

2015 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

220 West Van Buren Street, Suite 204

Columbia City, IN 46725

(260) 248-3112

Fax: (260) 248-3157

www.whitleygov.com

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

While every year brings new and different challenges to our communities, residents, and businesses, the year 2015 saw major changes for the Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department itself.

In March, David Sewell, the Department's Executive Director, departed for new opportunities. Mr. Sewell had held the position for more than 18 years, during which time he guided the Department through such undertakings as the approval, construction, and expansion of the SDI steel mill, the implementation of wind energy codes, strategies to deal with CFOs, the boom and bust of the housing market, and many other achievements. As importantly, he formed a department that has developed a reputation for being friendly and efficient, and that takes pride in serving the community.

Victoria Chavez came in July to fill the Directorship vacancy. Her tenure here was brief, though, as family commitments drew her away in September. In her time here, she began to realign the work flows of the office and initiated a study of the permit and application fees; both efforts are being continued into 2016.

During the extended periods of time between Executive Directors, the entire staff coalesced to undertake new responsibilities. Cathy Gardner stepped up as the interim director in addition to her regular duties, even filling the part-time Secretary position, *twice*. Amanda Thompson and Craig Wagner also worked outside their primary roles to maintain the level of service the public has come to expect. It is impossible to fully express the level of dedication of all of the staff has shown during this challenging year.

Coming to the Department, I could not have found a staff who are as knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and eager to help as the six work here. Their level of dedication has made stepping into the Director position unimaginably simple. In returning to Whitley County after having been away since 2000, I have been impressed with the growth—especially industrial—that has occurred even in the face of the 2008 recession. Despite that growth pressure, our communities have strived to retain their individuality and sense of place.

However, it is likely that we will be facing new challenges in the coming year and into the future. It will be important for every community to build on its assets to improve the quality of life in order to draw in new residents and make the current ones passionate about their hometowns. With that, the encouragement of sustainable, balanced growth will become more important than ever.

But no matter what the next year brings, I am excited to be part of a Department that is enthusiastic and capable to help make our communities great.

-Nathan Bilger, AICP, Executive Director

DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

STAFF

Executive Director	David M. Sewell, AICP (until March 27) Victoria Chavez (July 27 to Sept. 10) Nathan Bilger, AICP (started Nov. 30)
Chief Building Inspector	Craig W. Wagner, CBI
Assistant Planner	Cathy Gardner
Office Administrator	Amanda (Morford) Thompson
Secretary (part-time)	Aleta Koch (until April 16) Linda Gerig (April 13 to Oct. 30) Jenny Stephenson (started Nov. 9)
Building Inspectors (part-time)	Daniel Bishop Allen McCoy

The Joint Planning and Building Department's seven-member staff fills the six positions shown above. While each position is defined as being 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 27 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.

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 2015, 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 2015, the Board met twice: on February 2, and June 29.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF 2015

In addition to the accomplishments of the Commissions and Boards listed elsewhere herein, some of the notable achievements of the Department in 2015 included:

- The hiring of two Executive Directors
- Preparation of revised floodplain management codes for adoption by each jurisdiction per the requirements of IDNR and FEMA
- Assistance in developing and preparation of update to the Columbia City Comprehensive Plan
- Assistance to Columbia City during the annexation and initial zoning of a proposed 31-acre multi-family development
- Started video recording of Churubusco and South Whitley public meetings, improving the accuracy of meeting records
- Issued two unsafe building repair orders: for repair and securing of 209 N. Chauncey St., which was resolved, and for structural remediation of 116 W. Van Buren St. (formerly the Northside Grill), which is still in progress

DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

- Hosted Northeastern Indiana Association of Building Officials meetings, which feature code training sessions, code enforcement discussions, and presentations by construction industry suppliers and manufacturers
- Craig Wagner attended and/or presented at several continuing education meetings and seminars, including the Indiana Association of Building Officials Annual Business Meeting, Indiana Code Education Seminar, and classes on firestopping, International Fuel Gas Code, code administration, accessory structures, and geotechnical and structural inspection
- Conducted a customer service survey for the Permitting Excellence Coalition
- Obtained new software for the department to generate electronic application forms

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:

- Preliminary planning for upgrading U.S. 30, in conjunction with County and Columbia City officials
- 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
- 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
- Appraisal of various credit/debit card payment systems
- Evaluation of new permitting software, in conjunction with other departments, to replace the current obsolete system
- 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	640	New single-family homes constructed	67
Inspections completed	2,969	New commercial buildings	7
Building department vehicle mileage	36,712	Demolition permits issued	18
Unsafe building violation notices	17	Unsafe building orders issued	5
Improvement location permits issued	466	Mobile home renewals	7
Pond permits issued	5	Code violation notices	10
Plan Commission applications	17	BZA applications	41
Public meetings held	40	Development plan reviews	9
Total fees collected	\$67,615.95	Total operating expenses	\$182,662.15

