



PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT +  
BUILDING PERMITS DEPARTMENT  
2020 YEAR END REPORT

## PLANNING + PERMITS DEPARTMENT STAFF

This year saw department face numerous challenges and changes. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated flexibility by the staff and required remote work by the staff for much of the year. Code Enforcement was moved from the Permit Department and merged with the Facilities Department to align with the cleanup work conducted by that department. Additionally, effective January 1, 2021, the Permits Department the administrative and budgetary functions of the department will be merged with the Planning and Development Department. This move will allow the Permits Director, Kenny McCollum more focus on the day-to-day permitting functions of the department. Two new staff members joined the Planning Department is 2020. Lauren Hoffman joined the department in March as a Planning Technician. Matt Anderson joined the department in November as a GIS Manager.

Director of Planning and Development – James Walden, AICP

Assistant Director of Planning – Levi Hill, AICP

GIS Manager – Matt Anderson

Planner – Beth Sketoe

Planning Technician – Lauren Hoffman

Director of Building Permits – Kenny McCollum

Permits Technician – Michelle Collins

Building Inspector – Ken Eckert

Electrical Inspector – Zach Castleberry

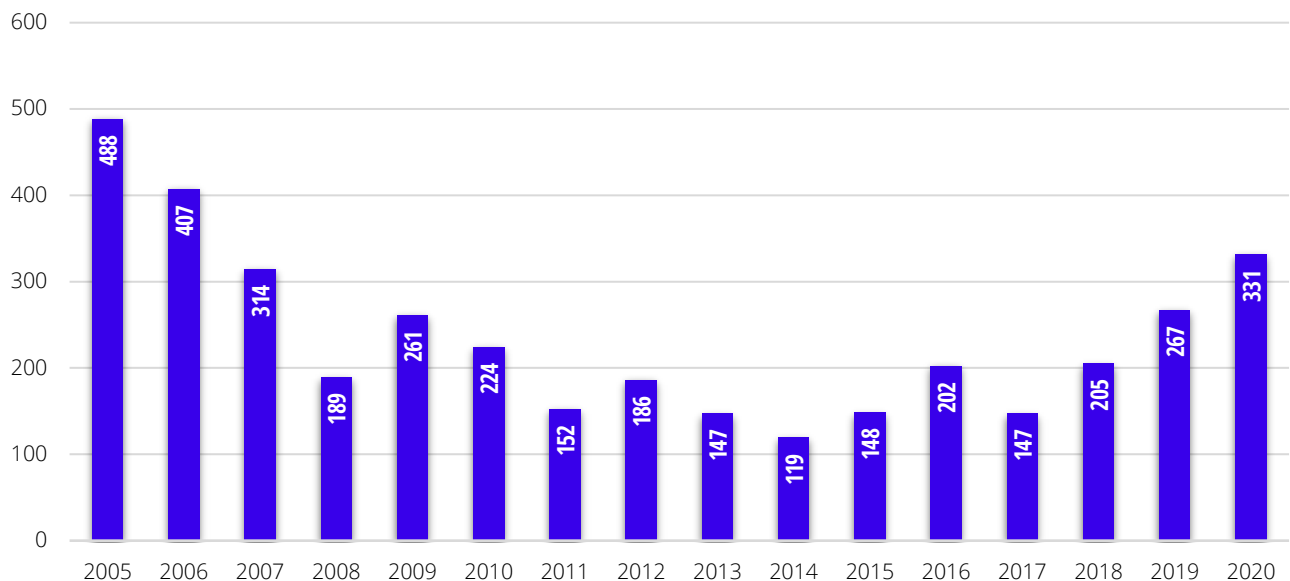
Mechanical Inspector – Cecil Corning

Plumbing Inspector – Paul Jones

## BUILDING PERMITS

Overall, permit activity increased from 2019 to 2020. New single-family construction permits were up 24% from last year at a 14 year high of 331. Since 2017, new single-family construction permits per year has increased a total of 125%, and the third year in a row of an annual increase in these figures. The city's highest annual total of new single-family construction permits was set in 2003 at 645. Based on recent platting activity it is likely that another year-to-year increase in the number of new single-family construction permits for 2021 will be seen unless economic conditions change.

**Single-Family Permits (2005-2020)**



Total number of permits issued was down 16% from 2019, while total building permits were up 10%. Seemingly perplexing, these data may indicate impacts of COVID-19.

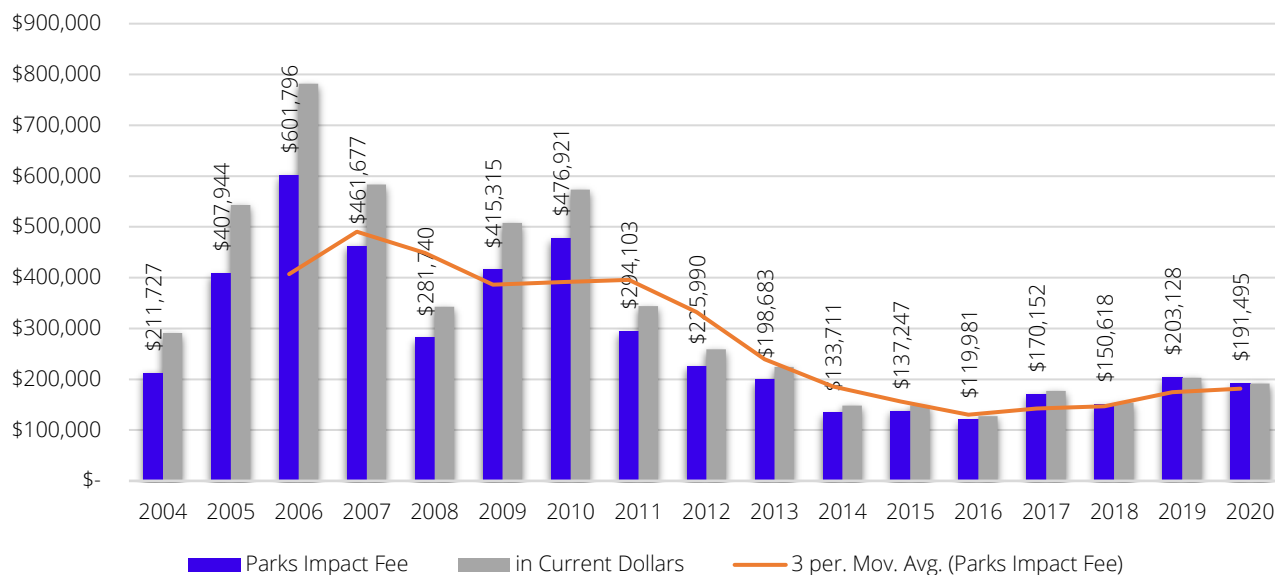
Permits Detail	2020	2019	2018
Total Building Permits	645	588	573
Electrical Permits	567	724	546
Plumbing Permits	389	477	432
Mechanical Permits	558	809	477
Gas Permits	240	255	273
Parking Lot Permits	4	7	7
Sign Permits	212	207	152
<b>Total Permits Issued</b>	<b>2,615</b>	<b>3,067</b>	<b>2,460</b>

