

# 2016 ANNUAL REPORT



COLUMBIA CITY/WHITLEY COUNTY  
JOINT PLANNING AND BUILDING DEPARTMENT

## 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 upper left):

Quail Ridge, Columbia City

Industrial facility, Union Township

Construction activity, South Whitley

Thresher's Ridge, Churubusco

All photos by Department staff

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

### MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

2016 was my first full year as the Executive Director of the Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department, and it was a year of many ups, with only a few downs.

Perhaps the biggest event of the year was the increase of construction and application activity, especially in the latter part of the year. While the total number of permits for 2016 was only about 7% more than 2015, many came in the months of September through December. If this influx continues into 2017, it could result in a robust number of permits, perhaps the highest since 2008. Of course, there are many factors in this, and we will only know for sure come December 31<sup>st</sup>.

A recommendation of the 2015 Annual Report was to rework the fee structure of the Department, which was a task initiated by my predecessor. After extensive research and review, new fees were adopted by the County Commissioners and City Council and became effective in July. Between the increase in permit numbers and rate increases, the year-end user fee revenue for the Department was \$124,534.54, which offset 56% of our expenses, exceeding the 50% goal.

All of the Department staff excelled in 2016, providing continued outstanding customer service while balancing increasing permits and petition applications. In the customer service survey conducted with the Northeast Indiana Regional Partnership, no negative responses were received, while several gave high praises to the helpful staff. I have yet to hear any members of the public give any negative feedback on the service of staff. I cannot give them high enough praise for all they do.

Sadly, though in April, we lost Al McCoy, one of our long-time building inspectors, who passed away after a recurrence of cancer. His wit and hearty laugh have been missed.

It was exciting for me to work with all of the jurisdictions over the year and get to know everyone involved. In particular, the Mayor's initiative to develop a plan to transition U.S. 30 into a freeway was an exhilarating project to be a part of since it encompassed the breadth of planning—information gathering, forming alternatives, public input, and presentation of a concept. I look forward to working on similarly strong planning and code projects forthcoming in 2017 and beyond.

We do already know that 2017 will be a year of change for the Department, with expected retirement of Cathy Gardner in April, but I am sure that, and any other changes that may occur, will be handled in stride by the Department in our efforts 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

Office Administrator/Planner I

Amanda Thompson

Secretary (part-time) *through December 19*

Planning & Permit Technician *starting December 19*

Jenny Stephenson

Building Inspectors (part-time)

Daniel Bishop

Allen McCoy *through April*

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 over three-quarters of a century of experience in land use, development, and construction practice, led by Cathy Gardner's 28 years in this office. 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 his teaching building code classes, and is actively involved in the development of the state building code. The other staff members also participate in training courses throughout each year.



*Craig Wagner on-site with a contractor*

### 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

# DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

- conduct unsafe building inspections, file orders, and enforce through the courts
- review development plan applications for all new commercial and industrial projects
- assist Whitley County Economic Development on economic development activities
- administer floodplain management program for County
- 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 2016, the members were:

George Schruppf, Chairman	County Commissioner
Ryan Daniel, Vice-chairman	Mayor
Jim Bayman	County Council
Brandon Forrester	County Plan Commission
Don Langeloh	City Plan Commission
Nicole Penrod	City Council
Kim Wheeler	County Council

By code, the Board must meet at least twice per year, at the beginning of the year to develop the annual report, and in the middle to prepare the budget. In 2016, the Board met twice: on February 2, and June 7.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2016

In addition to the accomplishments of the Commissions and Boards listed elsewhere herein, some of the notable achievements of the Department in 2016 included:

- Issued three unsafe building orders in Columbia City: an emergency demolition for 119 N. Elm St., demolition of house and shed at 368 N. Oak St., and a structure repair at 410 S. Main St. Issued one repair order in South Whitley at 410 S. State St. Issued one repair and cleanup order in Larwill at 6810 W. US 30.
- Completed Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule Survey and in-office review by the Insurance Services Office
- Craig Wagner served as the Vice President, parliamentarian, and Bylaws Committee Chairman for the Indiana Association of Building Officials
- Hosted Northeastern Indiana Association of Building Officials meetings, which feature code training sessions, code enforcement discussions, and presentations by construction industry suppliers and manufacturers. 2016 topics included: foundation and structural insulation, product testing and

## DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

certification, exterior structure cladding, commercial and residential framing and design issues, firestopping, electrical codes, and related inspection issues

- Worked in conjunction with other area departments to ensure compliance with Indiana building code requirements for foundation insulation
- Inspection staff performed tirelessly despite being shorthanded for most of 2016 after the death of long-time inspector Allen McCoy; began the search for a replacement for Mr. McCoy in the fall
- Conducted an ongoing customer service survey for the Permitting Excellence Coalition
- Served as a certification testing center for the International Code Council
- Started video recording of Columbia City and Whitley County Plan Commission and BZA meetings on a trial basis
- Implemented a new procedure for the Columbia City Board of Works to review proposed encroachments into easements
- Initiated a changeover in permitting software in conjunction with the Health Department to replace an obsolete database system and allow for the integration of credit card payments
- Held a major training workshop in June on the basic principles of planning and zoning for elected and appointed officials of all jurisdictions in the county
- Worked to create a conceptual plan for upgrading U.S. 30 in conjunction with County and Columbia City officials, organized public input, and drafted a plan document
- Collaborated with other departments to develop, receive input, organize, and implement a Parcel Committee in order to collectively review proposed property splits and combines in the County
- Implemented new permit and petition fees with the goal of a 50% department operating ratio

### 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
- Research requests for new wireless transmission facilities, development of new codes or processes for each jurisdiction to address the requests
- Aiding the downtown improvement and revitalization efforts of Churubusco and South Whitley
- 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
- Writing documentation of standard operating procedures for department processes
- Annual review of procedures, fees, and business operations
- Implementation of staffing for the Whitley County Redevelopment Commission
- 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	670	New single-family homes constructed	100
Inspections completed	3,026	New commercial buildings	9
Building department vehicle mileage	38,790	Demolition permits issued	20
Unsafe building violation notices	13	Unsafe building orders issued	5
Improvement location permits issued	514	Mobile home renewals	7
Pond permits issued	1	Code violation notices	9
Plan Commission applications	30	BZA applications	48
Public meetings held	43	Development plan reviews	8
Total fees collected	\$ 124,534.54	Total operating expenses	\$ 211,739.62

### POPULATION

The population for Whitley County was estimated by the U.S. Census as 33,406 as of July 2015, the most recent estimate available. This represents a growth of 0.3% above the 2010 Census count, but zero growth over the previous year. Over the 2010-15 time period, Columbia City saw an estimated increase of 1.2%, the highest change in the county. Even this is below the estimated growth for Allen (3.7%) and Kosciusko (1.6%) Counties, as well as the state of Indiana as a whole (2.1%). However, Whitley County has fared as well as, or better than, the other nearby counties: Noble (0.4%), Huntington (-1.3%), and Wabash (-2.3%).

