

CITY OF MASON

ZONING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT 2010 ANNUAL REPORT





City of Mason Mission Statement

The City of Mason will provide public services which create a safe, healthy and caring environment that is responsive to the needs of its citizens, while maintaining the pride and traditional character of the past and nurturing plans for the future.



During 2010, the Department of Zoning and Development continued to provide services to the community relating to planning, zoning, building inspections and code enforcement.

Department 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 or participates in the coordination of enforcement for the following Chapters of the Mason City Code:

- Chapter 6 (Building and Building Regulations)
- 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 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.

Staff Activity

The Zoning Division was involved in a variety of projects during 2010, 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 2010/11-2015/16 (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 Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Committee meetings informing members of City business and development activities.

- F. Attended monthly Tri-County brown-bag lunch meetings (planner's networking). Hosted one meeting at new City Hall facility and provided tour to area planners.
- G. Through Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, served as a member to the Urban and Rural Service Boundary Committee.
- H. Continued to report on current department activities through use of the Mason Newsletter, City website, and Facebook account.
- I. Reported monthly code enforcement progress to the City Administrator.
- J. Completed City-wide traffic study, including data collection, intersection analysis, traffic impact study of future growth, speed zone study, and origin and destination study.
- K. Completed first successful season of the community garden program, including community input meetings and volunteer leadership training – donation of more than 400 pounds of produce to the Capital Area Community Services food pantry.
- L. Reviewed Preliminary National Flood Insurance Rate Maps for non-technical errors and omissions.
- M. Assisted the Planning Commission in beginning the update to the Master Plan.
- N. Met weekly with the code enforcement officer to provide experience and assistance in letter writing, code knowledge, procedures and due process requirements.
- O. Coordinated inspections/plan reviews with Fire Chief regarding proposed and damaged structures.
- P. Supervised building inspections, plan reviews and code enforcement.
- Q. Provided orientation support for reception staff to process building permits, data input, and schedule building inspections.
- R. Arranged for asbestos inspection for City owned property at 441 N. Jefferson St. in preparation for demolition and live-burn fire training.
- S. Developed contracts for the new City Hall for heating and cooling, janitorial cleaning services and window cleaning services.
- T. Solved complicated warrantee deficiencies for the new City Hall, such as security controllers, roof leaks, fan motors, wall cracks, door locks, plumbing, lighting, etc.
- U. Successfully repaired building maintenance issues at Library, such as leaking faucets, leaking roof, sanitary sewer flood and related damages, misc. electrical, etc.
- V. Supervise janitorial cleaning services and day-to-day cleaning needs of staff at City Hall.
- W. Assisted the Ingham County Housing Commission with developing the Targeted Neighborhood Rehabilitation program.
- X. Coordinated public meeting to receive comments from rental property owners regarding potential residential rental registration program.
- Y. Participated in the US Census Bureau's Local Update of Census Address List. Evaluated Census address list and successfully added 521 addresses to the

Census address record for Mason. An accurate census address list ensures that all valid addresses in the City are provided a survey and counted during canvassing.

- Z. Participated in the Ingham County's Complete Count Committee to ensure maximum participation in the decennial Census.
- AA. Successfully secured reimbursement for Library sewer damages, resulting in a reimbursement to the City of nearly \$17,000.
- BB. Participated in the update of the City's Wellhead Protection Plan.

Personnel Changes

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

- David Haywood, Zoning & Development Director
- John Dodson, Building Official/Building Inspector (through May 2010)
- Josh Vertalka, Planning Intern (May 2010 – August 2010)

There were big changes to the department in the past year. The Building Official/Building Inspector position was cut, with general code enforcement responsibilities being moved to the Police Department. The Zoning & Development Department was able to utilize help from the reception desk (Eileen Northrup and Cortney Tostevin) to process building permits and input data such as inspection results, filing permits and general communication and scheduling with inspectors. Eileen and Cortney have proven quick studies of the permit system and provided invaluable support to the Department.

Training

Staff attended the following training courses:

1. Crystal Access security controllers software training (City Hall)
2. Enertemp HVAC software controls (City Hall)
3. Elevator operations, function and safety (City Hall)
4. Landscaping maintenance and irrigation controls (City Hall)
5. CPR Training – City of Mason
6. Planning & Zoning Essentials – Michigan Association of Planning
7. Michigan Medical Marijuana Act Training – Michigan Municipal League
8. Zoning Board of Appeals training – McGinty Law Firm
9. Title 6 – Antidiscrimination training (City Hall)

FACILITIES

City Hall Facilities Updated

Out with the old and in with the new! The year brought new digs for those housed at City Hall. The new highly efficient facility should serve the City's staff and residents for nearly 100 years!

The Zoning and Development Department is proud to be responsible for the day-to-day maintenance needs for the LEED (Leadership In Efficiency and Environmental Design) certified facility and brings new opportunities to learn more about the benefits in reduced energy use, irrigation, recycled materials content, and pleasing setting for staff and visitors.



