

*City of Ann Arbor Planning Services Unit*

# 2023-2024 Activities Report



**Prepared July 2025**

## Planning Manager Statement

2023 and 2024 were busy years for the Planning Services team. We celebrated four retirements and welcomed five new colleagues. Our Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP) efforts kicked off in summer 2023, and continued with public engagement throughout 2024 to prepare for the challenging work of synthesizing wide-ranging conversations with the community into a new policy document. Envisioning and planning Ann Arbor's next 25 years is a herculean effort but improving quality of life and livability for all Ann Arborites of today and tomorrow moves this effort forward.

While envisioning Ann Arbor's future, we remained focused on immediate efforts, such as the application of the new Transit Corridor (TC1) District. First established in 2021, this district leverages existing public transit services to increase density on main corridors. The TC1 district is intended to reduce automobile reliance and encourage infill development, hitting two main city-wide goals. At the end of 2024, there are four TC1 zones in Ann Arbor, signaling future smarter growth.

To complement transit-oriented-development goals, Ann Arbor added 1,348 new homes from 2023 - 2024, ranging from affordable and market-rate apartments to townhomes, condos, and detached homes. Most of these new housing developments were clustered in our D1 and D2 zones and along major transit corridors, furthering densification goals.

Clarity and simplification continue to be goals of the Planning Department. Our staff dedicated significant time to updating our Unified Development Code (UDC) to ensure the language and details remain current. UDC amendments from 2023-2024 included removal of floor area premiums and maximum floor area ratios (FAR) in D1 and D2 districts. These clarifications make it easier to achieve greater development square footage in downtown buildings, while retaining familiar building forms.

The volume and quality of the work accomplished over these last two years by our team, colleagues across the city, board members, and commissioners is impressive. I would like to extend my appreciation to all who have worked tirelessly, lending their time and expertise each day, week, and month to improve our City and to make Ann Arbor a great place for all.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Brett D. Lunt".

Planning Manager, City of Ann Arbor



## Planning Services Unit Team



Left to right: *Charlie Collins, Brett Lenart, Jon Barrett, Julia Shake, Matt Kowalski, Mariana Melin-Corcoran, Hank Kelley, Michelle Bennett, Jill Thacher, Courtney Manor, Emma Berger, Alexis DiLeo*

## Retirees and New Employees

**The Planning Services Department is fortunate to have had long tenures with each of these valuable colleagues. Happy retirement Jeff, Chris, Matt, and Mia!**



Jeff Kahan, 30+ years of service.



Chris Cheng, 26 + years of service.



Matt Kowalski, 26 years of service.



Mia Gale, 18 years of service.

The Planning Services Department welcomed five new colleagues in 2024: Mariana Melin-Corcoran, Julia Shake, Brittany Alexander, Michelle Bennett, and Charlie Collins.



Mariana Melin – Corcoran  
*Planner III*



Julia Shake  
*Planner IV*



Brittany Alexander  
*Administrative Assistant*



Michelle Bennett  
*Senior Planner*



Charlie Collins  
*Zoning Coordinator*

## Boards and Commissions

Planning Services is fortunate to work with various Boards and Commissions whose members volunteer their time, talent, and expertise each month. We value their careful assessments that provide meaningful guidance to our work.

Throughout 2023-2024, **30 board members and commissioners** from the Planning Unit's boards and commissions engaged in **1,245 hours of work across 96 meetings**.

### City Planning Commission

The City Planning Commission (CPC) guides planning and development initiatives in Ann Arbor. The CPC is the recommending body on zoning and code changes. They are also tasked with ensuring public concerns and comments are heard and incorporated into city planning initiatives. Below are the total number of site plan reviews, annexation recommendations, and special exception use applications processed by the CPC.

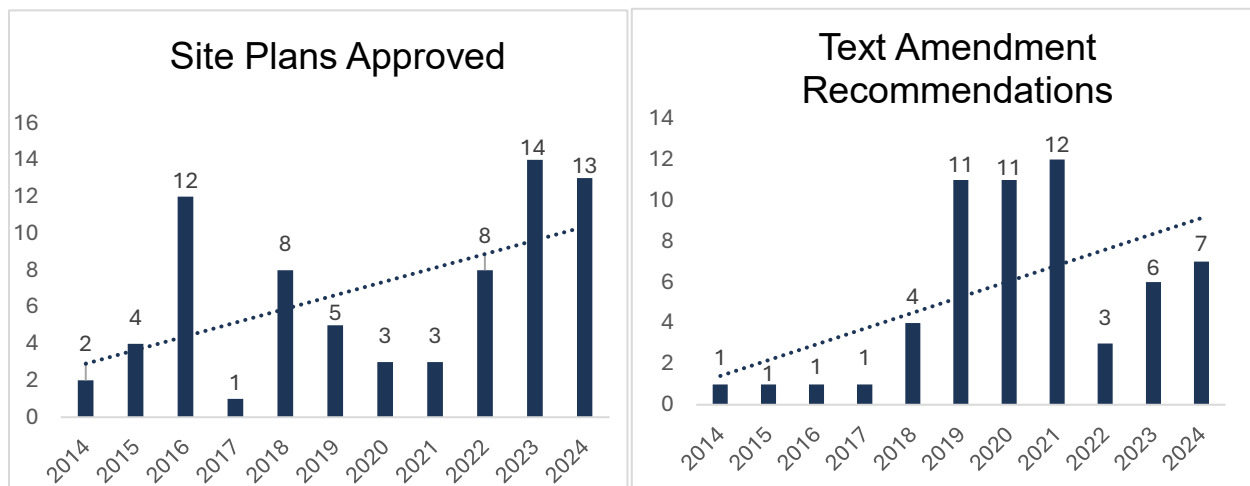
#### 2023-2024 CPC Commissioners

Ellie Abrons  
Daniel Adams  
Sadira Clarke  
Lisa Disch  
Shannan Gibb-Randall  
Sara Hammerschmidt