POPULATION

The population for Whitley County was estimated by the U.S. Census as 33,403 as of July 2014, the most recent estimate available. This represents a growth of 0.3% above the 2010 Census count. Over the same time period, Columbia City saw an increase of 0.9%, the highest change in the county. This is below the growth rates for Allen (3.0%) and Kosciusko (1.6%) Counties, as well as the state of Indiana as a whole (1.7%). However, Whitley County has fared favorably when compared to the other nearby counties: Noble (0.2%), Huntington (-1.1%), and Wabash (-1.9%).

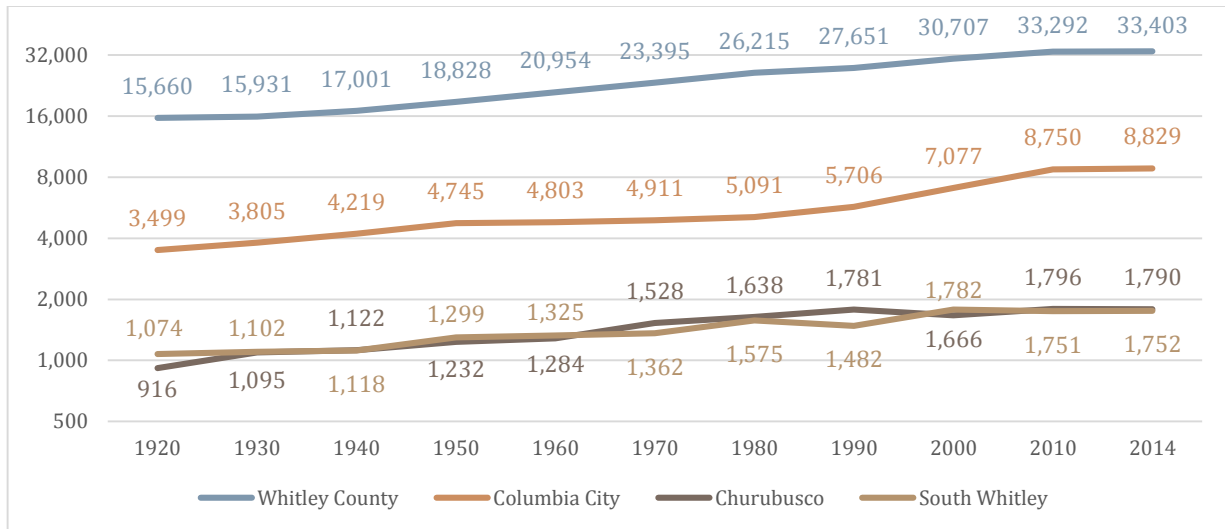
POPULATION GROWTH 2010-2014

	CENSUS	POPULATION ESTIMATES				CHANGE
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2010-14
Whitley County	33,292	33,288	33,270	33,238	33,403	0.3%
Columbia City	8,750	8,812	8,809	8,791	8,829	0.9%
Churubusco	1,796	1,801	1,797	1,789	1,790	-0.3%
South Whitley	1,751	1,770	1,763	1,757	1,752	0.0%

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

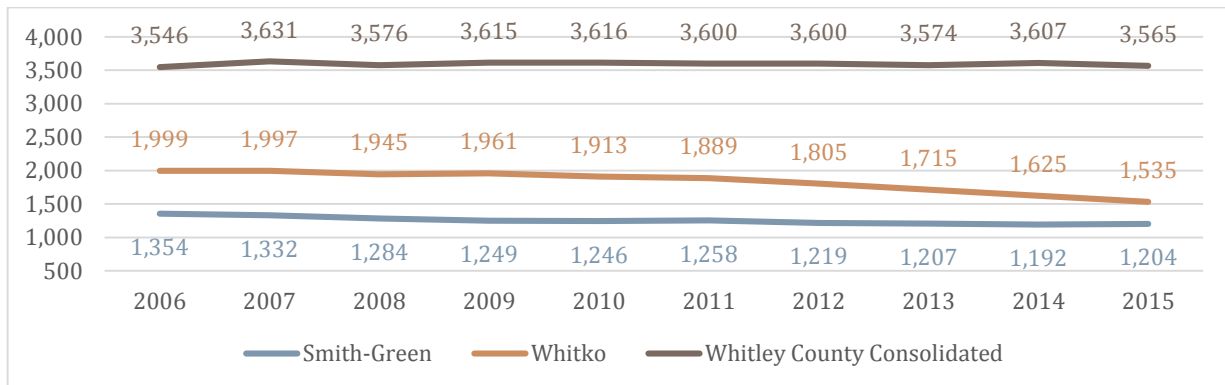
POPULATION GROWTH SINCE 1940



Source: U.S. Census Bureau

If the trend indicated by 2010-14 continues to the year 2020, Whitley County would see its lowest growth 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.

