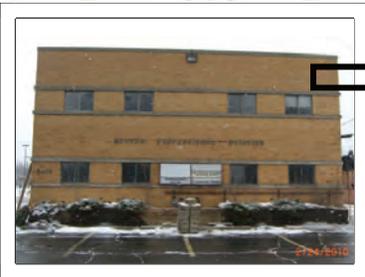


# 2010 Year End Report

## Department of Planning and Community Development

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- 1st Master Plan adopted in 35 years
- Veteran's Memorial Park completed
  - Zoning Code Amendments
- Zoning Compliance and Enforcement
  - GIS Improvements
  - Economic Development
    - And more...



DO Summers façade improvements, 6459 SOM Center Road



Veteran's Memorial Park

United States  
**Census  
2010**

April 1, 2010  
Census Day



Central Retail District



Arby's façade improvements, 6375 SOM Center Road



## 2010 Year End Report

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## **INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY**

2010 was a noteworthy year for planning and development related activities within City. Despite a continuing sluggish national economy, significant development activity occurred, and several accomplishments of importance were achieved. Among the highlights for 2010 were: the adoption of the first new City Master Plan in more than three decades; the completion of the master plan initiated and designed Veterans Memorial Park project; the development of a new and substantially more capable GIS interface; and the adoption of the new “I-1” (Warehousing and Assembling) zoning district.

These, and other planning related accomplishments and activities that occurred in 2010, are examined in greater detail below.

## **NEW CITY MASTER PLAN**

The first new City Master Plan since 1975, and the only Solon Master Plan to have been prepared in-house, was presented to City Council and officially adopted in the Summer of 2010. The major components of the plan include “The Central Retail District Plan”, “The Industrial Core Plan”, “The Economic Development Plan”, “The Physical Inventory and Demographic Analysis Plan”, “The Statement of Master Plan Policies, Goals and Objectives”; “The Traffic Master Plan”; and “The Sanitary Sewer Master Plan”.

The Master Plan is intended to serve as the blueprint for achieving coordinated change in the physical environment of the City over the next 10 to 15 years.

## **VETERANS MEMORIAL PARK**

Construction of the new Veterans Memorial Park project was completed in 2010. The park consists of two principal components, the informal “Gazebo Area”, and the more formal “Veterans Memorial Area” which is composed of monuments, sculpture, a fountain and pool, and flags – all honoring the various armed services.



Veterans Memorial Park

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The Veterans Memorial Park project represents one of first master plan initiated projects to be implemented within the City. The basic park design was originally established under the “2001 Center of Town Master Plan” – a fast tracked component of the larger Master Plan. This same plan established the architectural and site design criteria that guided the development of both the Fire Station #2 building and the Walgreen’s store.

Therefore, the construction of the Veterans Memorial Park, in combination with the Fire Station #2 and Walgreen’s projects, has established the SOM Center Road/Bainbridge Road intersection area as the first comprehensively planned and designed locale within the City.

### **ARCHITECTURAL/DESIGN REVIEW ACTIVITIES**

Architectural/design review continued to be a key focus of the City’s planning program in 2010, with several significant project reviews being either commenced or completed during the year. These include:

#### **Renovation/Redevelopment Projects**

1. DO Summers (6459 SOM Center Road)
2. Arby’s (6375 SOM Center Road)
3. Applebees (6140 SOM Center Road)
4. Hartville Professional Building (32875 Solon Road)
5. Sunmart (29605 Aurora Road)
6. Imperial Wok (33825 Aurora Road)
7. Senorita Bonitas (6000 Enterprise Parkway)
8. Panini’s (6150 SOM Center Road)
9. Longhorn Steakhouse (6015 Enterprise Parkway)

#### **New Buildings and Site Plans**

1. LeChaperon Rouge (6010 Kruse Drive)
2. The Chabad Mikvah (29800 Cannon Road)
- 3.\*McDonald’s (6395 SOM Center Road)
4. Landrover Demo Track (6133 Kruse Drive)
5. ECRM Parking Extension (27030 and 27070 Miles Road)

**\* Project variances/site plan were denied**

Each of the above project reviews were conducted in accordance with a three prong approach to planning and design – consisting of: 1.) The use of specific building/site design criteria as established within the City Zoning Code; 2.) Reference to community design preferences as established within the City Master Plan, and; 3.) The use of professional building and landscape design input, as needed, via contract architectural services. Following a coordinated approach to community design, such as this, is essential if the city is to achieve consistent, high quality, change to the aesthetic character of the commercial areas over time.

