

**COLUMBIA CITY/WHITLEY COUNTY
JOINT PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT**



**ANNUAL REPORT
2018**

PUBLICATION INFORMATION

This is the Annual Report of the

Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department

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Cover image:

Dollar General building under construction, September 2018, Columbia City

Photos by Department staff, unless noted

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

As one may see when reading this report, the 2018 statistics for the Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department are generally comparable to, or slightly lower than, those of 2017.

Even with the relative levelness of most numbers, 2018 did mark its place in department history in some notable ways:

- The long process to research, evaluate, and develop zoning code changes regarding confined feeding operations in the County consumed much of staff's time for the first nine months of the year. Moreover, the collective amount of time contributed by committee members, Plan Commission members, the Commissioners, interested parties, and the public through the process probably totaled several years. Beyond the final code adoption, the process identified some underlying issues, a few of which have been problematic for many decades, and set out the groundwork for additional work to come in 2019 and in the future.
- Columbia City had a few moderate-sized, but high-profile, projects that were completed this year, with Dollar General and Verizon Wireless' new stores along Line Street being prime examples. The long awaited Holiday Inn Express also wrapped up the building work late in 2018, although as of this writing they were still not open due to cosmetic finishing.
- While 2018's total permit numbers were lower than 2017, the number of single-family home permits issued actually increased by 31% over all of the jurisdictions. Monitoring whether this continues in 2019 is a recommendation discussed later in this report.



BR Real Estate's new building on Walker Way at Line Street soon after completion in August. Verizon Wireless and Jimmy Johns are current tenants.

I am personally expecting another good year in 2019, even if it is not a “banner” year. Although the specific figures may be uncertain now, it is definite that this Department will continue to strive to make our communities great.

-Nathan Bilger, AICP, Executive Director

DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

STAFF

Executive Director	Nathan Bilger, AICP
Chief Building Inspector	Craig W. Wagner, CBI
Assistant Planner/Office Manager	Amanda Thompson
Planner I	Jennifer Shinabery
Planning & Permit Technician	Michelle Sturtevant <i>starting February 25</i>
Building Inspectors (part-time)	Daniel Bishop William Klein <i>ending December 5</i>

The Joint Planning and Building Department’s seven-member staff fills the six positions shown above. 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 and has statewide notoriety by teaching building code classes and rewriting the state building code. Nathan Bilger is a certified planner and serves on the state planning association’s legislative committee. The other staff members participate in training courses throughout each year.

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
- 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

DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

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 2018, 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

The Board must meet at least twice per year to review the annual report and to review the proposed budget. In 2018, the Board met on March 9 and June 5.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2018

In addition to the accomplishments of the Commissions and Boards listed elsewhere herein, some of the notable achievements of the Department in 2018 included:

- Worked with the County Code Development Committee, Plan Commission, Commissioners, and public to research and develop a major, and controversial, zoning code update regarding confined feeding operations and related residential regulations
- Assisted Churubusco in preliminary discussions to facilitate a new subdivision
- Aided the County Redevelopment Commission and the City in the coordination of design and bidding for a major sewer line project
- Provided guidance and support for the South Whitley Redevelopment Commission in setting up their initial TIF area
- Craig Wagner served as North-at-large Director and Bylaws Committee Chairman for the Indiana Association of Building Officials
- Hosted ten Northeastern Indiana Association of Building Officials meetings, which feature code training sessions, code enforcement discussions, and presentations by construction industry suppliers and manufacturers.
- Provided permit information to the Permitting Excellence Coalition as part of a marketing initiative to show the efficiency and value of the region for construction and business development
- Led an informational meeting on the principles of Tax Increment Financing and Redevelopment Commissions and the current budget and expenditures for taxing units
- Hired Michelle Sturtevant as Planning and Permitting Technician
- Jen Shinabery became a notary public to serve the needs of the Department and County

ON-GOING PROJECTS

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

- Participation in the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership and the Permitting Excellence Coalition
- Assistance in implementation and tracking of Comprehensive Plan recommendations and goals for each jurisdiction
- Assisting South Whitley and Columbia City in downtown improvement and revitalization efforts
- 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 and updating public application and information forms
- Implementation of a property information program to provide real estate agents, property buyers, and existing land owners information about zoning, land uses, covenants, and related data
- Annual review of procedures, fees, and business operations
- Cooperation with the Whitley County Economic Development Corporation in business attraction and retention



Wright Medical's new facility under construction in Park 30.

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

SUMMARY OF DEPARTMENT STATISTICS

Building permits issued	742	New single-family homes constructed	131
Inspections completed	3,064	New commercial buildings	8
Building department vehicle mileage	38,198	Demolition permits issued	10
Unsafe building violation notices	9	Unsafe building orders issued	1
Improvement location permits issued	518	Mobile home renewals	7
Pond permits issued	6	Code violation notices	3
Plan Commission applications	48	BZA applications	51
Public meetings held	53	Development plan reviews	12
Total fees collected	\$ 170,910.60	Total operating expenses	\$ 273,760.19

POPULATION

The population for Whitley County was estimated by the U.S. Census as 33,756 as of July 2017, the most recent estimate available, representing a growth of 1.4% above the 2010 Census count. The growth from 2016 to 2017 was 0.8%, with Columbia City's increase nearing 2% for the period. As mentioned in the 2017 annual report, this growth seems to correlate with an increase in permitting for that year.

In 2018, we welcomed the first of nearly four dozen Puerto Rican families that Zimmer Biomet relocated to Whitley County after Hurricane Maria closed their plant there. These families have already made an impact on the community, with additional families and extended relations expected to arrive in 2019. It is expected that this will be reflected on the Census' 2018 population estimate and, hopefully, future years as well.