Permit Type	Residential	Commercial
Single-Family	331	n/a
Two-Family	12	n/a
Multi-Family	n/a	29
Addition	38	5
Remodel	48	45
Accessory	73	2
Temporary	0	12
Demolition	29	5

## IMPACT FEES

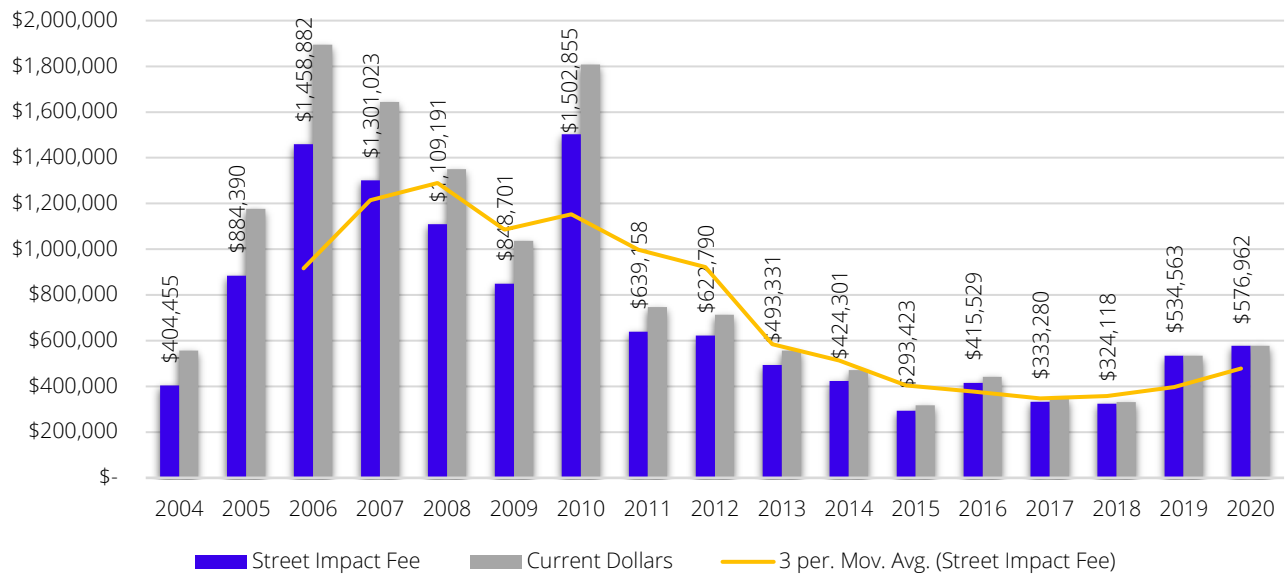
Impact fee collections were up year-to-year from 2019 with a marginal increase in street impact fee collections offsetting a marginal decrease in park impact fee collections. The original impact fee study projected annual collections of \$2.32 million for streets and \$390,000 for parks with a total of \$2.7 million in collections. These figures have never been realized with current year collections at \$768,457 or 28% of the total projected.

**Parks Impact Fees (2004-2020)**



Overall, a three-year moving average of collections has seen a trend of continual decreases. However, collections have generally increased over the last three years. The city's impact fees have not been adjusted to be restudied since adopted some 16 years ago. In that time inflation has risen 28% with the value of a 2004 dollar being worth 72 cents today.

**Street Impact Fees (2004-2020)**



## PLANNING COMMISSION

Planning Department staff provided support for the Conway Planning Commission, including the coordination of monthly staff reports including reviews and recommendations for requests pertaining to subdivisions, rezonings, conditional use permits, annexations, zoning variance requests, and various code and plan amendments.