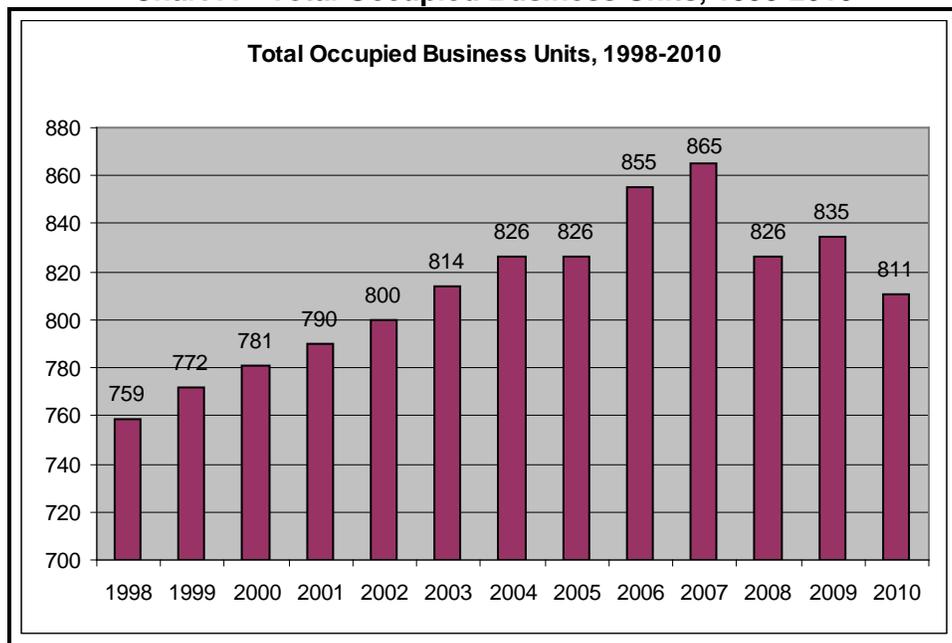
An illustration of some of the architectural façade renovations that were completed in 2010 are provided on the front cover page of this report.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

Despite the slow national economy, 2010 was yet another active year for economic development within the City. In general, industrial and commercial occupancy rates remained surprisingly strong -averaging approximately 93% and 90%, respectively. For comparison purposes, the five year average (2010-2006) yearly occupancy rate for industrial and commercial units is 92% and 93%, respectively.

Thus, while the total number of business units within the City have fluctuated over the years (as per “Chart A”, below), the average rate of occupancy has remained relatively consistent - despite the current economic slowdown.

**“Chart A” Total Occupied Business Units, 1998-2010**



In large measure, both Solon’s past and present successes in economic development have been the result of a balanced approach between business attraction and business retention activities - with an overall emphasis on creating a business friendly environment. This philosophy continued to be in evidence throughout 2010.

A particular emphasis was placed on business outreach activities in 2010. Mayor Susan Drucker and the Economic Development Manager paid personal visits to various Solon companies throughout the year in order to get firsthand feedback as to what the City is doing right, and where it needs to make improvements from an economic development standpoint. In addition, several meetings were conducted with Solon’s commercial/industrial broker community for the purpose of gaining insight in to the broader economic challenges and opportunities that are, or will be, facing the city in the coming years. Other business support/outreach activities conducted in 2010 included the City co-sponsored “Export to India” and “small business workshop” seminars, as well as

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continued City participation in the Chamber of Commerce’s ongoing business visitation program

In order to maintain Solon’s technologically competitiveness, efforts were made throughout the year to expand access to advanced voice and data communication infrastructure. A particular emphasis was placed on the Naiman Parkway light industrial/office area. The initial focus of these efforts has focused on the use of expert consultants and tenant surveys in order to generate buy-in from communication infrastructure suppliers. If successful on Naiman Parkway, this technique will be utilized in other underserved areas of the City.