POPULATION GROWTH ESTIMATES

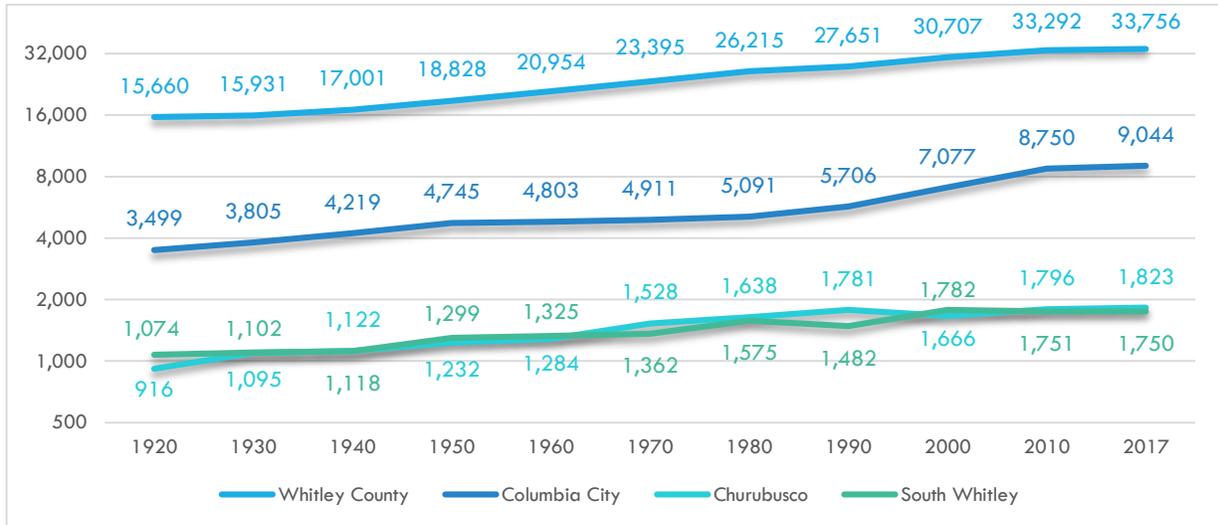
	Census		Population Estimates						Change
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2010-17
Whitley Co.	33,292	33,354	33,332	33,280	33,439	33,444	33,484	33,756	1.4%
Columbia City	8,750	8,837	8,834	8,813	8,851	8,879	8,887	9,044	3.4%
Churubusco	1,796	1,806	1,803	1,793	1,795	1,801	1,817	1,823	1.5%
South Whitley	1,751	1,775	1,770	1,765	1,760	1,752	1,747	1,750	-0.1%
Larwill*	283	282	283	282	284	283	284	284	0.4%

**Larwill is an incorporated town and so is included here for reference. Because the Town lacks its own Plan Commission, it is contained in County figures elsewhere in this report. Note that the Census data table used here differs from previous reports but should still be considered reliable.*

Over the 2010-17 time period, Allen County had an estimated 4.9% growth, Kosciusko County had 2.4%, and the state as a whole was 2.8%. However, Whitley County has fared as well as, or better than, the other nearby counties: Noble (-0.2%), Huntington (-2.1%), and Wabash (-4.4%). 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.

For 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.

POPULATION GROWTH SINCE 1920



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

As stated in the 2017 year's report, if the trend indicated by the 2010-16 estimates would continue to 2020, Whitley County would see its lowest growth rate since 1930. However, with the uptick in population seen in the 2017 estimate, and the expected numbers for 2018, concerns about negative impacts on the community may be lessening. However, continued population growth is still a concern, given the permit levels and other factors discussed later in this report.

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.

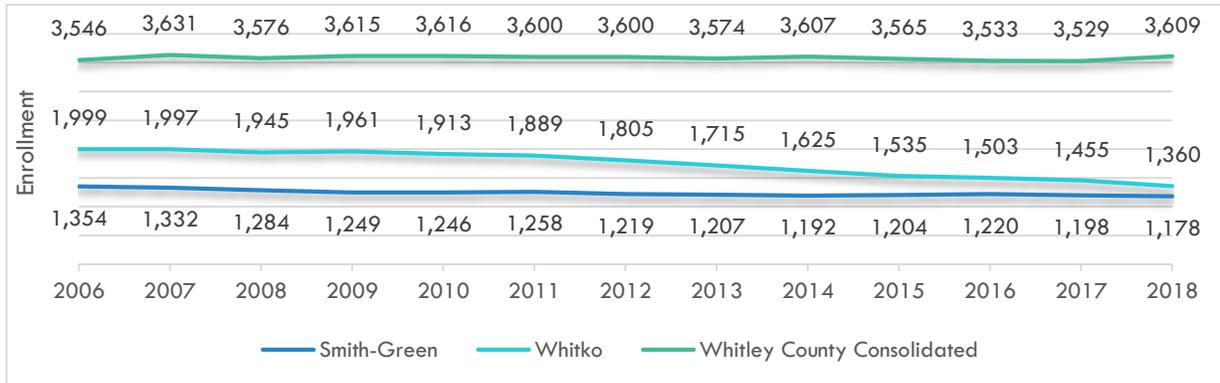
For the three school corporations of Whitley County, enrollment has been on a downward trend since 2006. The 2018-19 enrollment for Whitley County Consolidated Schools did increase to its highest point since 2014; this is potentially related to the spring influx of new Puerto Rican families mentioned above. It may also reflect transfers of students from other school districts, which may benefit one district at the detriment of another (no data on transfers are yet available).

The other two school districts' enrollment decreased again, with Whitko having the most dramatic fall: a 7% drop from the previous year and nearly 47% decrease since 2006. Smith-Green, also at its lowest level since 2006, had statistically a less significant decline, although their trend slopes downward.

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

It will be important for all of the communities and school corporations in the County to cooperate in finding ways to offset the decrease in students or otherwise stabilize the education systems. Smith-Green did pass a referendum in May 2018 that should bridge a funding deficit, but that measure is only temporary. Planning longer-term, comprehensive solutions would be an ideal goal for all involved.

PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT SINCE 2006



Source: Indiana Department of Education

Also of interest is that Whitley County’s only independent alternative school, TROY Center, has had a continual increase in enrollment since 2012 (the first available records), from 13 students to 41. The success of this school shows the importance that our community places on education. Their vocational training program, in partnership with local businesses and the Economic Development Corporation, results in young adults staying in the county to utilize valuable new work skills.