Wonwoo Lee  
Sarah Mills  
Richard Norton  
Lisa Sauve  
Julie Weatherbee  
Donnell Wyche

#### Summary of CPC Work

The Planning Commission recommends text amendments, approves site plans and Special Exception Use Permits, and recommends other site plan approvals to the city Council.



## Zoning Board of Appeals

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) is composed of nine members of the public, including one member of City Council and one member from the CPC.

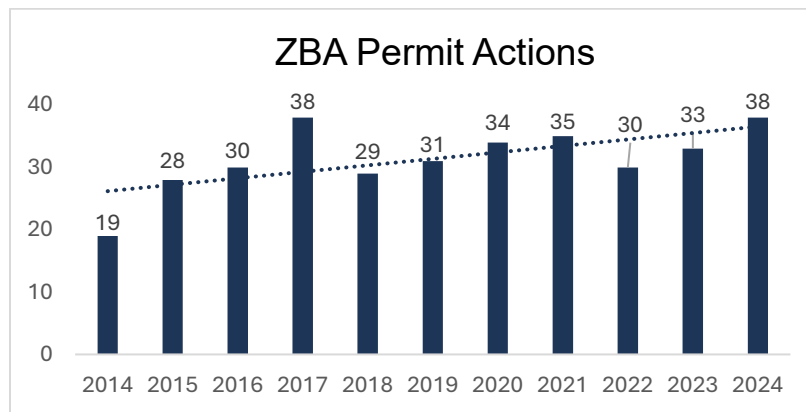
### 2023-2024 ZBA Members

Mike Daniel  
Drew Denzin  
Dave DeVarti  
Julia Goode  
Kristina Glusac  
Patty Laskowsky

Christopher Madigan  
Candice Briere  
Todd Grant  
Dharma Akmon  
Julie Weatherbee  
Grace Whitney

### Summary of ZBA Work

The Zoning Board of Appeals considers Variance applications, alterations to non-conforming structures, and appeals of some City staff decisions.



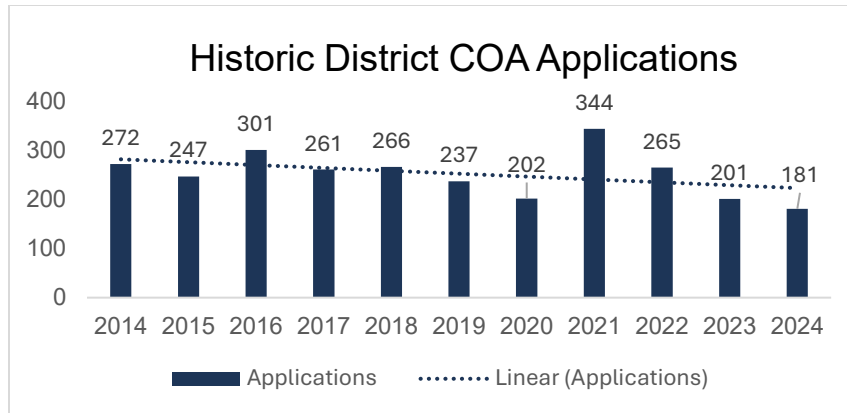
## Historic District Commission

The Historic District Commission (HDC), appointed by the Mayor and City Council, is made up of seven members that each provide knowledge on preservation techniques and practices. They also govern Ann Arbor's 15 historic districts. Historic district property owners must apply for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) if they want to make changes to their structures. A historic district property owner would need to obtain a COA for work involving accessory structures, additions, decks/patios, fences, signs, and mechanical equipment. These changes can be approved or denied by staff, who oversee minor work, or by the HDC, which oversees major work.

### 2023-2024 HDC Commissioners

Benjamin Calderon  
Anna Epperson  
Kathryn Fortener  
Steve Kaplan  
Jessica Quijano

David Rochlen  
Jennifer Ross  
Chip Smith  
Robert White  
Beverly K Willis



### 2023-2024 Annual Ann Arbor Preservation Awards

Each year, the HDC and planning staff award historic district property owners for outstanding preservation efforts. Included below are several of the 2023 and 2024 awardees. View the 2023 HDC awards and the 2024 HDC awards [here](#).