### POPULATION GROWTH ESTIMATES

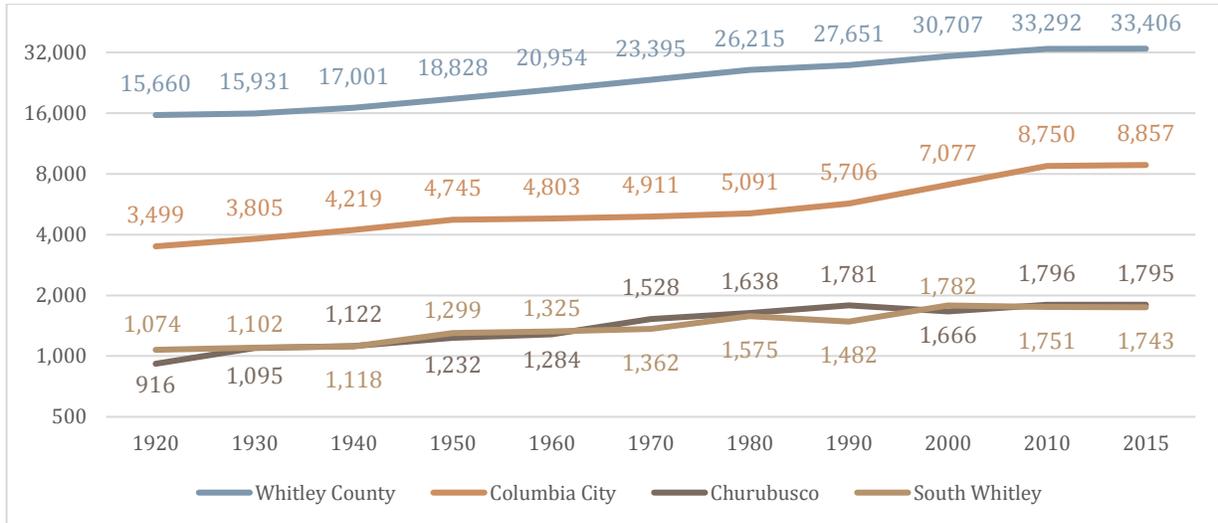
	CENSUS		POPULATION ESTIMATES				CHANGE
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2010-15
<b>Whitley County</b>	33,292	33,288	33,270	33,238	33,403	33,406	0.3%
<b>Columbia City</b>	8,750	8,812	8,809	8,791	8,829	8,857	1.2%
<b>Churubusco</b>	1,796	1,801	1,797	1,789	1,790	1,795	-0.1%
<b>South Whitley</b>	1,751	1,770	1,763	1,757	1,752	1,743	-0.5%
<b>Larwill*</b>	283	282	281	280	283	282	-0.4%

*Note: Larwill is an incorporated town and so is included here for reference. Since the town's planning, zoning, and building are handled by the County, it is not included elsewhere in this report.*

As a frame of reference, in the 70 years prior to 2010, the County had fairly steady population growth of about 10% per decade. Columbia City had a period of substantial growth from the late 1980s up to 2010, growing by some 50%. The two 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

If the trend indicated by 2010-15 continues to the year 2020, Whitley County would see its lowest growth rate since the Great Depression. This can significantly impact the sustainability of our businesses, industries, and schools, as well as potentially reducing provision of public services.

However, both Columbia City and Churubusco had two new single-family subdivision sections completed in 2016, along with one anticipated to start development in early 2017. At buildout, this would bring another 65± families into these communities. Additionally, both communities had multi-family developments approved in 2016, along with the two previously underway in Columbia City due to open in 2017. Hopefully, these and more residential developments reverse the population stagnation in 2017 and beyond.

## SCHOOL ENROLLMENT



Proposed site plan for the Columbia City High School

Related to total population growth, school enrollment is an important factor to consider in planning as it can be an indicator of the long-term vitality of our communities.

Increasing enrollment typically accompanies an influx of new residents, which could be a result of, or cause of, changes in planning strategies. Stagnant enrollment numbers may or may not reflect significant population changes, but are important to consider as rising school operating costs may exceed

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,

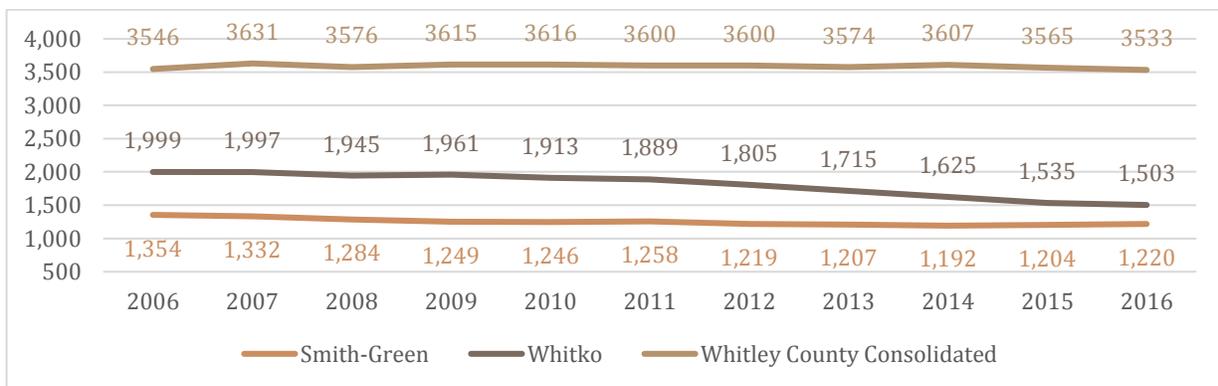
# COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

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. Like the flattening total population growth, the decrease in students can have negative effects for schools, businesses, and general quality of life. In 2016, Whitley County Consolidated Schools began planning and development of a new high school, which could help to spark interest in the school district and start to push student numbers upward.

The Whitko school district had a further decline in enrollment in 2016, and may need to find ways to adjust to the lower numbers in the near future. It could be a proactive effort for the Larwill and South Whitley areas to investigate opportunities to partner with the school corporation to offset the decrease in students.

## PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT SINCE 2006



Source: Indiana Department of Education

While the three school corporations were graded by the Department of Education as “B” in 2016, individual school grades ranged from “A” to “D”, with most scores having dropped from 2015. The causes for this decline are beyond the scope of this department, but it is worth noting here since school performance is important to attracting and retaining residential growth.