### Rezonings

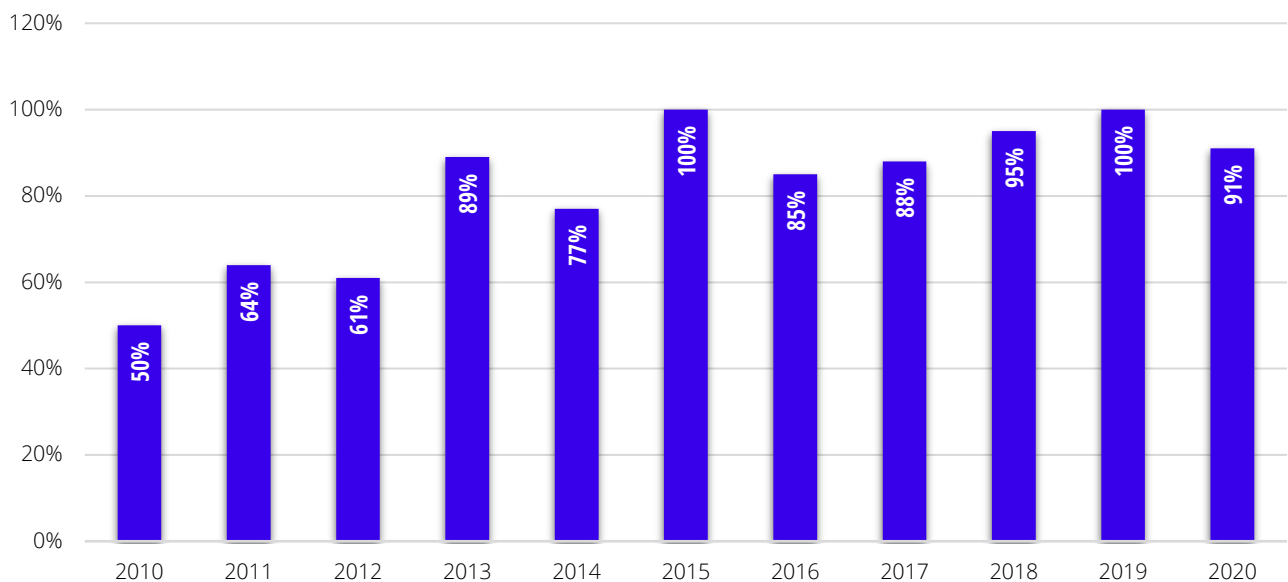
18 rezoning requests were reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Planning & Development Department. The 10-year average of rezoning requests is 19 per year. 17 were approved as requested, 1 was approved, but failed at City Council. 6 rezonings are still pending City Council for review. A total of 39.97 acres were rezoned prior to the December 21 Planning Commission Meeting. If the 6 outstanding rezonings pass at City Council, a total of 78.68 acres will have been rezoned in 2020.

Month	Location	Requested Zone Change	Acreage	Action
Jan	2690 Allyson Ln	Major modification to Conway Professional Plaza PUD	4.26	Approved
Feb	237 Locust Ave	R-2A to R-2	0.29	Approved
Mar	260/310 S Harkrider St	C-3 to RU-1	6.83	Approved
Apr	645 Exchange Ave	I-3 to I-1	1.22	Approved
May	1600 S Donaghey Ave	C-2 to PUD	3.28	Approved
Jun	1606 South Blvd	R2-A to R-2	0.18	Approved; denied at City Council
Jun	645 Diane Ln	O-1 to R-1	6.44	Approved
Jul	705 Club Ln	Major modification to Scherman Heights PUD	1.42	Approved
Jul	1165 Bob Courtway Dr	R-1 to O-1	1.37	Approved

Aug	2802 College Ave	R-1 to O-1	0.34	Approved
Aug	435 & 450 Princeton Dr	Major modification to Princeton Village PUD	1.50	Approved
Nov	1160 Mattison Rd & 3175 Donnell Ridge Rd	R-1 to A-1	13.02	Approved
Dec	1630 & 1640 S Donaghey Ave	R-1 to PUD	2.97	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12
Dec	Intersection of Trison Ln and E Siebenmorgen Rd	O-2 to R-1	2.50	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12
Dec	2690 Meadowlake Rd	A-1 to PUD	2.75	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12
Dec	605, 635, 655 Dave Ward Dr	I-3 to C-3	29.05	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12
Dec	225 E Robins St	I-3 to C-2	1.06	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12
Dec	1972 Dave Ward Dr	R-1 to O-3	0.38	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12

By and large, most rezonings were fairly split between those concerning commercial use and residential use with numerous “downzonings” – a rezoning resulting in a decrease in the intensity of allowed land uses. One theme of these downzonings that seems to have carried over from previous years is adaptation of land zoned industrial for new uses. Conway has many aging industrial areas that are no longer attractive for modern industrial uses and must be adapted. This may warrant future study by the city. The passage rate for most rezonings has climbed considerably in the last three years.