PUBLIC SCHOOL ENROLLMENT



Source: Indiana Department of Education

Related to total population growth, school enrollment is an important factor to consider in our communities. While the three systems' schools are mostly graded by the Department of Education as "A" or "B" for 2015, 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.

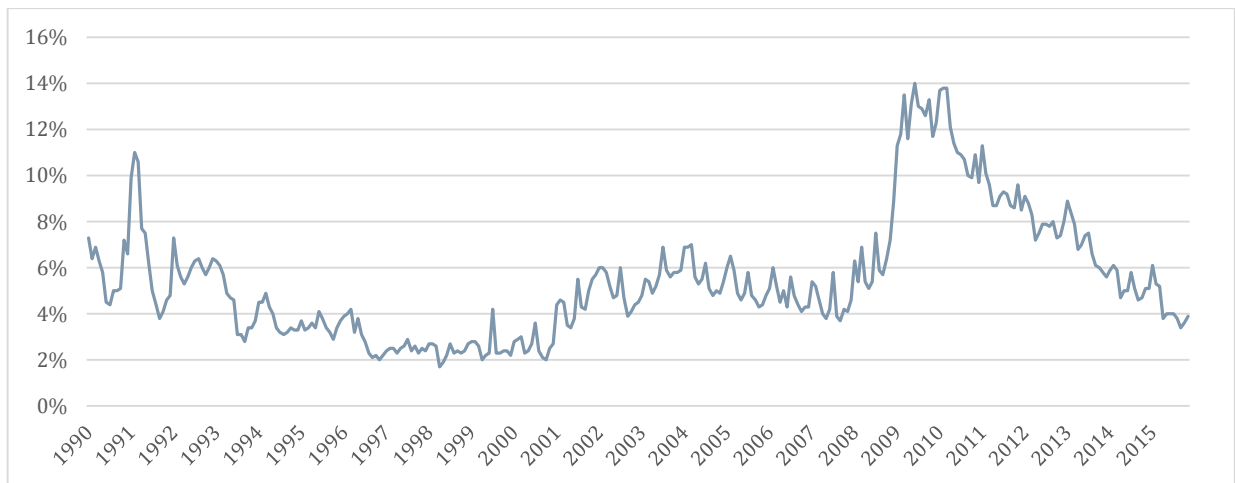
As a matter of planning, it is important that these impacts are anticipated and adequately addressed by each jurisdiction while pursuing the goals of their comprehensive plans.

COUNTY-WIDE STATISTICS

UNEMPLOYMENT

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

WHITLEY COUNTY UNEMPLOYMENT RATE SINCE 1990



Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics, through November 2015

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.

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

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

CHURUBUSCO

PETITIONS FILED IN 2015

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

PLAN COMMISSION

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Jason Bartl	Town Council	1/1/2018
Ken Bultemeier	County Commissioners	1/1/2016
Paula Grawcock	County Commissioners	1/1/2017
Jeremy Hart, Vice-chairman	Town Council	1/1/2016
Wayne Krider	Town Council	1/1/2016
Alan Malcolm	Town Council Member	1/1/2016
Bob Martin	Town Council	1/1/2018
Brenda Saggars, Chairman	Town Council	1/1/2018
Pat Stanford	Town Council	1/1/2018

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Churubusco Plan Commission held 2 meetings in 2015. Of note, the Commission approved a development plan for S&V Liquors, and they recommended updates to the Floodplain Standards.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Jason Bartl	Town Council	1/1/2016
Ken Bultemeier, Vice-Chairman	Plan Commission	1/1/2016
David Crabill, Chairman	Town Council	1/1/2016
Bruce Johnson	Town Council	1/1/2019
Miles Wilson	Town Council	1/1/2019

Summary of BZA actions

The Churubusco Board of Zoning Appeals held 2 meetings in 2015, both to consider setback variances.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

COLUMBIA CITY

PETITIONS FILED IN 2015

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

PLAN COMMISSION

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Doug Graft, Chairman	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Jon Kissinger	County Commissioners	1/1/2017
Don Langeloh	Mayor	1/1/2019
Jeff Walker, Vice-chairman	City Council	1/1/2016
Dennis Warnick	Mayor	1/1/2016
Dan Weigold	City Council Member	Term of Office
Larry Weiss	Mayor	1/1/2017
Jacie Worrick	City Council Member	Term of Office
Patrick Zickgraf	Mayor	1/1/2018

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The Columbia City Plan Commission held 7 meetings in 2015. The Commission approved development plans for Dollar Tree, Historic Blue Bell Lofts, Quail Ridge Senior Villas, and Real Estate Equities self-storage facility. The Commission also recommended updates to the Floodplain Standards and updates to the Comprehensive Plan.

