



# City of Grand Haven

## Community Development Department

### FY 15/16 Annual Report

This report summarizes the activities of the City of Grand Haven Community Development Department for Fiscal Year 2015/2016 (July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016).

Topics included in this report:

- A. Construction Trends
- B. Planning Commission Activity
- C. Zoning Board of Appeals
- D. Rental Housing Activity
- E. Code Enforcement Activity
- F. Neighborhood Housing Services

#### A. Construction Trends

There were a total of 2,159 inspections during FY 15/16 as a result of the construction from the below permits. This number does not reflect the building plan reviews, pre-construction meetings, or code review inquiries. In summary we had fewer than average number of permits but a record number in construction value based on the past 6 years. In fact, the value of the construction has nearly doubled since FY 10/11. This represents the sizeable construction projects in the past year.

#### Building Permit History - Total Residential, Commercial, and Industrial\*

	10/11	11/12	12/13	13/14	14/15	15/16
Building Permits	491	502	489	417	557	434
Permit Revenue	\$130,484	\$188,788	\$155,416	\$207,837	\$185,705	\$211,004.70
Construction Value	\$13,267,688	\$20,182,703	\$17,106,648	\$24,685,481	\$21,342,332	\$25,216,963

\*Does not include electrical, mechanical, land use or sign permits

Permit Record Type Totals	Permits	Revenue
Building	434	\$211,005
Electrical	325	\$ 41,787
Mechanical	343	\$ 42,858
Land Use	166	\$ 6,025
Sign	79	\$ 3,318

#### B. Planning Commission Activity

The following outline illustrates the Planning Commission case activity in FY 15/16:

- 1) Applications
  - a. Site Plan Reviews: 20
  - b. Special Land Use Permits: 8
  - c. Planned Development Amendments: 5
  - d. Sensitive Areas Overlay Reviews: 8
  - e. Lot Splits: 2
- 2) Text Amendments
  - a. Keeping of chickens on single-family residential properties.
  - b. Sign Ordinance Amendment to allow signage for nonconforming uses.
  - c. Amendment to allow administrative review of Sensitive Areas Overlay applications related to single-family uses.
- 3) Special Projects
  - a. Master Plan Update: This two-year planning effort with Grand Haven Charter Township and LIAA resulted in an updated master plan through the lens of resiliency planning. The final plan was adopted by the Planning Commission on March 15, 2016 and adopted by the City Council on April 11, 2016.
  - b. Health Pointe Joint Meeting with Grand Haven Charter Township: This meeting was held on February 24, 2016 to discuss the Grand Haven Township Health Pointe project, specifically potential impacts to the Robbins Road Corridor.
  - c. Signage Committee: This was formed by the initiative of the Planning Commission to review the sign regulations and develop recommendations for amendments.
  - d. Short Term Rental Housing Committee: This was formed at the direction of the City Council to review the short term rental regulations and develop potential recommendations for consideration.

### **C. Zoning Board of Appeals Activity**

The ZBA met four times in FY 15/16, which was down from seven meetings in FY 14/15.

- 1) 200 North Beechtree Street: Variance request to place a 20 foot tall pole sign where a 6 foot tall ground sign is permitted. (denied)
- 2) 422 North Griffin Street: Variance request to construct a 46 foot tall building where 40 feet is the maximum height. (denied)
- 3) 200 Prospect Street: Variance request for a 5 foot wide side yard setback where 6 feet is required. (approved)
- 4) 403 Elliot Street: Variance request for a 6 foot setback for a privacy fence where 10 feet is required. (denied)

### **D. Rental Housing Activity**

The number of rental properties and units is increasing in the City (many former owner occupied dwellings are becoming rentals. In 2010 we had 697 rental properties with 1,536 registered rental units. In March 2016 we had approximately 750 rental properties with 1,627 registered rental units. Requests for Short Term Rental certification are also on the rise. In

2008, when Short Term Rentals became officially recognized as a separate use, we had 39 parcels in the Oldtown and Southside districts alone operating as Short Term Rental properties. In 2016, that number increased to 86 parcels (126 individual dwelling units).

It also is apparent that there is less property neglect as they have in years past. We believe that is in part a result of our proactive approach to the rental inspection/enforcement process, and that many of the properties that were overdue for inspections have now been inspected and brought into compliance. We have also noticed that there appears to be a domino effect in some neighborhoods where once one property gets up to code, neighbors start work on their properties as well. We believe there is a much better understanding in the community about the rental registration and inspection program, and the need for it. We have a positive impact and make a difference with quality of life issues throughout the city! Protecting not only the housing stock, but compliance with the rental requirements, protects the health/safety and welfare of the tenants/occupants as well as the owners' investment in the community.

#### **E. Code Enforcement Activity**

The Community Development Department has a Code Enforcement Officer to enforce state law and ordinances. This officer is a sworn Public Safety Officer 3, a position that is shared jointly with the Department of Public Safety. Midway through FY 15/16, we transitioned from Officer Tom Jones to Officer Todd DeVries. Code Enforcement supports and enhances property values through effective enforcement of property standards, while working to keep aging buildings, homes, and properties from becoming "eyesores" in the community. Grand Haven like every community struggles with vacant buildings, trash, tall grass/weeds, and inoperable vehicles. Studies have shown that communities that have areas of blight and deteriorated properties have seen an increase in crime and decrease in property values. Grand Haven Code Enforcement enforces ordinances and state law for the safety and wellbeing of the public. Enforcement can be an essential provision of safe and healthy living and working conditions for the members of the community. In fiscal year 2015-2016, 631 cases have been brought into compliance. Most of those cases were done by a proactive approach of educating the public and property owners. Grand Haven Code Enforcement Officer notifies the property owner via letter including the cited law/ordinance, to bring the property into compliance.

#### **F. Neighborhood Housing Services Activity**

We served 138 new housing education clients between July 1, 2015 and June 30, 2016. For the 2015 tax year, we prepared taxes for 76 households which amounted to over \$134,000 in refunds for residents. At an average of \$200 per household for a paid tax return we saved residents over \$15,000. We have a home purchase and repair grant available to those purchasing a home in Eastown in the City of Grand Haven. Our most recent project on Colfax

allowed for an individual to receive \$7,112 in down payment assistance and \$21,500 in home repairs. This house received new siding, eaves, fascia, furnace, water heater, basement windows, lead abatement, electrical upgrades and general home repairs changing the value from \$73,000 to \$100,000. We partner with Northpointe Bank for the NIP, Neighborhood Impact Program, a grant program that allows for a homeowner within the City of Grand Haven to receive up to \$7,500 in home repairs. We have 3 homes currently receiving repairs and 4 more that are in the process of approval for the early fall. If all 7 of these homes are approved that totals \$52,500 in home repairs for 2016 through the NIP program. In addition, our office has a new project in the works. We have purchased a tax-foreclosed property through the County that we plan to rehab and sell to an eligible family.

As funding sources change our office is searching for new revenue sources. We have met with surrounding municipalities asking to form a regional partnership. The areas include City of Ferrysburg, Spring Lake Township, Village of Spring Lake, Robinson Township and Grand Haven Township. The Grand Haven Area Community Foundation is in support of this regional approach and has invited us to apply for funding to help support this new endeavor for 2 years.