**2023**  
715 Hill St - 1929  
*Xi Psi Phi Fraternity*



**2023**  
526 S Ashley  
*Built 1894*



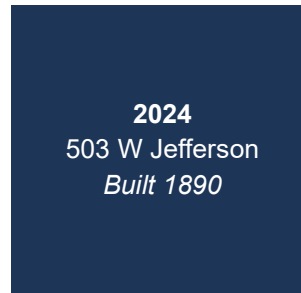
**2024**  
1617 Cambridge Rd  
*Built 1917*



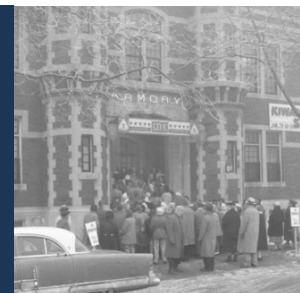
**2023**  
326 S State St.  
*Nickels Arcade (1923)*



**2024**  
223 E Ann St.  
*Kiwanis Club*

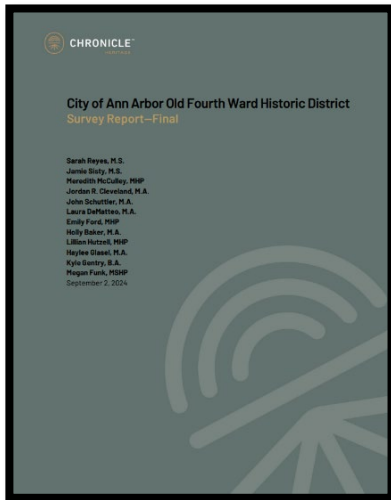


**2024**  
503 W Jefferson  
*Built 1890*





## Old Fourth Ward Historic District Survey



The Old Fourth Ward Historic District Survey was completed in 2024, updating the original 1982 report. The update outlines current standards for local historic districts and updated significance statements and existing conditions for each historically designated property in the District.

Access the full Old Fourth Ward Historic District survey by clicking [here](#) or on the report cover to the left.

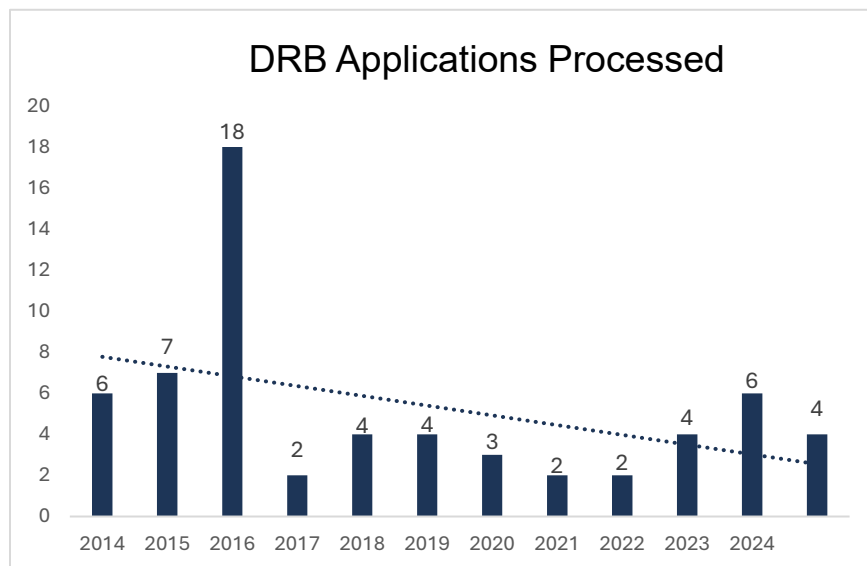
## Design Review Board

The Design Review Board (DRB) was a review body made up of members of the public to evaluate development in the D1 and D2 districts against design guidelines. The DRB was dissolved by City Council (CC) in May 2025.

### Design Review Board Members Serving in 2023-2024

Tamara Burns  
William Kinley  
John Kotarski  
Richard Mitchell

Geoff Perkins  
Wendy Rampson  
Lori Singleton



## Comprehensive Land Use Plan

### What is a Comprehensive Land Use Plan (CLUP)?

A Comprehensive Land Use Plan (“CLUP” or “comp plan”) is a document that states the City’s vision and priorities relative to development. The first major update to the Land Use Plan since 2009, the plan was initiated in 2023 and includes research on existing conditions on relevant topics and synthesis of numerous community feedback forums that have taken place. Comprehensive plans are used to determine land use decisions by providing data- and values-driven guidance when balancing many competing interests and goals.

### CLUP Public Outreach and Engagement



Public outreach for the Comp Plan began in early 2024. Planning staff and consultants engaged with residents across Ann Arbor to gather input using a variety of materials including an online survey, Meeting in a Box exercises, a Mad Lib game, and future land use visualizations.

#### CLUP Engagement “By the Numbers”

- 8 open houses at branch libraries
- 3,100+ survey respondents
- 20+ interviews
- 580+ stakeholders in small group meetings
- 200+ Meeting in a Box responses
- 30+ participants in small group discussions & targeted outreach
- 9 City Council and City Planning Commission meetings
- 400+ emails to Planning Commission

#### Comprehensive Plan Timeline

- ✓ **Summer 2023:** Kick-off the project
- ✓ **Fall 2023:** Stakeholder interviews and data collection
- ✓ **Winter 2024:** Online survey
- ✓ **Spring & Fall 2024:** Public sessions
- ✓ **Winter 2025:** CPC and CC guidance on draft comp plan
- ✓ **Spring 2025:** First draft published and CPC review, another round of public open houses
- ✓ **Summer 2025:** Second draft published and CPC review
- ✓ **Fall 2025:** Second draft reviewed.
- ✓ **Winter 2025-2026:** Review of 3rd Draft; 63-day public review period, CPC public hearing and CC public hearing, adoption



## Transit Corridor Zone (TC1)

The TC1 district was modeled on several existing zoning districts that merges form-based zoning and contextual requirements based on surrounding zoning. The district was established with the goal of reduced reliance on automobiles, providing a range of housing and development choices near existing transit service to meet existing and anticipated needs of the community. In 2024, two additional areas were rezoned to this designation along the Plymouth and Washtenaw corridors. For more information on TC1, click [here](#).