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	1/1/2017
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 5 meetings in 2015. The Board considered setback, height, and signage variances, as well as a special exception for outdoor storage in conjunction with a permitted use.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

SOUTH WHITLEY

PETITIONS FILED IN 2015

Rezoning	1	Subdivision plat	0	Variance	2
Zoning text amendment	1	Subdivision replat	0	Appeal	0
Development plan	1	Special exception	0	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
Tom Dome	Town Council	1/1/2018
Karen Jordan, Chairman	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Joe Kessie, Vice-chairman	Town Council	1/1/2019
Anna Simmons	Town Council	1/1/2019
Steve Smith	Town Council Member	Term of Office
Tony Starkey	Town Council Member	Term of Office
Wayne Swender	County Commissioners	1/1/2016

Summary of Plan Commission actions

The South Whitley Plan Commission held 9 meetings in 2015. The Commission approved a development plan for J & A Rentals (Cardinal Grain), and they recommended the rezoning of the old Brownstone Grocery property from the I-1 to the GB. The Commission also recommended the approval of updates to the Floodplain Standards and continued their review of the South Whitley Subdivision Ordinance.

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS

Membership

	<u>Appointed by</u>	<u>Term</u>
Frank Baldrige	Town Council	1/1/2018
Randy Cokl	Town Council	1/1/2018
Judy Earnhart, Vice-chairman	Town Council	1/1/2018
Rod Hardesty	Town Council	1/1/2018
Wayne Swender	Plan Commission	1/1/2016

Summary of BZA actions

The South Whitley Board of Zoning Appeals held 2 meetings in 2015 to consider setback variances.

PLANNING AND ZONING ACTIVITIES

WHITLEY COUNTY

PETITIONS FILED IN 2015

Rezoning	1	Subdivision plat	5	Variance	24
Zoning text amendment	1	Subdivision replat	1	Appeal	0
Development plan	3	Special exception	8	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	1/1/2016
George Schrupf	County Commissioner Member	1/1/2016
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 9 meetings in 2015. The Commission granted primary approval of 5 one-lot subdivisions and approved development plans for 30 Spec Realty, Indiana Material Processing, Inc., and Restoration Medical Polymers, LLC. They also recommended updates to the Floodplain Standards.

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	1/1/2016
Mark Mynhier	County Commissioners	1/1/2018
Danny Wilkinson, Chairman	County Commissioners	1/1/2019
Doug Wright, Secretary	Plan Commission Member	1/1/2016

Summary of BZA actions

The County Board of Zoning Appeals held 11 meetings in 2015. The Board considered setback variances, and granted special exceptions for a kennel, bottled gas distribution, gunsmithing, taxidermy, and pallet assembly businesses.