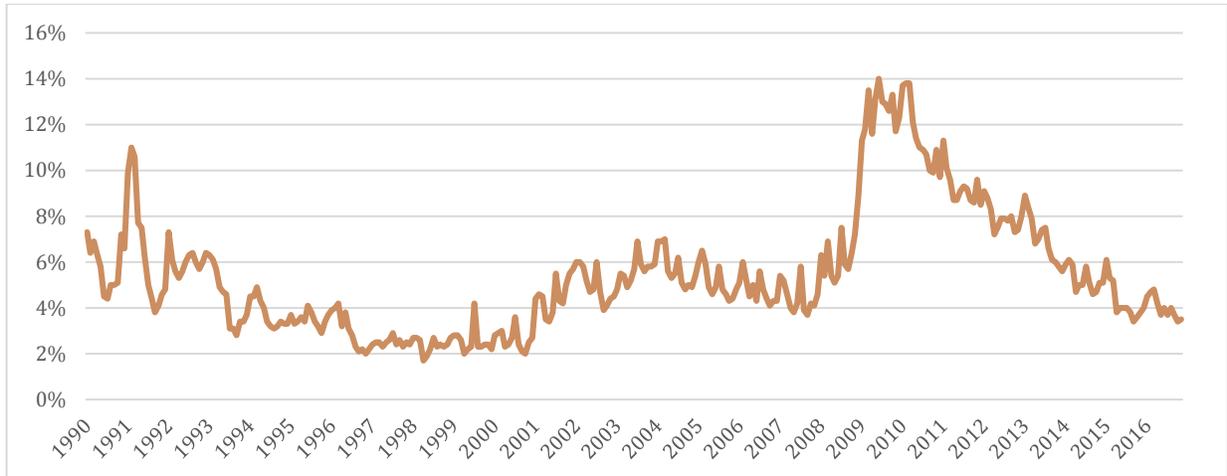
As a matter of planning, it is important that these impacts are anticipated and adequately addressed by each jurisdiction while pursuing the goals of their comprehensive plans.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

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

# COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

## WHITLEY COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT RATE SINCE 1990



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, through November 2016

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.

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

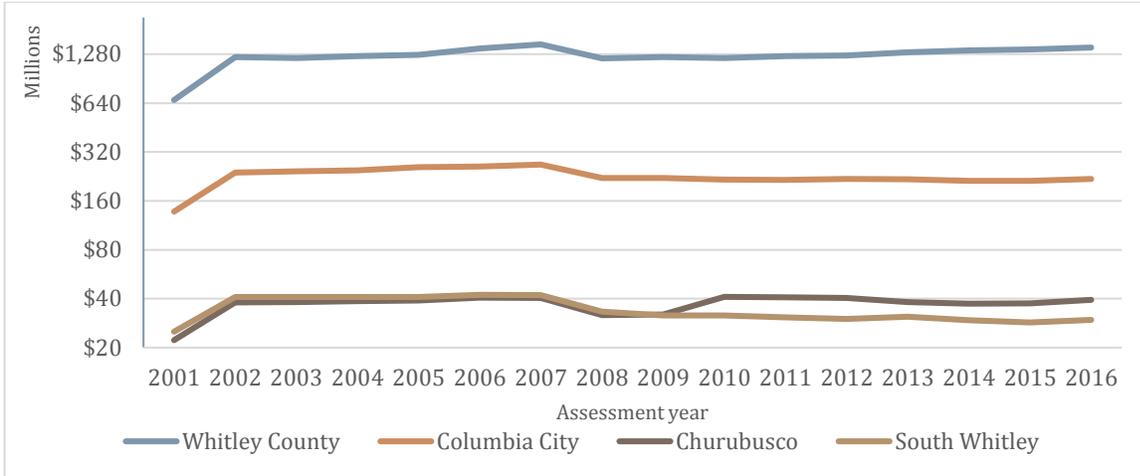
The assessed value (AV) of real property in the county can be an important indicator of the strength of a community and its ability to provide services, and the trend of AV is one factor used by businesses and site selectors in determining site locations.

As seen in the below graph, all the jurisdictions in the county have had similar trends of AV growth and decline (note that Larwill is not shown on the graph due to its significantly lower AV value relative to the others). Of interest is the drop in AV in 2007/08, most likely due to the state mandated change to a market value-based assessment.

An additional change in assessing that is not apparent is the implementation of property tax caps and circuit breakers in 2010. This is because few property assessments in Whitley County exceed the 1-2-3% tax caps since property tax rates largely fall below those caps. That can be a selling point for economic development and residential growth in our county, since other regions of Indiana are struggling with provision of services under the tax caps.

# COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

## ASSESSED VALUES (CERTIFIED NET) SINCE 2001



When looking at the trends for each jurisdiction in 2016, only the AV for the County and Churubusco exceed that in 2002. Columbia City and South Whitley had 8.46% and 27.7% decreases in net assessed value over that time period. Even considering just the period since 2008, the AV for Columbia City fell by 1.23%, and South Whitley’s by 11.15%. In that time period, the County rose by 16.54% and Churubusco by 24.12%.

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 also necessary to ensure services for quality of life, education, and safety may continue into the future.

# PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

## PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

### CHURUBUSCO

#### PETITIONS FILED IN 2016

Rezoning	1	Subdivision plat	0	Variance	1
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	1/1/2017
Jeremy Hart, President	Town Council	1/1/2020
Ashley Johnson	County Commissioners	1/1/2020
Wayne Krider	Town Council	1/1/2020
Bruce Johnson	Town Council Member	Term
Bob Martin	Town Council	1/1/2018 <i>resigned in August</i>
Mark Pepple <i>replaced Mr. Martin</i>	Town Council Member	Term
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 2 regular meetings in 2016. Of note, the Commission recommended a rezoning for an apartment project at Mulberry and Pleasant Streets.

#### BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

##### Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Jason Bartl, Chairman	Town Council	1/1/2020
Paula Grawcock, Vice-Chairman	Plan Commission	Biennial appointment
David Crabill, Chairman	Town Council	1/1/2020
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 2 regular meetings in 2016, and considered cases for a special exception of a kennel expansion and a setback variance.

# PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

## COLUMBIA CITY

### PETITIONS FILED IN 2016

Rezoning	3	Subdivision plat	2	Variance	5
Zoning text amendment	0	Subdivision replat	0	Appeal	0
Development plan	3	Special exception	5	Other	0

### 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	1/1/2017
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	1/1/2017
Patrick Zickgraf	Mayor	1/1/2018

#### Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Columbia City Plan Commission held 8 regular and one special meetings in 2016. The Commission approved development plans for Holiday Inn, Impact CNC, and the Church of the Brethren, made recommendations on rezonings for Casey's General Store, Rhoades Auto, and for a two-family dwelling. They also approved primary plats for the next sections of Deer Chase and Oakdale Ridge.

### BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

#### Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Marquis Jones	City Council	1/1/2019
Jon Kissinger, Vice-chairman	Plan Commission	Annual appointment
Dwayne Knott, Chairman	Mayor	1/1/2017
Anthony Romano	Mayor	1/1/2018
Dennis Warnick	Mayor	1/1/2017

#### Summary of BZA actions

The Columbia City Board of Zoning Appeals held 6 regular meetings in 2016. The Board considered setback and signage variances, as well as special exceptions for a child care home, a downtown mixed use apartment building, a commercial propane facility, and the new high school.

# PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

## SOUTH WHITLEY

### PETITIONS FILED IN 2016

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

### PLAN COMMISSION

#### Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Wendy Bills	Town Council	1/1/2017
Bill Boggs	Town Council Member	Term of Office
Randy Cokl	Town Council Member	Term of Office
Tom Dome	Town Council	1/1/2018
Les Hoffman	Town Council Member	Term of Office
Karen Jordan, President	County Commissioners	1/1/2019 <i>resigned in September</i>
Joe Kessie, Vice-president	Town Council	1/1/2019
Anna Simmons	Town Council	1/1/2019
Wayne Swender	County Commissioners	1/1/2016

#### Summary of Plan Commission actions

The South Whitley Plan Commission held 2 regular meetings in 2016. The Commission approved a development plan for a new Dollar General, and they considered a proposed two-lot subdivision (subsequently withdrawn).

### BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

#### Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Frank Baldrige	Town Council	1/1/2018
Tom Dome, Chairman	Town Council	1/1/2018
Rod Hardesty	Town Council	1/1/2018
Doug Morrissey, Vice-chairman	Town Council	1/1/2018
Wayne Swender	Plan Commission	Annual appointment

#### Summary of BZA actions

The South Whitley Board of Zoning Appeals held 3 regular meetings in 2016 and considered special exception requests for a parking lot and for a front yard fence.

# PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

## WHITLEY COUNTY

### PETITIONS FILED IN 2016

Rezoning	3	Subdivision plat	8	Variance	20
Zoning text amendment	0	Subdivision replat	3	Appeal	0
Development plan	4	Special exception	15	Other	1

### PLAN COMMISSION

#### Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Brandon Forrester, Secretary	County Surveyor	Duration of Office
John Johnson	County Commissioners	1/1/2017
Kenneth Kerch	County Commissioners	1/1/2018
Mark Mynhier	County Commissioners	1/1/2018
Paula Reimers, Vice-chairman	County Council Member	Annual appointment
George Schrupf	County Commissioner Member	Annual appointment
Brad Wolfe	County Commissioners	1/1/2018
John Woodmansee	County Extension Office	Duration of Office
Doug Wright, Chairman	County Commissioners	1/1/2017

#### Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Whitley County Plan Commission held 7 regular meetings in 2016. The Commission granted primary approval of 11 plats and replats, made recommendations on 3 rezonings, and approved development plans for AJ Machine, Red Star Manufacturing, Impact CNC, and Briggs Crop Nutrients.

### BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

#### Membership

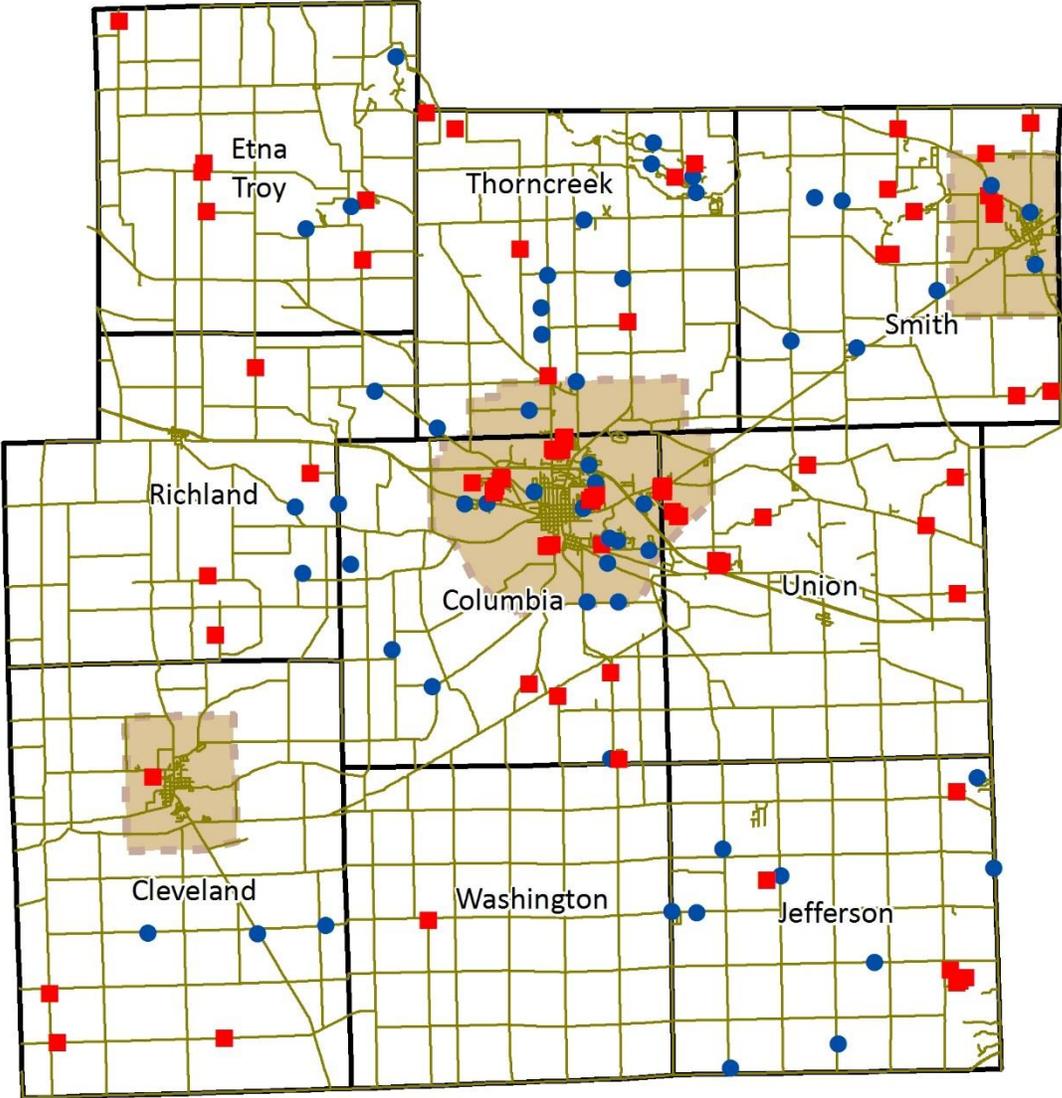
	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Tim Denihan, Vice-Chairman	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Will Klein	County Council	1/1/2020
Mark Mynhier	County Commissioners	1/1/2018
Danny Wilkinson, Chairman	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Doug Wright, Secretary	Plan Commission Member	Annual appointment

#### Summary of BZA actions

The County Board of Zoning Appeals held 12 regular meetings in 2016. The Board considered setback variances, and granted special exceptions for home occupations, secondary dwelling units, a confined feeding operation, telecommunications tower, and hunting lodge/camping, among others.