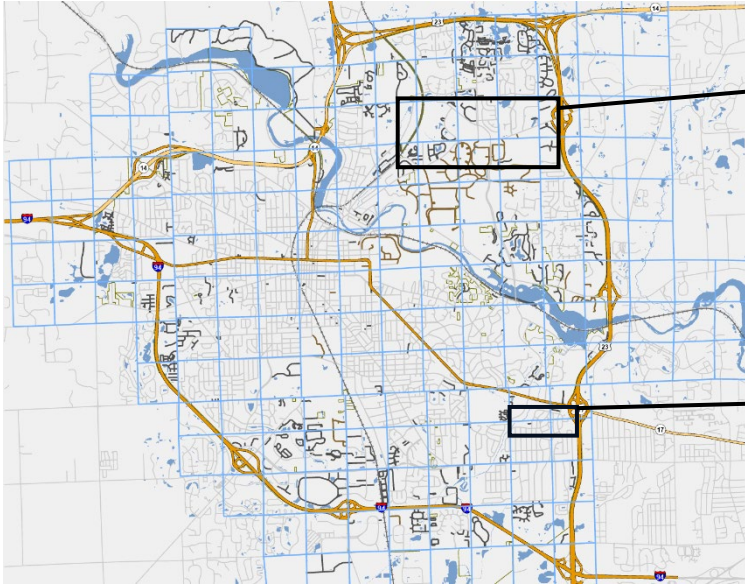


Figure 2. Map of Ann Arbor with Plymouth Rd and Washtenaw TC1 corridors outlined.



Figure 3. Plymouth Rd TC1 Corridor



Figure 4. Washtenaw TC1 Corridor

## Site Plans by the Numbers

Each day, the Planning Services Department reviews site plans, zoning and building permit applications, Historic District Certificate of Appropriateness applications, residential and commercial building permit applications, zoning information/analysis requests, and concept meeting requests. These requests can be reviewed and decided on by the Planning Manager, the City Planning Commission (CPC), or the City Council (CC). The map below shows site plan applications from 2023-2024. majority of 2023-2024 proposed projects with site plans were downtown, with some clusters in the southeast and southwest areas of town.