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

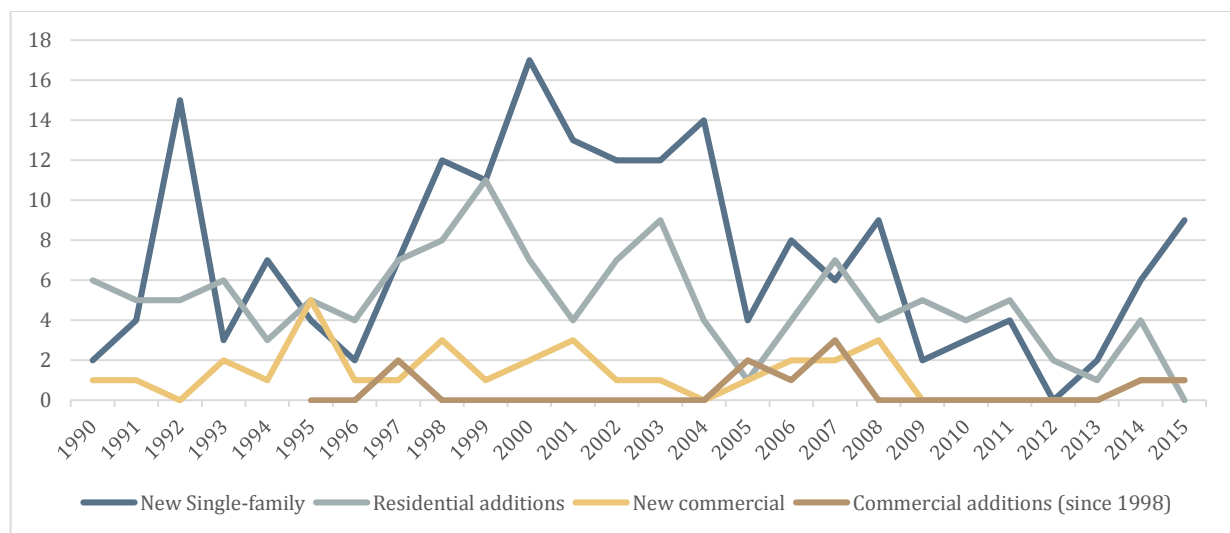
CHURUBUSCO

2015 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	9	\$1,649,500
Multi-family dwellings		
Manufactured/mobile homes	1	40,000
Residential additions/remodels		
Residential accessory buildings	9	100,600
Agricultural buildings		
Commercial/industrial	1	450,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	1	5,000
Institutional		
Institutional additions/remodels	1	400,000
Miscellaneous	23	221,400
TOTAL	45	\$ 2,866,500

Major projects in 2015: Smith Green Community Schools, a \$400,000 boiler replacement; and S & V Liquors, a new \$450,000 facility on the former Ramble Inn property.

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

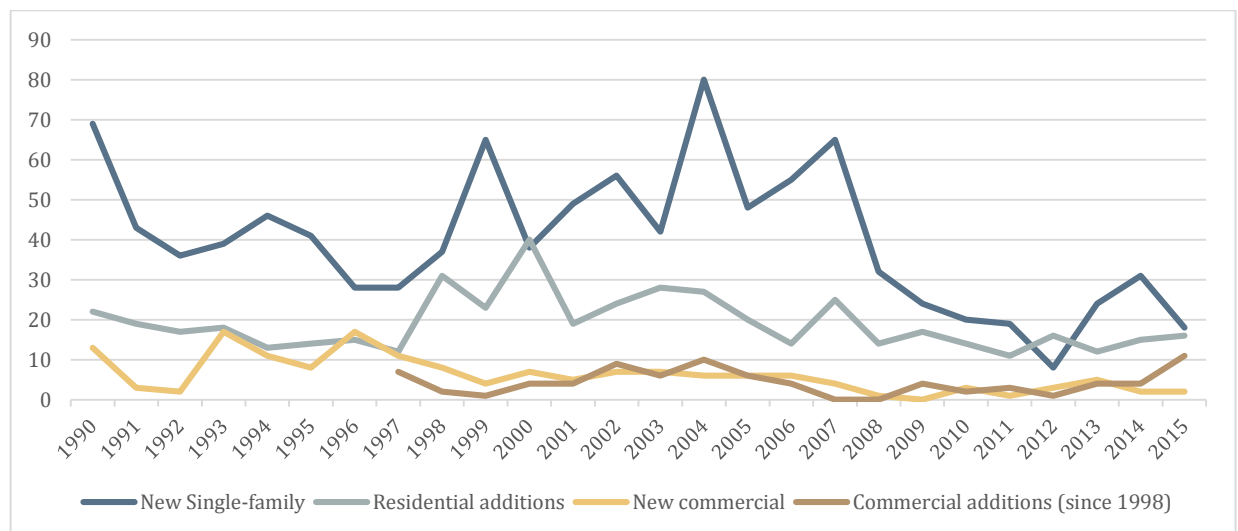
COLUMBIA CITY

2015 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	18	\$2,858,000
Multi-family dwellings		
Manufactured/mobile homes	2	4,500
Residential additions/remodels	16	377,700
Residential accessory buildings	23	347,425
Agricultural buildings		
Commercial/industrial	2	695,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	11	2,039,000
Institutional		
Institutional additions/remodels	1	132,000
Miscellaneous	100	1,457,960
TOTAL	173	\$7,911,585

Major projects in 2015: Dollar Tree, a \$650,000 new building; C & R Barrel Plating, \$800,000 for two additions; Wings, Etc., a \$425,000 interior renovation; and Speedway, LLC, a \$360,000 upgrade of their fueling facility.

