

**City of St. Joseph Michigan
Planning Commission
Annual Report
Calendar Year 2019**

**Approved January 9, 2020 by
City of St. Joseph Planning Commission**

Background.

The Michigan Planning Enabling Act requires the Planning Commission to complete a report annually to the City Commission discussing three specific areas. Following are the three reporting areas and the Planning Commission's report for 2019:

- A. The operations of the Planning Commission during the past year.
- B. The status of any ongoing planning activities.
- C. Recommendations regarding City Commission actions related to planning and development.

On January 9, 2020, the City of St. Joseph Planning Commission reviewed the draft Annual Report. After finding it to be appropriate, they directed staff to forward the finalized document to the City Commission.

Planning Commission Membership, Attendance and Training.

In March 2019, the City Commission appointed Ms. Julee Laurent and Mr. Joe LoPresti to the Planning Commission to fill positions that became unfilled due to resignations in April 2018. Their terms will expire in April 2021. Mr. Phil Maki resigned from the Commission at time of re-appointment in April after serving for nine years. Ms. Bec Rice and Mr. Sean Ebbert were both reappointed to the Commission and their terms will expire in 2022. The City Commission appointed Donna Stockton in August to fill the vacant seat and her term will expire in 2022.

During the annual organizational meeting in June, Ms. Hartzell was re-appointed to serve as Chair for the 2019-2020 term, while Mr. Ebbert was re-appointed as the Vice Chair.

The Planning Commission was scheduled to meet thirteen times in 2019. There was one joint meeting with the City Commission, Downtown Development Authority, Parks Advisory Board and Zoning Board of Appeals to discuss the downtown planning process that is being overseen by the Downtown Plan Steering Committee, however, the Planning Commission did not have a quorum present. The regularly scheduled meetings in July and August did not take place due to no agenda items.

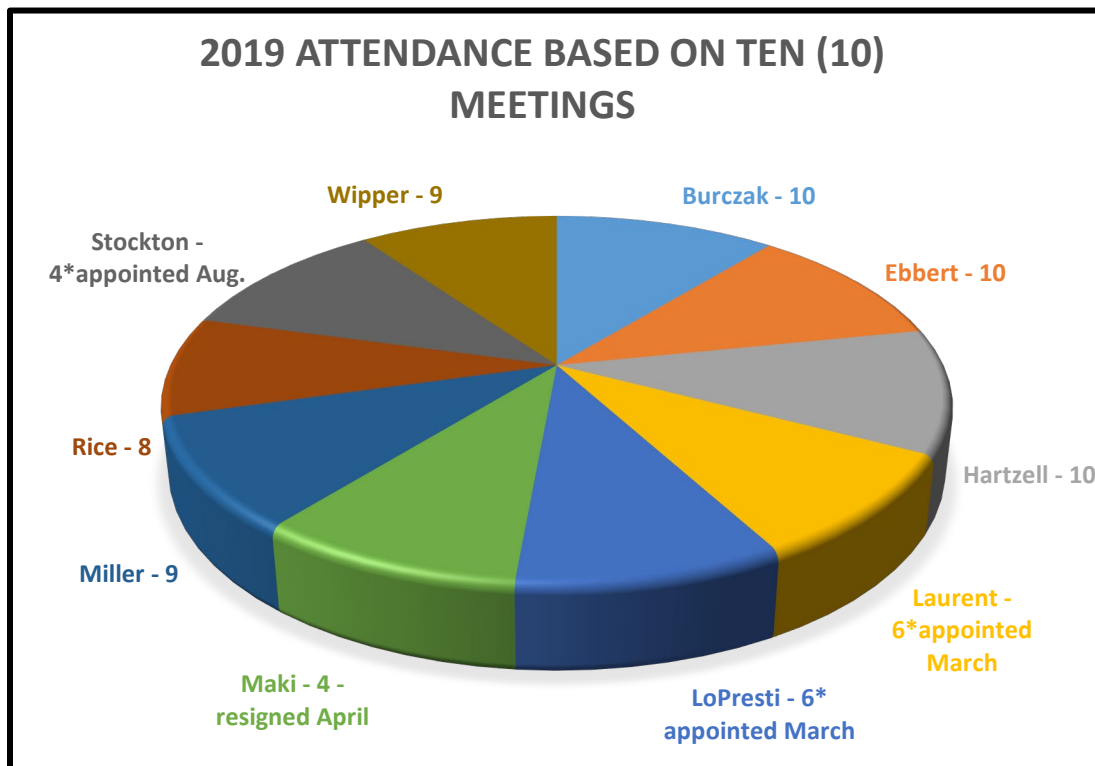
The ten meetings ranged from 0.5 to 2.5 hours for a total of 19 hours. Planning Commissioners spend additional time reviewing the agenda packets prior to the meeting and visiting the site. The overall member meeting attendance rate for the year was approximately 92%. Staff was informed of almost all absences prior to the meeting.