UNEMPLOYMENT

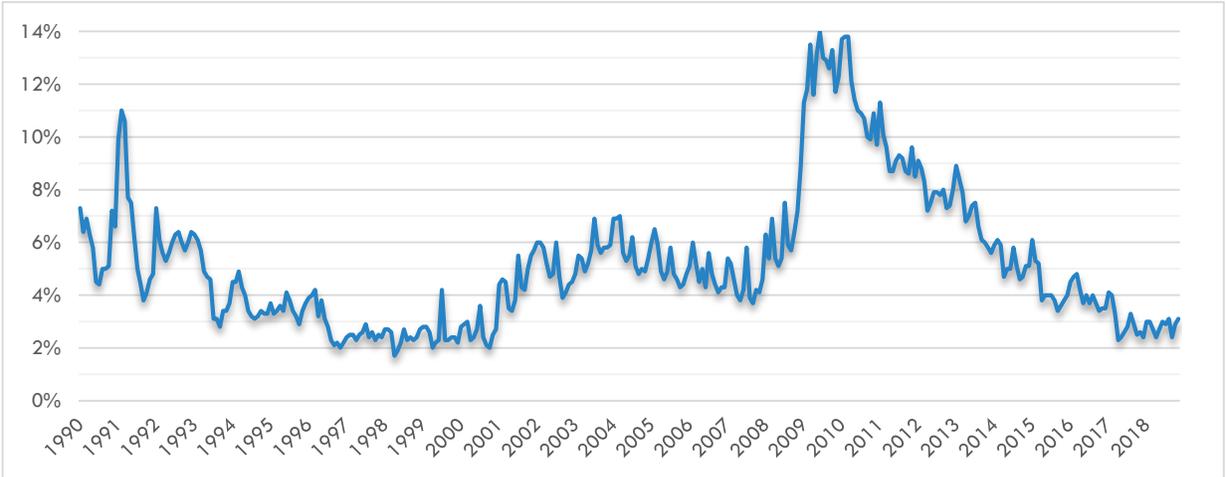
The unemployment rate is an important statistic for the Department and communities to utilize in planning efforts. At the end of 2018, the County unemployment rate stood at a seasonally-unadjusted 3.1%, having risen from a low of 2.4% in September. While this rate is higher than what was seen at the year-end of 2017, the available labor force increased by more than 3.5%, with the number of employed workers increasing by 3%. While it is not certain what exactly created this increase in available workers, it may be related to the causes of population increase discussed above.

On a planning level, the increase in labor force is an important factor to consider, perhaps more than that of solely the unemployment rate in the current economic situation. Increasing the worker pool means that businesses have more opportunities for hiring, while the currently employed are not in jeopardy of losing their jobs.

However, a 3% rate still is a concern as 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 due to a 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. Anecdotally, the seemingly-

perpetual “Now Hiring” signs seen throughout the county are an indication that there is still an overall labor shortage.

WHITLEY COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT RATE SINCE 1990



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, through November 2018

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.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

CHURUBUSCO

PETITIONS FILED IN 2018

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

PLAN COMMISSION

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Paula Grawcock	County Commissioners	1/1/2021
Jeremy Hart, President	Town Council (employee)	Employee
Ashley Johnson	County Commissioners	1/1/2020
Bruce Johnson	Town Council (member)	Term of office
Wayne Krider	Town Council	1/1/2020
Mark Pepple	Town Council (member)	Term of office
Brenda Saggars, Vice president	Town Council	1/1/2022
Pat Stanford	Town Council	1/1/2022
Nate Van Horn	Town Council	1/1/2022 <i>appointed in February</i>

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Churubusco Plan Commission held 3 meetings in 2018, in which the Commission reviewed a development plan for Kyler Ridge and two rezonings.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Membership

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

Jason Bartl was elected Chair, but did not serve due to his resignation from the Plan Commission at the beginning of 2018. No new Chair was elected.

Summary of BZA actions

The Churubusco Board of Zoning Appeals held 5 meetings in 2018 and considered cases for a special exception of an outdoor display, and setback and fence variances.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

COLUMBIA CITY

PETITIONS FILED IN 2018

Rezoning	3	Subdivision plat	6	Variance	8
Zoning text amendment	1	Subdivision replat	0	Appeal	1
Development plan	7	Special exception	7	Other	1

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	City Council (employee)	Employee
Dennis Warnick	Mayor	1/1/2020
Dan Weigold	City Council (member)	Term of office
Larry Weiss, Vice president	Mayor	1/1/2021
Patrick Zickgraf	Mayor	1/1/2022

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Columbia City Plan Commission held 8 meetings in 2018. The Commission approved development plans for the Dollar General, D&T Meinika, a new commercial center, and mini-warehouses, and made recommendations on a zoning amendment regarding industrial buffering standards and rezonings for residential and industrial uses. They also approved primary plats for several small subdivisions, phase two of Ravenwood, and an amended primary plat for Chesapeake Landing.

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	1/1/2022
Dennis Warnick	Mayor	1/1/2021

Summary of BZA actions

The Columbia City Board of Zoning Appeals held 10 meetings in 2018. The Board considered an appeal of an administrative decision; variances for signs, fences, and setbacks; and special exceptions for a county highway building, signage, home occupations, and an industrial use.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

SOUTH WHITLEY

PETITIONS FILED IN 2018

Rezoning	0	Subdivision plat	1	Variance	3
Zoning text amendment	0	Subdivision replat	0	Appeal	0
Development plan	0	Special exception	2	Other	1

PLAN COMMISSION

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Wendy Bills, President	Town Council	1/1/2021
Bill Boggs	Town Council (member)	Term of office <i>resigned in September</i>
Randy Cokl	Town Council (member)	Term of office
Tom Dome	Town Council	1/1/2022
Les Hoffman	Town Council (member)	Term of Office
Anna Simmons	Town Council	1/1/2019
Kent Slater	Town Council (employee)	Employee <i>appointed in November</i>
Wayne Swender, Vice president	County Commissioners	1/1/2020
<i>Vacant</i>	Town Council	1/1/2019
<i>Vacant</i>	County Commissioners	1/1/2019

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The South Whitley Plan Commission held 2 meetings in 2018. The Commission reviewed the proposed TIF district and considered one plat.

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 3 meetings in 2018 and considered variances for lot standards, a fence, and building height; they also considered special exceptions for modular classrooms at the high school and a front yard fence.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

WHITLEY COUNTY

PETITIONS FILED IN 2018

Rezoning	1	Subdivision plat	13	Variance	16
Zoning text amendment	1	Subdivision replat	1	Appeal	0
Development plan	6	Special exception	9	Other	3

PLAN COMMISSION

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Elizabeth Deckard	County Commissioners	1/1/2022
John Johnson, Secretary	County Commissioners	1/1/2021
Joe Wolf	County Commissioners	1/1/2022
Brad Wolfe, Vice president	County Commissioners	1/1/2022
Doug Wright, President	County Commissioners	1/1/2021
Thor Hodges	County Council (member)	Annual appointment
Mark Mynhier	County Surveyor	Duration of Office
Tom Western	County Commissioner (member)	Annual appointment
John Woodmansee	County Extension Office	Duration of Office