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1990



CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

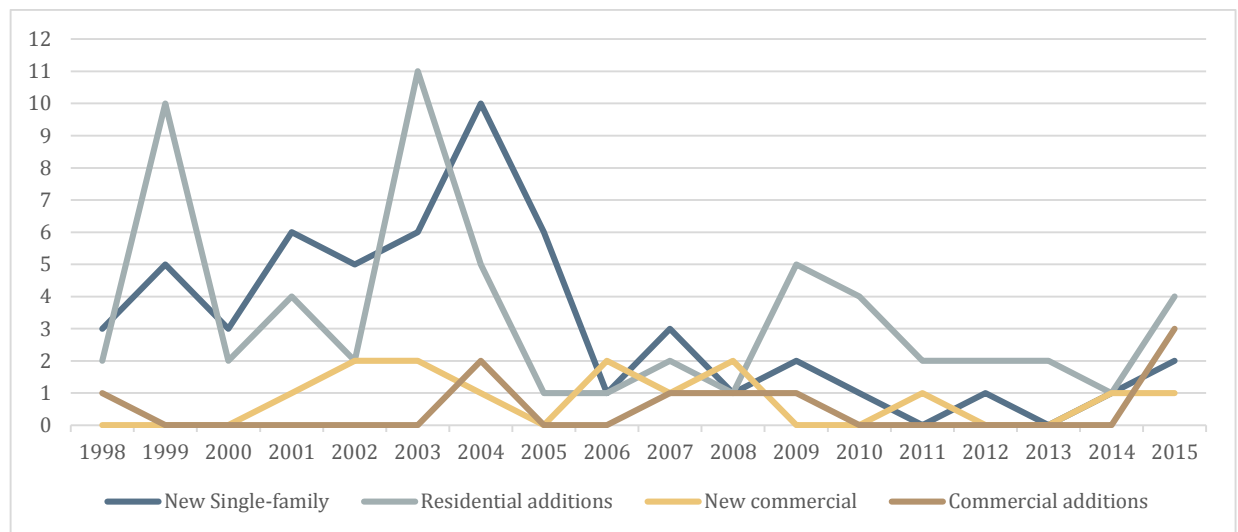
SOUTH WHITLEY

2015 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	2	\$210,000
Multi-family dwellings		
Manufactured/mobile homes	2	7,500
Residential additions/remodels	4	59,000
Residential accessory buildings	3	29,500
Agricultural buildings		
Commercial/industrial	1	800,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	3	132,000
Institutional		
Institutional additions/remodels		
Miscellaneous	25	103,075
TOTAL	40	\$ 1,341,075

Major projects in 2015: AG Plus, Inc., an \$800,000 expansion of their bin pack and feed ingredient systems; Cardinal Grain, an \$85,000 addition to the building on Hathaway Drive.

PERMITS ISSUED SINCE 1998*



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

CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY

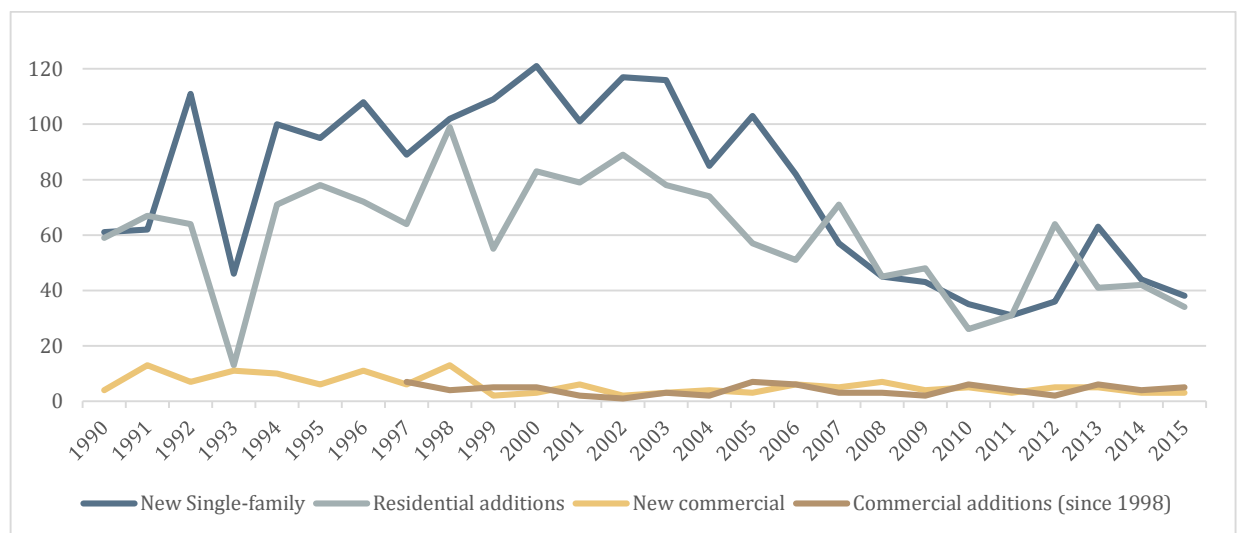
WHITLEY COUNTY

2015 BUILDING PERMITS

TYPE OF PERMIT	NUMBER OF PERMITS	ESTIMATED VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	38	\$ 10,369,600
Multi-family dwellings		
Manufactured/mobile homes	13	1,138,500
Residential additions/remodels	34	2,019,700
Residential accessory buildings	158	4,393,840
Agricultural buildings	10	419,300
Commercial/industrial	3	435,000
Commercial/industrial additions/remodels	5	1,835,000
Institutional		
Institutional additions/remodels		
Miscellaneous	121	843,970
TOTAL	382	\$21,454,910

Major projects in 2015: Spec 30 Realty, a \$400,000 spec building in Park 30 Business Park; Micropulse, Inc., construction of a \$750,000 clean room; Steel Dynamics, Inc., a \$900,000 renovation of their tile mill office; and Fort Wayne Metals and 80/20, Inc. had office and break room/fitness room renovation projects totaling \$150,000.