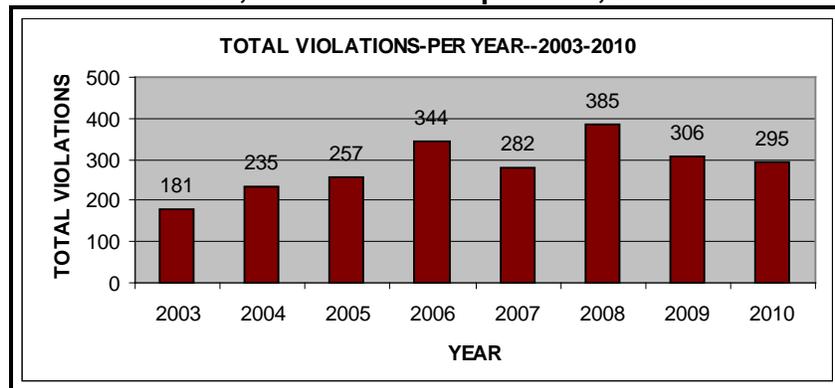
In an effort to continue to promote small business retention and attraction, several new programs were added to the “*Get Growing in Solon*” marketing strategy in 2010. These include the “*Get Connected*”, “*Get Savings*”, and “*Get Started in Solon*” programs. Each of these new programs are targeted towards offering modest incentives in order to give Solon a competitive edge in attracting small companies, and in retaining our existing smaller businesses. This is an important goal, as small companies and start-ups are one of the principal sources for securing future “major players” within the City’s commercial/industrial community.

Other noteworthy economic development related accomplishments in 2010 included the creation of a new Solon Select marketing video, and the development of a proposed regionalism strategy that recognizes the particular needs of economic development focused communities such as Solon. The year was topped off with Economic Development Manager, Peggy Weil Dorfman, being recognized for her years of excellent service to the City and the business community by being inducted in to the Solon Chamber of Commerce Hall of Fame.

### **ZONING ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES**

A total of two hundred ninety-five (295) new zoning violation cases were processed by the Planning Department in 2010. This number is up slightly from the eight year average of 285 cases per year, but marks a modest decline from 2009’s total of 306 cases (see “Chart B”, below).

**“Chart B”, Total Violations per Year, 2003-2010**



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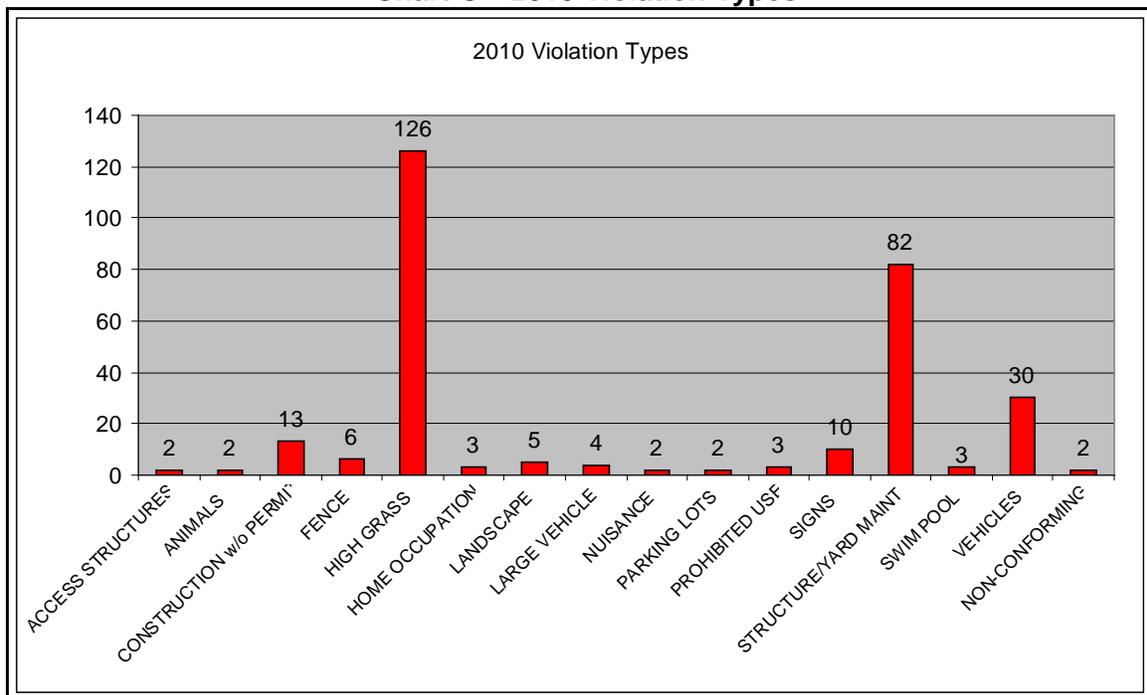
Of the zoning violations that were received during 2010, 81% were successfully resolved during the year, and 19% are still pending final resolution. While the number of unresolved cases may appear to be rather high, it should be clarified that a substantial number of these cases actually pertain to foreclosed homes that require repeated and *ongoing* maintenance (primarily for uncut yard areas). These properties remain in the unresolved category for tracking purposes.