Below is a list of the members with attendance rate, appointment dates, years of service and term expiration dates.

<u>Member</u>	<u>Attendance</u>		<u>Years' Service</u> <u>as of Dec 2019</u>	<u>Term</u> <u>Expires</u>
	<u>2019</u>	<u>Appointed</u>		
Kathy Burczak	100%	5/2012	7	2020
Sean Ebbert (<i>Vice chair</i>)	100%	3/2007	12	2022
Patsy Hartzell (<i>Chair</i>)	100%	7/1985	34	2020
Aaron Miller	90%	7/2005	14	2021
Becky Rice	80%	2/2006	13	2021
Ceile Wipper	90%	3/2017	3	2020
Julee Laurent	86%	3/2019	1	2021
Joe LoPresti	86%	3/2019	1	2021
Donna Stockton	100%	8/2019	1	2022
Phil Maki	80%	1/2009	10	2019

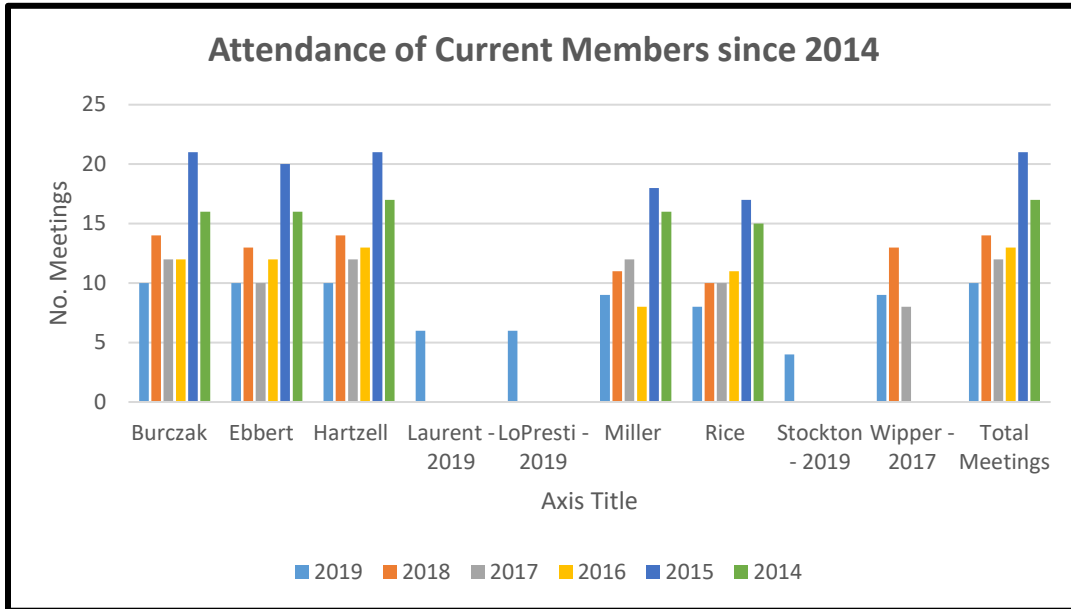
Chart I, depicts the 2019 attendance records.

Chart I – Miller included in chart



Below is Chart II which depicts attendance for the current members since 2014. It shows that members are consistently attending meetings and understand the commitment when accepting appointments.