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.

FEES COLLECTED, BY JURISDICTION

JURISDICTION	PLANNING FEES	BUILDING FEES	TOTAL	SHARE
Churubusco	\$ 1,074.96	\$ 3,473.00	\$ 4,547.96	6.73%
Columbia City	4,003.47	9,598.00	13,601.47	20.12%
South Whitley	975.21	2,217.00	3,192.21	4.72%
County	13,037.31	33,237.00	46,274.31	68.44%
TOTALS	\$ 19,090.95	\$ 48,525.00	\$ 67,615.95	

The following are not shown on this table: contract service payments by Churubusco and South Whitley; court or attorney fees collected; permit fee refunds.

OPERATING EXPENSES

Generally, the operating expenditures of the Department in 2015 were comparable to those of previous years. Salaries, auto maintenance/fuel, and office materials made up the majority of the expenses.

EXPENDITURES

EXPENSE CATEGORY	2015 BUDGET	EXPENDED	PERCENTAGE
Salaries	\$ 188,741.00	\$ 165,926.12	87.9%
Travel & auto	8,000.00	6,648.74	83.1%
Professional services	2,000.00	6,520.00	326.0%
Supplies	2,000.00	2,306.52	115.3%
Memberships	650.00	245.00	37.7%
Telephone	400.00	239.17	59.8%
Dues & subscriptions	550.00	220.60	40.1%
Equipment	500.00	0.00	0.0%
Misc. (permit refunds)	0	556.00	N/A
Total operating expenses	\$ 202,841.00	\$ 182,662.15	90.1%

REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

COUNTY-ONLY EXPENSES *	2015 BUDGET	EXPENDED	PERCENTAGE
County PC/BZA attorney	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	100.0%
County PC member stipends	7,200.00	4,725.00	65.6%
County BZA member stipends	4,500.00	3,900.00	86.7%
Total county expenses	\$ 14,700.00	\$ 11,625.00	79.1%
GRAND TOTAL	\$ 217,541.00	\$ 194,287.15	89.3%

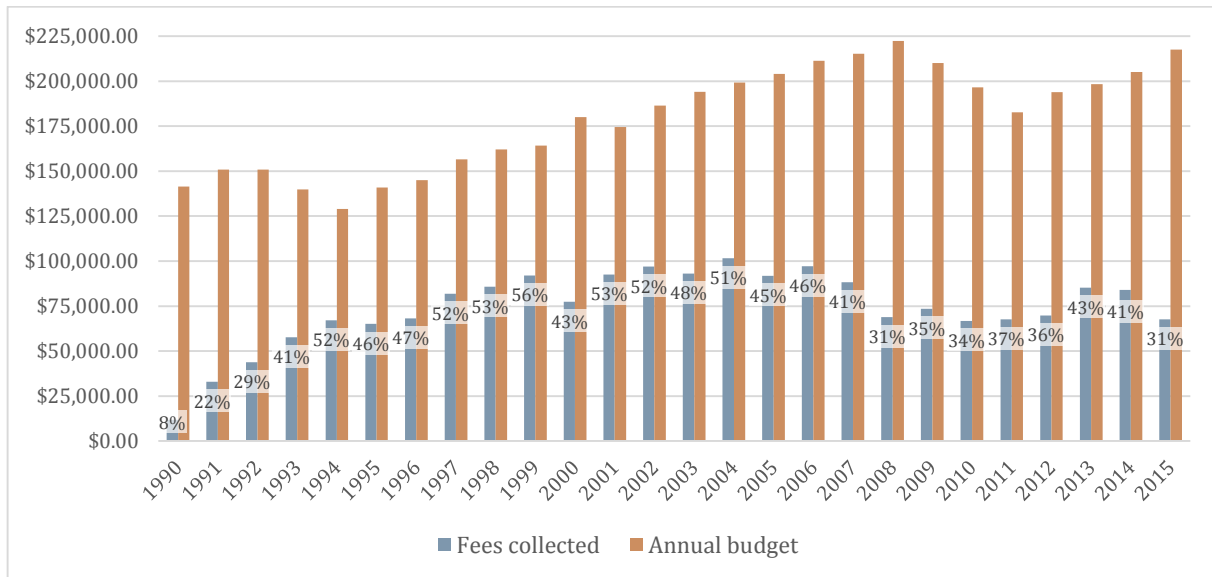
* These items are direct County costs that are included in the Department annual budget but are not operating expenses shared between the City and County.

