

CITY OF MASON

Zoning and Development Department

2009 Annual Report

During 2009, the Department of Zoning and Development continued to provide services to the community relating to planning, zoning, building inspections and code enforcement. In addition to day-to-day responsibilities, the Zoning and Development Department provides staffing to various Boards, Commissions and Committees, including the following:

- City Council
- Planning Commission
- Zoning Board of Appeals
- Building Code Board of Appeals
- Sign Board of Appeals
- Historic District Commission

The Zoning and Development Department is responsible for the following Chapters of the Mason City Code:

- Chapter 6 (Building and Building Regulations)
- Chapter 22 (Environment)
- Chapter 30 (Floods)
- Chapter 31 (Historic Preservation)
- Chapter 58 (Signs)
- Chapter 60 (Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control)
- Chapter 74 (Subdivisions and Other Divisions of Land)
- Chapter 86, Article II (Vegetation)
- Chapter 94 (Zoning)

In addition to the code responsibilities described above, the Department is responsible for the day-to-day maintenance needs for City Hall, the Police Department, the Mason Library, and other City property including the City's rental property located at 441 North Jefferson Street.

PERSONNEL

The Zoning and Development Department is comprised of the following personnel:

- David Haywood, Zoning & Development Director
- John Dodson, Building Official/Building Inspector
- Paul Olinzock, Jr., Planning Intern (Feb. 2009 – May 2009)

ZONING DIVISION

The Zoning Division was involved in a variety of projects during 2009, including but not limited to the following:

- A. Prepared staff reviews for special use permits, site plans, zoning amendments, site plan reviews for building permits, code enforcement, assignment of addresses for new commercial and residential structures, and land division requests.
- B. Worked with the City Administrator, Planning Commission and Department Heads to complete the Capital Improvement Plan for the fiscal years 2009/10-2014/15 (Planning Commission)
- C. Worked with the Historic District Commission on the resource inventory update project.
- D. Attended the Heart of Michigan Parks and Trails Committee meetings to stay informed of area efforts to expand regional trail systems.
- E. Attended Mason Economic Development Committee meetings informing members of City business and development activities.
- F. Attended monthly Tri-County brown-bag lunch meetings (planner's networking)
- G. Through Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, served as a member to the Urban and Rural Service Boundary Committee.
- H. Finalized the address list for the Local Update of Decennial Census Addresses Program for the 2010 U.S. Census, including appeals and new construction program. Attended the Ingham County Census Complete Count Committee meetings to ensure maximum participation.
- I. Initiated a Michigan Department of Natural Resources Trust Fund recreation grant for an eastern loop trail connecting Bond Park, Laylin Park, Ingham County Rayner Park and Fairground, Mason High School, Mason Middle School, and Steele Street Elementary School to the Hayhoe Riverwalk Trail.
- J. Continued to report on current department activities through use of the Mason Newsletter, City website, and Facebook account.
- K. Reported monthly code enforcement progress to the City Administrator.
- L. Initiated City-wide traffic study, including data collection, intersection analysis, traffic impact study of future growth, speed zone study, and origin and destination study.
- M. Initiated a community garden program, including community input meetings and volunteer leadership training – to open spring of 2010.
- N. Published availability of City-owned farm land and executed new farm lease contract with Woodlawn Farm.
- O. Responded to sewer backup at Library and facilitated repairs and litigation/reclamation of costs against at-fault parties.

- P. Reviewed Preliminary National Flood Insurance Rate Maps for non-technical errors and omissions.
- Q. Assisted Planning Commission in updating their by-laws.
- R. Facilitated Planning Commission tour/training of the Water Treatment Plant, Waste Water Treatment Plant and Fire Department.
- S. Five members of the Zoning Board of Appeals and five members of the Planning Commission attended the MSU Extension Planning & Zoning Training in March.
- T. Staff attended the following training courses:
 - 1. FEMA – National Flood Insurance Map Workshop
 - 2. Form-based Coding
 - 3. Small Scale Renewable Energy Systems 101 Workshop
 - 4. Michigan Association of Planning Annual Conference
 - 5. CPR Training
 - 6. Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control
 - 7. Planning & Zoning Training
- U. Prepared the following amendments to the Mason City Code for City Council consideration and adoption:
 - 1. Ordinance No. 171 – Planning Enabling Act (Planning Commission)
 - 2. Ordinance No. 172 – Planning Enabling Act (Subdivisions)
 - 3. Ordinance No. 176 – Zoning Enabling Act
 - 4. Ordinance No. 178 – Refuse Collection
 - 5. Ordinance No. 179 – Schedule of Civil Fines

Other ordinances currently being studied/prepared:

- 1. Residential Front Yard Setback Standard
- 2. Satellite Antennae
- 3. Rental Registration and Expanded Property Maintenance Code

The Zoning and Development Department has been active in the past year with development permits and variances. The following table illustrates the comparative levels of zoning permits between 2007 and 2009.