**Percentage of Rezonings Approved by City Council (2010-2020)**

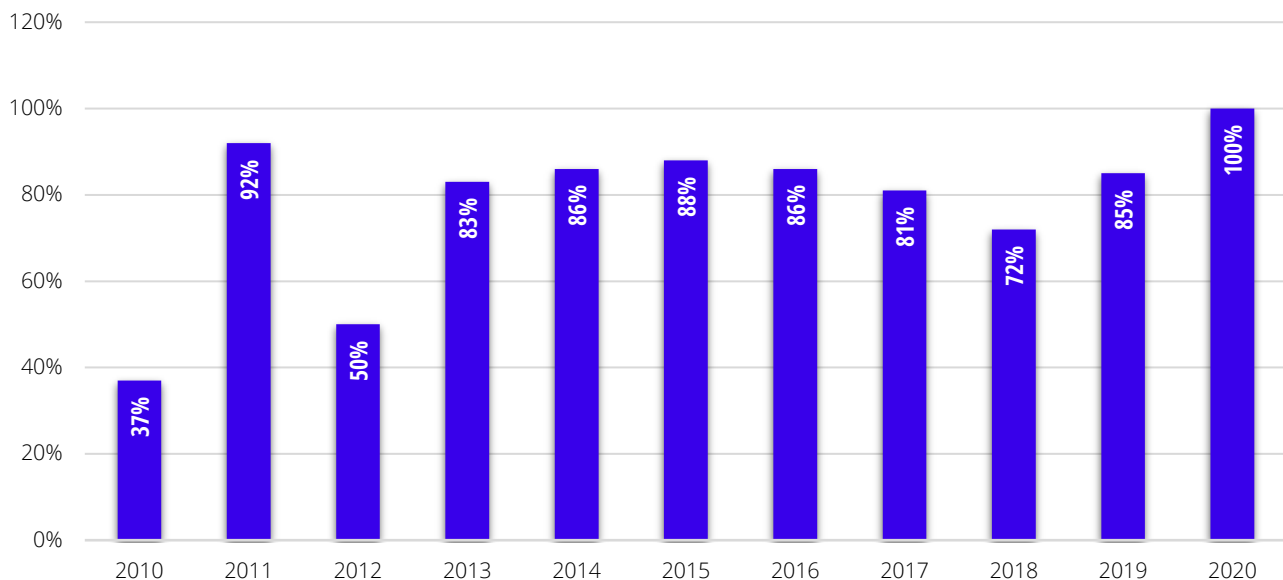


## Conditional Use Permits

9 conditional use permit requests were reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Planning & Development Department. The 10-year average of conditional use requests per year is 14. All requests were approved as requested, with 3 still pending City Council for review. A total of 22.73 acres were affected prior to the December 21 Planning Commission Meeting. If the 3 conditional use requests pass at the City Council level, a total of 26.16 acres were impacted in 2020.

Month	Location	Requested Conditional Use	Zone	Acreage	Action
Jan	703 Donaghey Ave	Childcare Facility	O-3	0.25	Approved
Mar	260/310 S Harkrider St	Warehousing	RU-1	6.83	Approved
May	1301 Sunset Blvd	Religious facility	R-1	7.61	Approved
Aug	2585 N Donaghey Ave, Lot 2	Tattoo parlor	C-2	7.01	Approved
Oct	286 Hwy 65 N	Gunsmith shop	TJ	0.66	Approved
Nov	1109 Gum St	Modification of ownership-religious assembly	SP/T4	0.37	Approved
Dec	225 E Robins	Homeless Shelter	C-2	1.06	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12
Dec	2425 Tyler St	Modification of ownership-childcare facility	R-2	0.27	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12
Dec	731 Donaghey Ave & 2131 Louvenia St	Temporary Parking	S-1	2.10	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12

**Percentage of Conditional Use Applications Approved by City Council (2010-2020)**



## Annexation

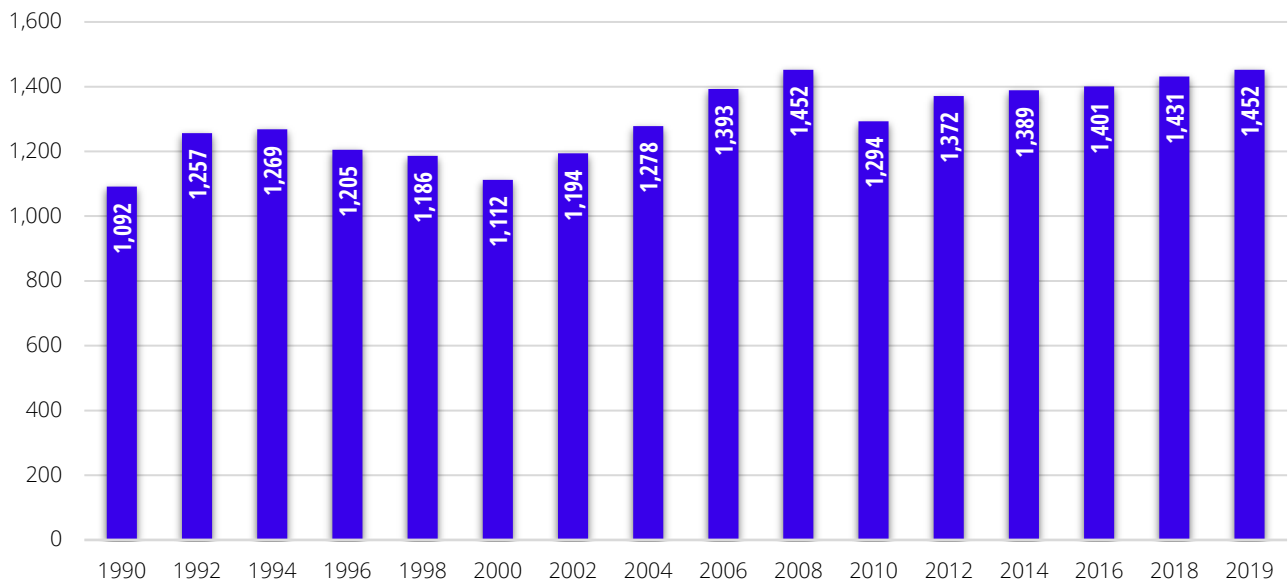
5 petitions for annexation were reviewed by the Planning Commission, the Planning & Development Department, and other City agencies. However, by the end of 2020 only 4 had been released by Faulkner County and accepted by the City. Those accepted include 7.50 acres W of Mill Pond Rd, 5.99 acres S of Bronnie Ln, 29.07 acres at the SE

corner of the intersection of Lower Ridge Rd and E German Ln, and 26.98 acres S of Emly Trail for a total of 69.54 acres annexed, with 10.00 acres pending City Council review E of East German Ln.

Month	Location	Zoning upon annexation	Acreage	Action
May	W of Mill Pond Rd	R-1	7.50	Approved
June	S of Bronnie Ln	A-1	5.99	Approved
Sep	SE corner of intersection of Lower Ridge Rd and E German Ln	R-1 & A-1	29.07	Approved
Oct	S of Emly Trail	R-1	26.98	Approved
Dec	E of East German Ln	R-1	10.00	Approved, pending City Council on 1/12

While annexation is often viewed in a positive manner, it comes with costs related to providing services for the annexed area. On the flipside, annexation can help aide city growth. Growth by annexation should not outstrip growth within the city's existing core to ensure Conway remains financially healthy. It is important to track annexation's impact on the city's overall density to ensure it is not occurring too rapidly, lest the city bear expensive burdens. A good measure of this health is population density. In general, Conway's population density has continued to climb as land inside the city is developed to the exclusion of relying solely on annexed lands for growth. Regional peer cities such as Fayetteville, Rogers, Bentonville, and Little Rock all have higher population densities ranging from 1,621-1,772 people per square mile. At such densities, Conway could be home to 75,000-83,000 people. Additional people that could help share the burdens of paying for the city's infrastructure and administration.