Total new foreclosures filed in the City during 2010 totaled 127 cases. While this number is higher than the five year average of 112 foreclosure cases per year, it is still a relatively modest figure in relation to that which most other communities are experiencing in the Cleveland area.

A total of five (5) zoning violation cases were filed in the Bedford City Court in 2010. Of these, four (4) are awaiting final action by the court, and one (1) has been resolved.

A breakdown of zoning violations by type for 2010 is provided in “Chart C”, below. As per the chart, uncut grass was by far the most common violation handled during the year, at 126 cases. Structure and yard maintenance (junk, debris, etc.) was the second most common violation at 82 cases, and vehicle violations (parking on grass, unlicensed/inoperable, etc.) was third, at 30 cases.

**“Chart C” 2010 Violation Types**



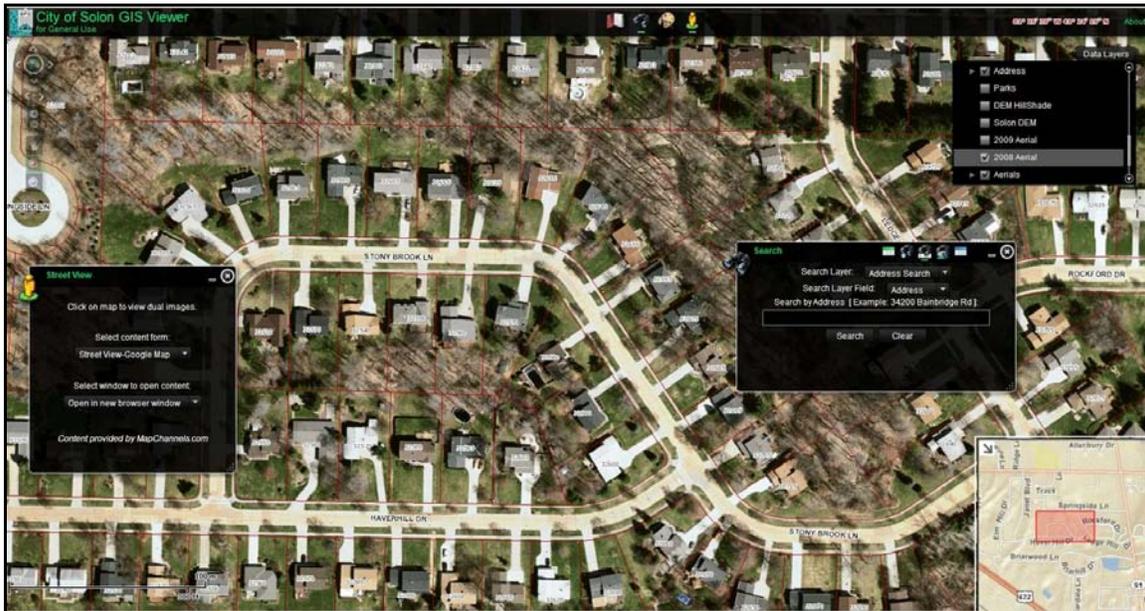
As per longstanding City policy, the zoning violation cases that come before the City in any given year are primarily generated by resident complaints. However, the Zoning Inspector also conducts regular neighborhood inspections, and will initiate action without

## 2010 Year End Report

the receipt of a complaint on any property condition that poses an obvious safety threat, or which poses an obvious blighting influence on a neighborhood (these primarily relate to accumulations of junk and debris, inoperable vehicles, and un-maintained yard areas.)