Staff is busy with reporting and follow-through of warrantee items related to City Hall. With any new facility there are warrantee items, and a large project such as City Hall is no exception. Staff is proud to report that all warrantee items discovered to date have been reported timely and items have been corrected or are scheduled for corrective action. Staff is currently spending approximately 4-8 hours per week on warrantee issues.



Library

Staff continues to support the great service provided by the Capital Area District Library by responding to the facility needs as they arise. In 2010 the following issues were responded to:

1. Foundation leak – repaired by securing light well to foundation, installing bubble over light well, and sloping grade away from foundation.
2. Leak over Genealogy/Book Sale Room gable – repaired by reroofing and flashing valley.
3. Basement flooding (multiple responses) – typical flooding of the basement occurs as a result of poor design of storm drains.
4. Leaking/deteriorated bathroom light wells – replaced light well structure and installed clear covers.
5. Miscellaneous calls – disabled sump pump, clogged toilets, leaky faucets, adjustments to drinking fountain, snow removal, re-fit loose or missing roof tiles, etc.

MASON COMMUNITY GARDEN

A Growing Community – City Starts Community Garden

Staff is proud to report the successful and popular community garden program. After months of planning, the Mason Community Garden is now open for business. The purpose of the garden is to provide space for individuals to grow produce for their personal consumption, as well as provide space for volunteers to grow produce to donate to the Mason Capital Area Community Services food pantry. The garden is located at 213 North Jefferson Street just south of the Hayhoe Riverwalk trailhead.



Through the public input process during the winter of 2009/2010 staff identified three community volunteer coordinators (Jon Vincent, Amy Vincent and Kelli Green) willing to provide much of the co-ordination, labor, donations, and creative thinking it took to make the program a success.

Staff and the volunteer coordinators were able to successfully recruit volunteers and gardeners to obtain compost, fencing, tilling, shed, paint, hose, rakes, shovels, scale and other miscellaneous materials necessary for the garden.

The Greater Lansing Food Bank Garden Project provided the following funding/material donations for the following acquisitions:

- Perimeter fencing and staking
- Scale for weighing produce for donating
- Miscellaneous tools

The Department arranged for water, compost, shed and land to be donated by the City.

Individual garden plots were 10 feet by 10 feet and cost \$5 for the season. There was no cost for volunteering in the community donation plot. Donations were sought as this is a community supported program (i.e. general funds are not used to support this program). The program is relying on registration fees and donations, which help with start-up costs, such as seeds, water usage, plants and miscellaneous supplies.

The garden has received a wide variety of support. The City of Mason provides the land and administrative support. The Garden Project of the Greater Lansing Food Bank has provided a wealth of information and guidance, as well as funding for fencing, training and access to plants and seeds. Needed material support is coming from generous offers from Mason Elevator and the Plumbers & Pipefitters Local 333. Resources that volunteers bring to the garden are immensely beneficial. The Mason Public Works Department generously provided labor and materials to provide water to the garden.

During the growing season, gardeners created a facebook account for the garden as a means of communication, organization and to report donations. The Mason Community Garden is generously supported by the following:

- The Garden Project of the Greater Lansing Food Bank
- The Mason Elevator Company (MECO)
- Michigan State University Extension
- United Association of Plumbers and Pipefitters Local 333
- Mason State Bank
- Southside Automotive
- Grove's Motorsports
- Freedom Tax
- The City of Mason
- Jim Kennedy
- Martin Colburn



Staff is proud to report that the program was directly responsible for growing and delivering over 400 pounds of produce to residents in need. **According to the FDA, that's enough to feed a family of four for nearly two months! Thank you Mason gardeners!**

Community Garden Quotables:

"I proudly dropped off the harvest that Jennifer and I picked last evening. Four squashes weighing in at 6lbs, and 8lbs of those gorgeous green beans! I can't express how happy it made me feel!"
– Jen Branch

"My grandson Sam and I finally got around to planting our plot today. I'm sure when things start coming up it will look like a kindergardener planted it, but it got him involved in learning and doing -- at least for a half hour or so. Thanks to all for making this happen in Mason!"
– Doug Klein



OVER 400 POUNDS DONATED!!!

PLANNING, ZONING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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 2008 and 2010.

Zoning Permit Type	2008	2009	2010
Rezoning	3	1	0
Special Use Permits	4	0	2
Preliminary Site Plan Reviews*	0	2	1
Final Site Plan Reviews	3	4	1
Plats (Preliminary / Final)	0	0	0
Planned Unit Developments	0	0	0
Parking Lot Plan Reviews	0	0	0
Land Divisions/Conveyance/Combinations	5	1	2
Zoning Board of Appeals	4	5	3
Historic District Commission	10	11	7
Building Code Board of Appeals	0	0	0
Sign Code Board of Appeals	0	1	1
Soil Erosion & Sedimentation Control	n/a	n/a	3
TOTAL	29	25	20

* Site plan reviews not covered by special use permits.