Zoning Permit Type	2007	2008	2009
Rezoning	0	3	1
Special Use Permits	3	4	0
Preliminary Site Plan Reviews*	0	0	2
Final Site Plan Reviews	2	3	4
Plats (Preliminary / Final)	0	0	0
Planned Unit Developments	0	0	0
Parking Lot Plan Reviews	1	0	0

Land Divisions/Conveyance/Combinations	4	5	1
Zoning Board of Appeals	3	4	5
Historic District Commission	4	10	11
Building Code Board of Appeals	5	0	0
Sign Code Board of Appeals	0	0	1
TOTAL	21	29	35

* Preliminary site plan reviews not covered by special use permits.

BUILDING DIVISION

The Zoning Division was involved in a variety of projects during 2009, including but not limited to the following:

- A. Conducted building inspections, plan reviews and code enforcement.
- B. Coordinated inspections/plan reviews with Fire Chief regarding proposed and damaged structures.
- C. Conducted routine and emergency maintenance at the following City properties;
 1. 441 N. Jefferson Street
 2. 882 Mason Street – Building demolition after prescribed burn
 3. Mason Library
 4. Mason City Hall
- D. Attended the following training courses:
 1. CPR/First aid
 2. Code Officials Conference of Michigan – Annual Conference
 3. Code Officials Conference of Michigan – Quarterly Meetings
 4. Huron Valley Association of Code Officials – Monthly Training Course
 - Legal Aspects of Code Administration
 - Administration Provisions of ICC Code Series
 - Introduction to Fire Protection System Components
 - Effective Communication Between Building & Fire Officials
 - Budget and Financial Administration for Local Government
 - NFPA-13: 2002 Update – Technical Provisions
 - NFPA-13: 2002 Update – Plan Review Techniques

The overall level of building permits issued in 2009 decreased significantly (9.3 percent) as compared to permits issued in 2008. Residential permits are down 25 percent from a year ago, with all new residential permits in the single-family category. However, this is not surprising in today's economic downturn.

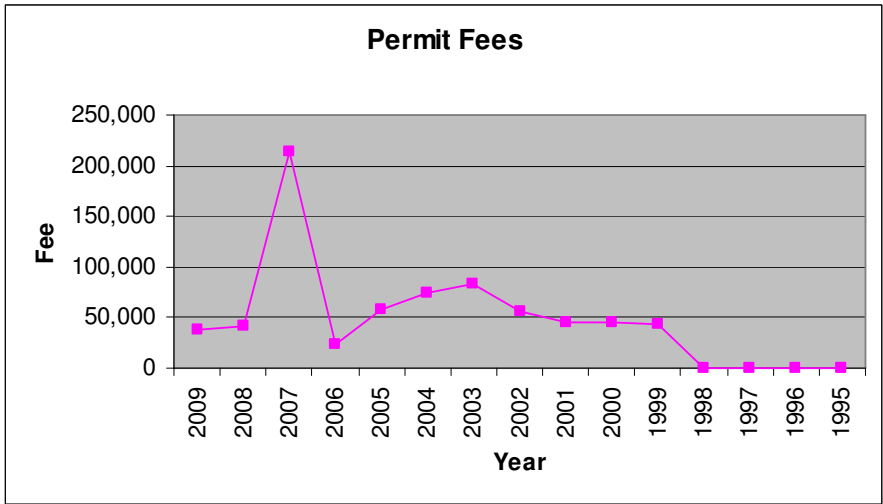
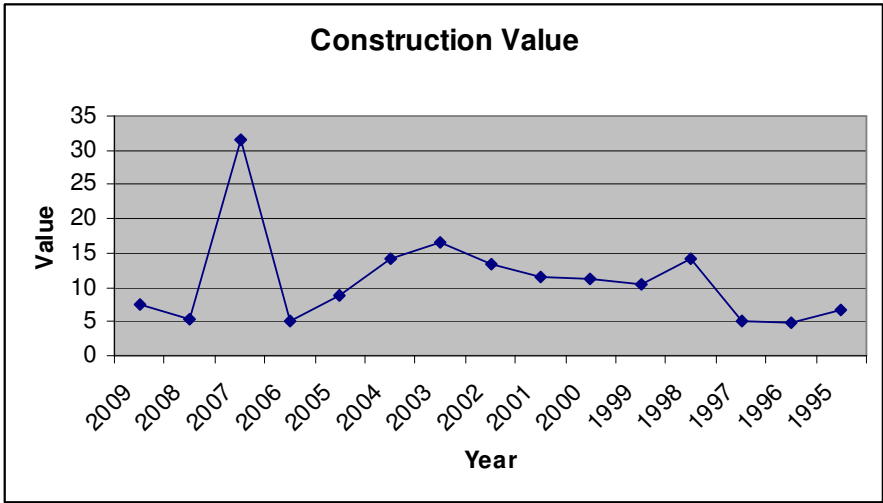
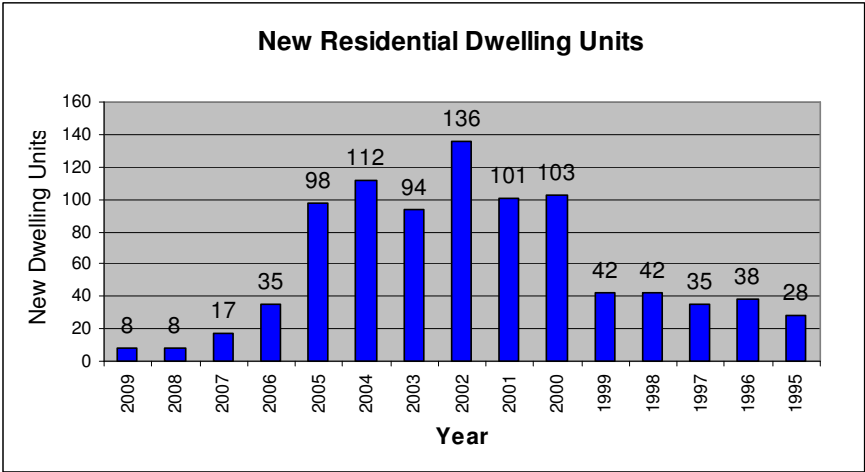
The following table illustrates the comparative building activity in the City for the past three years:

Building Permit Type	2007	2008	2009
Single family permits	13	8	6
Value	\$1,549,300	\$570,500	\$605,000
Two-family permits	2	0	0
Value	\$247,756	\$0	\$0
Multiple family permits	0	0	0
Value	\$0	\$0	\$0
Commercial permits – New	6	3	4
Value	\$2,450,086	\$2,425,000	\$3,700,000
Commercial permits – Alteration	23	22	15
Value	\$25,551,362	\$668,977	\$1,902,995
Sign permits	18	11	4
Other permits	229	181	174
Total permits	273	225	204
Total value of construction	\$31,514,362	\$5,627,241	\$7,569,786
Total permit fees	\$213,319	\$42,268	\$38,832

The major commercial, office, industrial, and institutional buildings receiving building permits in 2009 are as follows (permits over \$50,000):

1. Mason First Church of the Nazarene, new commercial, 1706 W. Dansville
2. City of Mason City Hall, new commercial, 201 W. Ash Street
3. Mason Bowling Center, commercial remodel, 801 N. Cedar Street
4. Nitrex Inc., commercial remodel, 822 Kim Drive

A detailed breakdown of the 2009 permits with a comparison to the past 15 years can be found in the attached table. The following graphs show the number of new residential units, total construction value of all building permits, and building permit fees for the past 15 years:



CODE ENFORCEMENT

The City’s code enforcement officer responded to 318 complaints in 2009. The overall compliance rate for all categories in the calendar year 2009 was 91 percent, a significant

increase from 2008 (84 %). Our highest compliance rate category was tall grass/weeds at 99 percent. The compliance rate for all categories is as follows:

- junk (94%)
- nuisance (91%)
- property maintenance (75%)
- tall grass/weeds (99%)
- unlicensed/inoperable cars (69%)
- working without a permit (88%)

The following table shows the relative comparison of code enforcement categories for the past three years:

Enforcement Category	2007	2008	2009
Blight	4	*	*
Junk	28	22	31
Nuisance	22	9	11
Property Maintenance	40	42	12
Tall Grass/Weeds	112	154	160
Unlicensed/Inoperable Cars	49	60	45
Working Without a Permit	56	51	59
TOTAL	311	338	318

* Category eliminated.

The City's policy for tall grass/weed violations is to issue a ten-day order to mow/trim weeds and lawns. Upon failure to respond to the order or insufficient progress with compliance the Building Official then requests the Department of Public Works to assign a crew to complete the work as soon as practicable. The property owner is then billed for the worked completed by City staff. Of the 159 cases resolved in this category, 26 lawns were mowed by the City in 2009.

FORECLOSURES

The following is the historical trend for foreclosures in the City. These properties are either owned by a bank or will be owned by a bank at the end of the six month redemption period. Some of the properties are redeemed by the individuals. The following table indicates a welcome trend, a reduction in foreclosures.

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Foreclosed Properties	19	32	68	41
Properties Sold by Banks	5	11	24	61