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Whitley County Plan Commission held 11 meetings in 2018, including one special meeting. The Commission granted primary approval of several plats, made recommendations on a rezoning and a major text amendment, and approved development plans for Shively Warehouse, Impact CNC, Wright Medical, Larwill convenience store, and others.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Membership

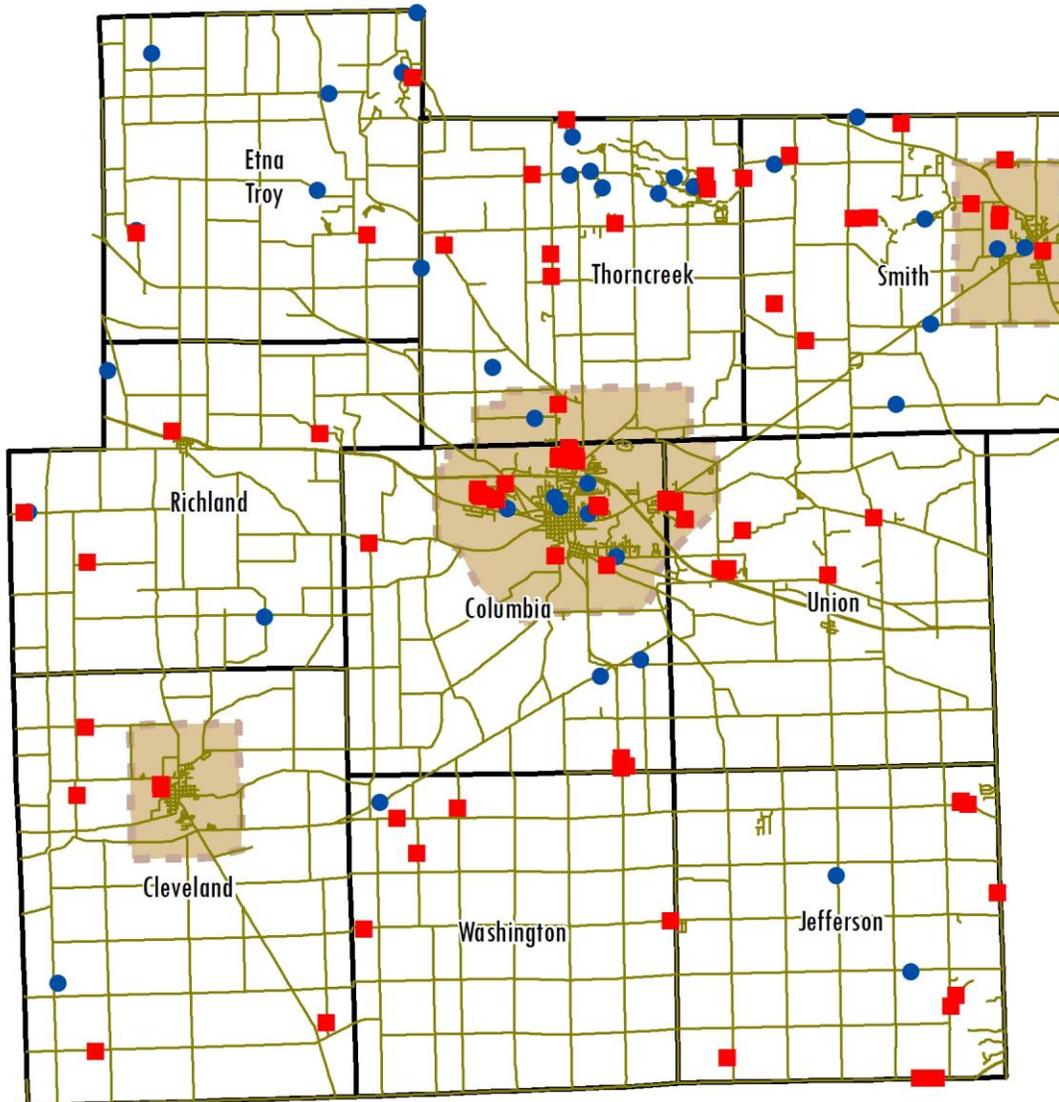
	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Elizabeth Deckard	County Commissioners	1/1/2022
Tim Denihan, Vice chair	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Will Klein	County Council	1/1/2020 <i>resigned in December</i>
Danny Wilkinson, Chair	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Doug Wright, Secretary	Plan Commission Member	Annual appointment

Summary of BZA actions

The County Board of Zoning Appeals held 11 meetings in 2018; cancelling the December meeting ended a streak of continual monthly meetings going back to March 2015. The Board considered 14 setback variances, 2 sign variances, and special exceptions for a home occupation, secondary dwelling unit, licensed child care, and a church expansion, among others.