### **GIS ACTIVITIES**

An entirely new GIS interface was substantially completed in 2010, utilizing Flex software. The development of this new interface has been an ambitious project spanning eighteen months, and has provided significant advancements in the general functionality and capability of the City's GIS program.



In addition, the new program will enable the City to achieve the longstanding goal of managing the content and design of the GIS interface entirely in-house. The in-house provision of GIS internet services will not only result in a significant cost savings to the City, but will also provide a superior program for the use of residents and internal GIS users alike. While this new interface is currently being utilized internally by City Hall employees, it will not be officially released to the public via internet until the first week of February 2011.

Several other notable advancements were also made to the City's GIS program during 2010, including: 1) the addition of sanitary sewer plans and profile drawings to the system in order to provide more efficient access to these plans by the Engineering Department; 2) the addition of updated FEMA floodplain maps; 3) the creation of new route maps for the Service Department to facilitate rubbish pick up operations; 4) the creation of new bus dispatch maps to assist Solon City Schools; and 5) the identification and verification of property addresses to assist the City's new water billing program.

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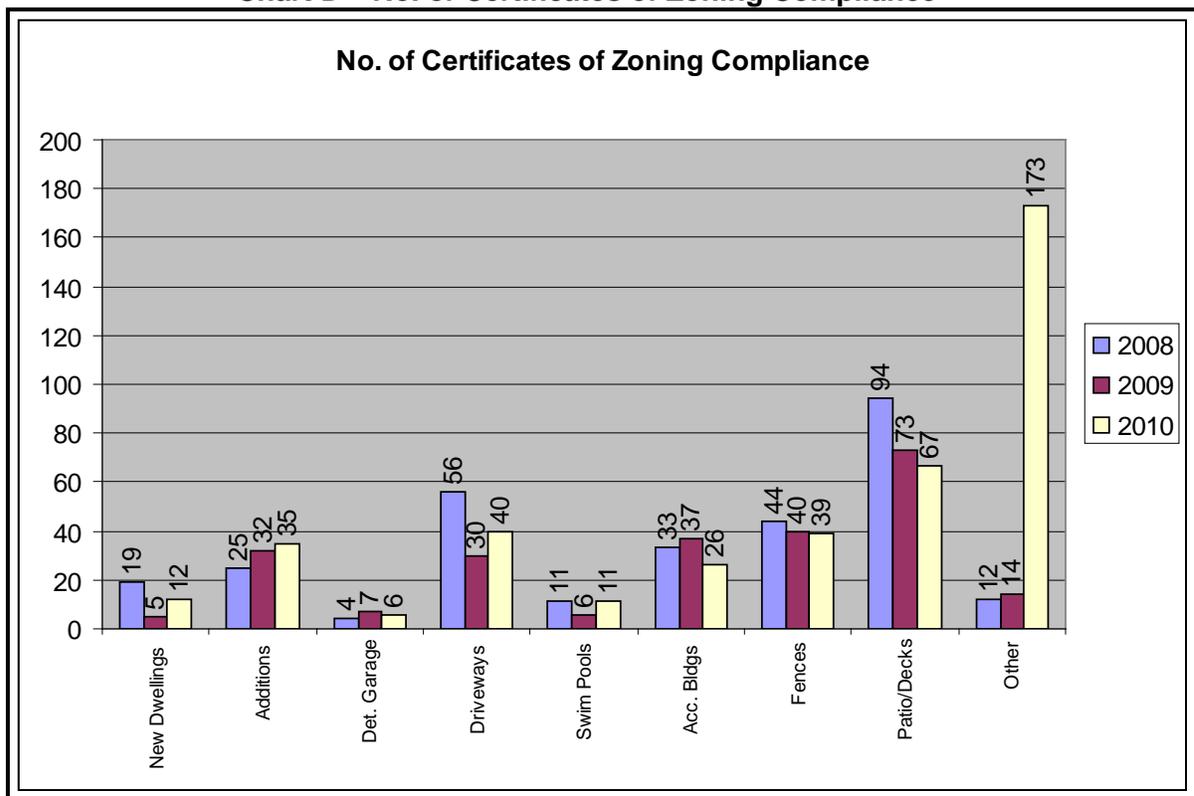
The GIS Coordinator was also invited to be a main featured speaker at the Cuyahoga County GIS Symposium in 2010 where he made a presentation of the main features of Solon's GIS program. This presentation demonstrated the means by which Solon's GIS is utilized on a day to day basis by the various City departments, as well as by City residents. The presentation was very well received and served to showcase Solon's innovative and advanced GIS program.