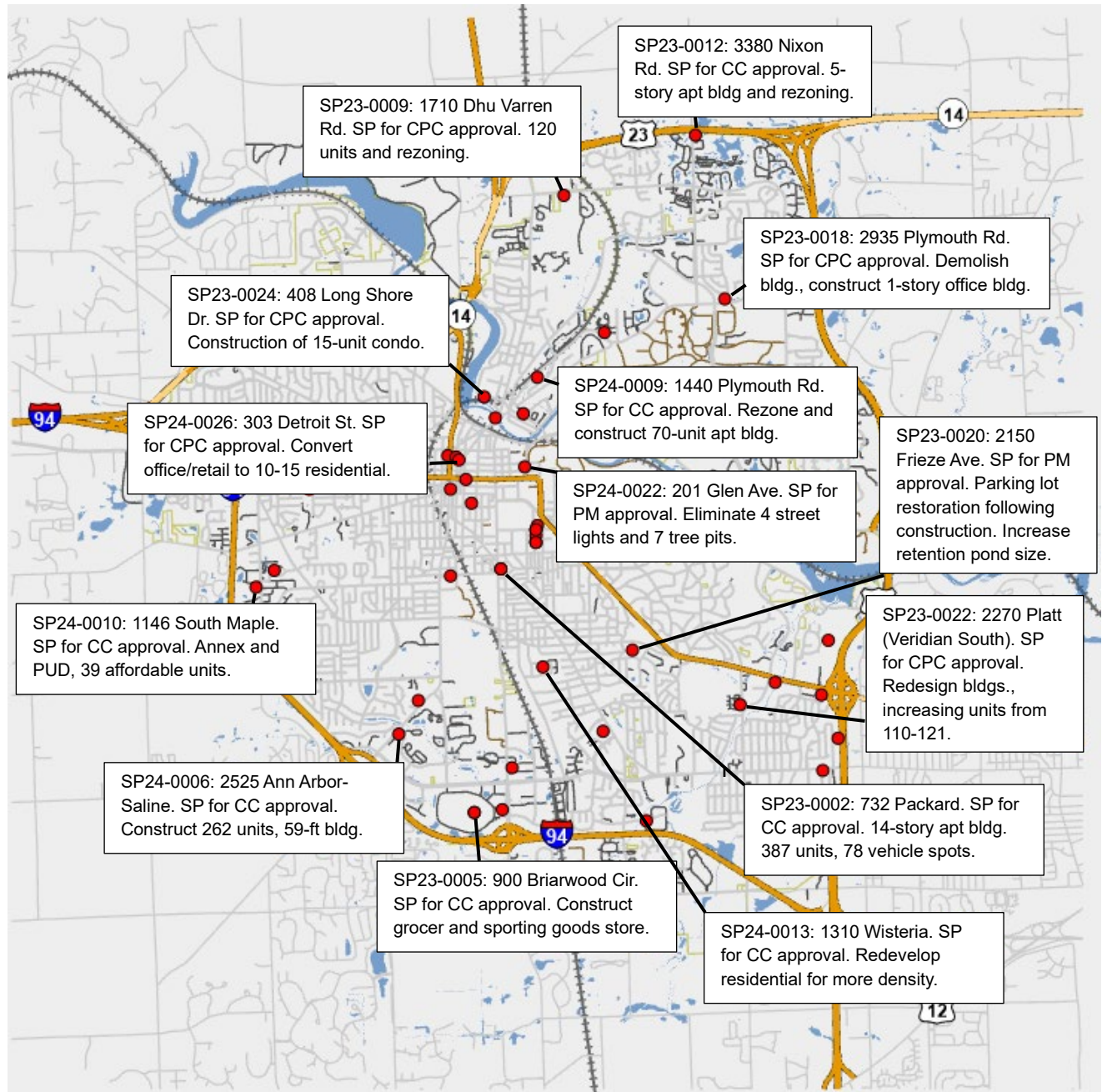


Figure 5. Map of 2023-2024 site plan applications with some site plans highlighted.



## Site Plans By the Numbers

The map below displays site plan applications from 2014-2022. The majority of 2014-2022 projects with site plans occurred in the downtown areas, with a cluster on the west side and in the southeastern portion of the city.

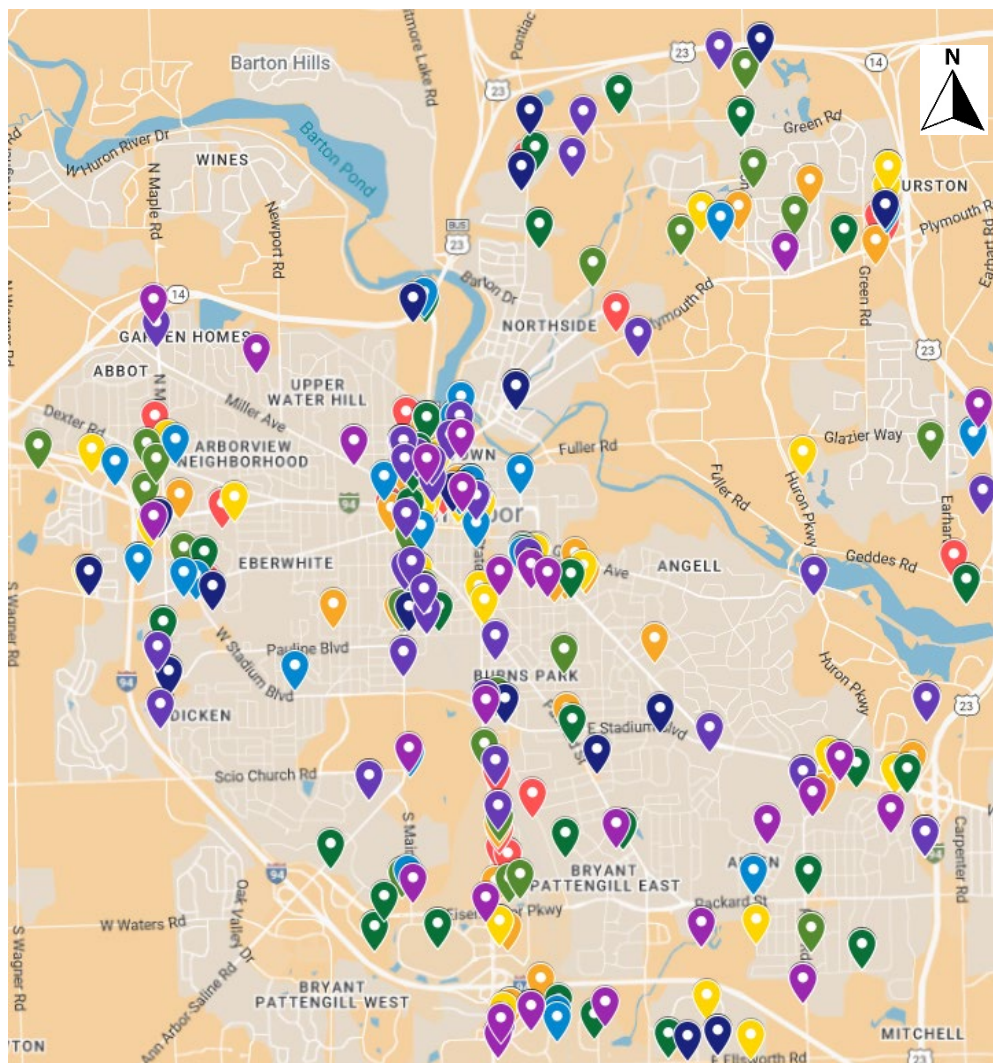
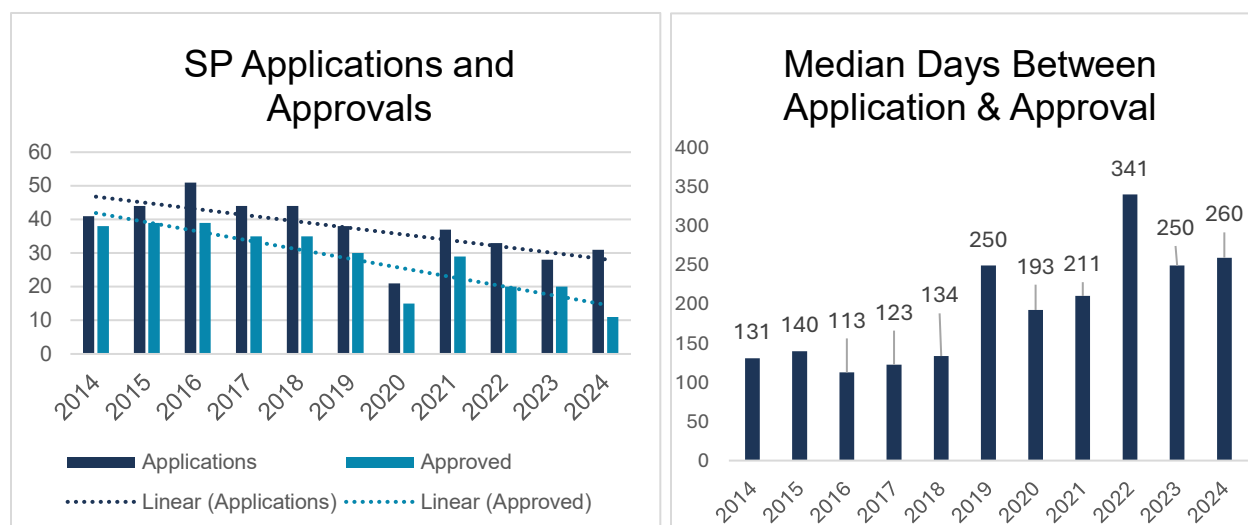