Ordinance Amendments Studied/Prepared:

1. Satellite Dish Antenna Standards
2. Michigan Medical Marijuana Act
3. Rental Registration/Property Maintenance Code
4. Fire Code
5. Backyard Chickens

Master Plan Update

The Mason Planning Commission has officially kicked-off their update to the Master Plan. Commissioners Burns, Vincent, Droscha and Naeyaert (Mayor Pro Tem) were courageous enough to volunteer their Saturday mornings to the effort. The Committee is currently working on background data research including census data, existing land use inventory and creating a schedule and required activity list necessary to complete the update.

BUILDING & CONSTRUCTION

The Department strives to provide contractors, applicants, property owners, tenants and residents with expert consultation in a way that anyone can understand. Our goal is to provide anyone with an interest in improving their property with the resources they need to get the job done right, on-time and as cost effectively as possible.

The overall level of building permits issued in 2010 decreased significantly (19%) as compared to permits issued in 2009. Residential permits are up 50 percent from a year ago, with all new residential permits in the single-family category. The following table illustrates the comparative building activity in the City for the past three years:

Building Permit Type	2008	2009	2010
Single family permits	8	6	9
Value	\$570,500	\$605,000	\$493,150
Multiple family permits (incl. two fam.)	0	0	0
Value	\$0	\$0	\$0
Commercial permits	25	19	11
Value	\$3,093,977	\$5,602,995	\$218,401
Sign permits	11	4	7
Other permits	181	174	138
Total permits	225	204	165
Total value of construction	\$5,627,241	\$7,569,786	\$1,957,491
Total permit fees	\$42,268	\$38,832	\$26,979

The major commercial, office, industrial, and institutional buildings receiving building permits in 2010 are as follows (permits over \$10,000):

1. Mason City Hall and Police Dept., 201 W. Ash Street
2. City of Mason Communications Tower, 201 W. Ash Street
3. Bestsellers expansion, 356 S. Jefferson Street
4. Courthouse Pub expansion, 160 W. Maple Street

City Partners with Meridian Township

The loss of a staffed Building Official/inspector brought the challenge of providing building inspection services. Fortunately we were able to utilize Meridian Township inspectors to provide this service on a on-call basis, with a considerable cost-savings to the City. Meridian Township inspectors and support staff are providing an exceptional service to the City and community. Permits are typically issued within 48 hours of receipt and in many cases issued the same day. Inspections are performed within 24 hours of request. Inspectors are timely, courteous and professional. Inspection results are communicated

effectively to reception staff and in return to property owners/applicants. I am pleased to say that this system is working very well.

Year End Highlights

The year brought much needed demolition of several damaged or functionally obsolete properties including the following:

- 201 W. Ash St.
- 628-638 Peachtree Pl.
- 652 Hull Rd.
- 224 N. Jefferson St.



Staff has worked diligently with property owners to facilitate and assist their needs with regard to demolition projects, such as providing contacts with area demolition contractors, assisting with permit process and utility disconnection.

CODE ENFORCEMENT

With the elimination of the building official/inspector and transfer of code enforcement to the Police Department, it is no surprise that the Department year-end figures are substantially lower than 2009. However, in the past year the Department responded to 139 complaints in 2010. The overall compliance rate for all categories in the calendar year 2010 was 56 percent. It is important to note here that nearly all of the open cases were transferred to the Police Department for follow up. The following table shows the relative comparison of code enforcement categories for the past three years:

Enforcement Category	2008	2009	2010**	2010***
			Zoning Dept	Police Dept
Dangerous Buildings	*	*	4	8
Junk	22	31	15	41
Nuisance	9	11	10	*
Property Maintenance	42	12	9	8
Signs	*	*	2	*
Tall Grass/Weeds	154	160	52	10
Unlicensed/Inoperable Cars	60	45	22	11
Working Without a Permit	51	59	11	*
Zoning	*	*	14	n/a
Miscellaneous	n/a	n/a	n/a	16
TOTAL	338	318	139	94

*Not reported in prior year(s) or under different category

**Through the end of July 2010

***after August 1, 2010

Staff has been working very closely with the Code Enforcement Officer, Jim Duthie, to provide assistance in procedural issues, case history, experience, etc. Staff meets with the code officer on a weekly basis to discuss relevant issues. It is the goal of the Zoning Department to continue to provide assistance to code enforcement officer. It has been a pleasure working with Mr. Duthie. His 32 years of experience as a public safety officer is evident in his voluntary approach to code enforcement. Mr. Duthie has a knack for gaining voluntary compliance from property owners that maintains their dignity and trust in local government. It is an honor to be work with him.

However, with the elimination of the Building Official position, we no longer have a builders-eye on the community to identify properties where work is being conducted without the proper permits and/or project review. Staff is working with the code enforcement officer to encourage this type of observation.

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.

	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>
Foreclosed Properties	19	32	68	41	50
Properties Sold by Banks	5	11	24	61	33