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

MAP OF RESIDENTIAL PERMITS



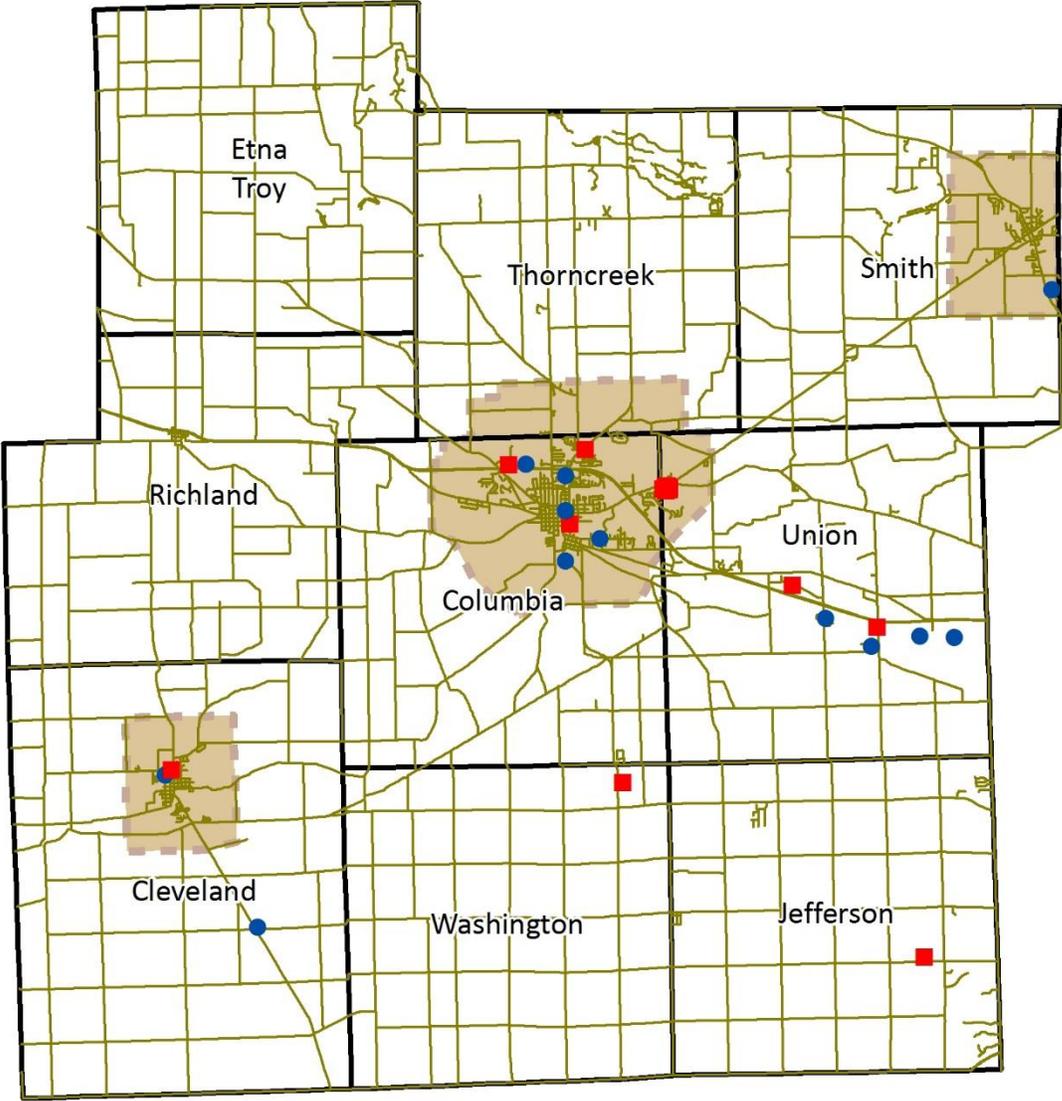
■ *New construction*  
*Includes single-family, two-family, modular, etc.*  
*Does not include multi-family.*

● *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

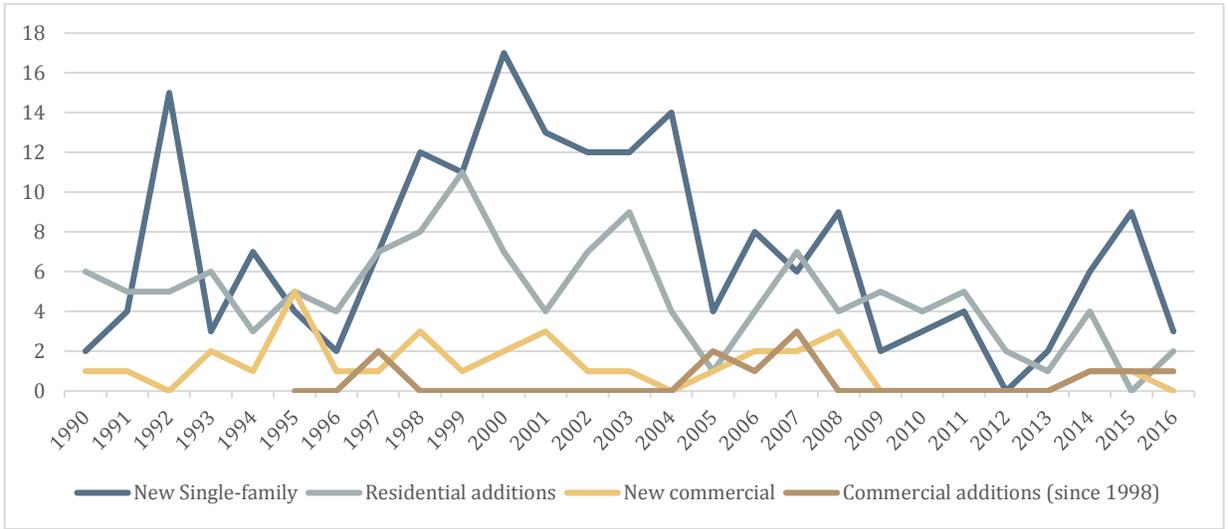
## CHURUBUSCO

### 2016 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	3	\$ 471,500
Multi-family dwellings		
Manufactured/mobile homes		
Residential additions/remodels	2	36,500
Residential accessory buildings	8	145,100
Agricultural buildings		
Commercial/industrial	0	
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	1	100,000
Institutional		
Institutional additions/remodels	1	30,000
Miscellaneous	28	122,333
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>\$ 905,433</b>

Major projects in 2016: Busco Pride, a \$100,000 remodel to their gas station; and a \$30,000 addition for Ideal Fish and Game Club.

### PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



# CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

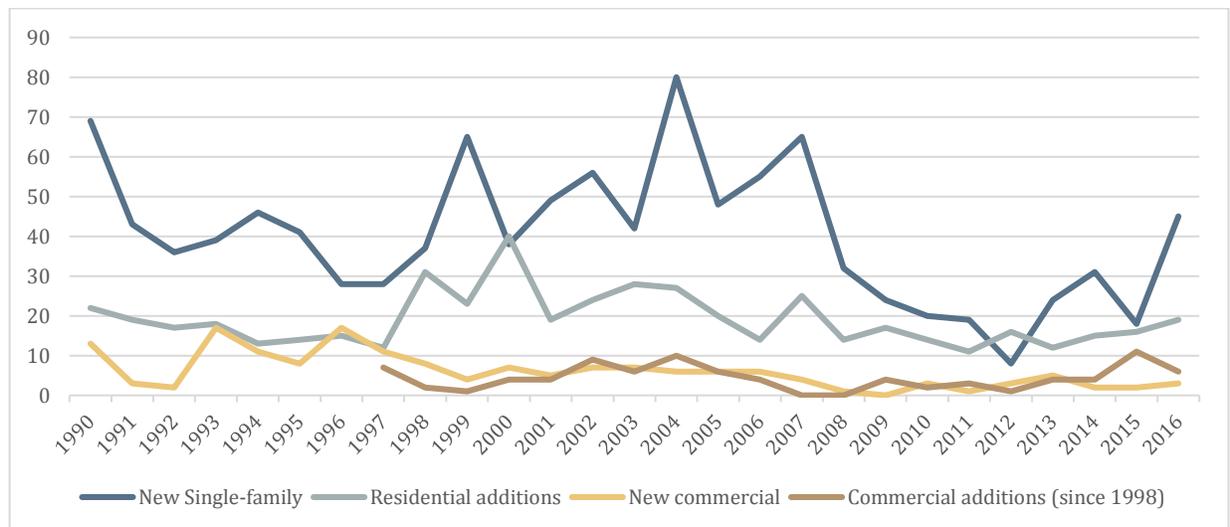
## COLUMBIA CITY

### 2016 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	45	\$ 7,273,000
Multi-family dwellings	9	11,600,000
Manufactured/mobile homes	1	12,000
Residential additions/remodels	19	337,600
Residential accessory buildings	41	589,350
Agricultural buildings		
Commercial/industrial	3	2,432,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	6	2,433,000
Institutional		
Institutional additions/remodels	1	820,000
Miscellaneous	112	1,526,650
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>\$ 27,023,600</b>

Major projects in 2016: Holiday Inn, a \$2.2M hotel; Wal-Mart, a \$1.1M remodel of their store; Impact CNC, a \$500,000 addition at their Short Street location; Star Bank, a \$400,000 remodel; Wendy's, a \$300,000 remodel; also, Historic Blue Bell Lofts and Quail Ridge, 167 total residential units and accessory buildings.

### PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



# CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

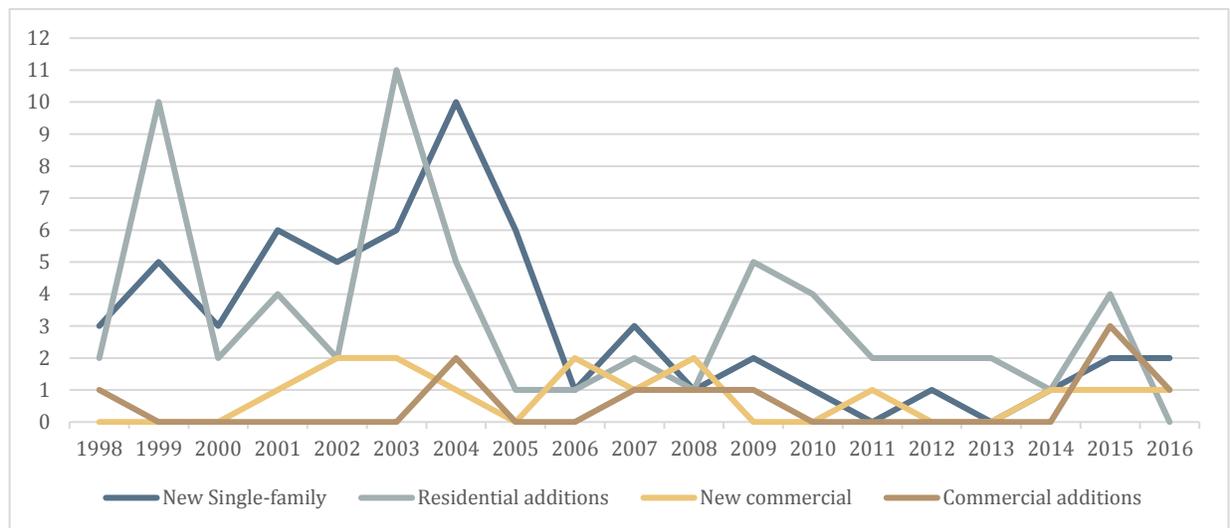
## SOUTH WHITLEY

### 2016 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	1	\$ 121,500
Multi-family dwellings		
Manufactured/mobile homes	9	111,250
Residential additions/remodels		
Residential accessory buildings	5	30,200
Agricultural buildings		
Commercial/industrial	1	900,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	1	20,000
Institutional		
Institutional additions/remodels		
Miscellaneous	37	263,665
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>\$ 1,446,615</b>

Major projects in 2016: Dollar General, a \$900,000 new store to replace the former Brownstone Market; and Synergy Feeds, a \$20,000 forklift ramp.

### PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1998\*



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

# CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

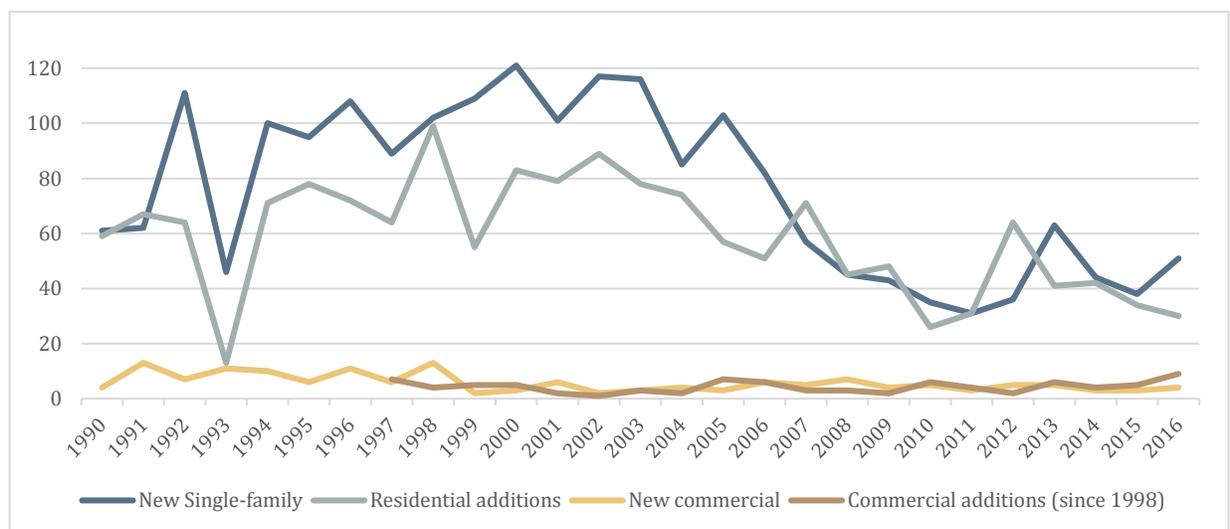
## WHITLEY COUNTY

### 2016 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	51	\$ 7,866,000
Multi-family dwellings		
Manufactured/mobile homes	9	836,100
Residential additions/remodels	30	2,300,200
Residential accessory buildings	154	4,434,350
Agricultural buildings	5	139,800
Commercial/industrial	4	6,500,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	9	4,905,000
Institutional		
Institutional additions/remodels		
Miscellaneous	168	2,133,120
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>\$ 29,114,570</b>

Major projects in 2016: Restoration Medical Polymers, a \$4.7M new building in Park 30; Farmer's Grain, a total of \$1.7M in new silos and an addition at their location on CR 600E; Indiana Material Processes, a \$950,000 addition to their building in Rail Connect; and Spec 30 Realty, a \$400,000 spec building in Park 30 Business Park; and Micropulse, Inc., \$800,000 in roof-mounted solar panels.

### PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



# REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

## REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

### FEES COLLECTED

The Department primarily collects fees for building permits and 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. These are considered user fees, and to a certain degree they should 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, the first increase since 2011, based upon actual costs, average inspection hours, and other factors. Combined with increased permit numbers, this resulted in collections being significantly higher than 2015.

### FEES COLLECTED, BY JURISDICTION

JURISDICTION	PLANNING FEES	BUILDING FEES	TOTAL	SHARE
<b>Churubusco</b>	\$ 1,111.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 6,111.00	4.91%
<b>Columbia City</b>	6,638.25	36,191.00	42,829.25	34.39%
<b>South Whitley</b>	1,252.50	5,622.00	6,874.50	5.52%
<b>County</b>	15,314.54	53,405.25	68,719.79	55.18%
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$ 24,316.29</b>	<b>\$ 100,218.25</b>	<b>\$ 124,534.54</b>	

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

### OPERATING EXPENSES

Generally, the operating expenditures of the Department in 2016 were comparable to those of previous years. Salaries, auto maintenance/fuel, and office materials made up the majority of the expenses.

### EXPENDITURES

EXPENSE CATEGORY	APPROPRIATIONS		EXPENDED	PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET
	(BUDGET)	(FINAL)		
<b>Salaries</b>	\$ 192,637.00	\$ 198,069.00	\$197,272.76	102.4%
<b>Travel &amp; auto</b>	8,000.00	8,000.00	7,934.31	99.2%
<b>Supplies</b>	2,000.00	2,300.00	2,190.42	109.5%
<b>Memberships</b>	650.00	825.00	802.00	123.4%
<b>Telephone</b>	400.00	260.00	258.52	64.6%
<b>Dues &amp; subscriptions</b>	550.00	515.00	181.40	33.0%
<b>Equipment</b>	500.00	2,120.00	2,114.40	422.9%
<b>Misc. (permit refunds)</b>	0.00	0.00	389.50	N/A
<b>Total shared expenses</b>	<b>\$ 206,447.00</b>	<b>\$ 213,799.00</b>	<b>\$ 211,739.62</b>	<b>102.6%</b>

# REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

COUNTY-ONLY EXPENSES *	APPROPRIATIONS		EXPENDED	PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET
	(BUDGET)	(FINAL)		
<b>County PC/BZA attorney</b>	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 2,750.00	91.7%
<b>County PC member stipends</b>	7,200.00	6,300.00	3,750.00	52.1%
<b>County BZA member stipends</b>	4,500.00	4,500.00	4,125.00	91.7%
<b>Professional services **</b>	5,000.00	3,080.00	624.00	12.5%
<b>Total county expenses</b>	<b>\$ 19,700.00</b>	<b>\$ 16,880.00</b>	<b>\$ 11,249.00</b>	<b>57.1%</b>
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 226,147.00</b>	<b>\$ 230,679.00</b>	<b>\$ 222,988.62</b>	<b>98.6%</b>

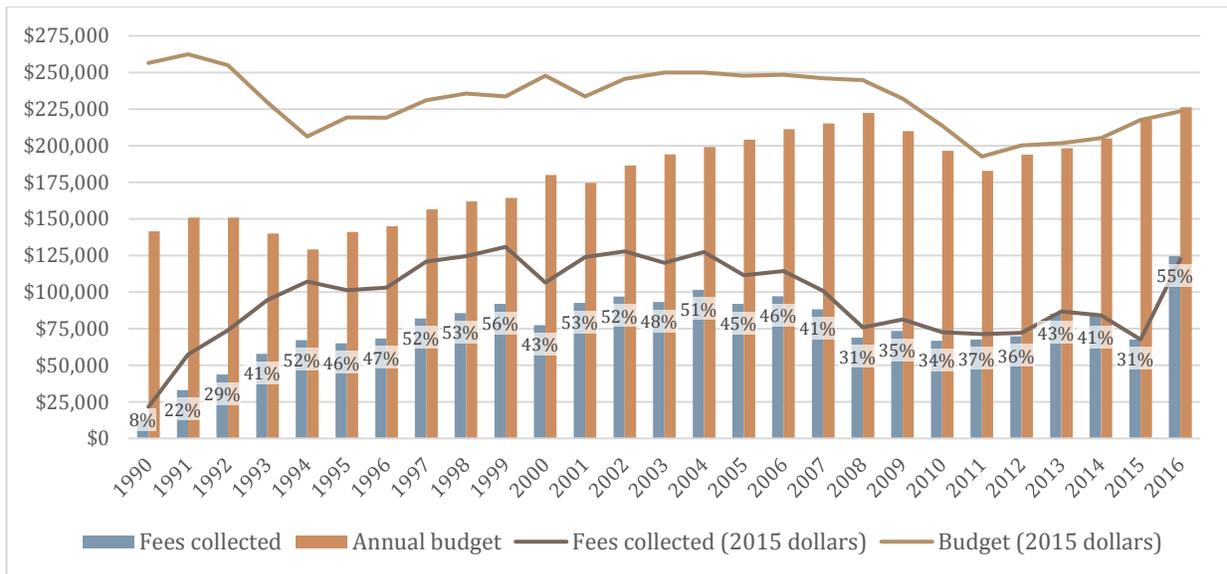
\* These items are direct County costs that are included in the Department annual budget but are not operating expenses shared between the City and County.