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

MAP OF RESIDENTIAL PERMITS



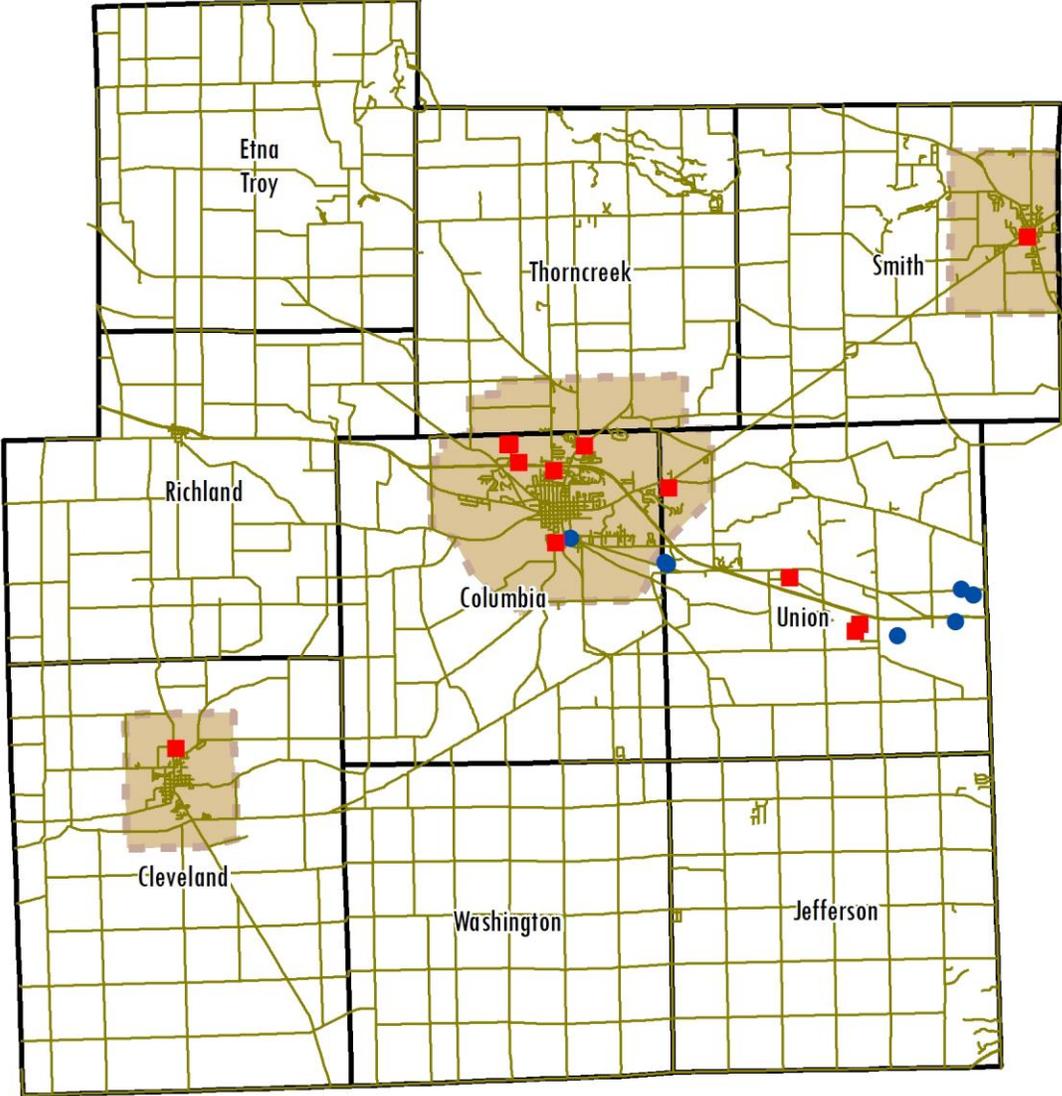
■ *New construction*
Includes single-family, two-family, modular, etc.
Does not include multi-family.

● *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.



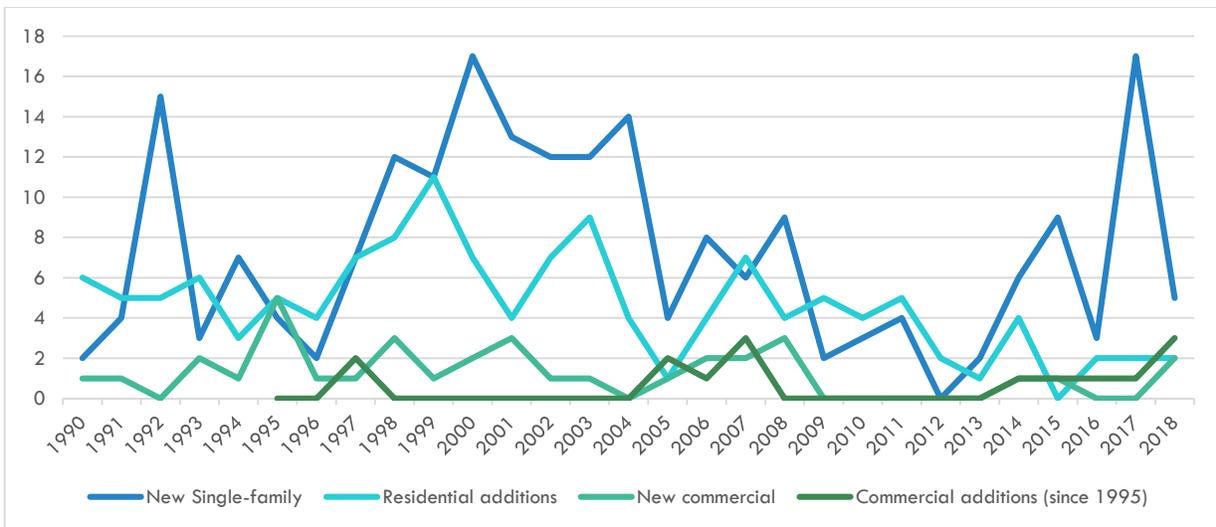
CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

CHURUBUSCO

2018 BUILDING PERMITS

Type of Permit	Number of Permits	Est. Value of Construction
Single-family dwellings	5	\$994,223
Multi-family dwellings	1	\$3,240,000
Manufactured/mobile homes	0	\$0
Residential additions/remodels	2	\$94,000
Residential accessory buildings	6	\$
Agricultural buildings	1	\$700,000
Commercial/industrial	2	\$122,600
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	3	\$570,000
Institutional	0	\$0
Institutional additions/remodels	1	\$937,505
Miscellaneous	36	\$261,825
TOTAL	57	\$6,920,153

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



MAJOR PROJECTS IN 2018

Project	Construction Value	Project	Construction Value
Kyler Ridge, apartment bldg.	\$ 3,240,000	Ag Plus, grain bin	\$ 700,000
Smith-Green Schools, remodel	937,505	Stahlhut Yarde, commercial remodel	400,000

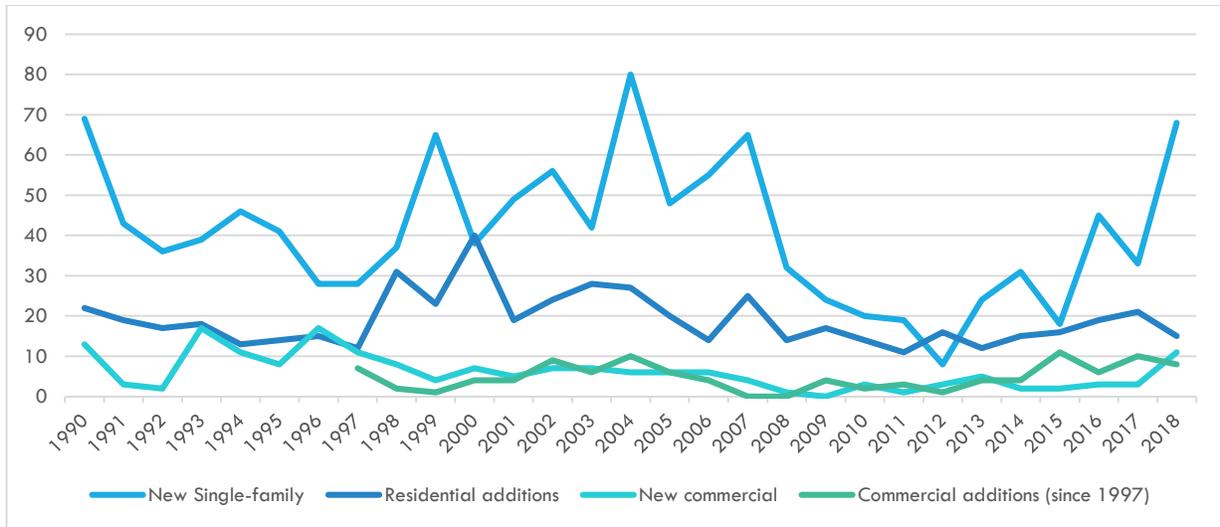
CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

