
Columbia City				704	1,036	982
South Whitley				140	111	181
County				1,935	1,774	1,841
Total	2,734	2,973	3,004	2,969	3,044	3,233

*Inspections per jurisdiction were not tracked prior to 2015

NEW SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Churubusco	0	2	6	9	3	17
Columbia City	8	24	31	18	45	33
South Whitley	1	0	1	2	1	5
County	36	63	44	38	51	44
Total	45	89	82	67	100	99

PERMITS IN FLOODPLAIN*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Churubusco	0	0	0	0	0	0
Columbia City	0	2	0	0	2	2
South Whitley	1	0	0	0	3	1
County	17	11	13	4	8	22
Total	18	13	13	4	13	25

*Some part of parcel located in regulatory floodplain; the permitted improvement may not have been in floodplain

LAND USE PETITIONS FILED	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Churubusco	6	2	3	4	3	5
Columbia City	10	10	10	10	18	22
South Whitley	0	1	1	5	4	9
County	46	40	45	44	53	74