Figure 6. Map of 2014-2022 Site Plan applications.

Site Plan Application Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Number of Site Plans	41	44	51	44	44	38	21	37	32
Color on Map									

## Site Plan Applications & Decisions Summary

Below is a summary of all site plan (SP) applications from 2014 - 2024. Voided site plan applications and those that require resubmittal are excluded from these numbers.



## Sign Permits

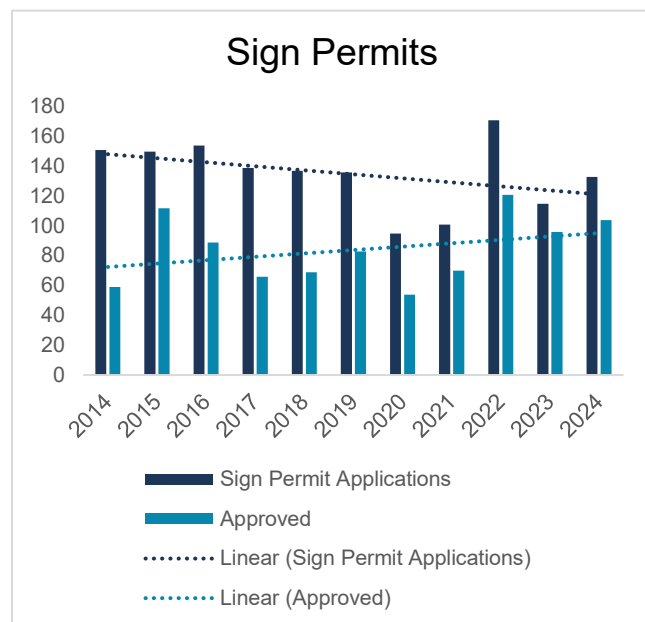
Sign permits encompass awnings, business centers/multi-tenants, face changes, ground poles, projecting, marquees, monuments, and walls. Sign regulations are intended to ensure sign are located, designed, sized, constructed, installed, and maintained in a way that protects and promotes safety, health, aesthetics, and the public welfare while allowing adequate communication.



Figure 7. Illuminated ground sign at an apartment complex that conforms to sign requirements.