Chart II



All members of the Planning Commission are encouraged to participate in additional learning opportunities. In past years, on-site training has been provided through the Michigan Association of Planning, unfortunately no on-site training was provided in 2019 as there were several opportunities in the area. Ms. Rice completed the on-line Citizen Planner Course through Michigan State University Extension. Ms. Burczak attended the National Conference for American Society of Land Architects (ASLA) in San Diego for her professional career which also provided the required continuing education requirements to maintain her designation as a Master Citizen Planner through Michigan State University Extension. In addition, Ms. Burczak attended “Providing Accessibility in Outdoor Developed Areas & Recreation Facilities in Lansing and Bik Parking Standards & Installation.

Staff Support and Packet Creation.

In 2019 the Planning Commission was staffed by Kristen Gundersen, Community Development Director/Zoning Administrator; Laurie Schmidt, City Attorney; Cecil Derringer, Chief Building Official; and Trudy Wilder, Building Inspector.

All packets were created using the Granicus Legislative Management Software. Once completed, packets were typically delivered to each member the Friday before the scheduled meeting and are posted to the City of St. Joseph’s “Public Hub” website section the Monday before the meeting. By utilizing the software-package it has allowed for the packets to be available to the public prior to the meeting in an easily searchable format that also includes the City Commission packets and other appointed Boards and Commissions.

The Community Development Director attended the following training and workshops:

1. Michigan State Floodplain Annual Conference, Ann Arbor, Michigan, three-day conference in March 2019. Obtained continuing education credits necessary for designation as a Certified Floodplain Manager.
2. Michigan Downtown Association Spring Workshop, Lansing, Michigan, one-day event in March 2019
3. Michigan Association of Planning – Managing Risk: Making Sound Planning and Zoning Decisions, Kalamazoo, MI in March 2019. Half-day workshop.
4. Michigan Association of Planning – Planning and Zoning Essentials, Kalamazoo, MI in March 2019. Half-day workshop.
5. Michigan Historic Preservation Network State Conference in May 2019. Two-day conference in Holland, MI.
6. Michigan Economic Development Association Spring Toolbox Workshop, Lansing, Michigan, one-day event in May 2019.
7. Michigan Downtown Association Summer Workshop, Petoskey, Michigan, one-day event in May 2019.
8. Redevelopment Ready Communities Workshop, Battle Creek, Michigan, one-day event in June 2019.
9. Michigan Association of Planning – State Conference, three days in Kalamazoo, MI in September 2019. Obtained continuing education credits necessary for AICP membership.
10. Bauckham Sparks Law Office Mini-Conference, half-day event in Lawrence, Michigan in September 2019.
11. Michigan State University Extension – Connecting Entrepreneurial Communities, two-day workshop in Ludington, Michigan, October 2019.
12. Michigan Downtown Association State Conference, two days in Holland, MI in November 2019.
13. Michigan Economic Development Association Fall Toolbox Workshop, Lansing, Michigan, one-day event in November 2019.
14. In addition, attended several on-line webinars to maintain membership in the American Institute of Certified Planners and Certified Floodplain Managers.

The City Attorney attended several municipal law conferences and seminars.

The Chief Building Official and Building Inspector attended two annual building conferences held by the State of Michigan to help obtain continuing education credits needed for different certifications. The Building Inspector also attended two Michigan Association of Planning workshops in March 2019 along with completing the on-line Citizen Planner Course offered by Michigan State University Extension.

2019 Planning Commission Meeting Information and Agenda Items.

During 2019, the City of St. Joseph Planning Commission reviewed 11 requests. In addition, the Planning Commission discussed the following:

1. Sign Ordinance Discussion/Drafting. The Planning Commission has been diligently working on updating the existing 1980 Sign Ordinance and to address the 2015 US Supreme Court ruling since 2017. In all, the Planning Commission spent approximately two-years and

discussed the draft document 29 times during this time. During 2019, the draft sign ordinance appeared on most agendas, it was discussed during eight meetings. On November 7th, the Planning Commission made a recommendation to the City Commission on the final draft document.