**Population Density - Persons/Sq. Mile (1990-2019)**



## Board of Zoning Adjustment

The Conway Planning Commission acts as the zoning variance review authority, the Board of Zoning Adjustment. 5 requests for zoning variances were reviewed by the Planning Commission and the Planning & Development Department. All requests were approved, affecting 4.14 acres.

Month	Location	Variance Requested	Zone	Acreage	Action
Feb	705 Davis St	Reduced side setback	R-2A	0.24	Approved
Feb	237 Locust Ave	Reduced rear and exterior setbacks and reduced lot depth	R-2A	0.29	Approved
Mar	1115 E Oak St	Reduced setback for commercial accessory structure and >160sf commercial accessory structure	C-3	1.68	Approved
Aug	4040 Riley Renee Cv	Reduced exterior setback	R-1	0.67	Approved
Nov	Lots 24-29 Kavanaugh Subdivision	Reduced front and rear setbacks and reduced lot depth	R-1	1.26	Approved

## SUBDIVISION/REPLATS

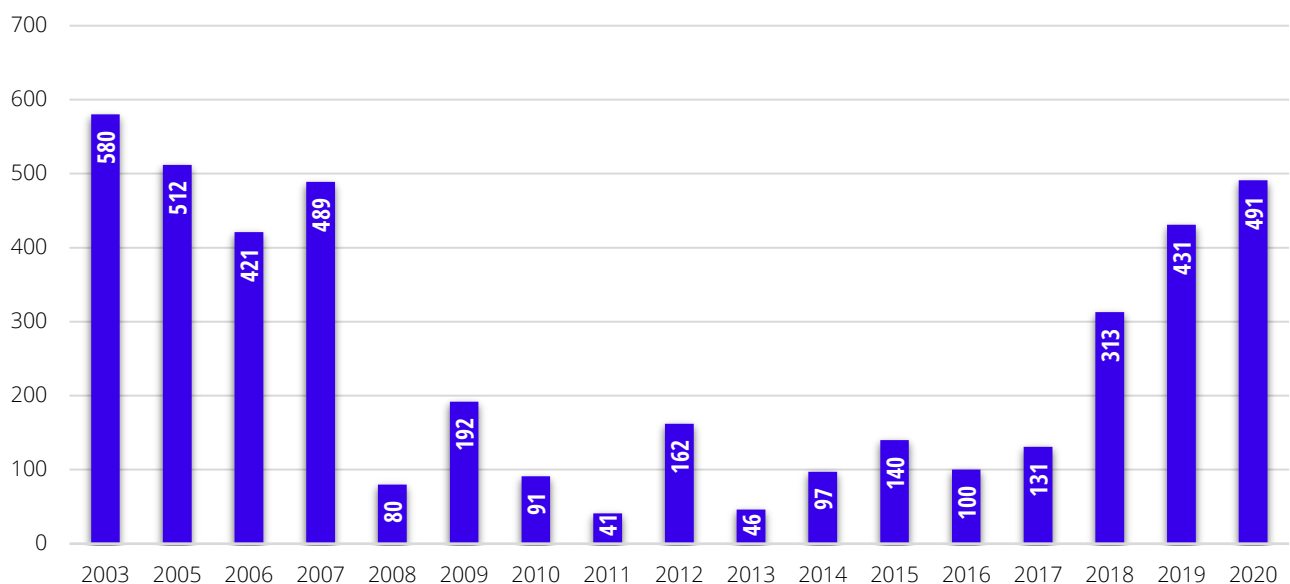
### Subdivision

Approximately 65 plats were submitted for review in 2020, 15 of which were major subdivisions requiring Planning Commission review and 50 represented minor subdivisions or replats that did not require Planning Commission review. This is well above the 10-year average for annual plat reviews, being 43. A total of 55 plats were filed with the Faulkner County Circuit Clerk.

### Lot Creation

The total number of lots created from plats filed in 2020 (including lots created from plats submitted for review in 2019) were 491 residential lots and 25 commercial (including multi-family lots). Based on platting activity from the last three years, it is likely that another year-to-year increase in the number of new single-family construction permits for 2021 will be seen unless economic conditions depress demand.