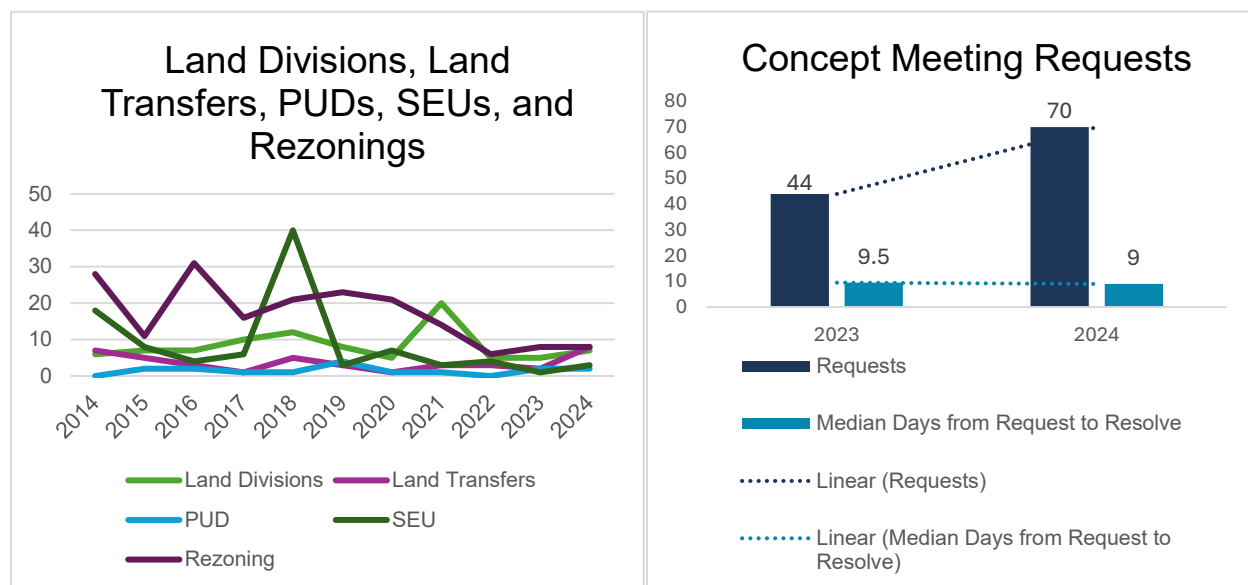
Figure 8. Illuminated wall sign that conforms to sign requirements.





## Other Applications Processed

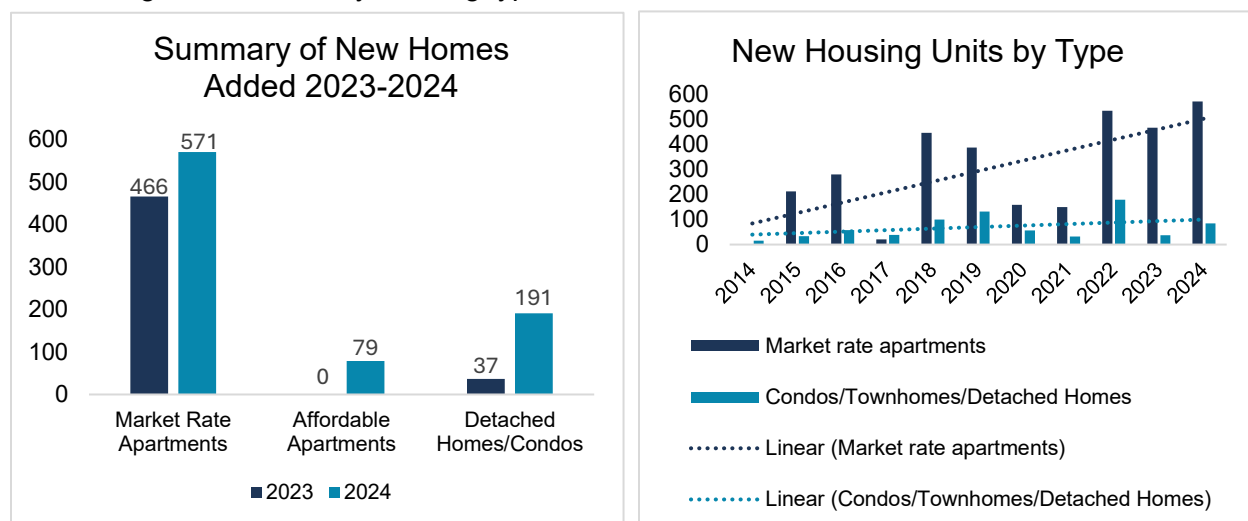
Land Divisions/Transfers, Planned Unit Developments (PUDs) applications processed are listed below. Concept meetings became available in 2023 and are requested by developers who have questions about a potential project or concept. Examples of concept meeting request topics include questions about site plan requirements, application process questions, permit questions, history of a particular parcel, general zoning district questions, and more.