2. Downtown Plan Steering Committee. Two members of the Planning Commission sit on the Steering Committee and monthly updates are provided regarding the status of the planning process. Members of the Planning Commission were encouraged to participate at community events. On November 6, 2019, the Downtown Plan Steering Committee recommended that the City Commission approve the draft document.

Following is Chart III which lists the different types of action items along with special projects the Planning Commission reviewed in 2019. Requests for sign variances and special sign approvals have the largest percentage actual requests, however, time involved in the review of these applications is typically less than those requiring a public hearing.

Chart III

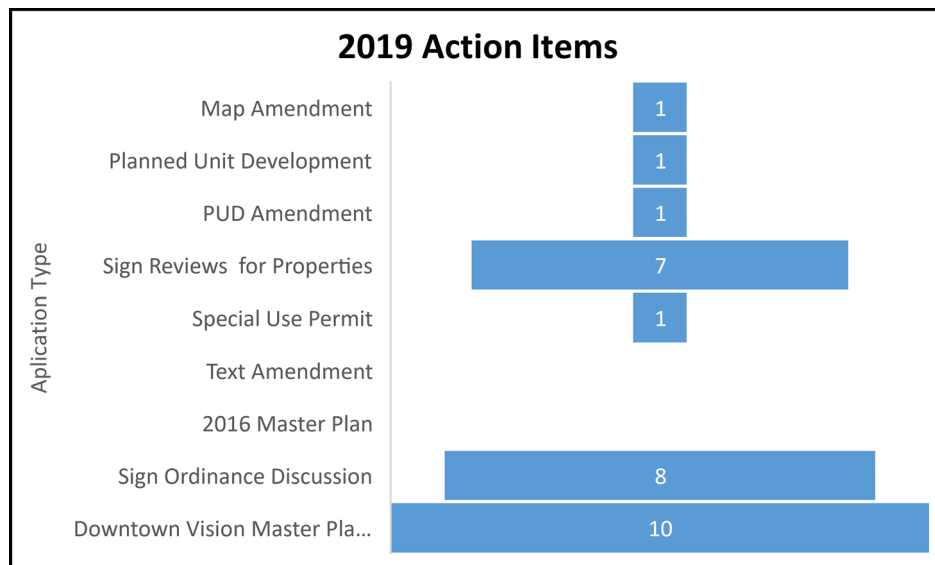
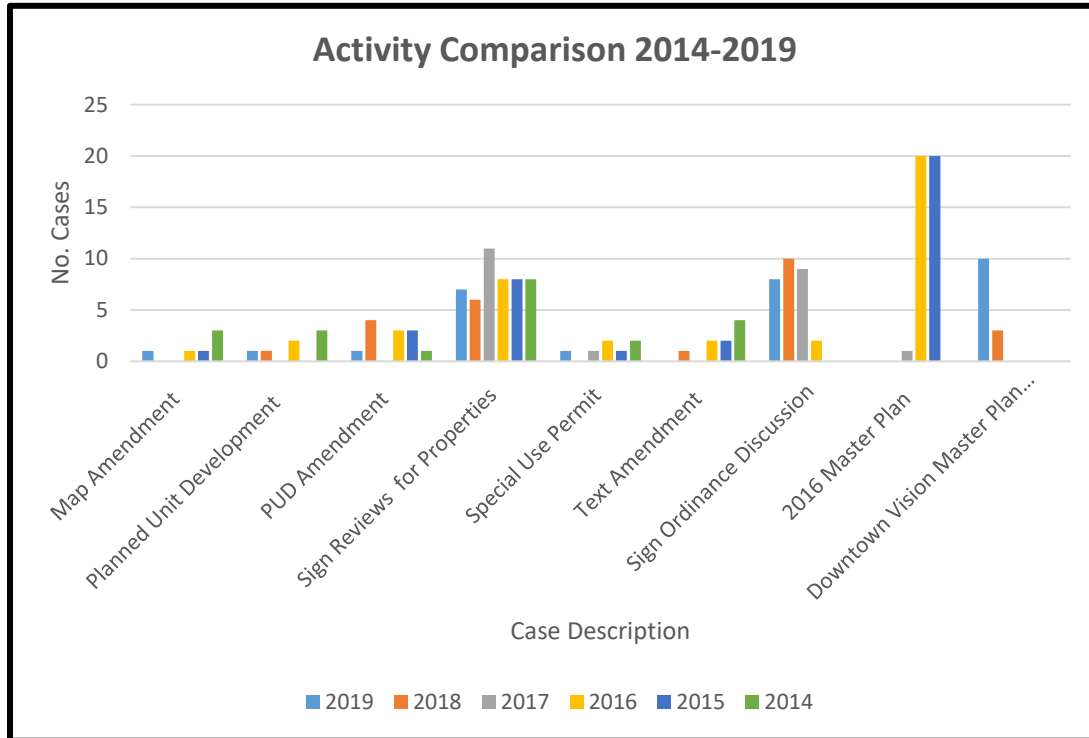