**Number of Single-Family Lots Created (2005-2020)**

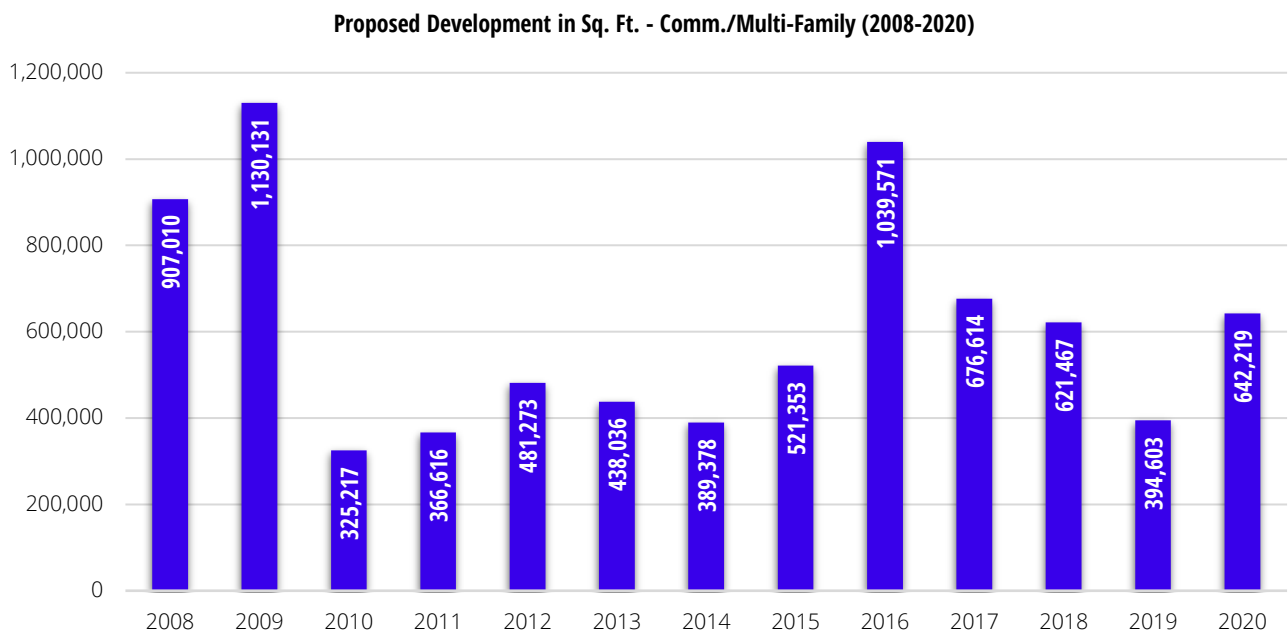




## DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

The Development Review standards include requirements for additional trees and landscaping, buffering of adjacent properties, cross access, joint access, reduction of curb cuts, architectural materials, etc. 30 development reviews were approved by Levi Hill (including reviews submitted in 2019). A total of 32 development review applications were submitted with 6 developments currently active in review.

Trends are difficult to establish from data on square footage of buildings approved through development review. 2016 was a significant year because it saw the coming of Lewis Crossing, a major power retail center in the city. Since that time, Lewis Ranch to the immediate north of Lewis Crossing was approved, but build out for the area has been considerably slower. A theme for development in the city within recent years has been medical office. This segment of the economy appears to be continuing to grow after the addition of a second hospital in Baptist Health – Conway. Much of this growth has been seen in specialty clinics or medical office buildings associated with the city's hospitals.



The average time frame for review is difficult to place as time periods vary greatly depending on the complexity of the project, how accurate initial submittal was for review, and timeliness of developer in submitting revisions and additional communication.

## CODE AND PLAN AMENDMENTS

Zoning Code

Subdivision Ordinance

Master Street and Trails Plan

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all planned changes to the city's land use regulations and plans were delayed and no changes were approved by City Council.

## GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

The City's GIS division within the Planning and Development Department is responsible for all applications and maintenance of the City's GIS system and is the primary GIS Census contact for the City of Conway and Faulkner

County. The division provides annual updates of new annexations to the Census to assist in population calculations. The division also oversees the GIS functions for Faulkner County and provides updates to the Office of Emergency Management and Roads Department, as requested. This agreement also allows the City and County continued collaboration while allowing a single GIS Dataset. Another benefit of this agreement is additional funds available to the Planning & Development Department for the purchase of software and equipment upgrades. The funds provided by the interlocal agreement with Faulkner County is used to continue upgrades to the shared enterprise system, fund aerial imagery purchases, as well as fund system upgrades.

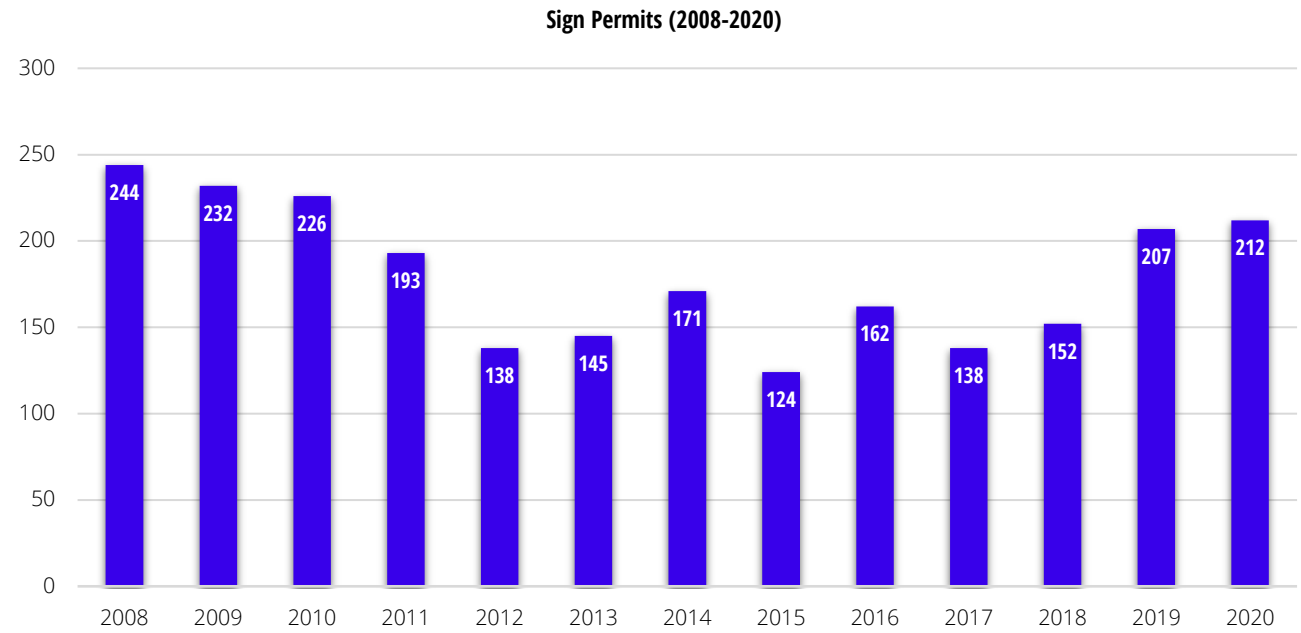
**PLANNING AND PERMITTING SOFTWARE**

On January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2020 via #O-20-07, the city was authorized to execute a contract with Tyler Technologies for the implementation of EnerGov. EnerGov is the leading enterprise planning and permitting software across the US. Based on extensive reviews and demos of various software platforms EnerGov was chosen because of its single-source implementation methods, compatibility with leading municipal financial software, and its ease use. In 2019, a decision was made that the City's existing software, Accela, should be replaced in favor of a more functional system. Implementation was on-going through 2020, and the platform is expected to go-live in the first quarter of 2021.