COLUMBIA CITY

2018 BUILDING PERMITS

Type of Permit	Number of Permits	Est. Value of Construction
Single-family dwellings	68	\$11,110,106
Multi-family dwellings	1	\$375,000
Manufactured/mobile homes	3	\$26,500
Residential additions/remodels	15	\$421,010
Residential accessory buildings	25	\$189,150
Agricultural buildings	2	\$41,000
Commercial/industrial	11	\$2,166,600
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	8	\$240,000
Institutional	0	\$0
Institutional additions/remodels	2	\$82,382
Miscellaneous	105	\$1,193,950
TOTAL	277	\$15,845,698

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



MAJOR PROJECTS IN 2018

Project	Construction Value	Project	Construction Value
BR Real Estate, commercial center	\$ 600,000	D&T Meinika, retail bldg.	\$ 400,000
Dollar General, retail bldg.	500,000	Quail Ridge, apartment bldg.	375,000

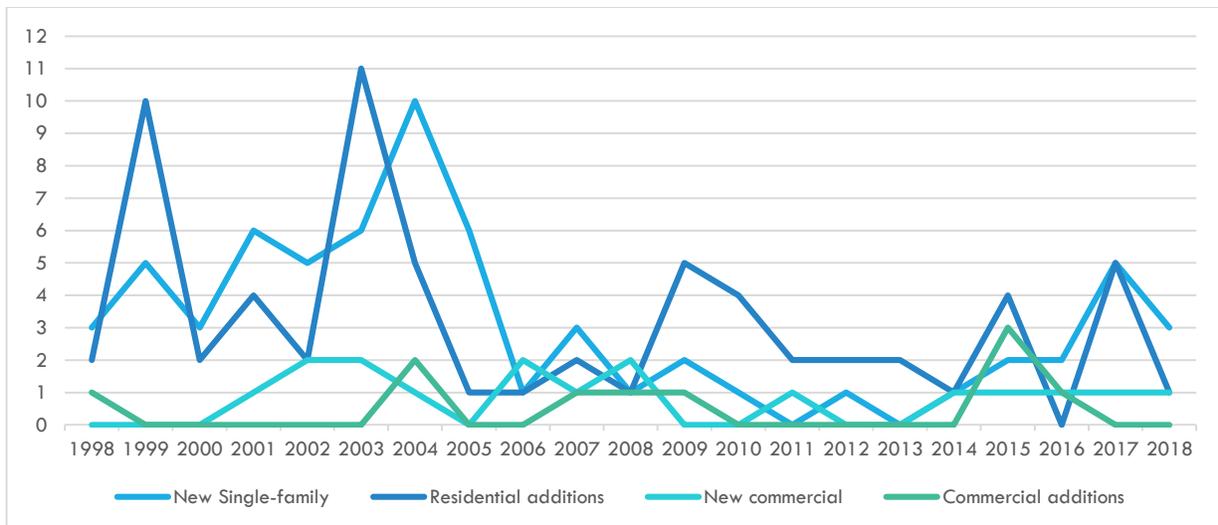
CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

SOUTH WHITLEY

2018 BUILDING PERMITS

Type of Permit	Number of Permits	Est. Value of Construction
Single-family dwellings	3	\$280,000
Multi-family dwellings	0	\$0
Manufactured/mobile homes	10	\$210,000
Residential additions/remodels	1	\$26,000
Residential accessory buildings	9	\$13,600
Agricultural buildings	0	\$0
Commercial/industrial	1	\$118,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	0	\$0
Institutional	2	\$154,350
Institutional additions/remodels	1	\$800,000
Miscellaneous	33	\$17,540
TOTAL	42	\$1,619,490

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1998*



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

MAJOR PROJECTS IN 2018

Project	Construction Value	Project	Construction Value
Town of South Whitley, water treatment facility	\$ 800,000	Whitko, temp. classrooms	\$ 154,350
Parkview Health, garage	118,000		

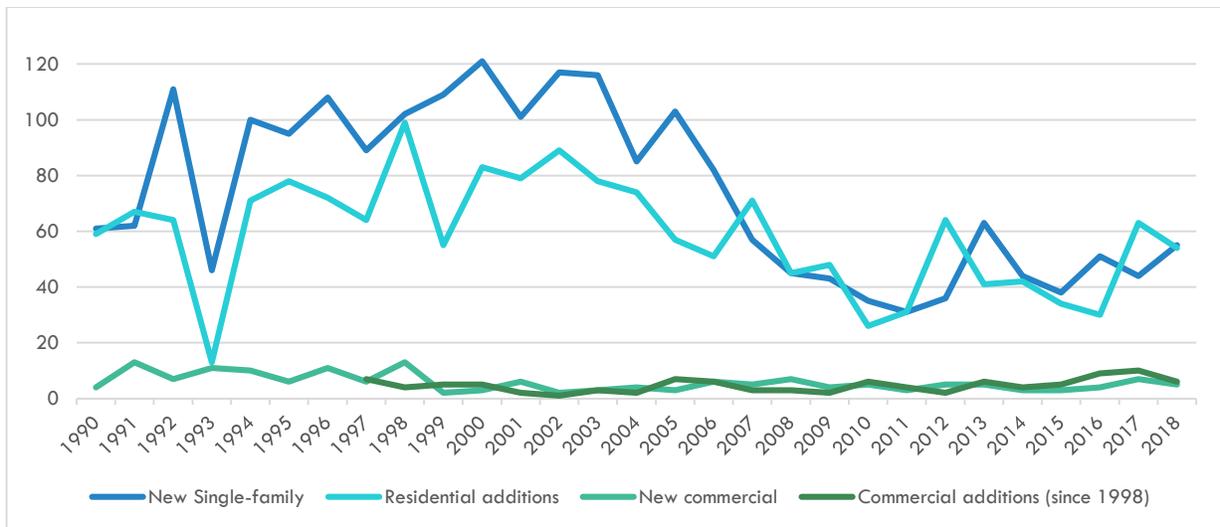
CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