Chart IV provides a comparison of activity from 2014 – 2019. It appears that the number of requests being processed has remained relatively consistent over the last five years.

Chart IV



Following is a complete list of the applications acted upon in 2019. This list provides the address, applicant name, brief description of request, month of review and action taken by the Planning Commission.

Zoning Ordinance Amendments – Map Amendment (rezoning) or Text Amendments.

- 185 Anchors Way – Ultimate Storage LLC – Map Amendment from I-1 Light Industrial to W Water Recreation District. *Recommended approval on May 2, 2019. City Commission approved second reading of the ordinance of June 10, 2019.*

Planned Unit Developments.

- 185 Anchors Way -Ultimate Storage LLC - Planned Unit Development to allow 23 storage units within three free-standing buildings. *Recommended approval with waivers on June 2, 2019. City Commission approved the request as presented and recommended by the Planning Commission on June 24, 2019.*

Planned Unit Development – Amendments.

- Southeast corner of Whitwam Drive and Harbor Village Boulevard – Harbor Shores Community Redevelopment, LLC (Harbor Village) – Amendment to 2016 Planned Unit Development and additional waivers. *Recommended approval of the request for four changes with additional or modified waivers April 11, 2019. City Commission approved the request as presented and recommended by the Planning Commission on May 6, 2019.*

Special Use Permits.

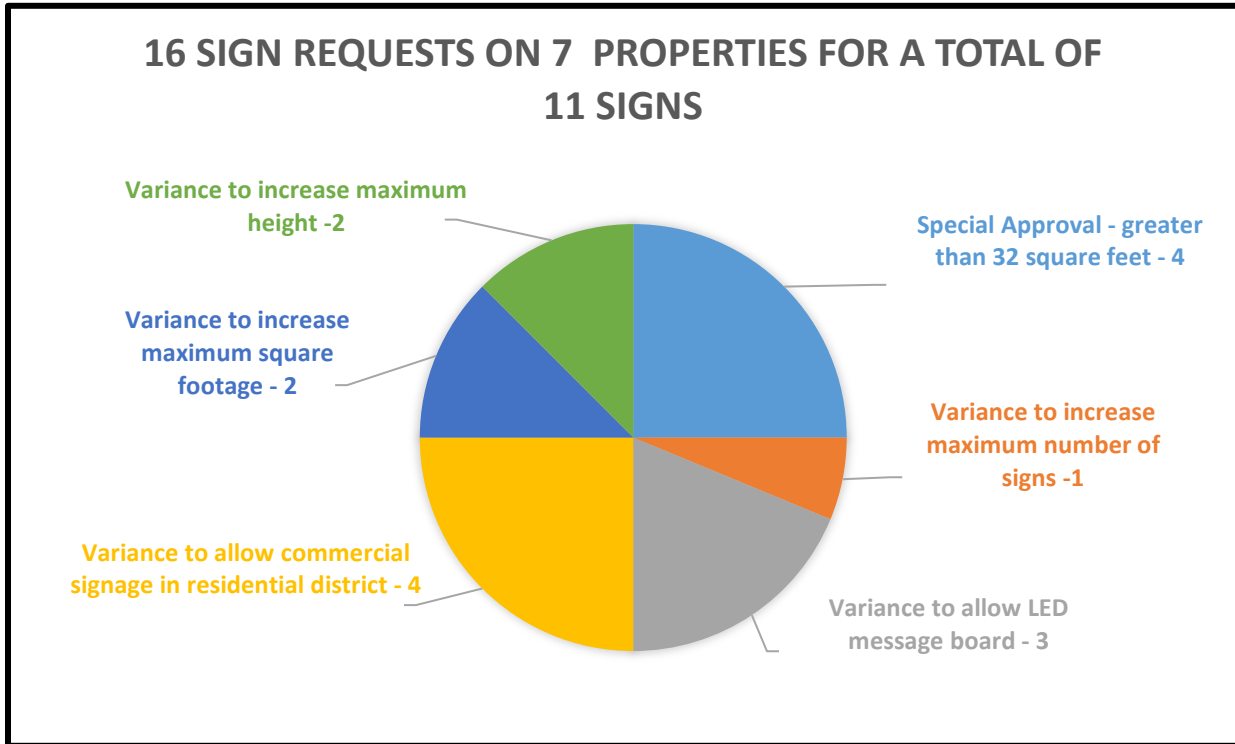
- 150 Hilltop Road – United Federal Credit Union and The Redmond Group – Special Use Permit for drive-through lane associated with ATM. *Recommended approval of the request as submitted on May 2, 2019. City Commission approved on June 10, 2019.*