### **CERTIFICATES OF ZONING COMPLIANCE**

All exterior residential construction projects in the City are reviewed by the Planning Department to check for compliance with the set-back and design provisions of the City Zoning Code. Once compliance with the Zoning Code is established, a Certificate of Zoning Compliance is then issued. This certificate serves as authorization to the Building Department to issue any required building permits for the project.

In 2010, a total of four hundred and nine (409) residential projects were reviewed and issued Certificates of Zoning Compliance by the Planning Department. "Chart D", below, provides a comparison of the volume of permit issuance by project type, over the past three (3) years.

**"Chart D" No. of Certificates of Zoning Compliance**



As per this Chart, applications for new dwellings, additions, driveways, and swimming pools all increased in 2010, while those for detached garages, accessory buildings, fences,

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and patios/decks decreased. It should be noted that the 2010 spike in the “other” category reflects an increased emphasis on reviewing mechanical equipment located in yard areas, such as emergency generators and air conditioner units.

### **CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

The primary purpose of the Construction Management program is to ensure that non-residential buildings and premises are constructed in accordance with the City Council approved plans. As such, this program requires the periodic field monitoring of all exterior construction projects, from commencement of initial site work, to final completion. Minor alterations to existing non-residential buildings are also monitored through this program.



Arby's façade renovations



Hartville Professional Building façade renovations



Carrington Court Apartment Building #3

In 2010, a total of one-hundred fifty (150) construction projects were reviewed for construction in compliance with the City approved site plans and elevations. These projects ranged from major building facade renovations (such as those identified under the Architectural/Design Review Section of this report), to more minor alterations such as the installation of new loading dock areas, sidewalks, and exterior mechanical equipment. Since the construction management program was initiated approximately three ago, discrepancies between Planning/Council approved plans and “as built” conditions have been essentially eliminated.

## **CERTIFICATES OF OCCUPANCY**

Any change in the occupancy of a non-residential building or any unit within a building, requires the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. The purpose of the Certificate of Occupancy is twofold. First, to verify that the proposed use in question is permitted in accordance with the provisions of the City Zoning Ordinance. Second, to establish an up to date record of building occupancy for both Economic Development and Safety Forces information.

There were a total of fifty-seven (57) Certificates of Occupancy applications reviewed by the Planning Department in 2010. The majority of these permits were issued for new tenants (46), while the remainder were issued for changes to existing tenant spaces (expansions or reductions), changes in business names, or changes in business ownership.

Notable new tenants for 2010 included the Harvest Kitchen and Lounge, which will occupy the former Arabica space located on Bainbridge Road; the Swirl Wine Bar, which was approved for occupancy at 33325 Bainbridge Road within the Historic District; and the LeMizu Japanese Restaurant at 30050 Aurora Road in front of the Springhill Suites Hotel. Each of these businesses are expected to open their doors to the general public in the first half of 2011.