WHITLEY COUNTY

2018 BUILDING PERMITS

Type of Permit	Number of Permits	Est. Value of Construction
Single-family dwellings	55	\$16,903,961
Multi-family dwellings	0	\$0
Manufactured/mobile homes	4	\$73,000
Residential additions/remodels	54	\$501,100
Residential accessory buildings	67	\$1,936,980
Agricultural buildings	23	\$1,823,000
Commercial/industrial	5	\$16,730,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	6	\$3,803,000
Institutional	0	\$0
Institutional additions/remodels	2	\$42,100
Miscellaneous	150	\$3,594,943
TOTAL	366	\$45,408,084

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



MAJOR PROJECTS IN 2018

Project	Construction Value	Project	Construction Value
Whitley RC Inv., industrial	\$ 7,000,000	Alliance Feeds, feed mill	\$ 6,500,000
Wright Medical, industrial	3,000,000	Impact CNC, addition	1,750,000

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, reimbursements for legal notices, and fees for providing services to South Whitley, Churubusco, and 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.

FEES COLLECTED, BY JURISDICTION

Jurisdiction	Planning fees	Building fees	Total	Share
Churubusco	\$ 7,510.80	\$ 6,739.00	\$ 14,249.80	8.34%
Columbia City	10,185.10	34,440.70	44,625.80	26.11%
South Whitley	10,630.70	2,923.00	13,553.70	7.93%
County	38,150.00	60,331.30	98,481.30	57.62%
TOTALS	\$ 66,476.60	\$ 104,434.00	\$ 170,910.60	

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 original approved budget, final appropriation after transfers and any additional appropriations, and the actual cash expenditures for 2018.

EXPENDITURES

Shared expenses	Appropriations		Expended	Percent of budget
	(Budget)	(Final)		
Salaries	\$ 242,519.00	\$ 236,469.00	\$ 234,540.09	96.7 %
Travel & auto	9,500.00	9,500.00	6,513.18	68.6 %
Equipment	7,000.00	7,000.00	6,508.38	93.0 %
Supplies	2,500.00	2,500.00	1,801.26	72.1 %
Printing	1,025.00	1,029.31	1,029.31	100.4 %
Memberships	850.00	850.00	716.00	84.2 %
Dues & subscriptions	550.00	545.69	247.60	45.0 %
Telephone	500.00	500.00	86.47	17.3 %
Misc. (permit refunds)	1,000.00	1,000.00	47.00	4.7 %
Subtotal	\$ 265,444.00	\$ 259,394.00	\$ 251,489.29	94.7 %

REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

Jurisdiction-specific expenses *	Appropriations		Expended	Percent of budget
	(Budget)	(Final)		
County PC/BZA attorney	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 2,750.00	91.7 %
County PC/BZA member stipends	11,700.00	11,700.00	8,775.00	75.0 %
Professional services	3,500.00	15,000.00	10,745.90	307.0 %
Subtotal	\$ 18,200.00	\$ 27,750.00	\$ 22,270.90	122.4 %
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 283,644.00	\$ 287,144.00	\$ 273,760.19	96.5 %

* These items are costs that are appropriated in the Department annual budget but are not operating expenses shared between the City and County. They are charged directly to the jurisdiction to which they apply.

The largest difference in 2018 expenditures when compared to prior years is the increase in additional appropriations for the Professional Services expenses. This has been historically a County-only expense, but both the County and City had legal counsel costs related to litigation in each jurisdiction throughout the year. With the total expenses being unknown toward year end, an additional appropriation of \$3,500 was granted, with remaining funds in the account being encumbered into 2019 to account for any outstanding costs.

Other than those expenses, other operating expenditures were comparable to 2017. Salary expenses were lower than originally appropriated due to a position vacancy for roughly two months, and so much of the overage was transferred to the Professional Services account.

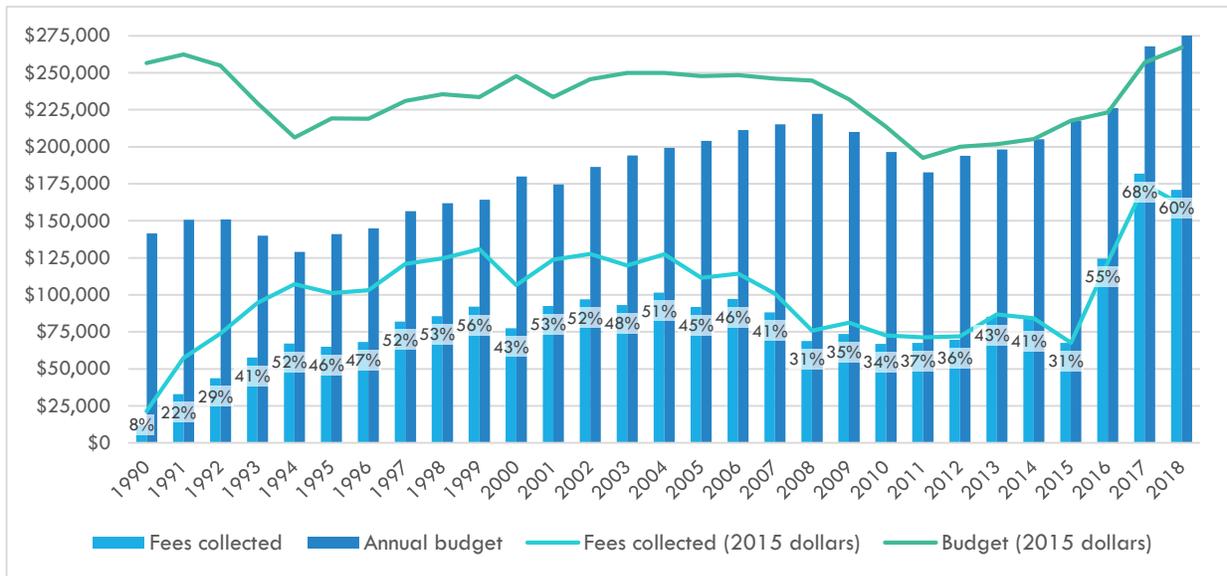
FEE REVENUES VS. EXPENSES

The Department is not a self-supporting agency. Its 2018 budget of \$283,644.00 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 expenses of the Department.