**OTHER PLANNING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES**

**Sign Permits**

The Planning & Development Department reviews applications and issues sign permits. A total of 212 sign permits were issued in 2020, 78 of which were for temporary (banner) signs.



**Vacating Easements, Alleys, and Streets**

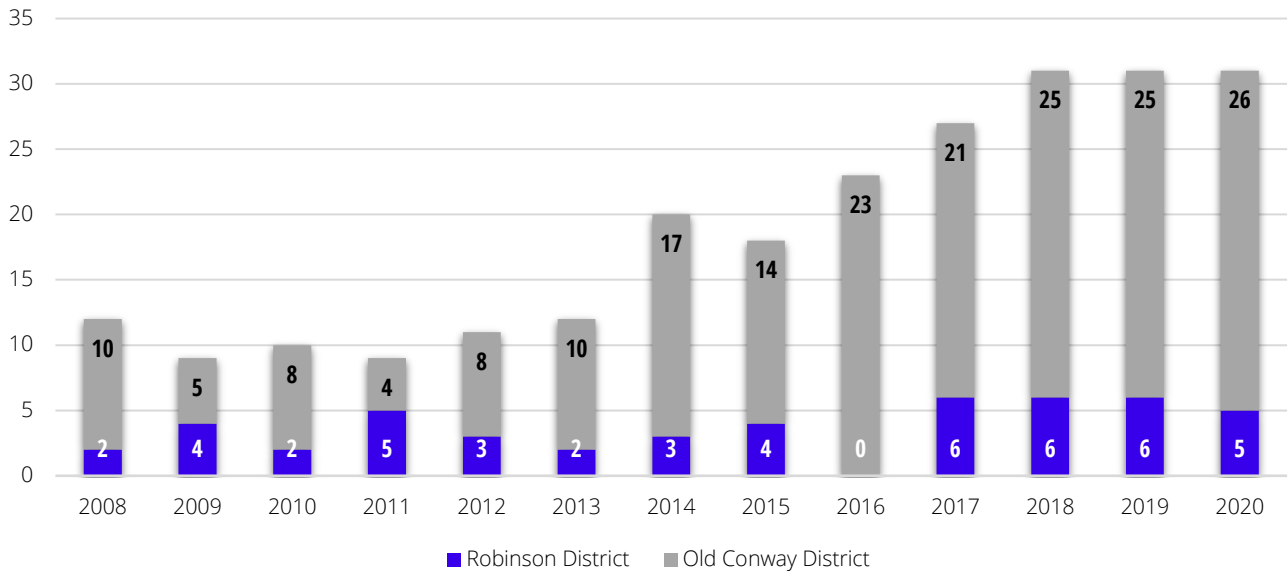
The Planning & Development Department prepared information for the City Council in 2020, pertaining to 1 easement closure request.

## OTHER BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

### Historic District Commission

The Planning Department acts as City staff for the Conway Historic District Commission (HDC). Planning staff reviewed 5 Robinson Historic District requests and 26 Old Conway Design Overlay District requests. The last three years have seen steady amounts of review activity in the areas under the HDC's purview. This can be seen as an increase in development and building rehabilitation in the city's older neighborhood, a positive sign.

**Historic District Commission Reviews (2008-2020)**



Month	Location	Requested Zone Change	Zone	Acreage	Action
Jan	2035 Independence Ave	New single-family residence	OCDOD	0.14	Approved
Jan	705 Davis St	New accessory structure	OCDOD	0.34	Approved
Feb	1709 Prince St	New accessory building	RHD	0.56	Approved
Feb	1622 Scott St	New accessory building & fencing	OCDOD	1.30	Approved
Feb	2055 Harkrider St	New commercial building	OCDOD	1.20	Approved
Feb	1501 Scott St	Church addition	OCDOD	2.19	Tabled
May	1811 Harkrider St	Garage/breezeway enclosure & exterior remodel	OCDOD	0.23	Approved
Jun	841 Donaghey Ave	Sign exception review	OCDOD	-	Approved
Jun	717 Chestnut St	New single-family residence	OCDOD	0.16	Approved
Jun	1830 Mill St	Exterior remodel	OCDOD	0.20	Approved
Jun	2055 Harkrider St	Commercial building façade change	OCDOD	0.23	Approved
Jun	1629 South Blvd	New institutional building	OCDOD	7.40	Approved
Jul	1830 Scott St	New single-family residence	OCDOD	0.24	Changes Approved
Jul	1832 Scott St	New single-family residence	OCDOD	0.24	Changes Approved
Jul	820 Center St	Fence variance	RHD	0.25	Approved
Jul	2056 Scott St	Carport enclosure	OCDOD	0.31	Approved
Jul	303 Oliver St	Residential remodel & addition	OCDOD	0.24	Approved
Aug	1405 College Ave	Accessory building modifications	OCDOD	0.46	Approved
Aug	2009 Caldwell St	Exterior modifications & addition	OCDOD	0.18	Approved
Aug	1824 Bruce St	Exterior modification	OCDOD	0.83	Approved