FEE REVENUES VS. EXPENSES

The Department is not a self-supporting agency. Its 2015 budget of \$217,541.00 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.

In 2015, fee revenue was approximately 31% of the Department's 2015 budget (37% of the shared expenses). Considering the Department's responsibilities and staffing requirements in 2015, it may be roughly figured that 45-50% of the budget is related to user requests and should be reflected in the fees collected. This would be consistent with the goals of the Department since 1990.

FEEES COLLECTED AS PERCENTAGE OF BUDGET



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2016

Based on the review of 2015 and future expectations, the following are recommendations for major goals for the Columbia City/Whitley County Joint Planning and Building Department in 2016.

BALANCED GROWTH

The stagnation of population growth among all the jurisdictions over the past five years can lead to broader adverse community impacts. The Department should 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. This can include assisting in downtown revitalization efforts, developing recreational and educational assets, and other measures as recommended in the comprehensive plans.

Whitley County as a whole has had a great history of attracting quality employers. Working alongside the EDC, the Department has had a significant role in this. Efforts to streamline, clarify, and standardize our development and construction processes should continue. Since it is apparent that many of the workers do not live within the County, a commuter study could be conducted to understand where they commute from and potentially help to understand how to attract them to live nearer their workplaces.

CUSTOMER SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Acceptance of credit cards is an increasingly common request by our users. In 2016, implementation of a credit card system will be a key priority to raise the level of our customer service.

Implementation of a new permitting and inspection system is another priority for customer service, as well as for internal efficiency for this Department and others. Depending on the system selected, improved permit indexing, on-line application submissions and inspection requests, paperless inspections, automatic notifications, and GIS integration, are all possible features that could be utilized. This should begin in 2016, but because of the scale and costs, it may take some time to fully achieve.

FINANCIAL

The amount of user fees received as proportion of the Department's budget has been falling over the past few years, while the cost of providing these services has been going up. Thus, a review and increase in building permit and application fees should be conducted in 2016. Ideally, the fee increase would result in fees covering about 50% of the Department budget.

Churubusco and South Whitley each currently contribute a flat \$2,400 per year to help offset the cost of providing services to their jurisdictions. This has not been changed since 1994 (2002 for South Whitley), so a review should be conducted of the amount in comparison to services provided and fees collected. It is recommended that this review occur once the new fees are in place in order to fairly compare the fees and contributions.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: COUNTY-WIDE CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITY COMPARISON

	2014		2015	
	PERMITS	EST. VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION	PERMITS	EST. VALUE OF CONSTRUCTION
Single-family dwellings	82	\$ 15,427,400	67	\$ 15,087,100
Two-family	6 units	795,500	0	0
Multi-family	0	0	0	0
Manufactured homes	3	383,000	10	1,134,000
Mobile homes	10	154,000	8	56,500
Residential additions	62	1,829,075	54	2,456,400
Residential accessory buildings	176	4,690,000	193	4,871,365
Agricultural buildings	10	1,140,900	10	419,300
Commercial/industrial	7	2,711,500	7	2,380,000
Commercial/industrial additions	9	7,215,000	20	4,011,000
Institutional	0	0	0	0
Institutional additions	1	18,000,000	2	532,000
Miscellaneous	375	7,500,755	269	2,626,405
TOTAL	741	\$ 59,847,130	640	33,574,070

APPENDIX

APPENDIX B: YEARLY COMPARISONS

BUILDING PERMITS	2012	2013	2014	2015
Churubusco	35	25	50	45
Columbia City	177	182	247	173
South Whitley	40	25	34	40
County	419	435	410	382
Total	671	667	741	640

IMPROVEMENT LOCATION PERMITS	2012	2013	2014	2015
Churubusco	19	12	28	31
Columbia City	96	111	157	112
South Whitley	20	10	19	22
County	294	331	290	301
Total	429	464	494	466

INSPECTIONS COMPLETED*	2012	2013	2014	2015
Churubusco				190
Columbia City				704
South Whitley				140
County				1935
Total	2,734	2,973	3,004	2,969

*Inspections were not tracked per jurisdiction prior to 2015

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

LAND USE PETITIONS FILED	2012	2013	2014	2015
Churubusco	6	2	3	4
Columbia City	10	10	10	10
South Whitley	0	1	1	5
County	46	40	45	44