Other new tenants included: Salon Alvarez (33579 Aurora Road), Charles Shoe Repair (33544 Aurora Road), Divalicious (28200 Miles Road), Haute Monde Salon (34222 Aurora Road), Tuesday Morning (33507 Aurora Road), Nestle (30500 Bainbridge Road – the former Keithly Building), Green Innovations (6075 Cochran Road), Cardinal Health Care (5370 Naiman Parkway), and Wrap-Tite (6200 Cochran Road)

## **ZONING CODE AND BUILDING CODE AMENDMENTS**

Several amendments to the Zoning and Building Codes were prepared by the Planning Department in 2010. These include the following:

- 1. NEW “I-1” (WAREHOUSING AND ASSEMBLING) ZONING DISTRICT (CHAPTER 1282)** – This new zoning district was developed in cooperation with Reit Management – the principal property owner on Naiman Parkway. The purpose of the proposed zoning classification was to expand the range of uses permitted within the former “I-1” (Warehousing) district to the extent possible – without negatively impacting the adjacent residential areas. The result was the creation of completely new light manufacturing and assembly zoning classification uses that has significantly enhanced the viability of the Naiman Parkway industrial area. This Ordinance was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission, endorsed by City Council, and ultimately adopted by the electorate on the May 2010 ballot.

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2. **CHANGEABLE COPY SIGN ORDINANCE (SECTION 1288.04)**– This ordinance established stringent design criteria in order to permit electronic message board signage within the City for the first time. The Ordinance was recommended by the Planning Commission and adopted by City Council.
3. **WORKMANLIKE MANNER ORDINANCE (SECTION 1289.02)** - This ordinance was developed to fill a void that was created by the state mandated adoption of the standardized residential building code. Before this mandate, communities could, and often did, have provisions within their local building code requiring that all construction projects be completed in a quality and workmanlike manner (the state code does not have this provision). To address this issue, a zoning code amendment was prepared to re-establish minimum quality construction standards within the City. This Ordinance was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission and adopted by City Council.
4. **FINE WAIVER ORDINANCE (SECTION 1424.99)** - This Ordinance established specific criteria that would enable the Mayor to waive the assessing of a fine for the commencement of work without building permits. Prior to this ordinance, fine assessment was mandatory, regardless of whether the work in question was of an emergency nature, and regardless of whether the Building Department was even open to issue permits. This Ordinance was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission and adopted by City Council.
5. **DIRECTIONAL SIGN ORDINANCE (SECTION 1288.04)**– This Ordinance was prepared in order to bring City zoning codes in to compliance with recent court rulings, by allowing directional signs to incorporate business names, logos, and other advertising related materials. This Ordinance was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission and adopted by City Council.
6. **VARIANCE AND SITE PLAN APPROVAL ORDINANCES (CHAPTERS 1291 AND 1293)** - These ordinances established the ability for City Council to continue variance and site plan review beyond the previous three meeting limit – subject to a specific request from the applicant to do so. This addressed a recurring problem whereby Council was forced to deny variances due to the need for additional information – even though the applicant was in favor of delaying the vote until such time as the information could be provided. This Ordinance was recommended for approval by the Planning Commission and adopted by City Council (in early 2011).
7. **RESIDENTIAL RENTAL UNIT OCCUPANCY PERMIT ORDINANCE** – This detailed ordinance was prepared at the request of City Council, for the purpose of initiating the discussion of residential rental unit registration and inspection. The original ordinance, which would have included internal inspections based upon ICC (International Code Council) standards, was ultimately not adopted by Council. A revised version of the Ordinance, requiring registration only, is currently under consideration by the Planning

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Commission and City Council.

### **PLANNING REPORTS**

One of the primary functions of a Planning Department is to provide technical support services to the Administration, City Boards, and Commissions. To this end, the department prepared more than 170 planning reports during the year analyzing the various development projects and planning related issues that came before the City. In addition, Planning Department personnel were in attendance at more than 50 meetings of the Planning Commission, City Council, and Council subcommittees, in a technical support role.

### **2010 CENSUS**

The Planning Department served as the principal City contact for the 2010 decennial census. In this role, the department reviewed U.S. Census Bureau's records relating to the City, correcting discrepancies, and adding hundreds of new addresses to the Bureau's census mailing lists. The Department also assisted census workers with the non-response follow up phase of the census process.