Sign Variances and Special Sign Approvals (regulations found in Code of Ordinance).

- 1235 Broad Street – Clementine’s Restaurant and Midwest Sign Company – 1) Special Sign approval of one wall sign greater than 32 square feet (actual size 60 square feet) – *Approved April 11, 2019.*
- 707 Lake Boulevard – Krasl Art Center - Variance to allow three non-illuminated donor plaques on free-standing sign in a residential district – *Approved with conditions May 2, 2019*
- 150 Hilltop Road – United Federal Credit Union and The Redmond Group – 1) Special Sign Approval – one wall sign greater than 32 square feet (actual size 106.25 square feet); 2) Special Sign Approval – one free-standing sign greater than 32 square feet (actual size 50 square feet) on Hilltop; 3) Variance for LED Changeable Message Board on Hilltop Road; 4) Variance for second free-standing sign to be on Lakeshore Drive; 5) Special Sign Approval – one free-standing sign greater than 32 square feet (actual size 50 square feet) on Lakeshore Drive and 6) Variance for LED Changeable Message Board on Lakeshore Drive – *Approved wall sign and free-standing sign on Hilltop Road. Signage on Lakeshore Drive denied May 2, 2019.*
- 520 Pleasant Street – Keller Rentals and @properties – Variances to allow changeable message board (LED video monitor) in the window. *Approved with conditions September 5, 2019.*
- 2850 Cleveland Avenue – MIMG CXIII and Lakecrest Apartments - 1) Variance to increase the maximum size from 10 to 32 square feet and 2) variance to increase overall height from 4’ to 5’6” to allow one free-standing sign for a multiple family development. *Approved November 7, 2019*
- 3005 Lakeshore Drive – MIMG CXIII and Lakecrest Apartments - 1) Variance to increase the maximum size from 10 to 32 square feet and 2) variance to increase overall height from 4’ to 5’6” to allow one free-standing sign for a multiple family development. *Approved November 7, 2019*
- 1600 Niles Avenue – Century 21 Affiliated and Joshua Maly – Variance to allow one free-standing sign at an office building located in the R1-C Single-Family Residence District. *Approved December 5, 2019.*