## Planning Initiative Profile

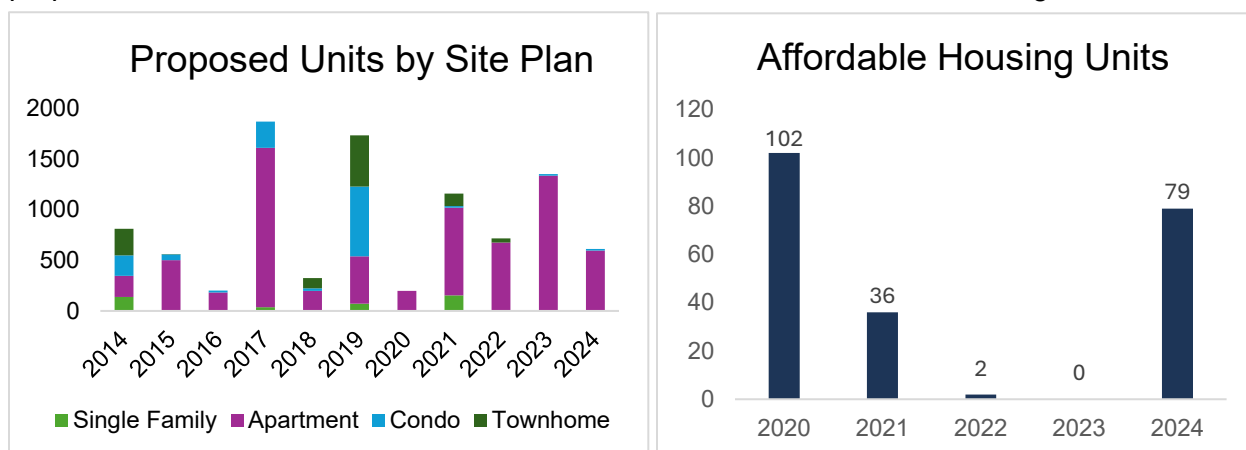
### Total Housing Units by Type

Certificates of Occupancy (CofO) are granted to developers when their residential unit is deemed available to occupy, as opposed to building permits which simply grant the developer the ability to construct what they have applied for. These numbers reflect the number of units that were granted CofOs by housing type.



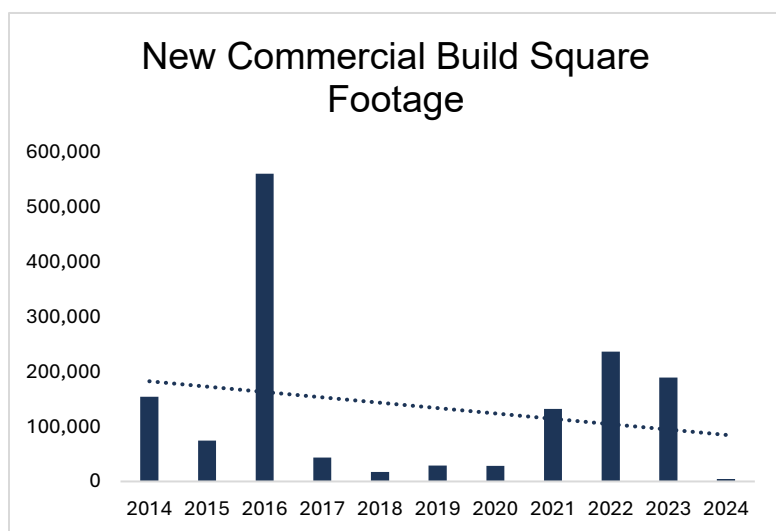
## Approved Site Plans Proposing Housing Units by Type

These numbers encompass the total number of approved dwelling units by housing type from site plans for each year from 2014 to 2024. Site plans are required for projects that involve a rezoning, a special exception use, additions to existing buildings with five or more dwelling units, the addition of certain accessory structures and/or changes to natural features plans on properties with five or more dwelling units, new construction with five or more dwelling units, proposed residential in non-residential districts, and new non-residential buildings.



## New Commercial Square Footage

These numbers reflect the amount of new commercial square footage, excluding additions.



- **2016** had the highest quantity of new commercial square footage at **560,841 sq ft**
- Some 2024 site plans may still be under review, so the approved new commercial square footage for 2024 is likely to **increase**
- The overall quantity of new commercial square footage has **decreased**

## Unified Development Code Amendments

Approval Date (Effective)	Title	Summary
August 7, 2023 (September 24, 2023)	<b>TC1 Uses, Auto-related standards, and additional standards</b> <i>ORD 23-25 R-23-328</i>	Allow automobile sales, service, repair, and rental as SEU in TC1.
November 6, 2023 (December 24, 2023)	<b>Premiums, D1, D2, and FAR</b> <i>ORD 23-32 R-23-441</i>	Eliminate premiums, eliminate Floor Area Ratio restrictions from D1 and D2 zoning districts.
November 6, 2023 (December 24, 2023)	<b>TC1 Front Setbacks</b> <i>ORD 23-33 R-23-442</i>	Amend required setbacks for TC1 to accommodate future multi-modal travel infrastructure.
December 18, 2023 (February 11, 2024)	<b>Personal scale Solar Energy Systems (SES)</b> <i>ORD 23-38 R-24-033</i>	Allow ground-mounted personal-scale SES in front yard and exclude from rear setback count.
December 18, 2023 (February 11, 2024)	<b>Plymouth Road Area TC1 District Rezoning</b> <i>ORD 23-36</i>	Rezone 45 parcels adjacent to Plymouth Rd to TC1.
January 22, 2024 (March 10, 2024)	<b>Conflicting Land Use Buffer</b> <i>ORD 24-02 R-24-059</i>	Simplify and reduce requirements for Conflicting Land Use Buffers in some areas.
September 3, 2024 (October 27, 2024)	<b>Transit Corridor Additional Standards, Parking Structures</b> <i>ORD 24-19 R-24-397</i>	Rename. Modify curb cut limits, development arrangement, and specific building type sections. Clarify first floor street-facing requirements and parking structure requirements.
September 3, 2024 (November 10, 2024)	<b>Height Exceptions, Stormwater Reviews, Development Approvals, Finished Grade</b> <i>ORD 24-20 R-24-405</i>	Outline exceptions to height limits, stormwater management compliance applicability and review responsibility, streamline standards and procedures.
November 18, 2024 (January 5, 2025)	<b>Child Care Center and Private School Uses</b> <i>ORD 24-29 R-24-452</i>	Increase districts where childcare and private schools as permitted uses, most notably in R1-R2B districts.