\*\* Prior to 2016, the professional services category had been always considered a shared expense.

## FEE REVENUES VS. EXPENSES

The Department is not a self-supporting agency. Its 2016 budget of \$226,147.00 was supported by the four member jurisdictions. However, as mentioned above, building permit application fees, petition filing fees, etc. 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.

## FEE COLLECTED AS PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET



As recommended in the 2015 Annual Report, a fee increase was implemented in July, with a goal to increase fee revenue to approximately 50% of expenses. By the end of 2016, fee revenue totaled approximately 55%

## REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

of the Department's 2016 budget (56% of the actual expenses), exceeding the target. This is likely due to the increases in permit activity as well as the fee increase.

As seen in the chart above, in absolute terms the total fee revenue in 2016 was the highest ever in the history of the joint department. Factoring in inflation, this was the 6<sup>th</sup> highest revenue, coming below the building boom years of 1998-99, 2001-02, and 2004. Looking at the operating ratio, 2016 ranked second in the percentage of revenue offsetting expenses. If permit activity continues to trend upward, 2017 fee revenue may even surpass all previous years.



## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2017

Based on the review of 2016 and future expectations, the following are recommendations for major goals for the Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department in 2017.

### BALANCED GROWTH

As was 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. The Department should continue to assist in preparing for and encouraging quality residential developments and working to improve the quality of life aspects, which are parts of each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan, over the next several years.

The provision of staffing for the Whitley County Redevelopment Commission by the Department in 2017 is expected to help streamline the economic development process by providing a "gateway" regulatory body for projects from their initial site inquiries to final occupancy. Updating the Economic Development Plan for the County's main TIF area will also be important in order to provide guidance for future activities by the Commission. It is expected that additional benefits will become apparent as the year progresses.

### CODE UPDATES

The Subdivision Control Ordinances for all jurisdictions are dated, with the most recent revisions being from 2010. One is barely altered from original adoption in the early 1970s. It is important that these be updated to establish clear and precise procedures for approving and constructing new developments and plats. By being transparent and straightforward in code requirements, one potential obstacle to both residential and commercial development could be removed. Further, reviewing proposed small plats through use of a plat committee or other processes could reduce the number of Plan Commission meetings and expedite approvals of those smaller plats.

In addition, some zoning code text changes may be implemented in 2017 to address instances of unclear language, create zoning districts for certain residential and industrial uses, revise sign codes based upon recent court decisions and interpretations, and potentially more. Any code updates or revisions of course will require the diligence of the Department, Plan Commissions, legislative bodies, and citizens to develop, revise, and adopt.

### CUSTOMER SERVICE

In 2016, a new permitting software upgrade was initiated, and the transition will continue into 2017, including the ability to accept credit card payments. In the end, this will allow for more efficient service response and capability for major builders and contractors to submit permits remotely via a web portal. If permit volume continues to increase, which seems likely in 2017, this will be an important feature for both regular customers and staff to effectively and efficiently process permits while handling other applications and requests.

# RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2017

## STAFFING

Cathy Gardner's imminent retirement in 2017 will leave a vacancy that will need to be refilled quickly to maintain a high level of service, even though it will be quite difficult to find someone to match her years of experience. It will be an effort, but ideally someone as devoted and knowledgeable can be found.

If the volume of permits and applications continues to increase through 2017 as significantly as in 2016, the hiring of another part-time secretary may become necessary. The addition of a second part-time inspector in 2017 will distribute the inspection workload, and the inspection software may aid in efficiency, but the situation will need to be monitored so as to make predictions for the 2018 budget.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A: COUNTY-WIDE CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY COMPARISON

	2015		2016	
	PERMITS	EST. VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION	PERMITS	EST. VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
<b>Single-family dwellings</b>	67	\$ 15,087,100	100	\$ 19,382,900
<b>Two-family</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Multi-family</b>	0	0	9	11,600,000
<b>Manufactured homes</b>	10	1,134,000	10	890,000
<b>Mobile homes</b>	8	56,500	9	69,350
<b>Residential additions</b>	54	2,456,400	51	2,674,300
<b>Residential accessory buildings</b>	193	4,871,365	208	5,199,000
<b>Agricultural buildings</b>	10	419,300	5	139,800
<b>Commercial/industrial</b>	7	2,380,000	8	9,832,000
<b>Commercial/industrial additions</b>	20	4,011,000	17	7,458,000
<b>Institutional</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Institutional additions</b>	2	532,000	2	850,000
<b>Miscellaneous</b>	269	2,626,405	345	4,045,768
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>\$ 33,574,070</b>	<b>764</b>	<b>\$ 62,141,118</b>

## APPENDIX B: YEARLY COMPARISONS

BUILDING PERMITS	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Churubusco</b>	35	25	50	45	34
<b>Columbia City</b>	177	182	247	173	87
<b>South Whitley</b>	40	25	34	40	40
<b>County</b>	419	435	410	382	509
<b>Total</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>667</b>	<b>741</b>	<b>640</b>	<b>670</b>

# APPENDICES

IMPROVEMENT LOCATION PERMITS	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Churubusco</b>	19	12	28	31	22
<b>Columbia City</b>	96	111	157	112	168
<b>South Whitley</b>	20	10	19	22	24
<b>County</b>	294	331	290	301	300
<b>Total</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>466</b>	<b>514</b>

INSPECTIONS COMPLETED*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Churubusco</b>				190	123
<b>Columbia City</b>				704	1,036
<b>South Whitley</b>				140	111
<b>County</b>				1935	1,774
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,734</b>	<b>2,973</b>	<b>3,004</b>	<b>2,969</b>	<b>3,044</b>

\*Inspections per jurisdiction were not tracked prior to 2015

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

PERMITS IN FLOODPLAIN*	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Churubusco</b>	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Columbia City</b>	0	2	0	0	2
<b>South Whitley</b>	1	0	0	0	3
<b>County</b>	17	11	13	4	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>13</b>

\*Some part of parcel is located in regulatory floodplain; permitted improvement may or may not be in floodplain

LAND USE PETITIONS FILED	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
<b>Churubusco</b>	6	2	3	4	3
<b>Columbia City</b>	10	10	10	10	18
<b>South Whitley</b>	0	1	1	5	4
<b>County</b>	46	40	45	44	53