Aug	418 Oliver St	Rear addition	OCDOD	0.17	Approved
Aug	511 First St	Exterior modifications	OCDOD	0.20	Approved
Sep	925 Mitchell St	Walkway addition	OCDOD	1.57	Approved
Oct	517 Fifth St	New single-family residence	OCDOD	0.22	Changes Approved
Oct	857 Mitchell St	New garage & exterior modifications	RHD	0.34	Approved
Oct	1924 & 1926 Robinson Ave	Exterior modifications	RHD	0.72	Approved
Oct	1313 Elm St	Exterior modifications	OCDOD	0.66	Approved
Nov	829 Ash St	Exterior modifications	RHD	0.38	Approved
Nov	516 Ash St	New single-family residence	OCDOD	0.19	Approved
Nov	802 Sixth St	Sign exception review	OCDOD	-	Approved
Dec	2009 Prince St	New accessory structure & exterior modifications	OCDOD	0.17	Approved

2019 CLG Grant: \$25,000 in Certified Local Government grant money was awarded to the Conway Historic District Commission by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program to complete a city-wide historic preservation plan. The Conway City Council committed to a \$25,000 match for the project. The project was completed in early fall and is awaiting adoption by the Historic District Commission.

2020 CLG Grant: \$57,701.65 in Certified Local Government grant money was awarded to the Conway Historic District Commission by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. The money was awarded to complete the following projects: Public Art Interpretive History Tour (\$5,000), Resurvey of the Asa P. Robinson Historic District (\$19,630), African American Historic Context Study (\$28,114), Educational Outreach Materials (\$1,360), NAPC FORUM Training (\$400), NAPC CAMP Training (\$3,197.65)

## Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Board

In 2020, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board (BPAB) refined and pursued its vision for a Conway where bicycling and walking is safe, convenient, and accessible for all. The advent of COVID-19 early in the year and the related disruptions to public and private life caused many of our annual and scheduled events to be canceled or postponed. However, the board quickly transitioned to a virtual meeting format and shifted our activities toward planning, advisory, and outreach initiatives that did not require in-person gatherings. Guided by a year-long visioning process and the model of national organizations such as the League of American Cyclists, the board adopted a new vision statement and revised our Five E's framework to reflect a focus on equity, inclusion, and accessibility in all aspects of BPAB's mission. BPAB also consulted with City Transportation and Planning staff on upcoming projects, such as bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure for the Salem Road reconstruction and a proposed College Ave multi-use path and provided feedback to the City Council on proposed changes to the city's parking ordinance (regarding no parking in bike lanes). Finally, BPAB supported the city's position against the proposed redistribution of Faulkner County sales tax revenue through an editorial published in the Log Cabin and social media outreach. Other successful outreach initiatives involved creative ideas for socially distanced walking and biking during COVID and promotion of the Chamber of Commerce's Biketoberfest events.

## Tree Board

The 2020 Arbor Day Celebration was a week-long event that was held virtually this year and spanned from Saturday, November 7<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup>. The event kicked off with a tree planting ceremony at Robinson Cemetery which was live streamed on The City of Conway Tree's Facebook page. This year's Arbor Day week also included an art contest from local school participants and presentations about tree care and maintenance. The Tree Board has plans to continue working with the City and Chamber of Commerce to identify and apply for grant opportunities that further the Board's goal of increasing the City's canopy coverage.

## Public Art Board

The Planning and Development Department again began providing administrative support to the Public Art Board in 2020. The year saw increased success for the board with successful implementation of the Event Horizon art piece's installation at the College and Salem roundabout. The board worked on the development of several policies governing the operations of the board. In addition, the board elected to pursue development of a Public Art Master Plan in 2021.

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

### Workshops and Conferences

The Planning and Development Department staff participated in the American Planning Association Virtual Cross-Chapter Collaborative, including APA chapters from Arkansas, Kansas, New Mexico, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and Texas, October 5-9.

### Memberships

The following professional memberships were held by the Planning and Development Department staff.

#### Director - James Walden, AICP

American Planning Association

American Institute of Certified Planners

National Alliance of Preservation Commissions

#### Assistant Director of Planning and Development – Levi Hill, AICP

American Planning Association

American Institute of Certified Planners

#### Planner – Beth Sketoe

American Planning Association

#### Planning Technician – Lauren Hoffman

American Planning Association

The division of permits and inspections maintains an active jurisdictional membership with the International Code Council and the International Association of Electrical Inspectors.

#### Cecil Corning – Inspector

Plumbing Inspector, State of Arkansas # P103255

HVAC Inspector, State of Arkansas # 1209360

Electrical Inspector, State of Arkansas # E1-1131

Master Electrical License #M-8624

Class A HVACR License #0134501

EPA Type 1 & 2

A.A.S. Electronic Degree

#### Zach Castleberry – Inspector

Plumbing Inspector, State of Arkansas P103234

HVACR Inspector, State of Arkansas # 1250140

Electrical Inspector, State of Arkansas # E1-1130

Electrical Journeyman, State of Arkansas EJ-11297

IAEI Member #21616170

Arkansas Home Inspector HI: 1806

Ken Eckert – Inspector

Plumbing Inspector, State of Arkansas #P103235

HVAC Inspector, State of Arkansas # 1219540

Paul Jones—Inspector

Plumbing Inspector, State of Arkansas #P103466

Master Plumber License-MP3908

Assembly Testing Technician-ATT109

Repair Technician-RT0051

HVAC Inspector, State of Arkansas #2927420

## **Presentations**

The following presentations and trainings were conducted by the Planning and Development Department staff.

Director - James Walden, AICP

Arkansas Urology Grand Opening – March 5 (Conway)

Markham Square Design Presentation – June 25 (Virtual)

Historic Preservation Plan Presentation – June 30 (Virtual)

Metroplan Regional Advisory Committee – August 13 (Virtual)

APA Cross Chapter Collaborative Conference – October 8 (Virtual)

Conway Area Leadership Institute – October 22 (Conway)

Assistant Director of Planning and Development – Levi Hill, AICP

Conway Area Leadership Institute – July 8 (Conway)