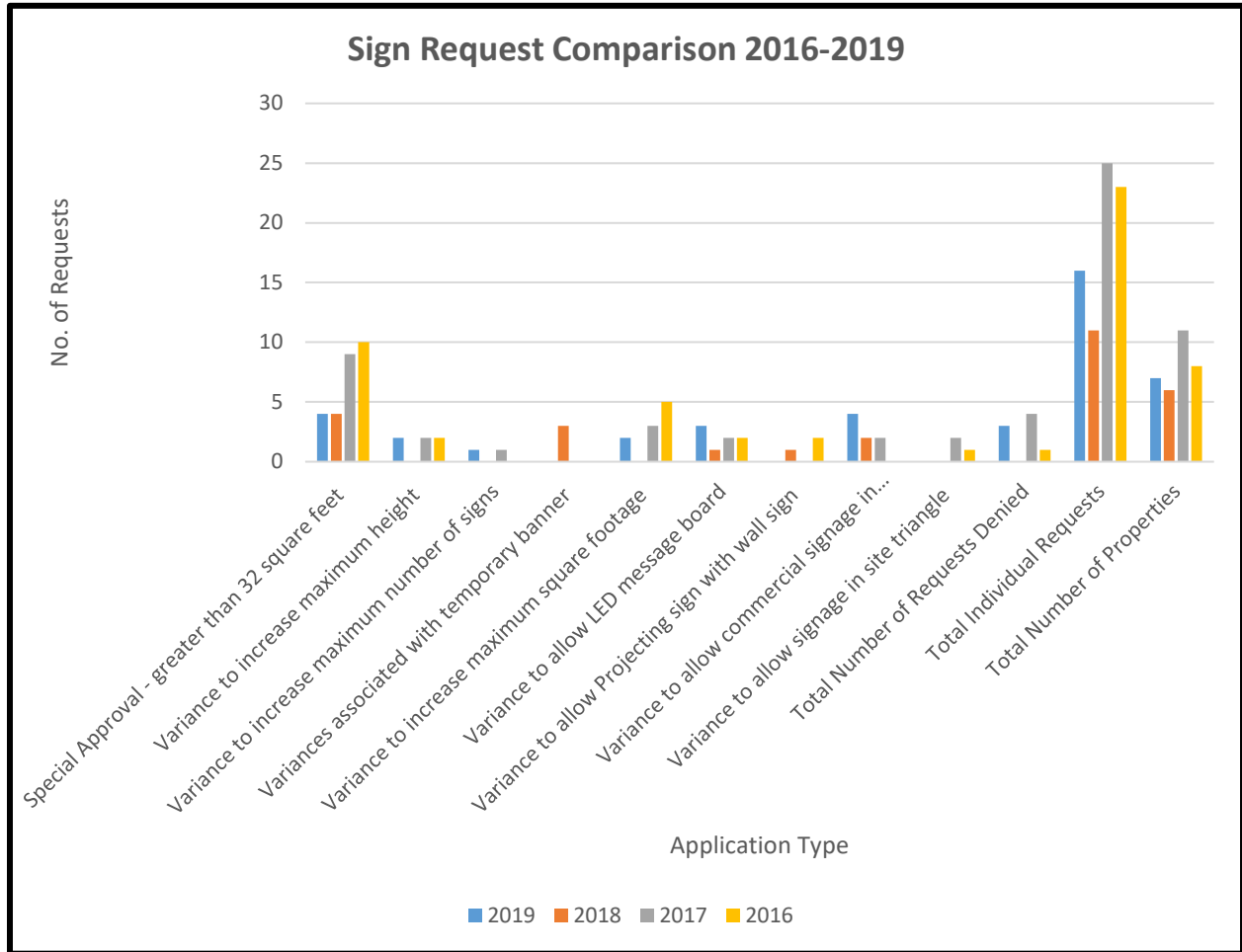
Following is Chart V, which depicts the individual sign requests made that required Planning Commission action. There was a total of 16 individual sign requests on 7 properties for a total of 11 signs. The largest number of applications submitted was for special sign approval for signs greater than 32 square feet.

Chart V



Following is Chart VI, a comparison of requests from 2016 to 2019. The request for approval of signs greater than 32 square feet along with variance requests to increase the overall height, allowed square footage and to allow LED signs has remained consistent over the years.

Chart VI



Future Activities for 2020.

In addition to the applications submitted for review and action by the public and development community, the Planning Commission will continue working on the tasks found in the 2016 Master Plan. Future activities include:

1. Review of the Zoning Ordinance in the area of lighting, parking, landscaping, screening and other areas as determined necessary.
2. Conduct required hearing process for adoption of updated FEMA Floodplain Maps
3. Begin required five-year review of the adopted 2016 Master Plan.