As mentioned in previous years, it is the goal of the Department to have fee revenues cover approximately fifty percent of expenses, while still being relatively affordable when compared to the region. For 2018, the year-end operating ratio of fees collected to actual expenses was 62.4% (or 60.3%, revenue to budget). This was down from 2017, and largely reflects the decrease in total revenues rather than rising costs. Still, the fifty percent goal was achieved for the year.

REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

FEEES COLLECTED AS PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET



As seen in the chart above, the total fee revenue in 2018 continued to be high, being second only to 2017, both in absolute figures and when factored for inflation.

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 2019

Based on the review of 2018 and future expectations, the following are recommendations for major goals for the Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department in 2019.

BALANCE GROWTH

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

While new single-family dwelling permits issued in Columbia City did rise in 2018, the other jurisdictions saw a fall. At the time of this writing, Churubusco has three developed lots available for new construction, without any more lots anticipated to be developed in 2019. South Whitley has about twice that number still available, but it too has no upcoming subdivision proposals.

It does seem apparent that demand for living in Whitley County has not fallen, as the median home price for the county in 2018 increased by 12.9% above 2017, according to Zillow¹, a rate about a third higher than other northeast Indiana communities. Other sources indicate similar increases in home prices and/or increasingly short time-on-market. Supply appears to be not matching demand, and prices are responding accordingly.

While residential development is not an absolute requirement for a well-functioning community, it must be accounted for in planning and community development efforts. If supply remains tight and demand high, should we prepare for higher and higher property values and home prices? Will that then make “affordable housing” a crucial community problem—or will the demand shift to places outside our county that have adequate supply, further stagnating our situation? Should our communities be actively recruiting builders and developers to encourage building residences?

So, as stated in previous reports, 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. This is an even more crucial goal for both the Department and communities than ever before.

PROPERTY INFORMATION PROGRAM

Among the changes to the County Zoning Code in 2018 was the directive to create an informational program to aid real estate agents, property buyers, and homeowners to understand the requirements, restrictions, and regulations that may apply to or surround a property. Establishing this program is a key initiative for the Department and may be accompanied by a broader reformatting of all of our brochures and applications.

CODE CHANGES

A major planning and code writing endeavor was undertaken in 2018 to research and revise County codes dealing with confined feeding operations and neighboring residential development. 2019 will bring a

¹Zillow.com. (October 2018). Market Overview: Real Estate, Fort Wayne Metro. Retrieved from <https://files.zillowstatic.com/research/public/realestate/ZHVI.Fort%20Wayne.394612.pdf>

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2019

similarly large, though hopefully less contentious, effort to look at the County's residential development codes. For the City, developing standards related to access and future street connections will be a priority. In all jurisdictions, and related to the above projects, new subdivision control ordinances may 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

Part-time inspector Will Klein left the Department staff in December after having been injured in an auto accident. Whether the position will be refilled in 2019 will depend on the need that may arise. If we are fortunate to see an increase in residential permits, then having additional inspection help will likely be required. If not, then the current staff may be sufficient. The adopted budget should be adequate for either option. In any case, with the anticipated hiring of a second full-time inspector in 2020, if any hiring is done, it will be with regard to this long-term plan.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: COUNTY-WIDE CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY COMPARISON

	2017		2018	
	Permits	Est. Value	Permits	Est. Value
Single-family dwellings	99	\$ 21,832,453	131	\$ 29,288,290
Two-family	0	-	2	280,000
Multi-family	1	450,000	2	3,615,000
Manufactured homes	14	1,292,000	17	309,500
Mobile homes	8	112,200	0	-
Residential additions	77	3,749,058	53	2,238,800
Residential accessory buildings	107	2,458,325	107	2,284,430
Agricultural buildings	26	4,540,500	26	2,564,000
Commercial/industrial	29	82,211,402	21	19,137,200
Commercial/industrial additions	5	1,888,700	6	3,756,000
Institutional	8	69,754,000	3	1,091,855
Institutional additions	0	-	3	915,000
Miscellaneous	441	11,435,976	371	4,313,350
TOTAL	815	\$ 199,724,614	742	\$ 69,723,425

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	2018
Churubusco	35	25	50	45	34	57	57
Columbia City	177	182	247	173	87	185	277
South Whitley	40	25	34	40	40	45	42
County	419	435	410	382	509	432	366
Total	671	667	741	640	670	719	742

Improvement Location Permits	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Churubusco	19	12	28	31	22	41	42
Columbia City	96	111	157	112	168	154	195
South Whitley	20	10	19	22	24	38	23
County	294	331	290	301	300	328	258
Total	429	464	494	466	514	561	518

APPENDICES

Inspections completed*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Churubusco				190	123	229	180
Columbia City				704	1,036	982	1,116
South Whitley				140	111	181	127
County				1,935	1,774	1,841	1,641
Total	2,734	2,973	3,004	2,969	3,044	3,233	3,064

**Inspections per jurisdiction were not tracked prior to 2015*

New Single-Family Dwellings	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Churubusco	0	2	6	9	3	17	5
Columbia City	8	24	31	18	45	33	68
South Whitley	1	0	1	2	1	5	3
County	36	63	44	38	51	44	55
Total	45	89	82	67	100	99	131

Median Single-Family Dwelling Cost	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Churubusco	NA	\$163,000	\$168,000	\$167,000	\$150,000	\$179,000	\$201,500
Columbia City	\$170,000	\$152,000	\$163,500	\$160,500	\$170,000	\$191,800	\$173,675
South Whitley	\$248,000	NA	\$350,000	\$105,000	\$121,500	\$162,000	\$80,000
County	\$220,500	\$218,000	\$200,000	\$250,000	\$190,000	\$250,000	\$275,000
Overall	\$217,000	\$181,250	\$177,500	\$180,000	\$180,000	\$203,448	\$204,900

Permits in Floodplain*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Churubusco	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Columbia City	0	2	0	0	2	2	2
South Whitley	1	0	0	0	3	1	5
County	17	11	13	4	8	22	20
Total	18	13	13	4	13	25	27

**Any 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	2018
Churubusco	6	2	3	4	3	5	8
Columbia City	10	10	10	10	18	22	33
South Whitley	0	1	1	5	4	9	6
County	46	40	45	44	53	74	50
Total	62	53	59	63	78	110	97

Receipts Written	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total	638	737	634	749	784	841	790	886	987	878